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



(left top) A sign language interpreter ensures that those hard of hearing or deaf receive the Liturgy of the Word and Bishop Iffert's homily.  
(above) A young boy being held by his father, points in awe at the Cathedral's rose window.  
(left) A mother and her daughter enjoy their time at the Mass of Belonging.  
(below left) Smiles are shared at the ice cream social held by the Fire Foundation of Northern Kentucky at St. Mary's Park following the Mass of Belonging.  
(below right) Ice cream is enjoyed as dancing picks up at the ice cream social.



Bailey photos



To hear Bishop Iffert's message about the Fire Foundation, scan the QR code.

## The Christmas classic, 'It's a Wonderful Life,' mirrors the 'wonderful mission' of the Fire Foundation of Northern Kentucky at Mass of Belonging

**Bella Bailey**  
*Multimedia Correspondent*

Bishop John Iffert celebrated the second annual Mass of Belonging at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, on September 9. Joining Bishop Iffert in the celebration of the Mass were Father Mark Keene, vicar general and pastor of St. Agnes Parish, Ft. Wright; Father Ryan Maher, rector of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption; Father Michael Brady, pastor of St. Therese Parish, Southgate; and Father Trinity Knight, pastor of Holy Cross Parish, Latonia.

The Mass of Belonging is hosted annually by the Fire Foundation of Northern Kentucky, whose mission is to enable students with disabilities to receive a traditional Catholic education. To do this, they provide funding through grants and additional education resources to the Catholic schools in the Diocese of Covington.

Bishop Iffert, in his homily, praised the work of the Fire Foundation, saying, "We all know the right thing to do in terms of

providing Catholic education and formation for all of our children. Sometimes we struggle to see how we might accomplish that, how we might afford it, how we might be able to do it. The Fire Foundation doesn't just condemn us for our hesitance, but instead says, 'Let me help you find a way to do what is right.'"

A few weeks ago, Bishop Iffert said he listened to a podcast in which Ken Burns, the famous filmmaker, was interviewed. In this podcast, Bishop Iffert said Mr. Burns compared the way one should live their life to the Christmas movie, "It's a Wonderful Life."

In this movie, there are two competing towns, Bedford Falls and Pottersville. "Bedford Falls was the place where neighbors did neighborly things for one another ... It was a place where the Holy Spirit's wealth was made present by the way neighbors loved and cared for one another," said Bishop Iffert. Pottersville, he said, is the antithesis of these values, where greed and corruption run unencumbered.

"Burns said from an early age, as soon as he saw that movie, he

*(Continued on page 14)*



# Thomas More University hosts Mary’s Meals founder and CEO as an example of living the University mission

Bella Bailey  
Multimedia Correspondent

The mission statement of Thomas More University invites students to examine the ultimate meaning of life, their place in the world and responsibility to others. This mission statement is embodied by the nonprofit, global charity, Mary’s Meals, whose founder, Magnus McFarland, was invited to speak at Thomas More University, Sept. 11.

President of Thomas More University, Joseph Chillo, opened the event saying, “This evening’s event is a wonderful testament to the power of giving and the importance of understanding our place in the world and our responsibility to others ... Supporting Mary’s Meals is a way in which this mission is put into action.”

Mary’s Meals, named in dedication to the Blessed Virgin Mary, feeds three million children in 16 of the world’s poorest countries.

“Our vision is that every child in this world should at least be able to eat one good meal in their place of education. That’s absolutely possible. I think the story of Mary’s Meals so far proclaims that this is possible. There is no good reason for hunger to exist in this world,” said Mr.

McFarland.

To ensure organizational sustainability for the countries in which they operate, three crucial things must co-exist, said Mr. McFarland. First, the work must be owned by the native communities. Locals must volunteer to prepare and serve the food. This creates the infrastructure for longevity. Second, the food that they serve must be locally sourced in order to support the local farmers and economy. Lastly, the work must be done in the name of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

“Mary’s Meals, it’s a gift. There’s lots of things we can say about Mary’s Meals but in a very particular way, it’s a fruit of prayer. It’s something we really do believe belongs to our Blessed Mother,” said Mr. McFarland.

What is now a far-reaching, global organization, started in the bed of a truck and a trip across Europe to a Bosnian refugee camp. After watching news about the Bosnian war, Mr. McFarland and his brother spent three weeks requesting donations from their community.

“We found ourselves riding this old truck out of our village in Scotland. We drove it four days across Europe and delivered these things into a refugee camp,” he said.

When Mr. McFarland returned home, he was expecting to return to life as normal. However, the Lord had other plans, he said.

“God had a different plan because when I got home to Scotland, there was this mountain of goods and clothing. People just kept on donating, turning up with carloads of donations,” said Mr. McFarland.

After much prayer and consideration, Mr. McFarland left his job as a salmon farmer, sold his house and said to the Lord in prayer, “I’ll keep doing this as long as people need our help and as long as people keep giving.”

Thirteen years later, three million children are being fed daily, and local economies are being stimulated, thanks to Mr. McFarland’s answer to a call from the Lord.

Mr. McFarland emphasized his own story to those in attendance, encouraging small acts of kindness and charity. “When I think about Mary’s Meals globally, I just think about it like a series of lots and lots of little acts of love. None of us do anything spectacular on our own. All of us just doing what we can and when that’s combined, it creates this thing that’s really changing the world.”



(above left) Magnus McFarland to the college students in attendance, “I encourage you young people to really take a risk at times, step out. All of us have the opportunity to take a step out of our comfort zone to help someone whose suffering.”

(above center) Magnus McFarland was joined on stage by musician Steve Angrisano who led the crowd in the singing of worship music, inviting them to reflect on what they can do in their own communities.

(right) Students sit silently in prayer, with their palms facing out, listening as Mr. Angrisano leads them in a meditation.

# Give Catholic NKY announced — join the Diocese in an online day of giving

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

A “one-day celebration of faith and generosity” in the Diocese of Covington has been announced for this years’ “GivingTuesday,” Dec. 2. Annually recognized the Tuesday following Thanksgiving, the global generosity movement designates it as a day of charity — and the launch of Give Catholic NKY, the Diocese of Covington’s officially established GivingTuesday campaign, streamlines the giving process both for donors and the parishes, schools and ministries they support.

Participating in GivingTuesday was an idea brought to the Office of Stewardship and Mission Services by Bishop John Iffert, but parishes were concerned about competition and resources about managing the campaigns themselves according to Jim Hess, director. And so, the idea to coordinate it at the diocesan level came into play, and Give Catholic NKY was the result.

“We handle running the day of giving,” said Mr. Hess. “So, it’s very low workload for parishes and schools to participate.” Additionally, participation for schools, parishes



and diocesan ministries is free — with all money collected during the day of giving going back to them at no cost. “It presents a beautiful opportunity for the entire diocese to come together and to prioritize giving Catholic on GivingTuesday.”

The user experience, Mr. Hess describes, will also be “fun and interactive” — with a displayed “leaderboard” showing all the available ministries to donate to. A “shopping cart” system is utilized as well, allowing individual donors to click through different fundraisers and add multiple donations to their online “cart” before checking out — streamlining the process.

“It’s a service that our office is providing to all the schools and parishes in the diocese, so hopefully people take advantage of it,” Mr. Hess said.

Information regarding the Give Catholic NKY campaign, including access to donating on Dec. 2, is available on the Give Catholic NKY webpage, [www.GiveCatholicNKY.org](http://www.GiveCatholicNKY.org).



# Women religious embark on Selma pilgrimage for upcoming Jubilee Day

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

Jubilee days provide opportunity for prayer and reflection and are dedicated to a certain demographic in the Catholic Church. Declared with the 2025 Jubilee, Pilgrims of Hope, one upcoming celebration commemorates consecrated life.

The Jubilee of Consecrated Life will be celebrated Oct. 8-9, and “includes all consecrated men and women from all forms of religious life are invited to this jubilee event: men and women religious, monks and contemplatives, members of secular institutes, members of the Ordo virginum, hermits and members of new institutes,” according to the official Jubilee 2025 website. In Rome, these days will be set aside for pilgrimage, dialogue and prayer among consecrated men and women.

In the Diocese of Covington, religious sisters in particular are planning a pilgrimage of their own — one that takes place between Selma and Montgomery, Alabama.

In March 1965, hundreds of people gathered in Selma to march on the Alabama capital of Montgomery — led by figures such as Martin Luther King, Jr. The demonstration hoped to ensure African Americans the right to vote and was successful in doing so.

“Selma has such a rich history of persistence and moving forward for what’s right,” said Divine Providence Sister Leslie Keener, one of the sisters working on planning the pilgrimage for all of the diocese’s women religious. “I think it’s important for us to go and bear witness

to that,” she said.

“I think it’s important, as we think about hope, that this is not our first time with struggle as people, but there have been successes — and it’s hopeful to remember that,” said Sister Leslie. “For me, being a sister is a lot about accompaniment and service ... at the heart of it is presence with people in the way that God is present to me in my own life.”

