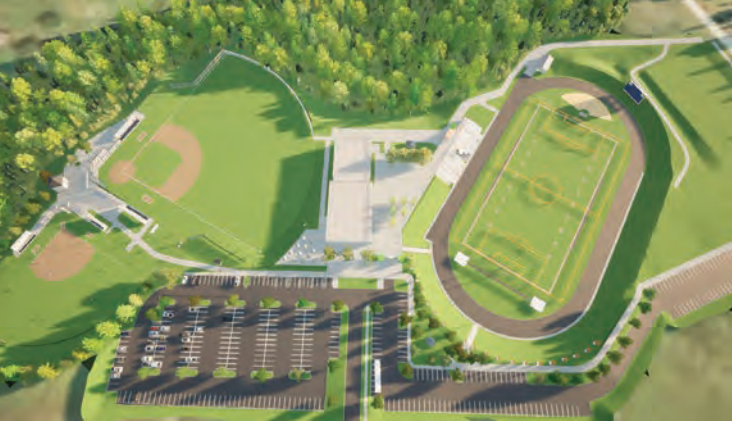


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Missed an edition? Current and back issues of the *Messenger* are available online at [covdio.org/messenger](http://covdio.org/messenger).



## Construction is complete on the Mustang Athletic Complex with the addition of a baseball and softball field

Bella Bailey  
Multimedia Correspondent

Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria, students, faculty and staff welcomed Bishop John Iffert, community members and donors to the blessing and dedication of the newly completed Verst Family Baseball Field and Bishop Brossart Softball Field. The Sept. 17 ceremony celebrated the hard work and dedication of all those involved in the completion of the Mustang Athletic Complex (MAC).

"We are excited for our entire community to have an athletic complex, not just these fields, but an entire complex which is second to none in Northern Kentucky," said Chris Holtz, principal.

Construction on the baseball and softball fields began Nov. 22, when ground was broken at the site of the now completed fields. Each field has synthetic turf, a green monster, dugouts, fencing and lighting. The addition also included a press box, concession

area and additional parking.

"These new fields provide the baseball team with more chances for games throughout the season, the turf field will reduce the number of rainouts and cancelled games, and the added lights will allow us to play later into the night," said senior baseball player Landon Ruth.

The completion of the fields now means that Bishop Brossart High School will be able to host both home and regional tournament games.

Hosting these games is a highlight of the new fields, said Mr. Ruth, "these events will show spectators how strong the Brossart community is."

For senior softball player Rachel Shewmaker, the highlight of the new fields is the community which they represent.

"Brossart wants to use these fields, not just for athletes, but also for the commu-

(Continued on page 10)

(top left) Future Mustangs watch as the students process from the field house to homeplate at the newly completed Verst Family Baseball field.

(top right) The softball team poses for photos, all smiles, on the new turf-topped softball field.

(center left) Bishop Iffert walked along the new fields and blessed them, the community members, faculty, staff and students.

(center right) Rachel Shewmaker said in her address, "Thank you for allowing me to play on this wonderful field for my senior year ... your generosity means so much to me and the other athletes who will benefit from this project."

(bottom left) This rendering was given to the *Messenger* when ground was broken on the addition to the Mustang Athletic Complex. The completed project closely resembles the layout of the rendering.

(bottom center) Principal Chris Holtz addresses those in attendance.

(bottom right) Senior Landon Ruth addressed the crowd, "Thank you everyone, for giving an athletic complex where everyone can learn and improve their skills."



# NCCHS and NDA celebrate CAPE 2025 Blue Ribbon Schools nomination

Laura Keener  
Editor

Having met the criteria for recognition, Newport Central Catholic High School, Newport, and Notre Dame Academy, Park Hills, are among the 50 schools nominated by the Council for American Private Education (CAPE) for the 2025 National Blue Ribbon Schools award.

“CAPE is pleased to recognize the following schools as having been nominated in 2025,” CAPE announced on its website along with a list of the 2025 nominees.

This is NCCHS’ first Blue Ribbon nomination and Notre Dame Academy’s fourth, having achieved the designation

in 1996, 2012, and 2019.

“I am proud to recognize Newport Central Catholic High School and Notre Dame Academy on their 2025 National Blue Ribbon Schools nomination,” said Bishop John Iffert. “Congratulations to principals Mr. Ken Collopy and Mrs. Lisa Timmerding, their staff and faculty in creating an academic environment where students excel, becoming the servant leaders God has called them to be. Congratulations also to the students who respect themselves and their teachers enough to take seriously this graced time of learning, putting in the hard work and dedication that has made this

(Continued on page 14)



(right) Newport Central Catholic will celebrate their national recognition on October 8.

