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(above) Attendees, including many religious sisters, pack Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium for “part 2” of Immigration: The Catholic Perspective, a presentation focused on Catholic Social Teaching regarding immigration hosted by the Intercommunity Sisters Peace and Justice Committee.



(below) Sister Kay Kramer, CDP, gestures to a photograph featuring her father (bottom left), the grandson of a German immigrant.



(left) Jessica Ramos, an immigration lawyer and manager of the immigration legal team for The Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio, LLC, provided attendees with information regarding immigration law and legal pathways toward immigration.



Second presentation on immigration tackled social teaching, immigration law — importance of human dignity and mercy, the keystone

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Once again, the Curia's Bishop Howard Memorial, Covington, found itself full of people of all ages — including both high school age students and seniors — for a presentation by the Intercommunity Sisters Peace and Justice Committee, titled “Immigration: The Catholic Perspective, Part 2.”

Following the success of the previous part in the series of presentations, Part 2 provided attendees with further detail on both the Catholic teaching and the law surrounding the topic of immigration in the United States. After an introduction by Sister Kay Kramer, CDP, and an introductory prayer from Bishop John Iffert — keynote speakers Hannah Keegan, director for Thomas More University's Center for Faith, Mission and Catholic Education and Jessica Ramos, an immigration lawyer and manager of the immigration legal team for The Legal Aid Society of Southwest Ohio, LLC, took to the podium.

Hannah Keegan, who previously gave an overview on Catholic teachings, particularly Catholic Social Teaching, at the first presentation, this time gave a “deeper dive” on the intricacies of

the subject.

“The Catholic social doctrine is trying to help us to under the Church's responsibility in society,” Mrs. Keegan explained, “What does the life of faith compel of me in the world? How does it change or inform or challenge my actions in life?”

Perhaps the most crucial part of Catholic Social Teaching, as Mrs. Keegan described is the importance of human dignity, “which is that every human person is created with an intrinsic value,” she said.

“The Catholic social doctrine is saying that the person has a

(Continued on page 18)



(above) Hannah Keegan, Director for Thomas More University's Center for Faith, Mission and Catholic Education, presents detailed information on the key features of Catholic Social Teaching — including the migrant's right to mercy and compassion, and the state's right to regulate its borders.

As a tabernacle of Christ, Mary was assumed into heaven, said Bishop John Iffert

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

Bishop John Iffert celebrated the vigil Mass for the Feast of the Assumption of Mary, August 14, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. This feast, traditionally recognized on August 15, celebrates Mary’s bodily assumption into heaven.

“Because she was the Mother of God,” said Bishop Iffert in his homily, “because bodily, she became the tabernacle of his earthly existence, her body was preserved from decay, her body was preserved from corruption, her body was preserved from the effect of sin.”

While the assumption of Mary into heaven is a point of distinction between Catholics and other religious denominations, Bishop Iffert defends the validity of the assumption with both anecdotal and doctrinal evidence.

previous stops also claimed to have the one head of John the Baptist. Bishop Iffert recalled from his friend that the man displaying the relic explained that they had the mature head of John the Baptist, and the village before them had the head of John the Baptist as a youth.

“I share this story not to add cynicism to the world but to point out just how desperate we are to connect to the holy ones who live before us. How desperate these communities are to exercise that claim for a connection to a holy saint ... so much so that you end up with three heads of John the Baptist,” said Bishop Iffert.

“Nowhere in the world,” Bishop Iffert said, “do you find a relic of the Blessed Virgin Mary ... nowhere in the world do you find a relic of her flesh, nowhere in the world do you find a relic of her bone. They don’t exist.”

The dogma proclaiming the assumption of Mary was



(above) The Marian altar at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption was adorned in blue cloth, surrounded by candles, with a crown atop Mary’s head, highlighting her assumption into heaven.

(far left) Bishop Iffert prepares to consecrate the bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ.

(left) A man prays reverently at the vigil Mass, August 14, for the Feast of the Assumption.

Bishop Iffert, in his homily, recalled a story which happened to a friend who teaches at a university in the Palestinian side of Bethlehem. One day, Bishop Iffert said, this friend of his was taken on a tour by a Scripture scholar; and he was taken to three different locations. Each of which claimed to have the head of John the Baptist.

This friend, moved by disbelief, pointed out to the man displaying the relic at the third location that each of his

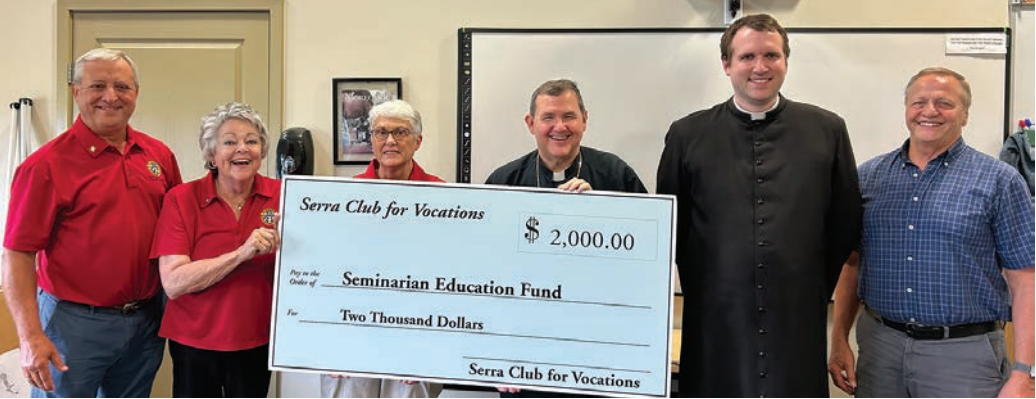
defined 75 years ago in the year 1950 by Pope Pius XII, in the apostolic constitution “Munificentissimus Deus.”

“The Lord God preserved this vessel of the Lord Jesus from undergoing the corruption that normally occurs after death of a body. Mary was not allowed to be a corpse. She was always a body filled with life, that is the gift from the Holy Spirit. The Church teaches this, and it has been taught from the early centuries of the Church because it is

true and it really happened,” said Bishop Iffert.

While the Church does not teach on whether or not Mary died or was “taken up in a whirlwind,” said Bishop Iffert, it does teach of her bodily assumption.

“Because she was the mother of God, because bodily, she became the tabernacle of his earthly existence, her body was preserved from decay, her body was preserved from corruption,” said Bishop Iffert.



Bishop Iffert and seminarians gather for annual barbecue

Bishop John Iffert joined the Serra Club for Vocations, Father Conor Kunath, vocations director for the Diocese of Covington and seminarians at the Thomas More University Biology Field Station, California, for the annual seminarian barbecue.

“The Serra Club for Vocations puts the event on each year around the end of summer,” said Father Kunath, “... this barbecue is just one of the ways that our local Serra Club supports our seminarians during their time in formation.”

This year, the Diocese of Covington has six men discerning the priesthood at seminary. Incoming seminarians Evan Ihrig, Evan Callahan and Aaron Batson are all entering year one of seminary formation. Returning seminarians Will Fuller and Joseph O’Bryan will enter their third and second year of seminary respectively. Notably, the most senior of the seminarians, Michael Schulte, will begin his last stage of seminary formation as a transitional deacon this upcoming year. This is the last of the steps before ordination to the priesthood.

Duties and Responsibilities of a State — Part 3 of a 4-part series

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

After laying out the duties and responsibilities of employers and employees to one another, Pope Leo XIII shifted his attention to the proper role of the State in meeting the challenges he had identified at the beginning of “Rerum Novarum.”

First, the pope makes explicit just what kind of entity he is addressing. A State is a government whose institutions conform with right reason and natural law. Its first duty is to ensure that the laws, the institutions, the general character and administration of the commonwealth promote public well-being and private prosperity. A State thrives as a result of moral rule, well-regulated family life, respect for religion and justice, moderate and fair public taxes, progress in the arts and trades and abundant production of the land. In arranging everything in this way every class will benefit, and the interests of the poor will be advanced.

In brief, **the state must serve the common good.** To the extent that the general laws protect the working class, the less need there will be for special means to address them. (§ 32)

A further consideration is that the State must further the interests of all. The working classes are as truly citizens as the rich, and naturally constitute the majority of the members of the commonwealth. Hence, “Among the many and grave duties of rulers who would do their best for the people, the first and chief is **to act with strict justice** — with that justice which is called distributive — toward each and every class alike.” (§ 33)

Though all citizens contribute to the common good, they do so in diverse ways: some govern, others defend the commonwealth, still others exercise a variety of trades and professions. But since the most important good that a society can possess is virtue, the body politic needs “to see to the provision of those material and external helps ‘the use of which is necessary to virtuous action.’”

Such goods are principally the product of those whose labor allows States to grow rich. Justice therefore calls for the State to watch out for the interests of those who labor so that “they may find their life less hard and more enduring.” This will serve the advantage of the entire commonwealth. (§ 34)



OSV News photo/Brendan McDermid, Reuters

Members of United Mine Workers of America and other labor leaders bow in prayer while picketing July 28, 2021, outside BlackRock’s headquarters in New York City as part of the union’s strike at Warrior Met Coal Mine. Miners had accepted significant pay and benefits in 2016 to help the company avoid bankruptcy. The 2021 strike noted that the company had returned to profitability, but it continued to offer poor terms while executives received bonuses and shareholders were prioritized.

The State must not subjugate either individuals or families in their freedom of action so long as these are consistent with the pursuit of the common good. The safety of the commonwealth is the central concern of the rulers, and never their own advantage. Their power to rule, after all, comes from God, whom they should imitate in exercising it, that is with a fatherly solicitude, guiding the whole and upholding all its members. (§ 35)

Consequently, should the general interest or some class suffer, the public authority must intervene for the good of the whole community as much as for the protection of those who are enduring some harm. When such troubles arise, the authorities must maintain peace and good order in a manner consistent with divine and natural law.

The pope listed and offered examples of a number of areas to attend to: the discipline of family life, duties of religion, exacting standards of personal and public morality, sacredness of justice, assurance that no one be harmed with impunity. To these he added the evils of employers

unjustly burdening their employees or degrading them “with conditions repugnant to their dignity as human beings,” and putting health at risk by excessive labor; or by work unsuited to the worker’s age or sex. In all these matters, “there can be no question but that, within certain limits, it would be right to invoke the aid and authority of the law,” provided the law does not reach beyond what is necessary to remedy the evil. (§ 36)

Respect for Rights

The public authority has a duty to prevent and to punish injury to the rights of every individual, and particularly those of the poor and badly off. The wealthy have resources to shield themselves from harm so that they have less need of assistance from the State. The poor, though, have no such resources and stand in need of State assistance. Wage earners, then, who belong to the mass of the needy should receive special care and protection from the government. (§ 37)

However, public authority has a duty to provide legal protection for private property, especially when passionate greed crosses the line of duty. For though it is just for all to strive to better their condition, “neither justice nor the common good allows any individual to seize upon that which belongs to another.” The vast majority of workers prefer to improve their lot by honest labor; nevertheless, there are many who are eager for revolution who would like to incite others to the violent takeover of lawfully owned property. The authority of the law must restrain such firebrands. (§ 38)

This is not to say that worker strikes are not justified by excessive hours of labor, or exceedingly hard work or insufficient wages. Such situations need to be prevented by “public remedial measures” because of the impact of strikes on both workers and employers, on trade and on the general public. “The laws should forestall and prevent such troubles from arising; they should lend their influence and authority to the removal in good time of the causes which lead to conflicts between employers and employed.” (§ 39)

The final article of this series will present Pope Leo XIII’s teachings on the implications of all these principles for the responsibility of the State to protect the interests of workers.