Sister Leslie said that she, and all women religious, would be “very grateful” for prayers, and uniting in prayer with them as they undertake this pilgrimage and celebrate their jubilee. She also invites people to connect with the sisters.

“We love the people we serve, and we love our friends and neighbors,” she said. “All of us are here in service to people, and so we love when people stay connect-



Sister Mary Antona Ebo, a Franciscan Sister of Mary, is pictured in the front row at the center with her superior, Sister Eugene Marie Smith, as they march in Selma, Ala., March 10, 1965, to support voting rights for Blacks.

ed with us in whatever way they can.”

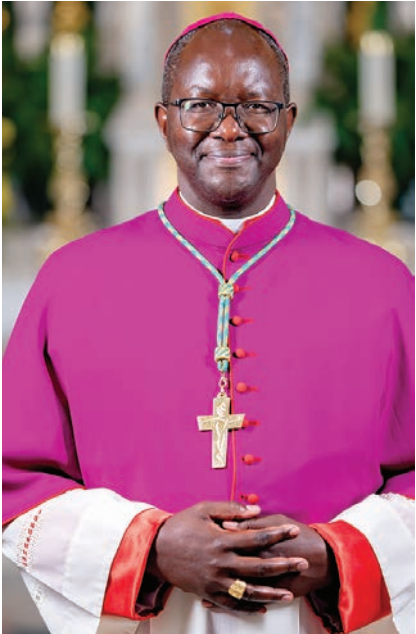
# New Louisiana bishop says he finds ‘strength, hope and courage’ in God

Julie Asher  
OSV News

“I do not deserve to be an apostle, but by the grace of God that is what I am,” said Bishop Simon Peter Engurait, newly ordained and installed as the head of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux, Louisiana, quoting words of the Apostle Paul.

He made the remarks in addressing the congregation after a nearly three-hour afternoon Mass Sept. 5 at the Stopher Gym at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux.

The faithful filled the venue to witness his consecration as the sixth bishop of Houma-Thibodaux. Dozens of bishops, priests, men and women religious, deacons, seminarians and laypeople attended the liturgy.



Bishop Engurait’s mother and five of his siblings were also there. Born in 1971 in Ngora, Uganda, the bishop is one of 14 children. The congregation included a representative of Uganda’s ambassador to the United States.

Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond of New Orleans was the principal consecrator with Archbishop Shelton J. Fabre of Louisville, Kentucky, and retired Bishop Sam G. Jacobs of Houma-Thibodaux as co-consecrators. Bishop Jacobs and Archbishop Fabre served as the third and fourth bishops, respectively, of Houma-Thibodeaux. Bishop John Iffert of the Diocese of Covington also attended.

“I stand here not because of my worthi-

ness but because of God’s mercy, but with that mercy comes an awesome and, yes, even a frightening responsibility to shepherd God’s people, to guard and defend the faith and to account not only for my soul but for those (I serve),” Bishop Engurait said.

“My brothers and sisters, God’s ways are not our ways, nor are his thoughts our thoughts,” he continued. “Who but God alone could have done this? Who would have thought, have imagined that I would one day stand before you as a bishop of the church?”

He said he draws courage from words of St. Paul in the Acts of the Apostles, where Paul states he was “compelled by the Spirit” to go to Jerusalem, not knowing what would happen to him and even though he was warned by the Holy Spirit that hardships awaited him. “I count my worth as nothing to me unless I can finish the race and bear witness of God’s grace,” Paul wrote.

“Like St. Paul, I go forward uncertain of the road

(Continued on page 10)

OSV News photo/courtesy of Serdave Duncan at the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux

Official portrait of Bishop Simon Peter Engurait, the sixth bishop of Houma-Thibodaux, La.



## Bishop’s Schedule

- Sept. 20**  
Diocese of Covington  
Pastoral Council meeting,  
10 a.m.
- Sept. 21**  
Mass, Cathedral Basilica of  
the Assumption, Covington,  
10 a.m. (commissioning of  
the High School Youth  
Ministry Team following)
- Sept. 23**  
Permanent Deacons  
rededication Vespers,  
Cathedral Basilica of the  
Assumption, 5 p.m.
- Sept. 24**  
Mass, Covington Latin  
School, Cathedral Basilica of  
the Assumption, 8:15 a.m.
- Sept. 25**  
ACUE donor recognition  
reception, Drees Pavilion,  
Covington, 6 p.m.
- Sept. 26**  
Intercommunity Sisters Peace  
and Justice Committee  
prayer service, Cathedral  
Basilica of the Assumption,  
7 p.m.

## World Day of Migrants and Refugees

Bishop John Iffert will preside  
at a prayer service

Sept. 26, 7 p.m.

Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption,  
Covington.

All are invited to pray for migrants and  
refugees in the United States and  
worldwide.

Hosted by the Intercommunity Sisters  
Peace and Justice Committee.

## Reporting Misconduct in the Diocese of Covington

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

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

## Informando sobre conducta inapropiada en la Diócesis de Covington

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

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



# Relentless effort, quick action are not always the answer, pope says

**Carol Glatz**  
*Catholic News Service*

In an overly frenetic world, the Gospel teaches the importance of stopping, resting and trusting in the Lord, Pope Leo XIV said.

“We rush to produce, to prove ourselves, to keep up,” the pope said during his weekly general audience in St. Peter’s Square Sept. 17.

“But the Gospel teaches us that knowing how to stop is an act of trust that we must learn to perform,” he said,

14, and several people in the audience shouted “happy birthday” to the pope when he rode by in the popemobile.

In his main talk, the pope continued his series of reflections on lessons of hope from the Gospel by looking at the mystery of Holy Saturday and Jesus lying buried in the tomb.

For Christians, it is a day of “great silence and joyful expectation,” he said, in English.

“Just as God rested after creating the universe, so did the Son rest after completing the work of redemption, hav-

“if we offer it to God.”

“God who lets things be done, who waits, who withdraws to leave us freedom — he is the God who trusts, even when everything seems to be over,” he said.

People should “learn that we do not have to be in a hurry to rise again; first we must stay and welcome the silence, let ourselves be embraced by limitation,” he said.

“At times we seek quick answers, immediate solutions,” he said. “But God works in the depths, in the slow time of trust.”



People greet Pope Leo XIV as he rides in the popemobile around St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican before his weekly general audience Sept. 17, 2025.

CNS photo/Lola Gomez

adding that “life does not always depend on what we do, but also on how we know how to take leave of what we have been able to do.”

The day also marked the feast of St. Robert Bellarmine, a 17th-century Jesuit theologian and cardinal, and the name day of Pope Leo, who was born Robert F. Prevost.

“I’d like to thank all of you for expressing your good wishes today on my name day. Thank you so much,” he said at the end of the audience.

It was also just a few days after his 70th birthday Sept.

ing loved us to the end,” he said. “We, too, are invited to find quiet and restful moments amidst the frenzy of our daily activity.”

“In the tomb, Jesus, the living word of the Father, is silent,” he said in Italian. “But it is precisely in that silence that the new life begins to ferment like a seed in the ground, like the darkness before dawn.”

Therefore, the pope said, even when people experience moments that are empty, still, unproductive or “useless,” they can turn them into a time of grace and resurrection

“When it seems to us that everything is at a standstill, that life is a blocked road, let us remember Holy Saturday,” Pope Leo said. “Even in the tomb, God was preparing the greatest surprise of all.”

“If we know how to welcome with gratitude what has been, we will discover that, precisely in smallness and silence, God loves to transfigure reality, making all things new with the fidelity of his love,” he said.

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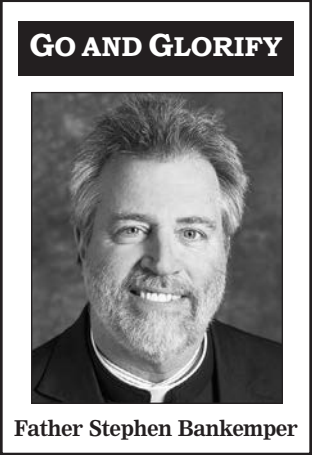
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# Preparing for eternity

The readings for the Twenty-fifth Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle C — are: Amos 8:4-7, 1 Timothy 2:1-8 and Luke 16:1-13.

For the last few weeks, we have been making our way through a section of Luke that contains many, as some describe them, “hard sayings” of Jesus. They have been hard, not to understand, but to do — take the lowest place, give to those who cannot repay, let no one and no thing be more important to us than Jesus. The hard say-



ing we encounter this weekend is a little of both — it can be hard at first to understand, and then also hard to do.

“And the master commended that dishonest steward for acting prudently.” What does this mean? Can a person act dishonestly and prudently at the same time? What is Jesus trying to teach with this parable?

Dr. Brant Pitre, drawing on St. Augustine, explains the parable by highlighting two aspects of the steward’s actions: his foresight (securing a place for himself when his time as steward ends) and his resourcefulness.