(below) Students at Notre Dame Academy cheer during their nomination celebration.



## Covington Diocese Blue Ribbon Schools

Twenty Catholic schools in the Diocese of Covington have been designated Blue Ribbon Schools. They are:

<b>Blue Ribbon Exemplary High Performing Schools</b>	St. Paul School, Florence 2014
Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria 2018	St. Pius X School, Edgewood 2001, 2015
Blessed Sacrament School, Ft. Mitchell 1994, 2007, 2015, 2021	St. Therese School, Southgate 2022
Covington Catholic High School, Park Hills 2007, 2016	St. Thomas School, Ft. Thomas 2006, 2019
Covington Latin School, Covington 2003	Villa Madonna Academy Elementary, Villa Hills 2007, 2017, 2023
Immaculate Heart of Mary School, Burlington 2006, 2018	Villa Madonna Academy High School/Jr. High, Villa Hills 2002, 2003, 2020
Notre Dame Academy, Park Hills 1996, 2012, 2019	<b>Blue Ribbon School Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing</b>
St. Agnes School, Ft. Wright 2009	Holy Cross District High School, Covington 2024
St. Cecilia School, Independence 2018	
St. Henry District High School, Erlanger 2012, 2021	<b>2025 CAPE Nominated Blue Ribbon Schools</b>
St. Henry Elementary School, Elsmere 2016	<b>Blue Ribbon Exemplary High Performing Schools</b>
St. Joseph School, Cold Spring 2018	Newport Central Catholic High School, Newport
St. Joseph School, Crescent Springs 2006, 2017	Notre Dame Academy, Park Hills
St. Mary School, Alexandria, 2016	

# Register now for October informational meetings on SEEK 2026 and World Youth Day 2027 conferences

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

This November, youths from across the nation will be gathering in Indianapolis for the 2025 National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC).

Among those will be students, chaperones and youth ministers from the Diocese of Covington — totaling around 400 participants so far, filling eight chartered buses. The Youth Ministry Office will be spearheading the organization of the conference trip, which takes place Nov. 20-22.

Jenny Yuskewich, assistant of the Youth Ministry office, is head of the planning committee for the diocesan attendees. Previously having attended NCYC as a chaperone, Ms. Yuskewich described it as “one of (her) top five experiences of (her) whole life.”

“I think I got as much or more out of it

Scan the QR code to register for an informational meeting for young adults interested in attending SEEK 2026.



Scan the QR code to register for an informational meeting for young adults interested in attending World Youth Day 2027.



than the kids,” she jested.

While plans are fairly cemented at this stage, there are still a “few available tickets,” according to Ms. Yuskewich — with room on the buses for more individuals to partake in the conference. A meeting on Sept. 26 will serve as a “kickoff” for the students and chaperones attending.

Preparations for the SEEK conference — a conference for college-aged individuals centered around encountering Christ, building community, and transformation through speakers and sponsors — are also underway, with interested parties invited to register for an informational meeting (scan QR code), Oct. 13, 6 p.m. at the diocesan Curia, Covington.

This year’s SEEK conference, held January 1-5 next year, is especially accessible for the 2026 season, as it will be held in Columbus, Ohio.

Looking even farther forward, plans are also in the works to send people from the diocese to the August 2027 World Youth Day in Seoul, South Korea. Interested parties are invited to join the discussion on diocesan participation in the international celebration via a meeting on Oct. 6, 6 p.m. (to register scan QR code), also happening within the Curia’s Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium.

World Youth Day is a major international event for young Catholics, which occurs every two to three years and is hosted by a different country each time. Millions of young adults from around the globe attend World Youth Day, which will culminate with Mass celebrated by Pope Leo XIV. Due to the expense and logistics of international travel and the physical demands of this spiritual mountain-top experience, preparations and fundraising begin early. Begun in 1985 by St. Pope John Paul II, for many World Youth Day is a once-in-a-lifetime festive and faith-centered encounter of the universal Church and Jesus Christ.



# Bishop Iffert commissions and blesses five youth ministry teams

Bella Bailey  
Multimedia Correspondent

The Diocese of Covington Office of Youth Ministry hosted a commissioning of the new youth ministry teams which will be active in the Diocese. All blessed by Bishop John Iffert, there are five total teams: the Youth Commission Evangelization Team (YCET), the CONNECT Team for middle school ministry, the Service and Mission Team, the Teens Encounter Christ (TEC) Team and the Event Teams. Each of these five teams has a dedicated ministry to the youth of the Diocese to help build a faith-filled community. “Not only do you do one ministry,” said Angie Poat, diocesan youth minister, “you are apostles, or ambassadors, to all of our youth ministries.”