Obituary

Divine Providence Sister Judith McMahon died peacefully at Holy Family Home on August 11. She was a professed member of the Congregation of Divine Providence for 71 years. Born in Covington, Ky., in 1933 to Thomas and Mary Carlan McMahon, she made her first profession of vows in 1954 and professed her final vows in 1959.

Sister Judy began her ministry as an elementary teacher at Christ the King School, Lexington, Ky., in 1954 and then taught at St. Aloysius School, Covington until 1962 when she began teaching high school at Our Lady of Providence Academy, Newport, Ky., and then at St. Thomas High School, Ft. Thomas, Ky., until 1972.

After a year of studying French in France, she returned to ministry in Kentucky, teaching French at St. Camillus Academy, Corbin; Our Lady of Providence Academy, Newport; Holy Family High School, Ashland; and at Newport Central Catholic High School until she was elected as a General Councilor for the Congregation in 1988 and



Sister Judith McMahon, CDP

moved to the Motherhouse in France for 10 years.

In 1998, after a time of sabbatical, she served at Jeanne d’Arc Residence, New York, helping with finances and hospitality. In 2006, she moved back to Kentucky and served in finance for Holy Family Home, Melbourne. From 2008 to 2010, she returned to the elementary classroom at St. Camillus Academy, Corbin, until the school closed, and she moved to Holy Family Home in 2016, where she served in a variety of ways. She continued to teach, but this time it was English as a second language at El Centro de la Divina Providencia. In 2022, she moved to the Health Care Center, and her ministry of prayer and presence continued.

Whether working with primary school children, high school teenagers or the immigrant women in New York or at El Centro, Sister Judy’s diligence and sense of humor were hallmarks of her interactions. She was a no-nonsense teacher, but her hearty laugh and joking were always present in her interactions. She was a woman of deep faith and prayer whose devotion to the Congregation and to the service of others was steadfast.

She will be missed by her religious community, the Sisters of Divine Providence and her many nieces and nephews. Sister Judy’s brothers, Thomas, Daniel and

James, and her sisters, Patricia Robbins, Mary Jane Betz and Joan Glenn, all preceded her in death.

Mass of Christian Burial was in Immaculate Conception Chapel, Melbourne, August 19, with interment in the convent cemetery following Mass. Memorials to the Congregation of Divine Providence, 5300 St. Anne Drive, Melbourne, KY 41059.



Bishop's Schedule

Aug. 22

All-school Mass followed by classroom blessing, St. Mary of the Assumption, Alexandria, 8:30 a.m.

“Gargoyles and Gratitude” donor reception, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington, 7 p.m.

Aug. 23

Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 4:30 p.m.

Aug. 24

Catholic Charities CassBa Event, Drees Pavilion, Covington, 3 p.m.

Aug. 26

Mass, Knights of the Holy Sepulcher, Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel, Crestview Hills, 6 p.m.

Aug. 27

Glenmary Missions tour followed by Mass, 10 a.m.

Christ’s love is stronger than hatred, pope says at audience

Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

Jesus’ love and forgiveness do not deny the truth of pain and betrayal, but they do prevent evil from having the last word, Pope Leo XIV said.

“To forgive does not mean to deny evil, but to prevent it from generating further evil,” the pope said Aug. 20 at his weekly general audience in the Vatican’s Paul VI Audience Hall.

“It is not to say that nothing has happened, but to do everything possible to ensure that resentment does not determine the future,” he said.

Continuing his series of talks about Jesus’ final days, the pope looked specifically at “one of the most striking and luminous gestures in the Gospel,” when Jesus offers a morsel of bread to Judas during the Last Supper, knowing full well that his disciple is about to betray him.

“It is not only a gesture of sharing: it is much more; it

is love’s last attempt not to give up,” Pope Leo said.

“The key to understanding Christ’s heart,” he said, is to realize that his love “does not cease in the face of rejection, disappointment, even ingratitude.”

“His love is stronger than hatred,” he said.

The pope said Jesus recognizes that “his love must pass through the most painful wound, that of betrayal. And instead of withdrawing, accusing, defending himself, he continues to love: he washes the feet, dips the bread and offers it” to all his disciples, including Judas.



Pope Leo XIV blesses rosaries and greets pilgrims inside St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican Aug. 20, 2025, after his weekly general audience. The pope visited them at the conclusion of the audience to offer his blessing, as the Paul VI hall had reached full capacity.

Jesus is not ignoring what is happening, he said. Rather, he has understood “that the freedom of the other, even when it is lost in evil, can still be reached by the light of a meek gesture, because he knows that true forgiveness does not await repentance, but offers itself first, as a free gift, even before it is accepted.”

Judas accepts the morsel of bread, but does not understand its meaning, and “Satan entered him,” the pope said. “That morsel is our salvation, because it tells us that God does everything — absolutely everything — to reach us, even in the hour when we reject him.”

“Jesus, with the simple gesture of offering bread, shows that every betrayal can become an opportunity for salvation if it is chosen as a space for a greater love,” he said. “It does not give in to evil, but conquers it with good, preventing it from extinguishing what is truest in us: the capacity to love.”

“Jesus’ love does not deny the truth of pain, but it does not allow evil to have the last word,” he said. “This is the mystery Jesus accomplishes for us, in which we, too, at times, are called to participate.”

“We, too, experience painful and difficult” moments, such as when there is disappointment or when “someone has hurt or betrayed us,” the pope said. “The temptation is to close ourselves up, to protect ourselves, to return the blow.”

“But the Lord shows us the hope that another way always exists,” he said, and that the faithful can “respond with the silence of trust. And that we can move forward with dignity, without renouncing love.”

“Let us ask today for the grace to be able to forgive,” he said. “As Jesus teaches us, to love means to leave the other free — even to betray — without ever ceasing to believe that even that freedom, wounded and lost, can be snatched from the deception of darkness and returned to the light of goodness.”

“Even if the other does not accept it, even if it seems to be in vain, forgiveness frees those who give it: it dispels resentment, it restores peace, it returns us to ourselves,” he said.

Pope Leo spent nearly an hour and a half greeting visitors and pilgrims in the audience hall, including special guests, sports teams, newlyweds and the infirm. He greeted several families with small children, holding their newborns and posing for a family photo.

He then headed to St. Peter’s Basilica to greet those who could not fit in the large audience hall and blessed people who were waiting in the parking area outside the hall. Because of the high temperatures outside, the general audience was being held in two parts — in the hall and in the basilica — so people would not have to be under the hot sun.

The pope greeted the faithful in the basilica in English, Spanish and Italian and reminded them of the theme of forgiveness in his main catechesis.

“Let us all learn to pardon,” he said in English. “Because to pardon one another is to build a bridge of peace. And we must pray for peace, which is so necessary in our world today, a peace which only Jesus Christ can give us.”



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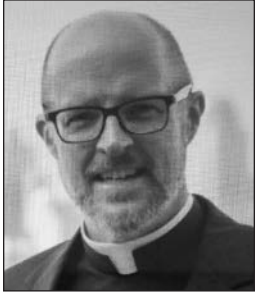
600 Farrell Drive, Covington, KY 41011

The narrow gate and the hard question

The readings for the Twenty-first Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle C — are: **Isaiah 66: 18–21, Hebrews 12:5–7, 11–13 and Luke 13:22–30.**

“Lord, will only a few people be saved?” This, surely, is one of the most important existential questions raised in the Gospel. It is the question that everyone who follows

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Phillip DeVous

Christ, or who would follow Christ asks, albeit in a more personal way: will I be saved? Are those I love to be saved? These are the hard, searching questions we are to ask and to consider if we truly desire to follow Jesus Christ.

There is a too frequent tendency in contemporary Church life to demur and deflect on the hard questions, especially if we sense the answer might be radically at odds with the consensus of the unbelieving world. As the philosopher, Walter Kaufmann, provocatively states it, “the present age is the age of Judas ... To be sure, it is not literally with a kiss that Christ is betrayed in the present age: today one betrays with an interpretation.”

Surely the question of how many people will be saved, and the related question of whether I will be saved, is a question that tempts us to conjure congenial interpretations that would wave away the question’s seriousness. The good news is the word of God is made for our heart, and our heart is made for the Word of God. Consequently, under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit we can rise to occasion of both contemplating a deep question and living with its answer- requirements for the following Jesus.

First and foremost, we must understand that God the Father “has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places”(Eph 1:2). These spiritual blessing are the Holy Sacraments and the Church, which is the grace of the Incarnation of Christ extended throughout history until the Second Coming and final judgment. So, we must not fear that sufficient grace and truth for salvation is lacking for salvation.

Our Blessed Lord suggests to us that what might be lacking is our will to acknowledge, accept and engage the graces that are revealed and on offer when he teaches, “strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I tell you, will attempt to enter but will not be strong enough.” Of course, salvation depends first and foremost on God’s grace. Once the grace has been given then surely our cooperation, conversion and obedience to the grace and truth that has been given is required. We know, even as we struggle, we must not be after as we were before such grace is given. So much “interpretation” in the air today tempts us to remain the same.

The Lord Jesus is laying out for us the difficulties of the spiritual life necessary to correspond to the grace of salvation. Further, He seems to be indicating that many will not want to take it up precisely because of the hardship it entails. I cannot help but think Jesus is referencing the “Two Ways” teaching of Deuteronomy: “See, I have set before you this day life and good, death and evil.” (Deut 30: 15). Jesus envisions the ease with which we pass through the main gates of worldly ways, living according to what’s egotistic, popular, pleasurable, socially accepted and necessary for material advancement in world.

The few, who have seen and heard the Lord, who have encountered his grace and truth, who wish to live according to “life and good” must exert greater effort to pass through the narrow gate of holiness and Godly virtue. This narrow gate, which gives one access to God is none other than Jesus himself. We pass to and through him to the Trinitarian life and eternal existence of Divine Love through receiving the Holy Sacraments and the Word of God with faith and obedience.

This is why we pray in the opening collect of the Holy Mass that our minds might be united in a “single pur-

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To feel so unworthy

An 11-year-old girl received good news! She had been waiting a long time. A foster family chose her and are pursuing her adoption.