The key to understanding Jesus is this sentence: “For the children of this world are more prudent in dealing with their own generation than are the children of light.” Jesus is not saying that the children of light — his disciples — should be dishonest as the children of this world, but that we should be as intelligent and resourceful in our preparations for eternity as they are in living their lives now.

As Dr. Pitre puts it, “What Jesus is saying is that if people in this world go to extreme measures to think about providing for themselves for the future, even so much as to steal, then how much more should Christians — disciples of Jesus — go to extreme measures to prepare for and to ensure for our ... eternal life.” (Pitre podcast)

That one day we will leave this Earth and live somewhere else for eternity is surprisingly hard for us to remember; after all, we experience people dying all the time. We focus so much on our earthly lives that we can forget or ignore reality. Even when they remember, however, many people in our modern society make an even worse mistake — they assume that everyone spends eternity with God, that there is no need to prepare for it in this life. Jesus’ parable is a reminder of these two important truths: that there is life after our time on Earth, and that we need to prepare for it.

How should we prepare? Pitre connects the steward’s actions in the parable with a line from a commentary by St. Ephrem: “Buy for yourselves, O sons of Adam, those things which do not pass away, by means of those transitory things which are not yours!”

Just as the steward uses money which is not his (change your promissory note from 100 measures of olive oil to 50) to buy a secure future for himself, so should we use the earthly money that does not belong to us to secure our heavenly future.

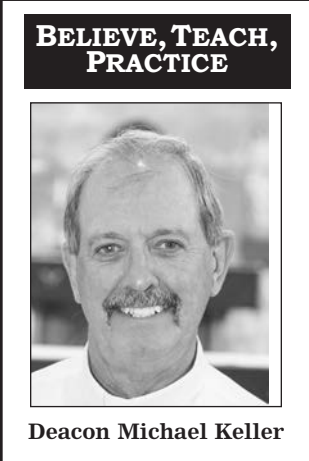
What money do we have that does not belong to us? One of the principles of Catholic social teaching is called the universal destination of goods. After we have supplied our legitimate needs with our money, the Church understands that we have a moral obligation to use our excess, at least in part, to care for others in need. “And the multitudes asked him [John the Baptist], ‘What then shall we do?’ And he answered them, ‘He who has two coats, let him share with him who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.’”

The word Scripture uses for this practice is almsgiving. In the Bible, alms refer to money — any material goods, really — given to the poor. Almsgiving is different

(Continued on page 14)

# Don’t sweat the small stuff

In Isaiah 66:10, that we recently heard at Mass, the prophet is addressing the people returning to Jerusalem from the Babylonian exile. They are facing many hardships as they rebuild their city and society. Isaiah wrote, “Lo, I will spread prosperity over



Jerusalem like a river ... As nurslings you shall be carried in her arms and fondled in her lap. As a mother comforts her child, so will I comfort you.”

While these words were written for the returning Jews, they were written for us too. They describe how God cares for us as his children.

We usually have an image of God as a father, not a mother. But recall in Genesis, it tells us that we were created in God’s image and likeness. It says, “Male and female he created them.” The image of God also as a caring mother is comforting. Although as St. Augustine tells us, we can’t possibly understand what God is.

You know we are very blessed and have been given many good gifts by God, but as the saying goes, into every life a little rain must fall. We all have something to worry about, which robs us of the joy God intends for us.

Most of these things are small. The weather, the stock market, being late, traffic, what to wear — you name it. And the media are constitutently hitting us with something to irritate and worry us.

We all worry and maybe even lose sleep worrying. But, in Luke, chapter 12, Jesus tells us not to worry. He says, “Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life?”

Tom Petty, a popular singer/songwriter in the 80s and 90s, has this line in one of his songs — “As sure as night follows day, most things I worry about never happen anyway.”

There are serious issues we face and are concerned about, too. Our health — we or a loved one may be dealing with a serious, maybe even terminal, medical condition. We could be concerned about our family or children. Our life may have gone off the rails and we have serious problems. Some of our Hispanic friends may have serious concerns

about immigration issues.

When we are dealing with serious problems, this is where the comforting words from Scripture come in. God loves us like, or rather more than, we love our own children and wants what’s best for us. Jesus told us that the Father knows what we need before we ask. God will walk with us as we deal with serious concerns — so we know we are in good hands.

As disciples, we have answered Jesus’ call to follow him. We believe he is leading us to the kingdom of heaven, the eternal banquet where we will join him, all the angels and saints, and our loved ones who have gone before us.

We believe Jesus when he said, “And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” (John 14:3)

Several years ago, I would regularly visit a friend who had terminal cancer. He had endured several rounds of chemo, and the doctors finally told him there was nothing else they could do for him. They gave him about six months. I was amazed at how at peace he was.

He was a man of faith and said he was looking forward to entering heaven. He also told me that he was trying to live each day as if it was his last and pack as much into it as possible as his health gradually declined. He said I should live each day as if it was my last, since there are no guarantees. During our meetings, he told me that looking back on his life, he could now see how useless it was that he worried about so many little things that in the end don’t really matter:

He used to recall the story of Martha and Mary where Jesus tells the worried Martha, “You are worried about many things. There is need of only one thing; Mary has chosen the better part.”

He said that this story told him that our focus should be on eternal life, not our earthly life. We know that life here is only temporary, and our real goal is to enter the heavenly kingdom. He said that’s all that really matters.

We have all heard the saying, “don’t sweat the small stuff,” and it’s all small stuff, right? I believe life’s too short to sweat the small stuff, as my dying friend said. The good news is that compared to God’s love for us and what awaits us in eternity, it’s all small stuff.

Deacon Michael Keller is assigned to St. John the Evangelist Parish, Carrollton, and Transfiguration Mission, Perry Park.

# Embarking on the hero’s journey

You stand before the valley, a dark and distant mountain rising from the horizon’s mists. Ahead of you, the path leads to the dragon’s lair. Every step forward is another trial of your valor — your tenacity, your fortitude — and yet, you venture into the unknown with the hilt of your blade steady in your curled palm.



I’ve always been a lover of the fantasy genre. J.R.R. Tolkien’s (a Catholic author; by the way!) “The Hobbit” was one of the first stories I remember my father regaling me with at bedtime, and that journey imprinted upon me a love of the medium.

Nowadays, I spend some of my evenings among friends, telling stories at a table through roleplaying games such as Dungeons and Dragons and Pathfinder. These adventures provide an engaging way to explore myself and my creativity, forge friendships and define for myself what it means to be a “hero.”

In narratology, there’s a concept called “the hero’s journey” — known also as the monomyth, which defines a common template of the quests heroes in both classical mythology and modern fiction partake. It describes a journey from the known, to the unknown and back again — climaxing at the “Abyss,” represented by a death, a rebirth and a revelation — and a falling action catalyzed by transformation and atonement.

Some examples of this pattern can be seen through the likes of the Odyssey, where the Ithacan king Odysseus must quite literally traverse the Underworld, the realm of the dead, to return to his home, his wife and his son — not without his wit, and the aid of the wisdom goddess Athena. This same narrative repeats in characters such as Luke Skywalker, in his quest to dismantle the Empire, Dorothy’s journey to Oz and, of course, Bilbo Baggins’s quest to reclaim the misty mountains for dwarvenkind.

While there is criticism of the monomyth for its tendency to simplify stories by cherry-picking narratives, there is something to be said about how storytellers throughout humanity have stuck to some loose cycle of rebirth and redemption for their protagonists. Indeed, there is nothing more human than hope — nothing more true to the human experience than the thirst, the need, to crawl from the abyss and into the light!

This concept of death and resurrection is obviously no stranger to us as disciples of Christ. It is Christ himself who also took that journey, who ventured into death so that, through his resurrection, he could return with atonement — not for himself, but for his people. To me, this is the greatest act of heroism.

The journey of the Cross is one we, too, must embark on as Christians. The trials we face, the battles we bear and (metaphorical) monsters we slay — they are not in vain. God never sets before us that which we cannot handle, what we cannot grow from. No matter how hot the dragon’s fire, how wide the maws and sharp the teeth of Scylla — we do not fight alone. Christ is at our backs to guide us, to fight alongside us and, at the end of the journey, show us the way back to the known — transformed and renewed.

Maura Baker is a staff writer for the Messenger, the Catholic newspaper for the Diocese of Covington, Ky



# Season of Creation is a ‘good time’ to renew commitment to life, the environment, says Divine Providence sister

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

In 2015, the late Pope Francis established Sept. 1 as the first World Day of Prayer for the Care of Creation. This year — now 10 years ago — also marks the publishing of the Laudato Si’ (Praise Be to You) encyclical, which further promotes all people towards stewardship to the planet and natural world.

This devotion to caring for the earth grew in 2019, when Pope Francis encouraged Catholics to participate in the Season of Creation — a month lasting from Sept. 1 to Oct. 4 — a fitting conclusion as the feast day of St. Francis of Assisi, patron of ecology. The Season of Creation is an ecumenical celebration — inviting all Christian churches to participate.