YCET is the largest of the four teams with 20 members and two leaders. The 20 members are high schoolers who have been trained as missionary disciples, serving in parishes, schools and communities. Each present member of the YCET team received a t-shirt bearing the new YCET logo. The t-shirts were blessed by Bishop Iffert and subsequently presented to the team members.

The new logo is a tracing of the large rose window in the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. Mrs. Poat explained the meaning behind the new YCET logo.

“You represent the Church, you represent the Bishop, and you are the window of God’s mercy, compassion and grace. You are the window through which some people will see God,” Mrs. Poat said.

The middle school ministry team, CONNECT, provides middle school youth with retreat days, also known as CONNECT Retreats. The goal of which is to, “connect junior high, sixth, seventh and eighth graders, give them fun, community-building encounters with each other, with the Church, to come alive and draw them into relationship with each other,” said Mrs. Poat.

The Service and Mission Team focuses on providing opportunities for youth to live the mission of the Church through the corporal works of mercy. Last year, the team hosted a Holy Week, Mission of Mercy retreat for students where they took part in door-to-door evangelization, street evangelization and grew their relationship with Christ.

New to the Diocese of Covington is the Teens Encounter Christ Team. TEC is an international organization which focuses on helping late teens and young adults foster an authentic encounter with Jesus and his paschal



(above left) Bishop John Iffert blesses each of the five newly commissioned youth ministry teams.

(above) Angie Poat reveals the t-shirts the YCET team members would receive. The shirt showcases the new logo, fashioned after the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption rose window.

(left) Team leaders and team members alike open their hands in worship as YCET leader, Hannah Ubelhor plays worship music.

(below) Bishop Iffert joins in the worship before the blessing of the teams.



## St. William Parish receives grant for bilingual missals as a way to foster parish inclusivity

Bella Bailey  
Multimedia Correspondent

St. William Parish, Williamstown, has been awarded a grant from Oregon Catholic Press (OCP) in the amount of \$1,500 to help offset the cost of buying bilingual missals to accommodate the growing Hispanic population in the parish.

Lorie Flerlage, music director at St. William Parish, saw the need for bilingual missals last year before the beginning of Liturgical Cycle C.

“There are people here that can’t read English and make any sense of it, but here now they have it in Spanish, and this is what they’re used to. What a way to get the Word of God out, if you have it in something you can understand,” she said.

After testing the waters with the first year of bilingual missals, Mrs. Flerlage knew she had to order the next round for Liturgical Cycle A, it was at this point the grant opportunity was brought to Mrs. Flerlage’s attention.

“I applied because the Hispanic population at our Church has increased. Many of them speak English, but some of them do not, and I thought, ‘Wouldn’t it be nice if they could come to church and participate in the language that they were used to.’”

Father Benton Cliff, pastor of St. William Parish, supported the grant application, being a champion for bilin-

gual inclusivity at the parish.

“He is very open to having inclusion for the Hispanic people, he wants them to feel comfortable,” said Mrs.

(Continued on page 11)



### Bishop’s Schedule

#### Sept. 30

4th anniversary of the ordination and installation of Bishop John C. Iffert  
Priest Formation Day, St. Barbara Parish, Erlanger, 10 a.m.

#### Oct. 1

Mass followed by new president installation, Notre Dame Academy, Park Hills, 9:30 a.m.

Mass, The Mustard Seed Community, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 5:30 p.m.

#### Oct. 2

Thomas More University Board Retreat, St. Elizabeth Technical & Education Center, Erlanger, 9 a.m.

#### Oct. 2 (continued)

Fire Foundation ‘Ignite the Mission for Inclusive Education’ event, Thomas More University, Academic Center, Crestview Hills, 6 p.m.

#### Oct. 3

All-school Mass, Mary, Queen of Heaven Church, Erlanger, 8:30 a.m.

#### Oct. 4

Religious Jubilarian/Religious Superiors lunch, St. Charles Community, Ft. Wright, noon

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

### Official Assignment

Effective Sept. 23, 2025

#### Deacon Eric Ritchie

To: Deacon, St. Thomas Parish, Ft. Thomas  
From: Deacon, Holy Cross Parish, Latonia

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

Jamie N. Schroeder  
Jamie N. Schroeder  
Chancellor



# Thomas More announces direct admissions agreement with Covington Latin School

### Staff Report

Thomas More University (TMU) President Joseph Chillo joined Covington Latin School (CLS), Covington, Head of School Randy Dennis, Sept. 16, to announce a “groundbreaking” direct admissions agreement between TMU and the high school. This agreement, which begins this year with the graduating class of 2026, promises all eligible CLS students automatic, direct admission to TMU — and financial aid totaling up to \$30,000 a year. Based on the 2025-26 tuition, students who earn the full \$30,000 will have effectively the same cost to attend Thomas More as their current costs at Covington Latin School.