She was living in DCCH residential for nearly a year. She and other friends in her apartment seek a fighting chance to live a healthier and happier life.

VIEWPOINT



Ronald M. Bertsch

After attending training and successfully completing the home study process the match was presented to them. After much prayer, discernment and a series of meetings and visitations, (Abby I will call her) moved into their home in May.

Abby was far behind in her education. Her past neglect and trauma had significantly hindered her learning. She could not understand basic math and she still did not know her full alphabet, the sounds or names.

All summer she had the full attention of this generous couple. They found help to provide additional tutoring. Abby has mastered the alphabet and cried when she successfully read a simple book cover to cover. We are so proud of her accomplishments and the potential that is becoming more apparent.

The story is on a beautiful trajectory, but Abby came back to DCCH for a therapy session, and it tore her up emotionally. Why the reaction? She finally blurted out the questions burning in her soul. “Why Me?” she asked them. “Are you sure?” There are 31 other children at

The couple inquired about adoption months earlier. They had no children, a mature couple, financially secure, owning a nice home on many acres. They work from home and enjoy the animals and livelihood they created. Can they qualify, is there a need to offer an older child a home and could DCCH help facilitate? These were their questions. YES, YES and YES was my loud resounding response!

DCCH. “They are more worthy than I,” she said.

Abby feels so unworthy. Her life experiences contradict the love, help and kindness she is experiencing. She can’t understand and deep down she believes she is undeserving. No doubt this message was reinforced by parental abandonment and unfortunately prior adults meant to care for her.

We pray Abby discovers God’s infinite love and meaning for her existence. It may take years to fully accept this new identity. It will require her new mom and dad’s unwavering and unconditional love, with more prayers. Celebrating her 12th birthday with a special meal, her first vacation to the beach and first airplane trip; more great memories to cherish.

I was inspired by Father Mike Schmitz recent post and thought of Abby. Father elaborated on the Sign of the Cross. We as Catholic Christians know this gesture and often perform out of habit probably. Let us contemplate the meaning. We first proclaim the Trinity, open hand touching or thumb and two fingers touching our forehead, heart and shoulders. Open hand is a blessing posture, or three digits remind us again of the Trinity and from whom we seek a blessing.

What are we worth? What is our price tag? The sign tells us we are worth the life and death of Jesus on the cross! He created us, wants us to love and serve him and he died and rose for each of us, not collectively but individually. Claim that gift, know it, believe it and live it.

How will Abby ever feel worthy enough? She needs this truth to penetrate her, that she has a personal creator and savior! I am so very grateful for this couple and other foster and adoptive parents who choose to take on this challenge. They give children this message exemplified through their daily actions, prayers, and the sharing of the Gospel of Jesus Christ!

For more information about foster parenting or adoption, call DCCH at 859-331-2040 or search www.dcccenter.org.

Ronald M. Bertsch is director of Therapeutic Foster Care/Adoption for the DCCH Center for Children and Families, Ft. Mitchell.

The last atomic bomb

This August marks the 80th year of the atomic age that began with the first and most recent use of nuclear weapons — on Japan just before the end of World War II.

I say “most recent” instead of “last” because while nuclear bombs have not been deployed since then, no one really believes they never will be again. Under the “right” circumstances and against the “right” enemy, there is little doubt that a leader in the future will decide to press the button just like Harry Truman did in 1945.

Then, America was fighting on the right side of what may have been the closest thing to a just war in all of human history. It is true that bombing Hiroshima and Nagasaki hastened the end of the war. Using the immensely destructive power of the atom bomb meant that a long and costly invasion of Japan could be avoided. The justification given for dropping the bomb then — and still today — was that it would save American lives. Between 150,000 and 246,000 Japanese — mostly civilians — died as a result of the attacks.

For Catholics, however, the calculus matters. When we judge the morality of an act by whose lives it will save, we have already surrendered any high ground we might have claimed. We should never forget that war is always evil and that even when a war we fight is just, our conduct of it may not be. We ought to be asking questions that may make us uncomfortable. First, is it possible to

CALLED TO HOLINESS



Jaymie Stuart Wolfe

use weapons capable of destruction on the nuclear scale proportionally? And second, given that divine math does not give more weight to the value of the lives on one side of a conflict that it does to those on the other; is it moral for us to do so?

And that’s why the past eight decades of international diplomacy have been spent desperately trying to contain how many weapons of mass destruction there are, and limit who has access to the technology and materials necessary to build them.

Powerful nations like ours often talk about how effective the threat of overwhelming force is as a deterrent to war. But there is always a war somewhere — Ukraine, Congo and Gaza come to mind — and no matter who possesses or controls them, weapons of unprecedented destruction only raise the stakes.

The working theory has been that “good” actors can be trusted not to use these weapons, and international villains can be expected to bully — or indiscriminately destroy — the rest of the world. Those who embrace that perspective note that despite nonproliferation and test ban treaties, and numerous arms reduction agreements, menacing despots of countries like North Korea and Iran are always trying to elbow their way into obtaining these weapons. Meanwhile, nations who are already members of Club Nuke ironically wield the threat of nuclear annihilation while at the same time claiming that they will never use them.

There are plenty of people who think that the only effective way to respond to a bully is to out-bully him. I’m not convinced that position is consistent with our faith.

In fact, the catechism, drawing from the Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World (“Gaudium et Spes”), clearly states that it isn’t: “Every act of war directed to the indiscriminate destruction of

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Pope’s brother, friends in the Chicago area will mark pontiff’s 70th birthday

Simone Ordendain
OSV News

Pope Leo XIV turns 70 on Sept. 14 and some of his closest friends in the Chicago-area will mark the day with him in mind, quietly.

But at one point in his priesthood, quiet was not the word to describe his birthday celebrations, for which he had to block off multiple days.

“The day itself we’d have in the (religious) community, but we’d have a weeklong celebration because he had to



OSV News photo/Prevost family

In this undated photo, Pope Leo XIV (then Robert Prevost) (left) smiles while his mother (back to the camera) cuts a birthday cake in what his brother (right) guessed was the pope's 9th birthday, at the family home in the Chicago suburb of Dolton.

have a birthday in each of these zones, everybody wanted to do his birthday, because they had great appreciation of him,” said Augustinian Father John Lydon, who lived with then Father Robert F. Prevost for about 10 years at their order’s formation house in coastal city of Trujillo, Peru.

Residents of these “zones” or little villages-slash-neighborhoods made up the parish, according to Father Lydon, now the formator at the Augustinians’ North American formation house in Chicago’s Hyde Park neighborhood.

He said the parish was made up of six zones in southern Trujillo and five of them hosted one night each of partying during his good friend’s birthday week, “because he was the pastor of our parish ... and because a good number of the zones are in the very poorer areas of Trujillo, and he treated the poor with a lot of dignity, which wasn’t common in the ‘90s.”

Father Lydon said Peruvian birthday celebrations “are very big, more than in America.” He described to OSV News that families would host a dinner, serve homemade birthday cake (usually white cake with chocolate icing) and then have lots of dancing after the meal. He said a typical Peruvian celebration is an all-night dance party that usually gets started at 10 p.m. and lasts until 6 a.m. the next morning.

“But we didn’t do that (stay up too late),” having the ear-

lier schedules that priests do, while the parishioners continued through the early morning. But the big question about these parties is: Did the Augustinians dance? Did the future Pope Leo dance?

“Oh, yeah, definitely,” exclaimed Father Lydon. “Everyone danced!”

There were no live bands. Once in a while someone had a guitar, but that was more for serenading Pope Leo with “Happy Birthday to you,” in Spanish, which is what they mostly did in the sixth zone, which includes the seminary, at a lunch party during the day.

The night party music was “the moda (modern),” popular contemporary dance music blaring out of a boom box, according to Father Lydon, retired president of Catholic University of Trujillo. He said they danced whatever were the popular dance moves of the ‘90’s, usually from Brazil and the birthday decorations included lots of balloons that people would pop at the end of a song, to punctuate the festivities with a canon-like salute for the pastor.

Far from the “big style” partying of Peru, a country of which the first American pope also holds citizenship, Father Lydon said for his close friend’s 70th birthday this year, he would remember him in a prayer and reflection video called “5 minutes with God.” He sends this out twice weekly to Villanova University students during the school year. He also plans to offer a Mass for the pope that day.

Going further back, to Pope Leo’s childhood, birthday celebrations were far more subdued, at least according to his brother John Prevost of New Lenox, a southwest Chicago suburb.

Prevost, 71, said from what he remembered, “it was just regular, I assume, what everyone else did. You get a cake, you open a present, and then you went to bed.”

He held up a black and white photo, with the year ‘64 stamped on it, that he said he was almost certain was Pope Leo’s ninth birthday.

The family sat at the dinner table with his brother the pope, smiling broadly at the camera, while their mother, her back to the camera, cut a birthday cake and himself also smiling while eating ice cream between two aunts eating ice cream. Their father, who is not pictured, presumably sat at the head. He said the shot was likely taken by the two boys’ oldest brother, Louis, since there was one

(Continued on page 8)

The narrow gate

(Continued from page 5)

Mass that our minds might be united in a “single purpose”, so that we might love what God commands and, most significantly, desire what God promises. We will not pursue the path through the narrow gate, which is the imitation of Jesus Christ, if we do not desire the grace and truth that has been revealed and gifted to us. If we do not desire it, will be tempted to interpret and reduce the Catholic faith to therapeutic bromides; to deploy compassion as a solvent of the truth, not its servant; and we will end up with a mush of nice, but not the utter fullness and holiness of God, which is our dignity, destiny and fulfillment as human persons.

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

The last atomic bomb

(Continued from page 5)

whole cities or vast areas with their inhabitants is a crime against God and man, which merits firm and unequivocal condemnation.”

A danger of modern warfare is that it provides the opportunity to those who possess modern scientific weapons — especially atomic, biological or chemical weapons — to commit such crimes.

Most people believe that all people want peace. In reality, that may not be true. But those who do will reveal it by their actions, in how they treat their friends but even more so in how they choose to deal with their enemies.

Our faith teaches us to seek peace instead of power and to persevere in that effort instead of giving in to posturing. That demands that we acknowledge the evil that all weapons of mass destruction make possible.

Hiroshima and Nagasaki should not be held up as emblems of Western victory or American dominance, but as cautionary histories of the overwhelming force and utter destruction that is unleashed by the willingness to wage war without limits. Not only cities, but souls, can be destroyed, and it is not always clear to which side those casualties belong.

Jaymie Stuart Wolfe is a Catholic convert, freelance writer and editor, musician, speaker, pet-aholic, wife and mom of eight grown children, loving life in New Orleans.

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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.

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.

St. Thomas Parish, Ft. Thomas, Seniors, upcoming events: luncheon, Aug. 28; social and game night, Sept. 25; luncheon and speaker, Oct. 21; dinner, Nov. 20. Find more details and online payment link: stthomasnk.org/seniors.