Religious sisters, and notably the Sisters of Divine Providence, have a special devotion to the mission of Laudato Si’, and thus, the Season of Creation. According to Divine Providence Sister Kay Kramer, the sisters internationally have committed to the Laudato Si’ action platform, a platform established by the Vatican dicastery that outlines ways to put into action care for the environment. The platform gives seven different goals to help guide dioceses, religious communities and anyone who wishes to involve themselves in the mission.

“Celebrating the Season of Creation is, for us, part and parcel of our commitment to Laudato Si’,” Sister Kay said, with care for the poor and defending human life being their goal of focus for the 2025 year. In their community, the sisters encourage one another to adopt their Laudato Si’ commitment, and a prayer service in October will allow them to celebrate the Season of Creation together.

“Hopefully, the more people learn about Laudato Si’ and the Season of Creation, they will want to get involved,” said Sister Kay. “It’s a great way to introduce young people to caring for the earth and to seeing the connection between living out our faith and that caring ... there’s so many Scripture references to creation and caring for the earth ... I think it’s integral to our faith.”

Laudato Si’ reaffirmed this aspect of the Catholic faith, Sister Kay said, and thus, “the connection between living our faith and taking care of this beautiful earth that God has given us.”

“As people continue to face challenges with climate disasters and happenings around the world, it’s important for all of us to recognize that we can do things,” Sister Kay concluded, giving examples such as cutting down on waste and conserving energy. “All of those things, which might seem small, they really do make a difference for the earth. The Season of Creation is a good time for all of us to remember that.”

For more information about the Season of Creation, including ways to get involved, visit <https://seasonofcreation.org>.



CNS photo/Cristian Gennari, pool  
**Pope Leo XIV**  
celebrates Mass for the  
Care of Creation on  
the grounds of the  
Borgo Laudato Si’  
ecology center in  
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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/>.

Come watch Season 5 of The Chosen at Mother of God Church, Covington, Thursdays, Sept. 4-Oct. 23, 10 a.m. and 6:30 p.m. It is a lot of fun to watch it in a group and discuss ... even if you have seen it before. Free and open to all. Bring a friend!

Notre Dame Urban Education Center, Covington, needs volunteer tutors for its Education Center’s Homework Plus Program (Grades K-8). Contact Brandi at (859) 630-9475 or [blenihan@nduec.org](mailto:blenihan@nduec.org).

A prayer service commemorating World Day of Migrants and Refugees will be held, Sept. 26, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. All are invited to pray for migrants and refugees in the United States and worldwide.

St. Thomas Parish, Ft. Thomas, Seniors, upcoming events: social and game night, Sept. 25; luncheon and speaker, Oct. 21; dinner, Nov. 20. Find more details and online payment link: [stthomasnky.org/seniors](http://stthomasnky.org/seniors).

The Office of Catechesis and Evangelization is offering workshops on Books of the Old Testament, presented by Father Timothy Schehr, retired biblical scholar and former professor at Mount St. Mary’s School of Theology at the Athenaeum of Ohio. Workshops are all held Saturday morning, 10–11:30 a.m., Diocese of Covington, Curia Office. 2025 Workshops – Isaiah: Nov. 1 – Session 1 and Nov. 15 – Session 2. Cost \$35 per session, cash or checks at the door. Register at [covdio.org/bible-workshops](http://covdio.org/bible-workshops).

St. Thomas School, Ft. Thomas, Boosters golf outing, Sept. 27, Hickory Sticks Golf Club, 1 p.m. Shotgun Start. Register now, [stthomasnky.org/golf](http://stthomasnky.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](mailto:bbhsboysbasketballeuchre@gmail.com) or call (859) 760-8228. More information available on [bmustangs.com](http://bmustangs.com) website.

New Beginnings is an 8-week program that provides the opportunity to heal and move forward despite a complicated situation. Led by facilitators who have been through their own personal losses, this program invites participants to move toward their own new beginnings. Registration is required. To register, visit <https://covdio.org/new-beginnings-2/> or call (859) 392-1529. Next session will be held on consecutive Thursdays, Oct. 2–Dec. 4, 7–8:30 p.m. at Catholic Charities, Covington.

Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, California, stagette, Sept. 28,

Parish festivals		
Sept. 19–20 St. Benedict Parish, Covington	Sept. 19–21 St. Timothy Parish, Union	Sept. 26-28 St. Agnes Parish, Ft. Wright
	Sept. 21 St. Matthew, Parish, Kenton	

doors open at 12:30 p.m.; bingo starts at 2 p.m.

St. Joseph Church, Camp Springs, annual Oktoberfish Fish Frys, Oct. 3 and 10, 4–7:30 p.m. Dine-in or carry-out options available. To place a carry-out order, call (859) 635-2491 or visit [stjoseph-campsprings.org](http://stjoseph-campsprings.org).

St. William Parish, Williamstown, will be hosting a Women’s Retreat Day for the Blessed Virgin Mary, Oct. 4, 9 a.m. to 8 p.m. Open to all women to spend the day in devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God. They are offering Franciscan at Home Courses, Penance service and Meditation, Mass, Rosary, invited speakers and vendors, meals and more! Register online at <https://www.givecentral.org/location/1464>.

Eighth annual Rosary Coast to Coast, Oct. 5, 2 p.m., at The Grotto of the Two Hearts, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington. Priests will lead an hour of prayer for this international event where all will join in prayer; at the same time, under the protective mantle of Our Lady of Guadalupe, for the spiritual health of the United States. Rain or shine. Bring a chair. [Rosarycoasttocoast.com](mailto:Rosarycoasttocoast.com). Questions: Jeanette at [jmlanden-witch@yahoo.com](mailto:jmlanden-witch@yahoo.com).

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.

Are you between the ages of 18 and 35? Would you be interested in attending World Youth Day 2027 in Seoul, South Korea with Pope Leo XIV and thousands of young adult Catholics from around the world? The official dates have been announced, Aug. 3–8, 2027, and the Diocese of Covington is considering organizing a pilgrimage. A meeting to discuss possibilities and determine interest will be held Monday, Oct. 6, 6–7 p.m., Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Diocesan Curia, Covington. All are welcome - no need to RSVP, just show up.

A Biblical Walk Through the Mass will be held Saturday, Oct. 11 from 11:30 a.m.–3:30p.m. in the St. Barbara Sterling Event Center. “A Biblical Walk Through the Mass” explores the extraordinary biblical roots of the Liturgy and reveals what it all means and why it all matters. This fascinating tour of the Mass will renew your faith and deepen your love for and devotion to the Holy Eucharist. Light lunch will be served. Book available for \$10. Reservations required: [www.stbararaky.org/Biblical-Walk-Mass](http://www.stbararaky.org/Biblical-Walk-Mass).

SEEK Conference. Want to attend? Need more information? An information meeting will be held Monday, Oct 13, 6 p.m.–7 p.m. at the Curia (BHMA). If you are interested in attending SEEK and are not registered with a group, plan to attend this meeting. SEEK is an annual Catholic conference hosted by FOCUS (Fellowship of



Students at St. Paul School, Florence, welcomed Cedella — the school’s therapy dog — Sept. 9.

Catholic University Students), taking place from January 1–5, 2026 in Columbus, OH. The conference is designed to inspire and equip people with skills for the Catholic faith, featuring Catholic speakers, powerful worship, community and opportunities for sacraments, with sessions suitable for college students, parishioners and families. To RSVP for the meeting, email [apoat@covdio.org](mailto:apoat@covdio.org).

“Date with Father Nate: A Celebration of Marriage,” Oct. 18, 6:15-11:30 p.m., St. Joseph Church, Cold Spring. Married and engaged couples are invited to relax, laugh, and learn together as Father Nathan Cromly shares a message of hope and love that strengthens marriages and families. Order tickets with a quick Google search “Date with Father Nate in Covington.” Questions? Call (859) 261-1365.

St. Henry High School’s Craft Show will be held Saturday, Oct. 18, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. Located at St. Henry Athletic Complex (SHAC) at 35 Cavalier Boulevard, Florence. Over 100 local craftsmen display unique hand-made items in many different mediums. There is also the opportunity to purchase raffle tickets on exciting themed gift baskets. There is a \$5.00 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.s

Brady Webb, webmaster of the Catechetical Institute at Franciscan University, will present a hands-on workshop exploring Franciscan University’s Catechetical Institute’s website, Oct. 25, 9:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m., Thomas More University’s Steigerwald Hall, Saints Center, Crestview Hills. This training is for everyone using the CI Website for learning the Catholic faith. Register by October 15, 2025, at [covdio.org/register/](http://covdio.org/register/). Questions? Contact Isaak A. Isaak at [iisaak@covdio.org](mailto:iisaak@covdio.org) or (859) 392-1529.

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., Thomas More University’s Ziegler Auditorium, Academic Center. Register by Oct. 29, at [covdio.org/register/](http://covdio.org/register/). Questions? Contact Isaak A. Isaak at [iisaak@covdio.org](mailto:iisaak@covdio.org) or (859) 392-1529.