CLS students who meet TMU’s minimum admission requirements will receive an automatic award of \$27,000 to which incremental increases based on ACT/SAT scores, as well as a \$1,000 incentive for FAFSA qualifying students.

“As we continue to expand the affiliation between Thomas More University and Covington Latin School, this investment in our students will provide opportunities to advance the benefits of a Catholic Education for our region,” said Dr. Chillo. “This agreement invests in the future of these high-achieving students and removes the financial barrier to a Catholic Liberal Arts education.”

“This is a great day for the students at Covington Latin School,” stated Mr. Dennis. “Thomas More University has consistently stepped up to the plate for our institution, and this scholarship offering is just another example of their commitment to furthering Catholic education in Northern Kentucky and the Cincinnati Tri-State area.”



(left) Head of School for Covington Latin School, Randy Dennis (left) and Thomas More University President Joseph Chillo (right) sign the direct admissions agreement during a ceremony at Covington Latin School, Sept.16.

(above) Thomas More University President Joseph Chillo addresses students of Covington Latin School, Covington. Starting with the class of 2026, Covington Latin students will receive direct admission to TMU.

(below) A senior student at Covington Latin School accepts an admission letter from President Chillo.



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A photograph showing a man in a suit shaking hands with a young woman. The man is holding a blue folder. The photo is credited to 'Gallagher photo'.

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Laura Keener ..... Editor, General Manager

Laura Gillespie.....Production Coordinator/Designer

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Isabella (Bella) Bailey .....Multimedia Correspondent

David Stutler.....Sales Manager



COMMENTARY

Rich or poor

The two schools near where I live began classes earlier this month. The front porch of my home faces the parking lot of a high school. Many of the students drive cars to school. The seniors had spent a day the week before school began decorating them with announcements of their senior status. It led to thoughts of all the school beginnings in my life.

Things have changed. There was no parking lot at my high school since no student had access to a car. Families had a car. One car. More than one car would indicate great wealth. There were many more city buses, and we used them. A good number of my classmates walked some distance to get to school. But suburbs have changed all that. Other things have changed — the idea of what constitutes wealth has undergone revision.

I recall a story my mother told about one of her cousins (an event that happened over a hundred years ago) on her first day of school. This youngster was asked by a classmate if she was rich or poor. She replied, “I don’t know. I will ask my mother.”

This she did when she arrived home and her mother’s reply was, “You have your right mind, all your limbs are straight, so you are rich.” The young cousin went to the school the next day, looked up the other girl and said, “I think we must be poor.”

Clearly the mother and the child were determining wealth using different criteria. Some people consider adulation or success in business as wealth, at least it is what they strive for or have as a goal in life. They take pride in these things and feel filled or satisfied when they

achieve them. Other people compare bank accounts or the elegance of their homes, still others flaunt their educational background as evidence of their wealth.

Good health, mental and physical, is on my priority list for making me comfortable about life. High on my list of values, I count them as elements of what constitutes wealth. Comfortably housed and well-fed, I seldom think about material goods as necessary for being wealthy. On the other hand, if I were homeless and lived in a state of extreme hunger, material wealth might creep up higher on my scale of values as I define wealth.

Early in my education, I remember a teacher said that money did not have a lot of value since you could not eat it or wear it. I reported this to my wise father who replied that neither could you clothe yourself or eat without it. So, what constitutes wealth? There are people with quite a lot in their bank accounts who do not appear to be happy. There are people with little who take joy in many simple pleasures. Who is wealthy?

Imagine winning the lottery when it has a jackpot of over a billion dollars as it recently had. Assuming that all my limbs are straight and I am in my right mind, what would the money add to my happiness? I pondered this. Even after I satisfied my wants and needs, there would be so much money left! I could purchase some luxuries that appeal to me, and I could donate to some worthy causes. Still, there would be more in my bank account than I could utilize, more than I needed for a secure future. Is having what I do not need the definition of wealth?

Human nature has an interesting feature. It always appears that when I achieve a goal or satisfy a desire, I move on to desiring something more. Wealth is hard to define and illusive to achieve. Perhaps, I am a bottomless pit that can only be filled by loving relationships and ultimately by God.