Newport Central Catholic High School 31st Family Fireworks Fest, Aug. 31. Food trucks, drinks, and fun will begin at 5 p.m. and will continue until the Big Blast. (No cans, bottles or coolers permitted.) Admission \$5; to purchase visit <https://gofan.co/app/school/KY6479?activity=Event%20School>. Limited parking passes guaranteeing you a spot on the hill cost \$10, purchase at <https://gofan.co/app/school/KY6479?activity=Event%20School>. Contact (859) 292-0001 ext. 528 or tkrebs@ncchs.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 required for anniversary couples; family members and guests are welcome to attend.

Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, presents: A Heart of Service: Simple Solution to World Hunger, Sept. 11, 7 p.m. in Ziegler Auditorium. “A Heart of Service: Simple Solution to World Hunger,” features Magnus MacFarlane-Barrow, founder of the global school-feeding charity Mary’s Meals, alongside Catholic musician Steve Angrisano. This event is free and open to

the public; no registration is required.

A Marriage Encounter Experience will be held on Sept. 19–21 at the Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Center in Norwood, OH. Sign up at wwme.org or call Andy and Melanie Reinersman at (859) 653-8464. Learn how to make your marriage better.

St. Thomas School, Ft. Thomas, Boosters golf outing, Sept. 27, Hickory Sticks Golf Club, 1 p.m. Shotgun Start. Register now, stthomasnk.org/golf.

Thomas More University Fall Preview Day, Sept. 27, Academic Center, TMU campus, Crestview Hills. The biggest fall event for college-bound high school students. Preview Day will introduce you to the vibrant academic and campus life that defines the Saints community. RSVP at <https://tmuky.us/preview25>.

On Saturday, Sept. 27, **Bishop Brossart Boys Basketball Program will have a Euchre Tournament.** Doors open at 5:30 and cards will begin at 7:00. Cost is \$25 if you pre-register by 9/26. Limited walkups may be available. Food included. There will also be a bourbon raffle, basket raffles and split the pots. E-mail bbhsboysbasketballeuchre@gmail.com or call (859) 760-8228. More information available on bmustangs.com website.

Notre Dame Urban Education Center, Covington, needs volunteers for its Education Center’s Early Learning Program. As a volunteer, you’ll be an extra set of hands to help with learning activities, guide little ones through their routines, and bring joy and encouragement to each day. Contact Brandi at (859) 630-9475 or blenihan@nduec.org for information.

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

Adult Spirituality Institute is once again presenting four separate sets of four classes with Father Tim Schehr, Father Jeffry Kemper and Msgr. Bill Cleves. Classes are throughout the school year and run for four consecutive Mondays per topic. First class begins on Oct. 6 at 10 a.m. at Mount St. Mary Seminary, Bartlet Center, on Beechmont Avenue and features Father Schehr on Praying with the Psalms. Cost is \$40 for four classes. Contact Adult Spirituality Institute at (515) 231-2223, ext 143 or <http://www.spirituality-institute.com> for additional information or to register.

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.



A student at St. Pius X school, Edgewood, greets Deacon Jim Fedor and the SPX mascot, Panther Shadow, with a “knuckle bump” on the first day of school, Aug. 12.

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.

Parents of Addicted Loved Ones, (PAL) is a support group that meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, 6:30–8 p.m. at Catholic Charities, Latonia. It provides continuing education and support, at no charge, for parents with a son, daughter or spouse suffering from addiction to alcohol or drugs. No cost. Just come — 3629 Church Street, Latonia. For more information contact Client Care at (859) 581-8974.

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

Pontiff’s 70th birthday

(Continued from page 5)

unoccupied chair:

Prevost told OSV News the cake was certain to be angel food cake, but “it didn’t (even) have to be his birthday. That was his favorite: angel food cake. To this day, even.”

Even the choice of cake was angelic for the boy whom neighbors and teachers said would be pope one day and who played priest in the family’s south suburban Chicago home from a very young age. (Prevost laughed when this was pointed out to him and said he had only just realized it).

When Prevost’s friend Augustinian Father Ray Flores, who sat in on the interview with OSV News, remarked that the pope’s birthday, Sept. 14 is the feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, Prevost said, “See? Holiness again,” and laughed.

He also said, since Robert left home at 13 to enter the

Augustinians’ minor seminary in Holland, Michigan, keeping regular contact with his brother has been the priority, whether their routine daily call falls on his birthday, or not. Even on birthdays, Prevost said, because his family does not know his schedule, they have to wait for a video call from him.

From the minor seminary, Pope Leo went on to college at the Augustinian Villanova University in Philadelphia graduating in 1977, finished seminary at Catholic Theological Union in Hyde Park, went on to Rome for school and ordination to the priesthood (both in 1982). He earned a licentiate, then a doctorate, in canon law (1984, 1987), both at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas. He was first sent to Peru to work in the mission of Chulucanas, in Piura, Peru, (1985-1986), did more mission work in Peru, based in the Archdiocese of Turjillo (1988-1999), then traveled the world as prior general of the whole order (2001-2013).

He went back to Peru (2014-2023) this time as bishop of Chiclayo Diocese, simultaneously holding Vatican positions, then was recalled to Rome to be elevated to cardinal

(2023) and prefect of the Dicastery for Bishops, until his election to the papacy May 8.

About a week before Pope Leo’s upcoming birthday, his brother John Prevost and a close friend, a next door playmate who was like a sister to the boys growing up, along with her family, plan to go to Aurelio’s Pizza in the nearby suburb of Homewood. That was where then-Cardinal Prevost stopped in for pizza months before he became pope.

Once he was elected pope, Aurelio’s started serving a “Pope-roni” pizza.

“They have this big sign ‘the Pope sat here.’ We will go and sit there (at the table) and have a sign that says, ‘Happy Birthday,’” said John. And they plan to send that photo to Pope Leo on his birthday.

John said his brother turning 70 is “a big milestone” among many in this past year.

He said a Church Pop Facebook post captured this well, during Pope Leo’s visit with young people at the Jubilee of Youth in early August.

“He was walking up those stairs ... for that (Jubilee) week with the kids, and there was that caption: Everyone should be able to climb stairs like Pope Leo (at age 69),” he said. “See? So it’s (70 is) just another step. And he’ll take it.”



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Representatives from FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky will be in attendance. FIRE’s mission is to champion the inclusion of students with disabilities in Catholic schools by providing educational resources, fundraising and promoting a culture of belonging.

Questions or to request specific accommodations, email info@FIREfoundationNKY.org



FIREFoundationNKY.org

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of doing big things,
but I want
to do everything,
even the
smallest things,
for the
greater glory of God."*

St. Dominic Savio

Two students from Immaculate Heart of Mary School embrace with palpable joy upon their reunion before the first day of school.

Back to School Supplement

THE MESSENGER • AUGUST 22, 2025



Committing to the new year

Most Rev. John Iffert
Bishop of Covington

Happy New Year! The new liturgical year will begin on the first Sunday of Advent (November 30 this year), and the calendar year starts on January 1, but many cultural commentators have noted that the real beginning of the year for most families is happening right now with the beginning of the school year. This month parents will renew their children’s wardrobe, purchase new shoes and fulfill the school supply list. Schedules and habits are renegotiated and written on calendars and whiteboards on the refrigerator or family bulletin board. Children and families begin to talk about extracurricular activities and to adapt to a new round of schedules, practices, performances and more. It’s at this time of year that most families will set the patterns of life that will see them through the next 10 or 12 months. In every practical way, the beginning of the school year is the beginning of a new year for most American families.

My simple request is that parents and grandparents consider the spiritual wellbeing of their children during this time of year when the building blocks of the family schedule are being put in place. As you commit to classes,



Bishop John Iffert

teams, music lessons and more, take just a moment to think about how you will commit to help your kids grow in their relationship to Christ this year.

If your family isn’t yet in the practice of receiving the Sacraments regularly, start there. Committing to attending Sunday Mass as a family and making sure that you and your kids approach the Sacrament of Reconciliation once a month or more is a great beginning and foundation for Christian life. If you haven’t already, commit to those simple practices now. It’s also important to assure that your young people are enrolled in religious education at a Catholic school and/or the parish, and that they are committed to being part of your parish’s youth ministry efforts.

If those foundational pieces are already in place, how about introducing a family rosary or a daily devotional designed for families and children? Perhaps you could commit to one-half hour each week of Eucharistic adoration with your children? You could sign up for a 30-minutes slot at a local parish each week or just put an appointment on your calendar to stop together at an open church or one of our local adoration chapels.

Perhaps you want to begin the tradition of a weekly

family night in your home. On this night, nothing else gets scheduled and your family spends time together on any kind of activity that does not include a screen. Of course, it would be great to incorporate family prayer into this special family time.

Take an active part in the development of your child’s faith life. Ask them to see their religion/theology books and read along with them. Each week or every day, talk with them about what they are studying in religion class and share your faith experience.

You regularly demonstrate your love for your kids. For many of you that includes attending every event at their school, performances or games of any kind. That’s great and can help families form close bonds. If you also want to pass on to your children your love for Christ and the importance of His place in your life, they need to see you pray and have the opportunity to join you in prayer. They need to know that you are committed to growth in holiness, and that it’s what you want most of all for them. Now, at the beginning of this new school year, is a great time to put habits that reinforce these values in place for you and your children.

Grandparents, don’t forget your role. It was at my grandparents’ home that I first encountered the daily rosary and began to see that a life with Christ was more than meeting the Sunday obligation. Are you making resolutions and new beginnings at this time of year? Resolve to live the faith with your children and grandchildren that you hope they will make their own and share with others.

There is literally no greater way to say, “I love you and I want the best for you.”

New year challenges

Kendra McGuire
Contributor

Another summer has come and gone and now we find ourselves enjoying the excitement of a new school year. From back-to-school pictures on social media to new shoes and backpacks, we quickly return to the routines of the school year; settling into another year of growth and learning for our children.

For our Catholic schools, preparations for the school year have been underway all summer. Teachers and principals attended professional development workshops and conferences, read the latest research on teaching and learning and worked diligently with all the school staff to ensure the school and classrooms were prepped and ready to welcome students on the first day.



Kendra McGuire

We all have expectations about how this year will go. As a parent, you may be hoping for a strong year of academic growth and that your child develops or maintains positive friendships. You may be hoping that the anxiousness some children experience the first few days quickly subsides. And we all share the desire for our children to be happy and enjoy coming to school.

For faculty and staff, we share similar hopes. We are

hoping to develop a great rapport with each and every student in our classes. We are hoping to meet parents and work together as partners for the success of their children. We are hoping our efforts will help students make great strides in their learning. And as our nervousness of the first day subsides, we too are hoping to be happy and enjoy coming to school every day.