Fall registration is now open for Mount St. Mary’s Seminary and School of Theology. Evening and weekend courses are available for busy adults who want to grow in knowledge and love of their faith. Earn a master’s degree, certificate, endorsement, CEUs, or take a class for personal enrichment. A 25 percent tuition discount is available to permanent deacons, lay ecclesial ministers, and Catholic school educators. Enroll at [www.mtsm.org](http://www.mtsm.org). Call (513) 233-6118 for information.



# Thousands of visitors celebrate Pope Leo’s birthday in St. Peter’s Square

Carol Glatz  
Catholic News Service

Dozens of small handmade signs and large bold banners waved in the crowd of some 30,000 visitors in St. Peter’s Square wishing Pope Leo XIV a happy birthday Sept. 14. Two gold mylar balloons with the numbers “7” and “0” were held up high.

The largest banner, in red and white, was held by a group from the Peruvian city of Monsefú in the province of Chiclayo, where the pope had served as bishop for eight years.

“Dear friends, it seems that you know that today I turn 70 years old,” the pope said to huge cheers and shouts of “auguri,” meaning “congratulations” and “happy birthday” in Italian.

“I give thanks to the Lord and to my parents; and I thank all those who have remembered me in their prayers,” he said after reciting the Angelus with the faithful in St. Peter’s Square.

Musicians and musical bands in the square struck up the “Happy Birthday” tune, and people sang and clapped along.

“Many thanks to everyone!” he said, followed by someone shouting, “Long live the pope!”

“Thank you! Have a good Sunday!” he said.

The Vatican also released a trailer for a new documentary celebrating Pope Leo’s American roots. The first pope born in the United States, Robert F. Prevost was born Sept. 14, 1955, in Chicago and grew up in Dolton, a nearby suburb.

Titled, “Leo from Chicago,” the documentary was to be “coming soon on Vatican Media’s channels” and would “offer viewers an intimate portrait of Pope Leo XIV’s early life throughout the United States, beginning with the testimonies of his brothers Louis and John, along with numerous voices, images, and stories” told by those closest to him, according to the Sept. 13 press release.

Meanwhile, children from the Vatican-owned pediatric hospital sent the pope hand-drawn cards and letters, and church leaders around the world also wished the pope a happy birthday, according to Vatican News.

Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, released a message on behalf of the Roman Curia, expressing “deep gratitude for your tireless witness to the Gospel and your constant encouragement to the faithful.”

“We assure you of our prayers for your health and

strength, so that you may continue to guide the people of God in unity and peace,” the message said.

Italian President Sergio Mattarella praised the pope, writing, “Your words have always reminded the international community of the dignity of every human person and the need for peace. On behalf of the Italian people, I extend my warmest wishes for your health and serenity.”

U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres wrote, thanking the pope for his “steadfast advocacy for dialogue and care for our common home. Your moral leadership continues to inspire the global community.”

Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople wrote, “We rejoice with our Catholic brothers and sisters on this day, giving thanks for your fraternal spirit and your dedication to Christian unity. May the Lord grant you many more years in health and peace.”

The Italian bishops’ conference wrote, “We thank the Lord for the gift of Pope Leo XIV, who reminds us daily that hope and fraternity are at the heart of Christian life. We join the entire Church in wishing him serenity and the joy of the Spirit.”

Writing on behalf of the pope’s Diocese of Rome, Cardinal Baldassare Reina, papal vicar for Rome, wrote, “Please accept our prayers and affection for all that you do every day, with tireless dedication, in service to the universal church, beginning with the church of Rome.”




CNS photo/Vatican Media

A group of children from an Italian parish holds up two gold mylar balloons of the numbers “7” and “0” as they join other visitors in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican for Pope Leo XIV’s recitation of the Angelus prayer and to wish him a happy 70th birthday Sept. 14, 2025.

“As we share your concerns, especially for the many scenes of war that bloody the world, we hope you can accomplish what your heart desires and continue to sow hope for today’s men and women,” the cardinal said.

Jesuit Father Arturo Sosa, superior general of the Society of Jesus, sent greetings on behalf of all the world’s Jesuits, writing, “Your encouragement to ‘go to the peripheries’ continues to inspire our mission and apostolic work.”



Caritas Internationalis, the Vatican-based umbrella organization of national Catholic charities, wrote, “Your voice for the poor and displaced strengthens our mission of charity. We celebrate your birthday by renewing our service to those most in need.”



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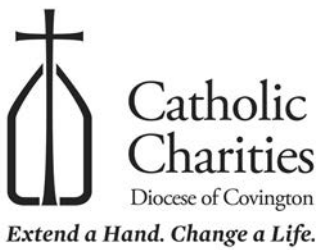
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# Supporters of Cassba help those in need realize their dreams

Emily Hudepohl  
Contributor

“Dreams are a journey that unfolds step by step. This year’s Cassba, themed “Dreams Are a Journey,” is a reminder that every journey begins with a spark of hope and that the path forward is made possible through the care and generosity of others. Cassba, the major annual fundraising event of Catholic

rediscovering their self-worth, supporters of Catholic Charities and its fundraiser Cassba, help to fuel their journey. Each act of generosity becomes a small light along someone else’s path. Catholic Charities is incredibly grateful for its dedicated staff, volunteers, donors, and guests who brought this year’s Cassba event to life. We invite others to join in advancing our mission to “Extend a Hand, Change a Life” and to remind clients that their



Catholic Charities submitted photo (left) Joe Danneman, Fox19 sports director and master of ceremonies for Catholic Charities Cassba event, and (right) Bishop John Iffert congratulate a raffle winner at the Aug. 24 fundraising event held at Drees Pavilion, Covington.



Charities – Diocese of Covington, was held Aug. 24 at the Drees Pavilion, Covington. With support from donors and volunteers, Catholic Charities continues to walk alongside those in need, helping them take meaningful steps toward healing, stability and renewed purpose. Catholic Charities helps lift the burdens that weigh down the journey towards hope and new beginnings. Whether it’s a parent rebuilding their life, a child seeking stability, or a neighbor

dreams matter. Cassba 2026 will take place on Sunday, August 30. Everyone is welcome. Visit [www.covingtoncharities.org](http://www.covingtoncharities.org) to learn more about the programs and services offered by Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington.” Emily Hudepohl is the integrated communications marketing specialist for Catholic Charities – Diocese of Covington, Ky.

For more information about Catholic Charities — Diocese of Covington, visit us online at [covingtoncharities.org](http://covingtoncharities.org) or call (859) 581-8974.

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# New Louisiana bishop

(Continued from page 3)

ahead, but certain of God — that’s why I chose my motto, ‘In Deo Tantum’ — ‘In God Alone’ — because it is in God alone that I find strength, that I find hope, that I find courage,” Bishop Engurait said.

When Pope Leo XIV named then-Father Engurait as Houma-Thibodaux’s bishop June 5, he had been serving as diocesan administrator since January 2024, upon the death of Bishop Mario E. Dorsonville, a former Washington auxiliary bishop who had headed the diocese for just under a year.

Previously he was vicar general of the diocese, begin-

ning in 2017. He was also pastor of St. Bridget Parish in Schriever, Louisiana.

His early education led him through Catholic seminaries in Uganda before a career in public service, including roles in Uganda’s government and a master of business administration from the Maastricht School of Management the Netherlands.

During his career, he rose from entry level positions to senior management. While at Katigondo Seminary in Uganda, he had a profound encounter with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal that shaped his spiritual path and

ultimately led him back to discern a priestly vocation, according to a diocesan news release.

Bishop Jacobs, a longtime key figure in the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, invited him to the Louisiana diocese to study for the priesthood. In 2007, he was accepted as a seminarian for the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux and was ordained a priest May 25, 2013, by Bishop Jacobs, then head of the diocese.

Before the rite of episcopal ordination, Cardinal Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States, read the papal bull on then-Father Engurait’s appointment as Houma-Thibodaux’s bishop.

In his remarks, the cardinal noted that he was apostolic nuncio to Uganda from 1999 to 2007, and during that time he met Engurait, then a layman.

“On one occasion at Mass for Holy Thursday,” Cardinal Christophe recalled, “I washed his feet, and he must have been like the original Simon Peter,” who asked Christ to wash “not only my feet but my hands and head as well,” because several years later his hands were consecrated as a priest and now his head will be anointed with oil as a bishop.”

“So God has him covered from head to foot,” the cardinal said. “Bishop-elect Engurait, you are well acquainted with the love and mercy of God, who has brought you to this day filled with the gift of hope, which is a special grace of this Jubilee Year: God will supply all that you need for a joyful ministry.”

Bishop-designate Engurait received the papal bull from the cardinal and showed it to the bishops in attendance and then walked through the congregation, holding it up for all to see. He walked up and down the aisles to cheers and loud applause.

“You have served well in priestly ministry and as vicar general,” Archbishop Aymond told the soon-to-be-bishop. “We gather here to pray with you and for you — rooted in sacred Scripture beginning with the apostles, and for over 2,000 years ... the Holy Spirit has enabled other men to become successors of the apostles. That is what we do again today.”