Am I rich or poor? It depends.

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

The woe or the way

The readings for the Twenty-sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle C — are: Amos 6:1a, 4-7; 1 Timothy 6:11-16 and Luke 16:19-31.

“Woe to those the complacent in Zion!” For us to grasp just how thoroughly the Prophet Amos is calling us to

task with his proclamation, it is imperative to understand the essence of the prophetic “woe.”

A woe is an anguished cry or lament by those mourning the dead, the future prospect of death, or cataclysm. Prophets pronounce woes as warnings about God’s judgment on sinful cities or nations. They also serve as urgent appeals for repentance from sin.

One of the primary ways we become complacent in our pursuit of holiness is to presume we are good enough; to presume that mercy will just “work” no matter my disposition. Zion, the biblical Jerusalem, finds its fullest expression and fulfillment in the Church, the Body of Christ. In the Church there dwells the fullness of grace of salvation.

Despite the extraordinary reality of Christ dwelling among us, it is easy to fall prey to a kind of presumption that makes us spiritually complacent and neglectful, causing us to slouch towards the prophetic “woe” being pronounced upon us.

How does such spiritual complacency about something as important as our eternal destiny in the Trinitarian God come about? Very often, distracted by the relentless tempo of the unexamined life, we treat the Church like a mere system for good works and emotional uplift, not the place of encounter and communion with the Holy of Holies, the Trinitarian God. When the Church is understood in this manner, the Holy Sacraments get reduced to something like mere signs of aspiration and affirmation, personal goodness, and/or community togetherness, not the means of our repentance, conversion, and sanctification.

When the Church, the Gospel message, and the Holy Sacraments are rendered as a ceremonial system of “moral therapeutic deism,” a phrase coined by the sociologists Christian Smith and Melissa Sundquist Denton, we have entered the realm of complacent idolatry. There are five basic tenets (really senses) of moral therapeutic deism (MTD); senses that hollow out an authentic spiritual life in Christ.

- 1. A God exists who created and orders the world and watches over human life on earth.
- 2. God wants people to be good, nice and fair to each other, as taught in the Bible and by most world religions.
- 3. The central goal of life is to be happy and to feel good about oneself.
- 4. God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life except when God is needed to resolve a problem.
- 5. Good people go to heaven when they die.

It would be entirely correct to describe the tenets of MTD as “my way, my truth, and my life” vs. Jesus, the way, the truth, and the life. It is obvious the tenets of the worldly ideology of MTD, with a sprinkling of the spiritual, are rather generic, resisting any definition or direction. Everyone is left to pick whatever meaning one wishes — the notions they find most affirming.

The prophet Amos was trying to stir people from a complacency, which assumed a false sense of spiritual security among the people, despite the evildoing that thrived in their midst, within them and among them. It was the prophet’s task then, and the Church’s now, to

*(Continued on page 10)*

and sacred practices — to guide us along the road to healing.

*Laura Kelly Fanucci is an author, speaker and founder of Mothering Spirit, an online gathering place on parenting and spirituality*

Where is God when we’re grieving at home?

When kids start school, teachers will remind parents that it’s not a bad thing if children have meltdowns after coming home. “They’ve been holding in big emotions all day,” one kindergarten teacher assured us. “Now you as parents are their safe space to land.”

What a perfect way to describe home — the people and the places that can handle our true selves and our deepest emotions.

Right now, our country is mourning for countless tragedies and violent deaths. While public expressions of grief are on full display, home is where we do most of our grieving, praying and processing. How does God meet us at home to help us heal?

We can start by turning to Scripture. As the prayerbook of the Bible, the Psalms are full of ways to help us grieve at home, softening our hearts with God’s gentle mercy so we can love each other well during hard times.

The Psalms remind us that we can bring all our human emotions and experiences to God, holding nothing back. These sacred songs give voice to our sorrow, anger, loss, fear and lament when words fail.

When you need to let down your guard, find solace and solidarity with the psalmist who grieved at home, too: “I am wearied with sighing; all night long I drench my bed with tears; I soak my couch with weeping.” (Ps 6:6)

When you need to know that your grief is seen and not wasted, lean into God’s attentive love: “Are my tears not stored in your flask, recorded in your book?” (Ps 56:8)

If you struggle to eat and drink as grief zaps your appetite, let the Good Shepherd lead you to nourishment: “In green pastures he makes me lie down; to still waters

he leads me; he restores my soul.” (Ps 23:2)

If you can’t sleep, remember in the night that the Lord “never slumbers nor sleeps.” (Ps 121:4)

When you want to feel protected, pray with images of God as safe and strong: “You are my shelter; you guard me from distress.” (Ps 32:7)

At its best, home means safety, nourishment, rest and reliable rhythms. But when we grieve at home, we also grieve together; bumping up against those we love who don’t always think, pray or mourn like we do. What might this mean for your family?