The beauty of our Catholic schools is that we are not only focused on academic growth, but on the whole person God created each student to be. As faith communities, Jesus Christ’s teachings and His love for us are central to our mission. This focus on God leads to an understanding of life and how our academic growth, our day-to-day activities and our interactions with one another fit into God’s plan for us. This is the two-fold mission of Catholic schools. First and foremost, to pass on the faith to prepare students for eternal life and the second, our academic growth in preparation for our earthly life.

The challenge for the year ahead does not lie in teaching the Catholic faith to our students. The challenge is how we will respond to this learning. Will each child choose to treat one another as Jesus would? Will we, as parents,

avoid gossip and put our efforts into building up the community? Will teachers choose to see each child, parent, and co-worker as a child of God? Will we seek to understand rather than be understood? Will we choose mercy and forgiveness when our classmates, teachers or parents fall short and hurt us?

These are the questions we must ask ourselves. Because if our expectation for the year is to be joyful and love being part of the school community where our children attend school, then we need to do our part and follow Jesus too. We all have a role in creating the school culture and community that is grounded in the teachings of Jesus Christ. We must teach and expect this in our homes and model it for our children in our daily lives and interactions too.

In Galatians 5:22, St. Paul tells us that, “the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.” Isn’t this the hope we have for our children and their school community this year? The hope that their academic learning is surrounded by the love of Jesus and filled with students, families and staff who strive to live these virtues every day.

As we head into this new school year, let’s remember the importance of building up our Catholic school communities and the role we play in making them great places for our children to grow and learn. And let us pray often, asking the Holy Spirit to guide us and fill us with the gifts needed to be the person our children and their school need us to be.

Kendra McGuire is the Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Covington, Ky

Back-to-school and spiritual growth

Isaak A. Isaak
Contributor

Welcome back to school! The beginning of a new academic year is an exciting time within Catholic schools and parishes. Refreshed from summer break, parents, students, teachers, catechists, school and parish personnel return their focus to students’ ongoing growth and development. This growth and development are intellectual, personal and, most importantly, spiritual.

Pope Benedict XVI, in addressing the Pontifical Council for the Family, remarked that the new evangelization must begin with the family. The Diocese of Covington’s Pastoral Plan priorities include strengthening families to celebrate and live in the Sacraments, to form children in religious education, and to equip teachers and catechists for the work of evangelization.

“How are they to call on one in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in one of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone proclaiming him? And how are they to proclaim him unless they are sent? As it is written, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!’” (Romans 10:14-15).

The strength of a religious education program, whether in the school or parish setting, is in the person of the catechist who comes to classrooms with good news. The catechist participates in the responsibility of



Isaak Isaak

the faith community to instruct others in the faith. Faith, however, is taught more by lived example than by word. People of deep faith, committed to prayer and Scripture, are called catechists. They share faith with others, thus providing leadership in religious education.

Catechists must take time to learn more about the faith they are commissioned to share and the art of sharing it personally and effectively. “The call to be a catechist includes willingness to give time and talent, not only to catechizing others, but to one’s own continued growth in faith and understanding” (NDC, 206).

Goodwill alone does not ensure the success of a catechist. A living, active faith

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

does not necessarily include the basic skills necessary to be a catechist. Catechists, volunteers as well as professional teachers, need ongoing faith formation. Adequate preparation and training are indispensable for every catechist/teacher of religion. As a lifelong learner, the catechist/teacher is open to a growing knowledge of Catholic doctrine, scripture, relational skills and teaching methods; and remains current on contemporary church and social issues.

In the Diocese of Covington, there are administrative regulations for religious education certification. They have been established to assist in the understanding of what is required for those who wish to serve as a catechist or religion teacher. With the Franciscan University's Catechetical Institute partnership workshops and resources, the Diocese can provide top-quality instruction to its catechists, teachers, and any adults who would like to learn more about their faith.

It is important to remember that catechesis involves an essential partnership between the family, the parish community, and those who serve as catechists and teachers at all levels. Because catechesis is the sharing of faith, it requires faith-filled, knowledgeable, and skilled people who strive to grow continually in their faith. Those who serve as catechists and teachers conduct, in the name of the Church, the systematic, intentional efforts to enable people to grow in faith. We are all blessed to have their service.

The Office of Catechesis and Evangelization provides Teacher and Catechist Certification, Adult Faith Formation, Marriage Preparation, Family Life, Young Adult Ministry, and Youth Ministry. For more information and resources, please visit www.ucovdio.org/oce. Questions? Contact Isaak Abraham Isaak at iisaak@covdio.org or (859) 392-1529.

Isaak A. Isaak is Director of the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization.

Meet the new school administrators as they make way for upcoming year

Staff report

For the 2025-2026 school year, eight grade and high schools in the Diocese of Covington are welcoming nine new administrators into new roles. Here they are as each jumps into a new school year:

Covington Latin School, Covington Randy Dennis

Randy Dennis is the new Head of School at Covington Latin School, bringing over two decades of experience in education. He earned his Bachelor of Science in Secondary Education from Indiana University and his Master of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction from the University of St. Mary. His administrative training was completed at Ball State University. After spending many years in the classroom, Mr. Dennis transitioned into school leadership, serving as a principal in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis for five years.

Mr. Dennis is excited to join Covington Latin, a historic institution with a strong tradition of producing outstanding students. He is eager to lead the school through its new affiliation with Thomas More University. When asked about his new role, Mr. Dennis expressed, "I am honored to be here at Covington Latin. This is an exciting time for the school, with many new opportunities on the horizon for

students and their families."

Mr. Dennis and his wife, Sara, have been married for 22 years and are the proud parents of eight children, all of whom have attended or will attend Catholic schools. The family resides in Indiana and is active in their home parish, St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception. Mr. Dennis enjoys spending time with his family and participating in outdoor activities. He feels truly blessed to be a Catholic school leader and, when reflecting on his vocation, said, "There is no greater role more important than leading others to Christ."



Randy Dennis

Holy Cross District High School, Covington Rob Knox

Entering his sixteenth year at Holy Cross District High School, Mr. Rob Knox will be the interim principal for the 2025-2026 school year. Mr. Knox, a history teacher, holds Bachelor's Degrees in History and Secondary Social Studies Education from Thomas More University; a Master's

Degree in History from the University of Cincinnati and a Master's Degree in Education Administration from Georgetown College. Before taking on the interim principal position, Mr. Knox previously served as the Dean of Academics and the Dean of Students.

As a lifelong resident of Latonia, a graduate of both

(Continued on page 12)

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BACK TO SCHOOL

(Continued from page 11)

Holy Cross Elementary School and Holy Cross District High School (2005), and a member of Holy Cross Parish, Mr. Knox is intimately connected to the entire Holy Cross Community and is extremely humbled and excited to lead Holy Cross High School into its second century of education and sharing Christ's love. One of the great blessings of his life, is that Mr. Knox's family is always nearby. Mr. Knox's wife, Hannah, is the campus minister and career and college guidance counselor at HCDHS. His sons, Henry and Benjamin, are students at Holy Cross Elementary School, and his youngest son, James, attends the Holy Cross Care & Learning Academy. Mr. Knox is proud to be a part of an urban education community that can educate students from ages 2-18, and having his family so near is a source of comfort, love and drive to see Holy Cross succeed.

In his free time, Mr. Knox enjoys traveling with his family, coaching his sons in baseball, golfing, history documentaries and cooking.

Notre Dame Academy, Park Hills
Lauren Hitron

Lauren Hitron serves as the new president of Notre Dame Academy in Park Hills. With more than two decades in Catholic education, Ms. Hitron brings a wealth of experience, vision and leadership to her inaugural role in the Diocese of Covington.



Lauren Hitron

She most recently served as the director of the Jean Frazier Leadership Institute at Sacred Heart Schools in Louisville. As the founding director, she conceptualized and launched comprehensive leadership programs for students in both elementary and high school including a robust internship program, a leadership certificate track and alumnae networking opportunities. Ms. Hitron began her career as the enrollment director for Sacred Heart Academy in Louisville (a member of Sacred Heart Schools) where she led sustainable enrollment growth and shepherded nearly 3,000 new students during her tenure.

A committed advocate for Catholic education and faith-based leadership, Ms. Hitron is an associate of the Ursuline Sisters of Louisville where she served on the senior leadership team. Ms. Hitron was a member of St. Agnes Parish in Louisville and is looking to join a parish in Northern Kentucky. She holds two Bachelors of Arts degrees from the University of Central Florida, a Master of Arts in Organizational Leadership with a concentration in Servant Leadership from Gonzaga University and a Pedagogy of Leadership Certificate from the University of Pennsylvania. She is a graduate of Leadership Louisville and Ignite Louisville through the Leadership Louisville Center.

Ms. Hitron reflects on her appointment as president of NDA. "I am incredibly honored to be serving as president of Notre Dame Academy. As a lifelong Kentuckian, I have always been impressed with NDA's reputation of academic excellence nurtured in a strong, Catholic community rooted in the charism of the Sisters of Notre Dame. I am inspired by the school's vision of transformative women leaders embracing God's goodness in the world, and I look forward to working with the NDA community to build upon the firm foundation laid by the Sisters of Notre Dame more than a century ago."

Lisa Timmerding

Lisa Timmerding has been in education for 22 years. She spent 14 years teaching in various capacities in local public school systems and one year teaching at Gateway Community and Technical College. For the past eight years she has spent time in the Diocese of Covington in



Lisa Timmerding

various administrative roles. Her administrative career began at Holy Cross Elementary where she served as the Principal for six years. She was embraced by the Holy Cross community and was fortunate enough to be a part of their rich tradition and history for that time of her life.

While she had no intention of leaving that amazing community, when an administrative position opened at her alma mater, she felt compelled and called to apply. She was blessed to be hired as the assistant principal for Student Life at NDA where she worked for the past two years. This year she will begin her tenure as the principal of Notre Dame Academy.

When asked about her new position, Mrs. Timmerding said, "It is an incredible and humbling honor to be named principal of Notre Dame Academy. I am deeply inspired by the school's rich tradition of academic excellence, Catholic values, and the empowerment of young women. I am honored to be walking in the path of so many past inspiring leaders, especially the Sisters of Notre Dame. I look forward to working with our dedicated faculty, families, and students to continue building a community where each young woman is encouraged to walk in faith, lead with confidence, find joy in life and reach her fullest potential as kind Christian women."

Mrs. Timmerding's education background includes a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education, a Master of Arts in Education and an additional Master of Arts in Instructional Leadership.

She is passionate about Catholic education and planting the seeds of faith into students across the Diocese. The faith foundation formed for her both at home and in the Diocese of Covington for her 12 educational years is something that she considers one of life's greatest blessings. To be a part of a community helping to provide transforma-

tive education to young people by working in a Catholic school has been her greatest honor.