He said a bishop’s ministry is threefold: first, to oversee the teaching of ministry of church by preaching the Gospel “faithfully and courageously,” handing on the teaching “with great fidelity; second, to lead God’s people in prayer; celebrate the sacraments, especially confirmation, and have the privilege to ordain priests and deacons; and third, to provide pastoral care and pastoral governance.”

“In all things, my friends, he will strive to reflect Jesus the good shepherd as he carries his pastoral staff with humility in the name of Jesus,” Archbishop Aymond said, adding that the title of bishop is “for service, not for your own honor.”

In his closing remarks, Bishop Engurait told the congregation that this day of his ordination and installation “is not mine alone. It is the fruit of so many who have walked with me.”

“It is sometimes said that the only happy day in the life of a bishop is the day of his ordination,” he added. “Well, I cannot accept that. I pray that every day, even the difficult ones, may hold some joy in the Lord, may hold some consolation in his service and, yes, even a little laughter along the way.”

The Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux is a part of Region V, which is made up of the (arch)dioceses of Alabama, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi and Tennessee.



OSV News photo/Angeljoy Porche, courtesy of the Diocese of Houma-Thibodaux

Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond of New Orleans places the open Book of the Gospels upon the head of Bishop-elect Simon Peter and prays the Prayer of Consecration during a nearly three-hour afternoon Mass Sept. 5, 2025, at the Stopher Gym at Nicholls State University in Thibodaux, La.



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# Catholic University launches new AI institute led by Microsoft’s Taylor Black

Kimberley Heatherington  
OSV News

On Sept. 12, The Catholic University of America, the national university founded by the U.S. bishops, announced that Taylor Black, director of AI & Venture Ecosystems in the Office of the Chief Technology Officer at Microsoft, has been named founding director of a new interdisciplinary institute on artificial intelligence and emerging technologies.

The Catholic University institute will gather faculty from across disciplines for collaboration, and will globally engage in partnerships with other universities and outside organizations. The university earlier in 2025 launched new undergraduate and graduate AI programs — which debuted this fall — incorporating both ethics and interdisciplinary problem solving.

Black is also a deacon candidate for the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Phoenix and will travel regularly to Catholic University’s campus while continuing his work with Microsoft. OSV News spoke with him shortly after his appointment. The interview has been edited for length.

OSV News: You’re right at the center of “Big Tech” at Microsoft, and now you’ll also be immersed in an academic environment. As you divide your time between Microsoft and The Catholic University of America, what kind of shift will that be for you?

Black: There is actually a great amount of good overlap between the two. One of the reasons for doing both is tech can move faster than the culture and the academy can really sustain. I’m excited to have a foot in both, where we can have the experience of the academy and the experience of the culture influence how tech goes about some of its work, and also feed the “cutting edge” into an ecosystem that is more contemplative, more thoughtful, than tech often can be — because this is such a huge technological shift, with ramifications for the human person that I think are unprecedented.

OSV News: Can you share some of the plans you have for the institute?

Black: I see three main thrusts initially.

The first is, new college graduates and new knowledge workers are having a tough time when it comes to employment. Part of the reason for that, I think, is the advent of artificial intelligence technology. So the institute is intended to help — in a holistic way — new graduates understand how this technology works, how to utilize it in a human flourishing manner, and how to take advantage of all the great benefits artificial intelligence can provide when used well and intelligently.

Second, it can feel like AI is very tech-heavy — something that might belong only in the computer science department, or maybe computer science and business. But if we take artificial intelligence as — to riff off a (Apple co-founder) Steve Jobs quote — a motorcycle for the mind, rather than a bicycle for the mind, it can be applied to any discipline within the university. So another aspect of this institute is to bring all the departments within the university together — to enrich our understanding of the human person and what human flourishing means in light of this technology, and to understand ways in which it can be helpful and harmful to each of the disciplines, so we have a better understanding of how and where and when to use



OSV News photo/courtesy Catholic University

**Taylor Black, director of AI & Venture Ecosystems in the Office of the Chief Technology Officer at Microsoft and a deacon candidate for the Byzantine Catholic Eparchy of Phoenix, is the founding director of The Catholic University of America’s new interdisciplinary institute on artificial intelligence and emerging technologies, the Washington-based Catholic University announced Sept. 12, 2025. Black is pictured in an undated photo.**

it as well-formed humans.

The third aspect of the institute ties into the way AI changes the nature of work; it also changes the nature of the university as (an) institution. We have some really interesting possibilities of understanding how this technology can be used in service of the university, how the university model may need to shift in certain ways to adapt to the profound nature of AI, and how it affects grading, being a student and how one learns. A lot of that can feed back into how we conceive new ways of providing different economic models for the university as well. And not just Catholic University — but the university writ large, since universities across the United States are finding themselves in a challenging place.

OSV News: The AI degrees offered by Catholic University blend the Catholic intellectual tradition with every facet of study. What do you think this says about the longstanding, supposed conflict between the Church and science and technology?

Black: There has never been any real tension between faith and reason. When understood the way the Catholic Church understands science and technology, all of these things are produced by human actors utilizing our God-given desire to follow our unrestricted desire to know. Like

anything humans can create, technology can be used for good or for ill, and some technologies lend themselves to more bad applications than good applications. But it is in the end us who are determining how that technology should or shouldn’t be used.

OSV News: Pope Leo XIV seems to be predicting a kind of second industrial revolution because of AI. What are your thoughts about that?

Black: There’s going to be a transition period — as there is with every major technological shift — where old jobs are changing so much that they don’t really exist in the same way anymore, and new jobs haven’t been figured out yet. And it’s in that place — the messy middle that we’re slowly entering — where we need to be cognizant of that. There is going to be a big shift in the nature of work, and we need to be thinking — as a culture and a society — how we ameliorate the transitional effects of this large technology shift, while also being realistic that the ways in which artificial intelligence is currently being used, likely are not ways that are going to be the most disruptive.

OSV News: How should the Church respond to advances in technology such as AI? There have been numerous Vatican conferences focusing on the topic, but how can the Church avoid being sidelined by powerful interests?

Black: The Church is us, right? We’re the Church. There’s something like 1.4 billion of us in the Catholic Church around the world, building these technologies, part and parcel, with many of the interests that are being stood up by different governments, and different companies, and technology. It’s important for us to remember ... we’re the ones who are sitting on the boards of these companies. We’re the shareholders. We ourselves are representative of the interests that need to be informed by Catholic thoughts, and by Catholic teaching, and by us, the faithful Catholics. That’s how the Catholic Church can influence how this technology affects human flourishing — because we’re it.

OSV News: AI has been depicted both as an amazing tool and a literal threat to humanity. How do you assess it at this point?

Black: I think seeing AI as a threat to humanity takes kind of two different instantiations. One is it’s going to be this super intelligence that is bigger and stronger and meaner than us and will take over the world, and we’ll all be subservient to this master intelligence. ... Second, we as humans are good at anthropomorphizing things — if it remotely resembles something we do, we assume it’s us. And clearly, the technology — because it can do things remotely that we thought were unique to us — will get bigger and badder, and become a bigger, badder us.

But that’s just not the nature of this technology. It doesn’t want to do anything. It has no telos (Editor’s note: the Greek word “telos” from philosophy is used to refer to the “final purpose” or “ultimate end/goal” of an object); it has no orientation towards anything other than what its programmers and what its developers and what its makers, as humans, have asked it to do ... I don’t think that AI as a technology, by itself, is any concern whatsoever — any more than a hammer.

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# Oldest organ in Christendom sounded for first time in 800 years, leaving organist speechless

Judith Sudilovsky  
OSV News

After 800 years of silence, the pipes from the oldest organ in Christendom played again, filling the reception hall of Jerusalem’s Franciscan Monastery of St. Saviour with the unique sound of the 11th-century liturgical chant, Benedicamus Domino Flos Filius.

It was performed by Spanish researcher and organist David Catalunya, marking the highlight of a five-year international research project sparked by his rediscovery of 222 ancient bronze pipes.

Sounding unlike any other modern organ, the notes elicited from the 16 selected pipes — six of which were original — displayed on a wind-chest constructed specifically for them by master organ maker Winold van der Putten, were a rich combination of three different registers at Catalunya’s performance during a press presentation of the organ pipes on Sept. 9.

“It’s very, very like celestial music,” Catalunya said. “The emotion I felt when I heard the sound revealing itself after 800 years of silence was like ... opening the tomb of a pharaoh. It came to us as a surprise indeed. The following days, myself and my team were like floating inside a dream.”

“We couldn’t really believe it. I spent the following nights without sleeping,” he added. “It is the oldest organ in Christendom, possibly the oldest musical instrument in the world maintaining its original sound.”