Mark important dates like anniversaries but give people the space to choose what feels right for them. Some families have traditions for visiting the cemetery; other mourners feel closer to their beloved dead in different times and places. After local or national tragedies, you might decide to pray together as a family before bedtime or light a candle after Mass.

Add something tangible to your home — a photo on your prayer altar, a funeral card or even a newspaper article on the fridge can remind you to pray.

“Constructive” grievors often like to do something concrete: build a memorial, plant a tree or tend a garden. Talk about what might help each of you remember those you are missing.

Seek comfort in the calendar. The liturgical seasons pull us out of ourselves and into the home of the Church, reminding us we are never alone. November brings a whole month to pray for those who have died, and at every Mass we remember how close the communion of saints comes during the Eucharist.

Look outside the home for help, too. Just as we need a village to raise a child, families need the same during times of stress or sorrow. Therapists, teachers, support groups, pastors and lay ministers can connect us to community resources and sources of spiritual support that pull us out of the pit of grief.

God never wants us to suffer in silence or isolation. God gives us the gift of home — through people, places



# Naturalization event held at Newport Central Catholic High School confirms 57 legal immigrants as U.S. citizens

**Bella Bailey**  
*Multimedia Correspondent*  
Newport Central Catholic High School's gymnasium was transformed into a court room, Sept. 19, as 57 legal immigrants, representing 24 nationalities, became United States citizens. The naturalization event was presided over by The Honorable David Bunning, chief judge of the Eastern District of Kentucky for the United States District Court, who is a 1984 graduate of NCC.

The process of becoming a United States citizen is not an easy one, with tests and interviews between applicants and officers, oftentimes the process is lengthy, lasting years.

Judge Bunning said of the applicants presented to him, "Each has met the requirements of law concerning the ability to read, write, speak and understand the English language. And, has further satisfied the United States Citizenship and Immigration services that he or she has a satisfactory knowledge of the history and the form of government of the United States."

The applicants, spanning the globe, the furthest of whom coming from Cambodia, gathered in NCC's gymnasium in front of friends, family and students to fulfill the quintessential "American dream."

To the applicants, Judge Bunning shared the stories of the framers, many of whom faced consequences for their signing of the Declaration of Independence nearly 250 years ago.

"I chose to share their stories because, like them, each of you has denounced their homeland in the hopes of a better life and future for you and your families ... You are not ruled by a king or dictator, but by a democratic voting process, with three branches of government that serve as checks and balances on the other. And no less important, a guaranteed Bill of Rights, you are protected by the rule of law," Judge Bunning said.

As each of the newly declared U.S. citizen were handed a small American flag, the symbol of freedom to many, the students of NCC clapped as loudly as the family and friends gathered.

Ken Collopy, principal of NCC, said, "We got a lot of great feedback from students and staff, just about how unique of an event it was ... Overall a very, very positive event as far as the educational experience, learning the process of how legal immigrants become U.S. citizens."


The decision to invite the students into the courtroom to witness the naturalization proceedings was an easy one, said Mr. Collopy.

"We are very much about the holistic education of students, it's not just learning within your traditional classroom," he said. "We really believe that education doesn't have to happen in your traditional desk, it's an experience. I feel strongly that students were able to get some of that at the event."

As the new citizens waved their flags in the air, the words of Judge Bunning stayed ever present, "There is not more a profound sentence than this, 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, and that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness,'" he said. "These are far more than mere poetic words, but the underlying ideas that infuse every sentence of the Declaration that sustained this nation for almost 250 years."



(top left) Students raise their hands excitedly to Judge Bunning's question, "Does anyone know which new citizens' country of origin is the furthest from Newport?" Many guessed before Judge Bunning satisfied their curiosity, "Cambodia, that's the correct answer. 8,825 miles."  
(top right) A new citizen excitedly hugs her family after receiving her citizenship.  
(above left) Judge Bunning shakes hands with a new citizen who looks excitedly at his paperwork.  
(above right) Citizens wave high their new American flags, a symbol of the rights bestowed on them as an American citizen.



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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).

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, 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 [stjosephcampsprings.org](http://stjosephcampsprings.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](http://Rosarycoasttocoast.com). Questions: Jeanette at [jmlandenwitch@yahoo.com](mailto:jmlandenwitch@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.