Mrs. Timmerding was born and raised in Northern Kentucky and currently resides in Edgewood with her four children. They are parishioners of St. Pius X Parish where they have formed amazing friendships and a community that is like family. She is happy to give back to a community that has done so much for her and rallied around her in the hardest of times.

Her husband Sean, her greatest supporter and source of motivation, lost his battle with brain cancer last September. While she was devastated to see him suffer for the four years of his battle, the community rallied around her and showed her the goodness of God and incredible power of prayer. She is thankful to be able to be a servant leader in the Diocese of Covington and continue to promote the Catholic faith through her work.

St. Edward School, Cynthiana
Mark Hatmaker

Mark Hatmaker will be the new Head Teacher at St. Edward School, Cynthiana. Mr. Hatmaker has over 18 years of experience working with children. Prior to his teaching career, he served as a clinician for the Kentucky



Mark Hatmaker

Department of Juvenile Justice for 15 years, after earning his bachelor's degree from Eastern Kentucky University. His professional journey included daily interactions with children while working closely with school staff in a supportive educational environment.

Mr. Hatmaker has been at St. Edward School for the past three years, during which he began his teaching career while simultaneously pursuing a master's degree in teaching, which he completed in December 2024. He is a member of St. Edward Parish, along with his wife and their three children, two of whom are currently students at St. Edward School, while their eldest has transitioned to middle school in Harrison County.

Expressing his enthusiasm for this new chapter, Mr. Hatmaker stated, "I am both honored and excited to step into the role of Head Teacher at St. Edward School. It has been a privilege to be a part of this wonderful school for the past three years, and I look forward to continuing my journey here. I am deeply committed to upholding the Catholic values that define our school, as they serve as our foundation, guiding our interactions and enriching the educational experience we provide. I firmly believe that Catholic education nurtures not only the mind but also the spirit, fostering stronger relationships between teachers and students. This approach creates a supportive learning atmosphere where students can thrive academically, socially, and spiritually."

(Continued on page 14)

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BACK TO SCHOOL

(Continued from page 12)

St. Joseph School, Cold Spring
Meghan Whelan

St. Joseph School is pleased to announce the appointment of Meghan Whelan as its next principal. A seasoned educator and committed Catholic leader, Mrs. Whelan brings with her over 15 years of experience in Catholic elementary education, along with a deep-rooted passion for fostering both academic achievement and spiritual growth in students.

Mrs. Whelan began her vocation in education as a Kindergarten teacher at St. Mary School, Alexandria. For the past 14 years, she has served as a first-grade teacher at St. Cecilia School, Independence. Throughout her time at St. Cecilia, she has distinguished herself as a dynamic educator and leader, playing a pivotal role in curriculum development, faculty mentorship and community engagement. Her contributions were instrumental in the school obtaining recognition as a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence.



Meghan Whelan

Mrs. Whelan holds a Bachelor of Arts in Education from Bellarmine University, a Master of Arts in Education from Northern Kentucky University, and a Master of Education & Administration from Xavier University. Her academic training has equipped her with a broad understanding of instructional leadership, organizational management and Catholic school governance.

Mrs. Whelan, along with her husband, Bob, and their three children, are parishioners of St. Cecilia Parish, Independence.

Mrs. Whelan looks forward to enriching the school's tradition of academic excellence, spiritual formation and service to others. Her appointment marks an exciting new chapter in the life of the school, as it continues to form young minds and hearts in the Catholic faith.

St. Joseph School, Crescent Springs
Timothy Mains

Timothy Mains grew up on a farm in Falmouth, KY with his seven older siblings and attended Pendleton County Schools. After graduating, he earned Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Biosystems Engineering from the University of Kentucky and worked in engineering for several years before being called to teach. He started his career in education teaching math at Philip Sharp Middle School for two years while earning a master's degree in teaching from the University of the Cumberland. God led him to St. Cecilia Catholic School, where he taught science for five years. While teaching there, he took on numerous leadership roles and was called to administration. He recently finished his education to obtain his principal licensure from Xavier University.



Timothy Mains

As a lifelong Catholic, Mr. Mains has been a member of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Falmouth, KY. He and his family are active members of that community. There, Mr. Mains is a lector and usher, and he and his wife are greeters. He married his wife, Amberly, in November of 2020. In his free time, he enjoys spending time with his family and pets, reading, doing puzzles, and playing board and games.

Although this is his first time in administration, Mr. Mains is excited to be part of the St. Joseph community. When asked about his new position, he said "I am so proud to be given this opportunity. I have felt nothing but love and welcomeness from everyone. I want to foster a love of learning and a deepened faith in the students and teachers. I have no doubt that this will be an amazing school year for us."

St. Patrick School, Maysville
Jacob Hay

Jacob Hay will be the Principal at St. Patrick School, Maysville. Mr. Hay lives in Augusta, Kentucky with his wife Alicia and their two children, Catherine and Andrew. The Hays are parishioners of St. Augustine Church, where he serves as Lector, as well as St. Patrick Church in Maysville. Mr. Hay previously taught at St. Augustine School in Augusta until he made a career change for his family into the private sector. He credits his supervisor in the private sector, Susan Bedel, for teaching him skills that he will be able to utilize as an education administrator.



Jacob Hay

Along with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary Education from Morehead State University, he has also completed 12 hours in Instructional Leadership from Northern Kentucky University. He is planning on attending Thomas More University this fall to eventually complete his Master's degree in Education Leadership.

Mr. Hay is excited about returning to education and leading St. Patrick School. He has stated, "Although I believe in the importance of academics, my goal as St. Patrick's principal will be to put Christ first in all that we do. Therefore, I believe it is essential that our primary goal is to teach our children to know, love and serve our Lord every day! If we create an environment where the gospel comes first, we will be successful!"

St. Timothy School, Union
Ashley Rehkamp

Ashley Rehkamp will serve as the new principal at St. Timothy Catholic School, Union.

Mrs. Rehkamp is entering her 14th year in education, all of which has been spent teaching in middle school. She taught at Saint Therese and Mary Queen of Heaven before joining the faculty at St. Timothy, where she has served for the past seven years.



Ashley Rehkamp

For the past two years, Mrs. Rehkamp has served as the middle school lead teacher at St. Timothy, working closely with staff and administration to support instruction and student growth.

A graduate of Thomas More University, Mrs. Rehkamp holds a Bachelor's degree in Middle School Education with concentrations in mathematics and language arts. She later earned her master's degree in leadership from the University of the Cumberland.

Mrs. Rehkamp and her husband, George, have been married for 13 years and are active parishioners at St. Timothy. Their three children — Mabel (11), Georgie (8) and Owen (6) — are all students at the school.

When asked about stepping into her new role, Mrs. Rehkamp shared, "It's a joy to serve the community that has formed my children and supported my family. I am honored, humbled, and ready to continue the great work already happening at St. Timothy. With faith as our foundation, I look forward to what we'll accomplish together."



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New law will help families access America’s Catholic schools

Bishop David M O’Connell
OSV News

Earlier this month, the president signed into law the first federal school choice tax credit in our nation’s history. This new landmark legislation, led by Sens. Ted Cruz, R-Texas, Bill Cassidy, R-La. and Tim Scott, R-S.C., was modeled on the Educational Choice for Children Act (ECCA)—which aimed to expand parental choice in education to an estimated 2 million children across the country.

For years, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has endorsed this bill because it aligns with our church’s teaching that parents are the first and primary educators of their children and, therefore, have the right to select the best educational environment for them.

The groundbreaking new law deserves accolades for its recognition of the rights of parents, but there are significant questions about how it will be implemented at the federal and state levels. The potential success of this law depends on what happens next. Ensuring that the greatest number (and the neediest) of children can benefit from this opportunity will require vigilance and discernment during the implementation and rulemaking process.

One challenge will be ensuring that states “opt in” to the new federal opportunity so that children in each state can access scholarships. For example, the state of New Jersey currently has no state-level private school choice program. This new federal law could, for the first time, bring new resources to the children and families who wish to attend Catholic schools in New Jersey.

In the Diocese of Trenton alone, there are tens of thousands of students who could benefit from such scholarships, and nearly 40 Catholic elementary and secondary schools to serve them. Lawmakers have the power to unlock millions of dollars in new education funding for students without adding a single dime to their budget or shifting any funding away from public education.

Ensuring that our religious liberty and private school autonomy are respected also remains an area where church leaders, parents and legislators must be particularly vigilant. Canon law is crystal clear that Catholic schools must be centered on the principles of Catholic doctrine.

Newly onboarded diocesan Director of Curriculum and Instruction stresses importance of unified curriculum for equity among schools

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Emily Urlage, former public school teacher and instructional coach, and former principal of St. Joseph school, Cold Spring, recently took on the role of Director of Curriculum and Instruction for the Diocese of Covington — a role newly implemented whose primary task is to “develop curriculum documents for the entire diocese,” according to Ms. Urlage.

The aim of these unified documents is to ensure that “every school is on the same page with the standards that should be taught at



Emily Urlage

each level,” she said, as well as what those standards should look like and how to assess them.

“I really want to do most of the work with the teachers and the schools,” with Ms. Urlage meeting with principals to help select teachers to assist with the process, and from there developing the new standards with their guidance.

“We want to create equity,” Ms. Urlage spoke on the relevance of a unified curriculum. “Every student that comes into the diocese should be able to go to any building and get the same quality of education. With common standards, that’s one step in the right direction.”

Catholic identity is too important to ever jeopardize. Promoting the urgency of affirming our rights to religious freedom and autonomy is a crucial priority of the bishops’ conference during the rulemaking process.

The USCCB has made clear that the Catholic community has a responsibility to support parental choice in education. For years, state Catholic conferences and the Catholic laity have been deeply and tirelessly engaged at the state and federal level promoting laws that empower parents and strengthen. As a result of this work, more than 1.3 million children across the country are benefitting from school choice today.

Bishops have a particular responsibility to promote policies that support families in their choice of education. Canon law says that, as pastors of souls, bishops have a special duty to do all they can to make sure the faithful can avail themselves of a Catholic education. As a lifelong educator, I believe deeply in the value of a rich, authentic Catholic education, and as the chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Catholic Education, it is my responsibility to encourage my brother bishops to

promote policies that support parents in their liberty to pursue the education of their choice for their children — but particularly a Catholic education in a Catholic school.

The new federal law offers the chance to unlock educational opportunities for millions of children across the country — but there is still more work to be done. Over the next several months, state Catholic conferences, parents, pastors, school leaders and all the Catholic faithful will have a special role to play to ensure that the law benefits the greatest number of children possible.

President John F. Kennedy once remarked, “children are the world’s most valuable resource and its best hope for the future.” We owe it to them to provide them with the best education possible. I urge the Catholic faithful to continue to pray for parents and to support their efforts to fulfill their God-given right and obligation to direct their children’s education and for our elected leaders that they affirm the same.

Bishop David M. O’Connell of Trenton, New Jersey is the chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Catholic Education.