Dubbed the Bethlehem Organ, it is believed to have been located in the chancel of the Nativity Church in Bethlehem, an area now under the jurisdiction of the

Armenian Church, he said. It consists of 18 pipes for every note, something very different from modern organs, which normally have only five or six pipes for every note, he said. To experience the full sound of the entire instrument, a replica needs to be built, which is the next stage of the project, Catalunya added.

The research project is supported by the Complutense Institute of Musical Sciences of Madrid, in collaboration with the Franciscan Terra Sancta Museum and the Custody of the Holy Land.

The organ pipes and their reconstructed organ case built by a local craftsman will be displayed at the Music Cloister of the future Terra Sancta Museum Art & History, currently under construction led by Franciscan Father Stéphane Milovitch and supported by the Belgian government. Several replicas are also planned for display in Bethlehem and in Europe.

The organ was originally built in France in the 11th century and was used for nearly a century in a church in France, possibly near Paris or the Abbey of Fleury, said Catalunya. It was transported to the Holy Land and Bethlehem by the Crusaders a century later, where it sounded in the Church of the Nativity for another century.

Then it was painstakingly dismantled and the pipes buried underground along with a set of bells to protect them on the eve of the invasion of the Muslim Khwarezmian Turks in 1244, known as the Siege of Jerusalem.

“European Christians ... brought to the Basilica of Bethlehem the most avant garde musical instrument then used in worship, the organ. An instrument designed to

become the emblem of sacred music,” said Álvaro Torrente, director of the Complutense Institute of Music.

“Today ... virtually every Christian church has an organ. But in the 11th century, this was still a novelty. The men who carried this organ to Bethlehem were driven by the same desire for the finest voices and instruments in the world to embellish the liturgy of the Basilica Nativity,” he said.

The pipes were preserved in almost meticulous condition thanks to the dry climate and the fact they were made from copper and carefully hidden by the Franciscans, Catalunya added.

Original markings by the pipe maker 800 years ago remain visible on the pipes and provided invaluable information for the researchers about how they were made, Catalunya said, allowing them to make the reproductions in the exact same way. Despite being a thousand years old, the pipes produce a surprisingly full and authentic sound, capable of filling large architectural spaces, he added.

The researchers took over 5,000 measurements of the pipes and reconstructed the organ case.

“It’s apparent that their makers knew very well what they wanted to hear,” said Koos van de Linde, a leading organ researcher. “It was extremely moving to hear how some of these pipes became alive again after about 700 years under the earth. After 800 years of silence, the hope of the crusaders who buried them, that the moment would come when they would (sound) again ... was not in vain.”

Van de Linde called it “a great honor to be a witness of this and to be involved in that resurrection.”

(Continued on page 14)

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# Oldest organ in Christendom

(Continued from page 12)

When reconstructing the instrument — organ maker van der Putten said he did not try to get the sound he wanted to hear from the pipes but tried to discover the sound that the old material supplied him with.

“That’s the most important way when you restore instruments, not to put yourself in front, but to put the material in front and listen to that,” he said. “It was opening new visions. You have here old pipes telling you things by its form. ... I am 75 years old and I consid-



OSV News photo/Debbie Hill

David Catalunya, a Valencian musician and musicologist, plays the oldest organ in the Christian world at the Franciscan Monastery of St Saviour in the Old City of Jerusalem Sept. 9, 2025. The 11th-century organ was silent for 800 years until a five-year international research project reconstituted it with its original pipes and sounds.

er this the crown of my work.”

Father Eugenio Alliata, a Franciscan archaeologist from the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum, said the collective memory of the hidden treasure had been kept alive for centuries but was finally discovered almost by chance in 1906 during the establishment of the Casa Nova Franciscan pilgrim hospice in Bethlehem, adjacent to the Church of the Nativity — in what was once the Catholic parish cemetery.

Excavations of the site by archaeologists from the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum uncovered the hidden 222 bronze pipes, a carillon of 13 bells and other liturgical objects. They were transferred to the Franciscan Archaeological Museum of the Convent of the Flagellation but for over a century the discovery went practically unnoticed in academic circles.

“It is a treasure hidden for eight centuries and then overlooked for more than 100 years, until my dear colleague David recognized that those pipes constitute a unique testimony to musical practice, not only here in Jerusalem, but across Europe,” noted Torrente.

“Before the discovery, there was no organ dated from the 15th century. Thus, the instruments take us four centuries back, offering a completely new perspective on medieval music.”

He said the organ also provided a unique window into medieval European music making, engineering and craftsmanship which could reshape the understanding of culture in the Middle Ages.

# Preparing for eternity

(Continued from page 5)

from tithing. Tithing is 10 percent — the first and best — of one’s goods returned to God (it belonged to God by virtue of the fact that all we have comes from God) by prescription of the law. Almsgiving is a practice certainly encouraged in Scripture — some say implicitly mandated — but was money given to other human beings more out of the moral obligation of charity, mercy, or compassion.

We cannot literally buy ourselves into heaven — it is unlikely that St. Ephrem meant that — but almsgiving is a practice that can free us from a spiritually unhealthy attachment to our material goods (“Anyone

of you who does not renounce all his possessions cannot be my disciple.” Luke 14:33), increase the virtue of charity in us, and help us to lay up for ourselves “treasure in heaven,” (Matt 6:20)

St. Augustine preached that the steward was “insuring himself for a life that was going to end.” (Sermon 359a, cited by Pitre) Then he asks the question, “Would you not insure yourself for eternal life?” Will we?

*Father Stephen Bankemper is pastor, St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas, Ky*

# Mass of Belonging

(Continued from page 1)

knew he faced a choice. Did he want to contribute to the world that would nurture Bedford Falls and its caring community, or did he want to choose Pottersville, with the antithesis of all those values,” said Bishop Iffert, “It’s not a bad way to think about life. It’s very similar to the vision that both Isaiah and Our Lord Jesus Christ set before us tonight in the Scripture.”

Living your life in a way that promotes the values of Bedford Falls is the same way that Jesus, in the Gospel reading of Matthew 25:31-40, says one might be worthy to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. “...For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited.”

Those that are to be precluded from the Kingdom of Heaven, Jesus said, were those that saw their brothers and sisters — hungry, thirsty, a stranger, naked, ill and imprisoned — and did nothing.

Bishop Iffert said, “Jesus seems to be saying to us that the choices we make in the world, the choices we make in how we love and care for one another. They unleash the power of the Kingdom of God in our midst and transform our community after the likeness that God intends for us.”

The Fire Foundation of Northern Kentucky contributes to the Diocese of Covington the values of Bedford Falls and the Kingdom of Heaven. They aid in the mission of inclusive Catholic Education. Meeting parents where they are, they say, “Let me help you discover the way forward, let me help you know how you can help care for all of our own and not turn our backs on any that God has entrusted to our care,” said Bishop Iffert.

“It’s a beautiful mission,” he continued, “it’s a wonderful thing and so I’m grateful for this foundation, for all the work they do, for helping us to recognize how we might choose differently and helping to make it real.”

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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

Pope praises late duchess for her charity work, ‘Christian goodness’

VATICAN CITY — Pope Leo XIV praised the late Duchess of Kent, who joined the Catholic Church in 1994, for her “Christian goodness” and her many years of charity work and care for vulnerable people. His comments came in a telegram of condolences to King Charles III sent on the occasion of the funeral of Katharine, the Duchess of Kent, the first Catholic funeral for a member of the royal family in modern times. The text of the telegram, released by the Vatican Sept. 16, was read aloud during the funeral Mass the same day at Westminster Cathedral, according to the BBC. The duchess was the first British royal to join the Catholic faith since 1685. “I was saddened to learn of the death of Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Kent, and I send heartfelt condolences, together with the assurance of my prayerful closeness, to Your Majesty, the members of the Royal Family, and especially to her husband, the Duke of Kent, and their children and grandchildren at this time of sorrow,” said the telegram, signed by the pope himself. “Entrusting her noble soul to the mercy of our Heavenly Father, I readily associate myself with all those offering thanksgiving to Almighty God for the Duchess’s legacy of Christian goodness, seen in her many years of dedication to official duties, patronage of charities, and devoted care for vulnerable people in society,” the pope wrote.

Pope encourages hiring people with disabilities at Vatican

VATICAN CITY — Pope Leo XIV has approved a change in the Vatican labor laws to encourage offices to hire people with disabilities and to make the necessary accommodations. A rescript approved by the pope regarding “the inclusion of differently abled persons in the work community of the Holy See” was published by the Vatican Sept. 13. The pope’s decision modifies a section of the regulations regarding hiring and employment at the Vatican. “The employment of people with disabilities is promoted with a spirit of inclusion and, where necessary, through the adoption of appropriate and specific measures, given that the condition of disability does not preclude suitability for work within the entities subject to these regulations,” the modification says.