Teeing up support for Catholic Charities

The Knights of Columbus Fourth Degree of Northern Kentucky recently presented a check for \$19,000 to Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington from its 16th annual Dennis Elix Memorial Golf Classic. This continues a tradition of support for this worthy cause by the Knights.

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.stbarbaraky.org/Biblical-Walk-Mass](http://www.stbarbaraky.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 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).

Sacred Art Pilgrimage, Oct. 18, 9:30 a.m.–4:30 p.m. Bus will depart from St. Joseph Church, Crescent Springs, after 9 a.m. Mass, followed by an architectural and art tour at St. Xavier Church, Cincinnati, private tour of Morning Star Studios, lunch (not included in cost), and architectural and art tour of Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. Cost: \$35. Contact Tina Klare at [tklare@stjosephcsky.org](mailto:tklare@stjosephcsky.org) or (859) 341-6609 for reservations.

“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.

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

“The most significant challenge facing the Catholic Church today is the attrition of our own people,” Bishop Robert Barron. Only 7 percent of young adults who were raised Catholic actively practice the faith. Do you have an adult child who has fallen away from the Church? Would you like to learn how to help them? If so, attend a six-session workshop guided by the book “Return” by Brandon Vogt, starting Oct. 23, 6:30 p.m. at Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Curia, Covington. For information and signup contact Gerry Otto at (513) 322-9783 or [GerryOtto.PMD@gmail.com](mailto:GerryOtto.PMD@gmail.com).



Cemetery Visitations

Bishop John Iffert will lead a prayer service, Saturday, Oct. 18, honoring loved ones who died and were buried between October 2024 and September 2025 at the following cemeteries:

- St. John Cemetery, Ft. Mitchell, 10 a.m.
  - St. Mary Cemetery, Ft. Mitchell, 11 a.m.
  - St. Stephen Cemetery, Ft. Thomas, 12:30 p.m.
- Families and friends are encouraged to attend as the name of their loved one will be spoken aloud. The cemetery visitation is a final way to honor the recently deceased and an annual tradition of praying for all the deceased.



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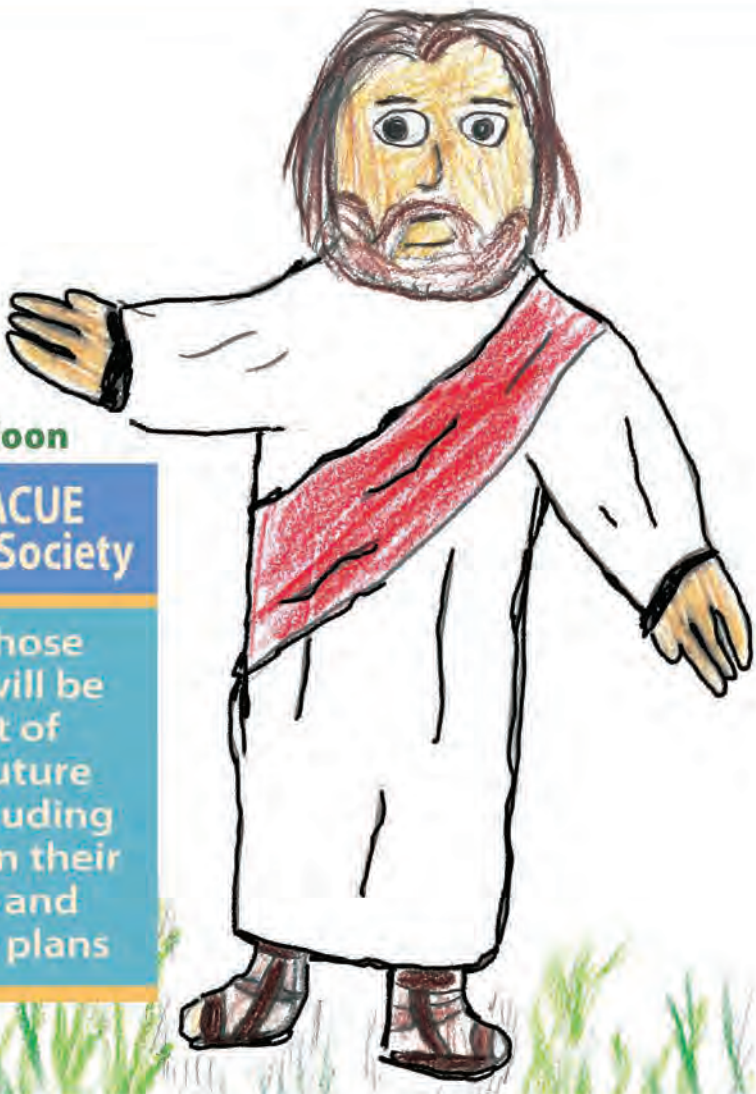
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**VMA High School recognized for a century of accreditation**  
(left) Congratulations to Villa Madonna Academy High School on its recognition for 100 years of accreditation. The school was presented a plaque at the Cognia 2025 Summit. Pictured (from left) are Joe Cordonnier, assistant principal; Ketsy Fields, senior director North East Region; and Pamela McQueen, executive director/principal. Cognia, as described on its website, is a nonprofit organization dedicated to strengthening schools through accreditation, certification, assessment, professional learning and improvement services.