New Catholic scouting patch honors Pope Leo XIV

Gina Christian
OSV News

Catholic scouts have several new achievements to aim for, including a Pope Leo XIV patch.

The Religious Activities Committee of the National Catholic Committee on Scouting has announced five new religious activity programs, which enable scouts to learn more about and deepen their faith.

The new activities, unveiled by the committee in a July 13 Facebook post, include the Pope Leo XIV patch, part of the NCCS’s Faith Series.

The requirements for the patch will offer the chance to learn more about “our first American born Pope,” said the NCCS in its post. “In addition, they will learn what the papacy means and its history.”

The patch, an image of which the NCCS included in its post, depicts Pope Leo wearing a stole and the papal mozzetta, or cape, as he did when he first appeared on St. Peter’s Basilica’s balcony after his election May 8. Framing the figure are the words “Pope — Vicar of Christ,” with the date of his election “ghost stitched” — or stitched in a color blending into the lavender background. The NCCS noted that the original version “will only be available for a year and then changed to remove the ‘ghost’ stitching.”

The patch also features gold stitching of the two key elements of the NCCS logo — a crozier, the staff symbolizing a bishop’s authority, and the fleur-de-lis, the central element of the BSA’s crest and a longtime symbol of purity.

The NCCS is officially related to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, led by the USCCB’s Secretariat on Laity,

Marriage, Family Life and Youth. It also serves as an advisory committee to Scouting America (formerly known as the Boy Scouts of America).

The NCCS also partners with the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry and other Catholic organizations to “provide faithful and useful Church-sanctioned programming and guidance to Catholic Scouting units,” according to the NCCS website.

Along with the Pope Leo patch, NCCS has also announced a new activity series on Religious Trails, designed to spark pilgrimages “to the important religious sites in our country.”

Four sites in Washington have so far been designated for the patch: the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, the St. John Paul II National Shrine, The Catholic University of America and the Franciscan Monastery of the Holy Land in America.



OSV News photo/courtesy of National Catholic Committee on Scouting

This Pope Leo XIV patch, pictured in an undated photo, is one of several new Catholic scouting patches announced in a July 13, 2025, Facebook post by the National Catholic Committee on Scouting.

In addition, the NCCS has added two new activities to its American Saints series, which now includes just under 20 men and women, spanning the various stages of the canonization cause process, who lived and served in the U.S.

The latest additions include Catholic army chaplain Venerable Emil Kapaun, whose heroic offering of life during the Korean War was recognized by Pope Francis, and Venerable Augustus Tolton, the first recognized U.S. Black Catholic priest, born into slavery in 1854 and — following his 1886 ordination in Rome — a pastor in Quincy, Illinois, and later Chicago.

In its International series, the NCCS has also issued a new “Be Not Afraid” patch, named for St. John Paul II’s repeated exhortation, notably stressed in his Oct. 22, 1978, homily at his papal inauguration, to exchange fear for a total surrender to Christ.

The NCCS noted that the phrase forms the theme for the 2027 World Scout Jamboree in Poland. Patch activities will focus on three modern saints from that nation — St. John Paul II and two saints he canonized: St. Maximilian

Kolbe, the Franciscan priest who offered his life for a fellow Auschwitz prisoner and was ultimately killed by lethal injection, and St. Faustina Kowalska, the Polish religious sister and mystic to whom Christ revealed the Divine Mercy devotion. The limited edition patch will be available until 2028.

Brave new classroom: Catholic schools nationwide integrate AI into teaching plans

Kimberly Heatherington
OSV News

The modern educational toolkit, of both teachers and students, now includes the use of artificial intelligence. Experts and teachers from coast-to-coast told OSV News AI is poised to transform Catholic education.

“In the Catholic school space, where we’re at right now is trying to build AI literacy among our teachers, and our students and our parents,” shared Father Nate Wills, a priest of the Congregation of the Holy Cross and director of Higher-Powered Learning, an initiative of the University of Notre Dame’s Alliance for Catholic Education.

Professional development for teachers — introducing them to AI tools and their use — is typically a critical first step.

“I think it’s really important for teachers to know what’s out there so that they both empower their students and transform their assessments,” Wills said. “If a teacher was completely ignorant of the existence of calculators in the 1970s, that would just be silly, right?”

With that paradox firmly in mind, Higher-Powered Learning has hosted user-friendly seminars focusing on AI in the classroom; teacher training; AI policies and guidelines; and more. The initiative’s website also features a wealth of resources and guidance.

Still, it can all perhaps seem a bit overwhelming. “This feels,” Wills admitted, “like a quantum leap for a lot of people.”

RAND Corporation announced in April, 2024, that as of fall 2023, 18% of K-12 teachers reported using AI for teaching and another 15% have tried AI at least once.

A place to start is the articulation of an AI policy — whether for students, employees or in the classroom. Higher-Powered Learning offers adaptable policy templates, but also helps dioceses tailor them to their own needs and strategy.

“One of the most important things about a document like this is, it’s living,” said Brad Snyder, associate superintendent of Educational Programs for Catholic Schools in the Diocese of Orange, California. “Because AI is doing nothing if not changing constantly. As a diocese, we’ve been meeting for about a year-and-a-half in committees to create a guidance document for our parishes also. So I think we’ve been trying to get ahead of the wave.”

Snyder sees a parallel with another major technological shift — the advent of the world wide web in the early 1990s.

“I would say it’s almost akin to when we first started using the internet,” he said. “When we searched for things before, you’d break out the card catalog, right? We don’t do that anymore. And I think AI is going to propel us forward in a similar manner.”

And rapidly, too.

“It’s just taking off,” Snyder said. “And the next couple years is going to be really transformational in what it can do — and therefore, we have to be informed on how we’re going to use it.”

Educators are keenly aware that AI has the potential to be not just an asset, but a substitute — the oft-heard suspicion that students will use it to generate an assignment instead of doing it themselves.

“One of the things we really try to work with — with our teachers and our principals — is you need to monitor; but you need to make sure you mentor,” Snyder said. “We want to make sure we’re supporting students using it correctly, and in a way that benefits them.”

“Here’s the issue: Students are going to use AI,” he continued. “You might as well be able to show them how to use it in a manner that’s going to support them, and not hurt them. I think that’s critical.”

Nor is AI meant to “replace” anything, Snyder said.

“Catholic education is what? It’s a community, right?

It’s relationship building. It’s the whole child,” he emphasized. “Technology can’t replace that — and we don’t want it to. But if it can help make me more effective, reach my students at their level more efficiently, and move them forward in their skill development — that’s the mentorship of using AI.”

So what can AI do, for teachers and students?

“Like Pope Leo said, this is a sea change,” declared Steve Tortorello, director of Partnerships and Special Projects for Catholic Schools in the Archdiocese of Chicago. Echoing Snyder, he added, “This is not a new app. This is not a new program. This is like when the internet came out — that’s the level of change that this is.”

As to its potential, “I talk about how AI can be both the most supercharged teacher’s assistant you could ever imagine,” explained Tortorello, “and a thought partner; like the teacher across the hall.”

He gave a practical example.

“Say you’re working with seventh graders on picking

levels,” Tortorello said. “Every kid can read it at the same time, at the level that best challenges them. This unlocks a ton of things I can do, as far as differentiations. And so to me, that’s magic.”

There’s still a human element, however.

“You generate something with AI, you refine it with more questioning, and then you as the human edit it to make sure it’s exactly what you want,” he added. “And so now that supercharged teacher’s assistant can help you save countless hours.”

Those hours add up, and impact work-life balance.

“It’s not only about efficiency,” Tortorello said. “It’s about preventing burnout for our teachers.”

On July 8, OpenAI and Microsoft announced the bankrolling of new AI training for teachers. The American Federation of Teachers said it would use the \$23 million — including \$500,000 from the A.I. start-up Anthropic — to create a national training center.

At Union Catholic High School in Scotch Plains, New Jersey, Assistant Principal Noreen Andrews — who, among her other duties, coordinates the school’s Advanced Placement courses — remembers clearly when she realized AI was about to change her world.

In November 2023, Andrews said, a colleague entered her office to announce that AP College Board student exam essay questions would now be written by AI.

“And I’m like, ‘Oh my God, you know, I’m an AP teacher,’” recalled Andrews. “Does everybody recognize what’s happening? Do you see what’s happening?” She wanted, Andrews said, “to make sure that we were all understanding what had come into our world, and what was never going to leave us.”

Andrews quoted a now-favorite maxim: “AI will not replace you. But people using AI will.”

“We’ve talked about it amongst ourselves as educators — and when I’m talking to parents and educating them about

what we’re doing with AI in education at our school, that’s one of my first cards,” she said. “It’s mind-boggling, because we’re at the beginning of this — but yet it’s moving so fast that we’re well past the beginning.”

Union Catholic took things step by step, explained Andrews, beginning with a robust program of teacher development.

“First it was the teachers — then it was making sure that teachers were putting it in the hands of the students and helping them,” she explained. “And now this year is very focused on AI literacy.”

In January, Union Catholic High School secured the Responsible Artificial Intelligence in Learning (RAIL) endorsement through the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools — a recognition of its commitment to promote responsible, ethical and safe use of AI in education.

RAIL-certified schools are a select group.

“We’re one of 46 schools in the world,” Andrews proudly shared.

“We’re not about making rules and trying to enforce rules to lock things down, but rather to teach our students how to be responsible with their devices; with AI; with the internet. That’s our focus,” Andrews said.

“The most important thing we can do — as teachers, as educators — is to prepare our students to survive in this new world.”

Kimberley Heatherington writes for OSV News from Virginia.



OSV News illustration/Pixabay

This is an undated AI-generated image of computers. The modern educational toolkit, of both teachers and students, now includes the use of artificial intelligence. Experts and teachers from coast to coast told OSV News that artificial intelligence, AI, is poised to transform Catholic education.

out adjectives in a sentence. And you’ve already done the exercise in the book and you think, ‘Wow, my kids need more practice.’ Well, guess what,” said Tortorello. “AI can make you more practice materials,” — and here Tortorello snapped his fingers — “that quickly.”

He added, “And it can make it on whatever topic your kids are interested in. Do they love Taylor Swift and Minecraft? Well, now you’ve just made 10 more practice sentences on Taylor Swift and Minecraft, and they’re doing that while they’re figuring out learning adjectives.”

Not only are students more engaged — teachers save time.

“If I was teaching seventh grade English — which I’ve done before — and I had to make that extra adjective worksheet, it might take me 45 minutes to come up with different ideas,” Tortorello said. “Now, I can tell Chat GPT, ‘Make me an adjective worksheet at this reading level’ — boom — and it does it in 10 seconds.”

Another example Tortorello cited is AI’s ability to customize, or in educational terms “differentiate,” student materials.

“If I’m teaching fifth grade Reading, and I know in my fifth grade class I’ve got 20 kids — and 10 of them read at fifth grade level, and five read way above the fifth grade level, and five read below the fifth grade level — I used to give them one article,” he explained.