Over 60 people killed in Ntoyo, Congo, by Islamic State group supporters

NTOYO, Congo — Aid to the Church in Need is sounding the alarm after a brutal massacre in eastern Congo. On the night of Sept. 8-9, attackers linked to the Allied Democratic Forces stormed the village of Ntoyo in North Kivu, killing at least 64 people. Many of them were mourners gathered for a wake in the area of St. Joseph of Manguredjipa Catholic Parish. Witnesses said the militants used guns, hammers and even set homes on fire in what appears was a planned act of terror: Bishop Melchisédech Sikuli Paluku of Butembo-Beni expressed his closeness to grieving families, asking God to strengthen them amid what he called “this horrible carnage.” The ADF, which pledged allegiance to Islamic State group in 2019, has waged a campaign of extreme violence against civilians, especially Christians. ACN urged prayer, pressing the international community to act and warning that the region faces a worsening humanitarian crisis under the weight of more than 120 armed groups. In other recent atrocities, at least 43 people, including children, were killed July 27 in a brutal overnight attack on a Catholic church in Komanda in eastern Congo. In February, over 70 corpses were found in a Protestant church in Lubero. “Many of them had their hands bound and had been decapitated,” ACN said.

Palestinians are living in ‘unacceptable’ conditions

VATICAN CITY — As tens of thousands of Palestinians were fleeing their homes as Israel launched a major new ground offensive in Gaza City, Pope Leo XIV expressed his “profound closeness to the Palestinian people in Gaza.” They “continue to live in fear and survive in unacceptable conditions, forced once again to leave their lands,” he said to applause at the end of his weekly general audience in St. Peter’s Square Sept. 17. “Before the Almighty Lord who commanded, ‘Thou shalt not kill,’ and in the presence of all of human history, every person always has an inviolable dignity to be respected and protected,” he said. The pope renewed his appeal “for a ceasefire, the release of hostages, a negotiated diplomatic solution and full respect for international humanitarian law” while inviting everyone to join him “in heartfelt prayer that a dawn of peace and justice may soon arise.” Meanwhile, the U.N. Independent International Commission of

Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory determined that Israel is responsible for the commission of genocide in Gaza. Danny Meron, Israel’s Ambassador to the U.N. in Geneva, rejected the commission’s findings, saying the report “falsely accuses Israel of genocidal intent,” which cannot be substantiated, and it “promotes a narrative serving Hamas and its supporters in attempting to delegitimize and demonize the state of Israel.”

Catholic leaders acknowledge tension between Trump immigration policy and religious liberty

WASHINGTON — The same week President Donald Trump spoke at a hearing of the Department of Justice’s Religious Liberty Commission in Washington, a key Catholic bishop said some of his immigration policies risk presenting the Church with religious liberty challenges. Before a roundtable discussion on migration issues hosted by the Initiative on Catholic Social Thought and Public Life at Georgetown University, Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso, Texas, told reporters, “It is interesting that since the administration has put a large amount of emphasis on all kinds of liberty right, including religious liberty, that we find ourselves in this conflict on some of these court cases recently.” He noted the Trump administration has invited several bishops to advisory roles on religious freedom, and hoped it would allow “opportunity to dialog about these issues and to point out where we see inconsistencies that are damaging to an effort to really preserve those First Amendment rights.” At the roundtable discussion, panelists discussed policy and pastoral challenges presented by a mass deportation effort. Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami discussed traveling with the Knights of Columbus by motorcycle to pray the rosary outside the notorious “Alligator Alcatraz” migrant detention facility in Florida. He noted the Catholic group was founded for immigrant Catholics that “were discriminated against precisely because they were Catholic.”

US bishops deepen commitment to fight racism with new permanent body

WASHINGTON — The nation’s Catholic bishops have deepened their commitment to combating racism, having made permanent a subcommittee dedicated to the issue, which has flared dramatically in recent years. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops announced Sept. 10 that its Ad Hoc Committee Against Racism — established in 2017 under then-USCCB president, and now retired, Cardinal Daniel N. DiNardo Galveston-Houston, Texas — has been made a permanent USCCB body. The move, approved by the USCCB’s administrative committee Sept. 9, will place the committee, now named the Subcommittee for the Promotion of Racial Justice and Reconciliation, under the conference’s Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development. That committee’s mandate “includes Catholic social teaching on issues of domestic concern such as poverty, housing, the environment, criminal justice, and other challenges that often have a disproportionate impact on communities of color,” said the USCCB in its Sept. 10 media release.

Pope erects new diocese in China, names new bishop

VATICAN CITY — Pope Leo XIV formally suppressed two dioceses in China and erected a new one, which already had been operating without the Vatican’s consent. “With a desire to promote the pastoral care of the Lord’s flock and to attend more effectively to its spiritual well-being,” Pope Leo decided to suppress the dioceses of Xuanhua and Xiwanzi and to erect the new diocese of Zhangjiakou, the Vatican press office said Sept. 10. The Vatican press office said Pope Leo had made the decision July 8, the same day he had nominated as bishop of the new diocese Father Joseph Wang Zhengui, “having approved his candidacy within the framework of the provisional agreement” between the Vatican and the Chinese government.

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*presented by*

**Mr. Brady Webb, M.A.**

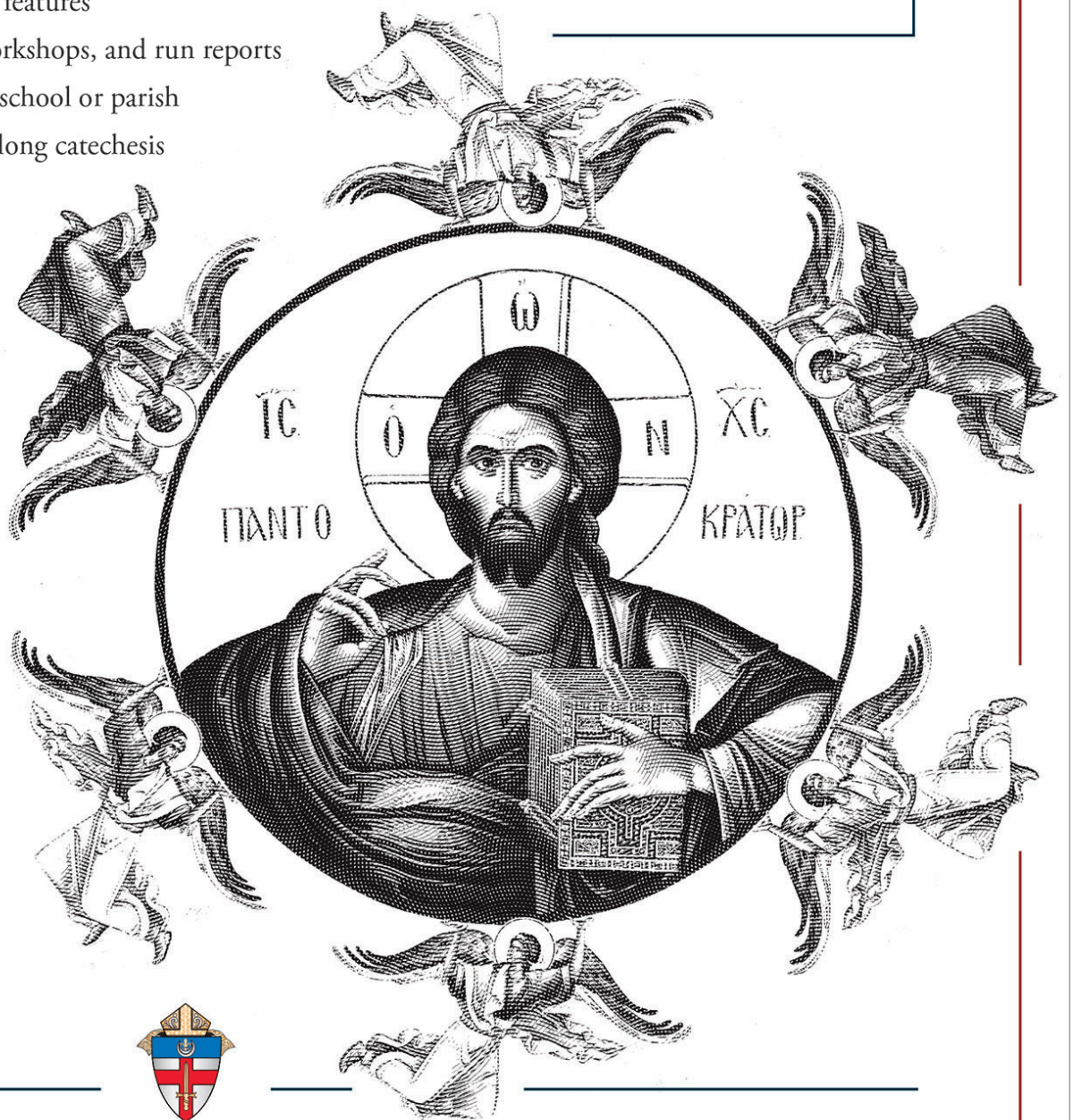
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9:30am	Welcome & Prayer
11:30am	Mass
12:15pm	Lunch
1pm	Onboarding Learners & Leaders & Mentors
2:45-3pm	Resources, Tips, Related Initiatives, & Conclusion
3:30pm	Closing Thoughts & Prayer

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