“And the quick kids would be done in five minutes. The average kids would take 10 minutes. The kids who struggle might take 20 minutes. They might not comprehend it. Well, now I can rerun that article at three different reading

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Step 3: Your account becomes active when your background check, VIRTUS session and Acceptance Form are posted on your account. You will receive 12 bulletins per year. You will receive e-mail notices at system@pub.virtus.org unless your computer program blocks them.

Bulletins:

■ August 2025 bulletin: posted Sunday, Aug. 3; due Tuesday, Sept. 2.

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.

VIRTUS Training:

■ 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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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

Pope says he hopes Trump-Putin meeting leads to ceasefire in Ukraine

CASTEL GANDOLFO, Italy — Arriving in Castel Gandolfo, Pope Leo XIV told reporters he hoped U.S. President Donald Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin can find a way to reach a ceasefire in Russia’s war on Ukraine when they meet in Alaska. Reporters were in the crowd that waited to welcome the pope back to the papal summer villa Aug. 13, and a journalist from the Italian agency ANSA asked him what his hopes for the Aug. 15 Trump-Putin meeting were. “I’m always hoping for a ceasefire,” the pope said. “There must be an end to the violence and so many deaths. Let’s see how they can reach an agreement because the war has been going on too long.” Pope Leo said that it is not even clear what the point of the war is, “so one must always seek dialogue, diplomacy and not violence.”

Federal resettlement funding ended, but US Catholic Charities agencies continue to serve

WASHINGTON — Since 1980, over 3 million refugees have

been welcomed to the U.S. through the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, or USRAP. But that changed on Jan. 20, when President Donald Trump signed an executive order titled “Realigning the United States Refugee Admissions Program.” The order effectively paused all refugee admissions and suspended federal funding — impacting Catholic Charities agencies nationwide. The fallout has been significant, leading to staff layoffs. But “we’re still surviving,” said Katie Dillon, communications manager at Commonwealth Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Richmond, Virginia. The agency received 350 refugees to resettle after the funding cut, and staff had to figure out how to assist them. But through donors, board members, different community groups, faith groups, “we were able to keep those 350 people housed,” and get them resources, she said. Matt Smith, chief development officer of Catholic Charities of Fort Wayne & South Bend, Indiana, said the agency is exploring different funding options. At the same time, there is still some state funding available for refugees already living in Indiana. The shock of the funding being suspended “is going to last for quite some time,” said Paul Propson, CEO of Catholic Charities of Southeast Michigan, but his agency forges ahead.

Judge blocks religious exemption to birth control coverage; Little Sisters of the Poor to appeal

WASHINGTON — A federal district court in Philadelphia on Aug. 13 struck down a religious conscience rule implemented by the first Trump administration exempting employers with religious or moral concerns from having to provide their employees with insurance coverage for contraceptives and other drugs or procedures to which they have an objection. The Little Sisters of the Poor, defendants in the suit, are expected to appeal. U.S. District Judge Wendy Beetlestone in Philadelphia found the rules, which expanded the parameters for the types of nonprofits that could use the exception, were not necessary to protect the conscience rights of religious employers. Becket, the religious liberty law firm representing the Little Sisters of the Poor in their ongoing legal efforts over their objections to paying for abortifacient drugs, sterilizations and contraceptives in their employee health plans, said the nuns would appeal the ruling “in the coming weeks.” “The district court blessed an out-of-control effort by Pennsylvania and New Jersey to attack the Little Sisters and religious liberty,” Mark Rienzi, president of Becket and lead attorney for the Little Sisters, argued in a statement.

Second presentation on immigration

(Continued from page 1)

right to migrate. The state has a right to regulate its borders,” said Mrs. Keegan, “but it must regulate its borders with justice and mercy. And so, the more we regulate the borders without a consideration of mercy, the less we respect the dignity of the person.”

“When we speak about the issue of immigration, we are fundamentally addressing the movement of people,” Mrs. Keegan quoted Bishop Mark Seitz, bishop of El Paso, Tx., “Human persons created in the image and likeness of God, each one of them a brother or sister to us all.”

Following Mrs. Keegan, lawyer Jessica Ramos took to the podium to describe, in depth, the pathways to legal immigration in the United States — and the associated challenges that often face migrants seeking U.S. citizenship. While facing hardships such as economic instability, psychological trauma and language barriers — many immigrants, particularly though unauthorized or undocumented, are described by Ms. Ramos as “undocumentable”. This term, coined by a colleague, means that many prospective migrants lack a legal pathway to immi-

gration status.

Achieving a “green card” in the United States — the first step to citizenship — typically requires one of two avenues; employment, which is mostly restricted to individuals with higher education in specialized fields, and family, which is restricted to immediate family and categorized based on the type of relationship — with waitlists for familial green cards ranging from 4 years to 150 years. And, while avenues for asylum seekers and refugees exist, the specific discrimination conditions for asylum and the United States’s limited refugee acceptance number of 125,000 individuals also makes these routes inaccessible for most.

The current administration, according to Ms. Ramos, is “taking away the opportunity to apply for asylum, and putting people in what is called ‘expedited removal’ — which is where they say if you were ever caught at the border; or if you have been in the country for less than two years, then you are not entitled to talk to a judge about your asylum case ... that is what our law says.”

The real issue which arises is many individuals inability to prove on the spot of arrest their legal status, regardless of whether they have a green card or citizenship or not, according to Ms. Ramos, who states that these practices possibly encroach on the rights of everyone, not just migrants.

“How do you prove that you’re a U.S. citizen?” Ms. Ramos asked the crowd, “How do you prove that you’ve lived here for more than two years without due process? This could affect any one of us.

Following the presentation, Holy Spirit Parish, Newport, pastor Msgr. William Cleves remarked on his experiences hearing confessions at the Campbell County Detention Center — learning from migrants awaiting deportation that many have been cut off from their families and were told that they could not reach out to contact them. Some of them, according to Msgr. Cleves, fear deportation to countries different from their country of origin, as well. He concluded the night with prayer, for mercy and justice for all.

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NEWS BRIEFS

Pope Leo to make ‘digital appearance’ at US Catholic youth conference

WASHINGTON — Pope Leo XIV will have a “real-time digital encounter” with participants attending the National Catholic Youth Conference this fall. The news was announced Aug. 15 by the annual conference’s host, the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry. The Washington-based



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organization, launched in 1981 with the support of the U.S. bishops, fosters collaboration among the country’s Catholic youth ministry leaders. During the gathering, which will take place Nov. 20-22 in Indianapolis, the pope will address an expected 15,000 or so young people ages 14-18. The digital appearance — scheduled for Nov. 21 at 10:15 a.m. (ET) amid the event’s general session — will feature a 45-minute dialogue with a pre-selected group of young people. “Even in a globalized world, the Church can seem far away for young people,” said Archbishop Nelson J. Pérez of Philadelphia, episcopal adviser and board member of NFCYM. “The Holy Father’s choice to encounter the American youth in this way is an expression of his closeness to Catholic youth, following in the footsteps of his predecessor Pope Francis who called the youth the ‘now of God.’”

As Hong Kong Catholic activist’s trial reaches final stretch, appeals grow to ‘save him’

HONG KONG — In Hong Kong, the landmark trial of pro-democracy media tycoon Jimmy Lai, a Catholic, resumed Aug. 18 after a week’s delay, with the 76-year-old provided a heart monitor and medication following health scares. Lai, founder of the now-shuttered Apple Daily newspaper, has spent nearly 1,700 days in solitary confinement. He faces life in prison if convicted of conspiring to collude with foreign forces and publish seditious materials under China’s sweeping national security law. U.S. President Donald Trump told Fox News he will “do everything I can to save him,” while Lai’s son has urged Britain to intervene, warning, “I don’t want my father to die in jail.” Western governments, including Australia, have also pressed for his release, citing the erosion of freedoms once promised to Hong Kong under its Basic Law. The Hong Kong government said on Aug. 13 that it “strongly disapproved and rejected the slanderous remarks made by external forces” regarding Lai’s case, AFP reported. Chinese authorities maintain that Lai is receiving a fair trial.

Uruguay bishops express sadness over euthanasia vote

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay — Uruguay’s bishops expressed sorrow after the country’s lower house of Congress approved a bill decriminalizing euthanasia. The measure, known as the

Dignified Death Law, passed Aug. 13 by a 64-29 vote with backing from most lawmakers in the Broad Front coalition and some from the Colorado Party. It now heads to the Senate for debate. In a statement signed by Bishop Milton Tróccoli of Maldonado-Punta del Este-Minas, Cardinal Daniel Sturla of Montevideo and Bishop Heriberto Bodeant of Canelones, the bishops reaffirmed support for palliative care, saying it allows patients to be accompanied with dignity, rather than hastening death. The bishops have consistently opposed euthanasia, calling it “unethical” and warning that it amounts to homicide in a medical setting. Public opinion, however, leans strongly in favor — a recent poll found 62% of Uruguayans support legalization. If passed, Uruguay would become the first country in South America to approve euthanasia through legislation, following constitutional courts decisions in Colombia and Ecuador.

6 pro-life activists face state charges for abortion clinic ‘rescue’ in Pennsylvania

UPLAND, Pa. (OSV News) — Six pro-life activists — all but one of them Catholics, including two recently pardoned by President Donald Trump — are now facing state charges for a July 31 Red Rose Rescue abortion clinic “rescue” in Upland, near Philadelphia, that temporarily disrupted its activities. The protest took place at the Delaware County Women’s Center in the Crozer Chester Medical Center. The facility only provides first trimester medication-based abortions using mifepristone and misoprostol. The Upland borough police report described a chaotic, but nonviolent, afternoon on July 31. An email Aug. 7 to Citizens for a Pro-Life Society supporters stated the group was “arrested while peacefully offering roses and resources to mothers.” On Aug 14, an arraignment hearing scheduled for magisterial district court in Brookhaven was postponed until Aug. 21. Among the six defendants out on bail are Joan Andrews Bell, 77, of Montague, New Jersey, and William Goodman, 55, originally from Madison, Wisconsin. Both Bell and Goodman had been pardoned by Trump for their convictions under the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, or FACE Act. They and four others face charges of biosecurity trespassing — entering a medical treatment area without adhering to biosecurity procedures — and disorderly trespassing. Both are misdemeanors and could bring jail terms of up to one year as well as fines.



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Cristo Rey Parish	18	\$61,800	\$7,250.00	(\$54,550.00)
Divine Mercy Parish	66	\$50,400	\$38,768.71	(\$11,631.29)
Holy Cross Parish	112	\$14,300	\$49,980.55	\$35,680.55
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Holy Spirit Parish	153	\$44,000	\$132,019.70	\$88,019.70
Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish	281	\$138,200	\$164,379.35	\$26,179.35
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