## Mustang Athletic Complex

(Continued from page 1)

nity,” she said to the crowd, “You all shared with us, and we want to share this facility with others. You have helped us to make our dreams of having an all-encompassing sports complex come true.”  
Before blessing the field, Bishop Iffert took a moment to speak, “I’m excited for you because you’re demonstrating your commitment to help young people grow in virtue and to learn how to embrace the best of what is youth culture in a way that’s going to help them develop into bright, successful, capable young people — to learn how to win well and to lose well,” he said.  
The presence of God through the athletes on the new fields was not understated by the Brossart community. Mr. Ruth said

in his remarks, “We are building an establishment where coaches, players and fans will be able to experience God’s grace on and off the field.”  
Bishop Iffert blessed the fields saying, “Bless this place. We entreat your kindness that this place will contribute to leisure activities that renew the spirit and strengthen mind and body. Grant that all who meet here may find the enrichment of companionship and together, offer you the praise.”  
Then, taking the aspergillum, Bishop Iffert blessed the fields and the crowd, so that they all might be filled with the spirit of God’s grace as athletes take the field for the first time in March.

## The woe or the way

(Continued from page 5)

exhort us to the higher and harder path, as St. Paul teaches us, to “pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience and gentleness. Compete well for the faith. Lay hold to eternal life, to which you were called...”  
To lay hold of the eternal life, to which we are called, a question confronts us: Do we experience urgency in the need to repent from sin?  
In praying the Michaelmas Novena in my parishes, we have been reminded that it is primarily through unexamined, unrepentant and unconfessed sin that the Satanic rebellion takes root in us, hardening our hearts to the truth, love and presence of Jesus Christ. This lulls us into complacency and makes us vulnerable to

spiritual evils.  
The greatest of all spiritual evils, of course, is a hardness of heart, which leads us down the path towards the spiritual cataclysm of rejecting Jesus Christ. The way to ensure we are not spiritually complacent is to make a searching examination of conscience and a devout, thorough Confession. It is through our Holy Communion with Jesus, ever more perfected by the regular reception of his Divine Mercy that “we keep the commandment without stain or reproach until the appearance of our Lord Jesus Christ.”  
Father Phillip W. DeVous is the pastor of St. Charles Parish, Flemingsburg and St. Rose of Lima Parish, Mayslick, Ky

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# Mary, Queen of Heaven parishioner invested into Equestrian Order



Sir Walter Mace with Bishop John Iffert, KC\*HS after his investiture.

### Staff Report

Sir Walter D. Mace, KHS was invested as a Knight into The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem, Sept. 14, the Feast of the Exaltation of the Holy Cross, in a solemn investiture ceremony and Mass held at the Basilica of St. Adalbert in Grand Rapids, Mich. He was knighted by His Excellency, the Most Rev. Jerome E. ListECKi, KC\*HS, Archbishop Emeritus of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and former Coadjutor Lieutenancy Prior.

Sir Walter is a parishioner of Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish in Erlanger. He joins the ranks of the Covington-Lexington Section, which is one of 23 sections throughout six states that comprise the Order’s North Central Lieutenancy.

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem is an ecclesiastical order of the Holy See and an internationally recognized Order of Chivalry. It is one of the oldest chivalric orders in the world, with origins that trace back to the year 1099 AD and the First Crusade.

Individuals nominated for membership spend a year in discernment and formation and must be approved by the Vatican before they can be invested. Knights and Dames make a lifetime commitment to live a life of the Order’s spirituality and to dedicate themselves to its mission of service and support for the Christians in the Holy Land. Today, the Order numbers over 30,000 members worldwide.

# Bilingual missals

(Continued from page 3)

Flerlage. “He doesn’t speak Spanish, but he has practiced. Sometimes he will open the Mass, and he’ll do the opening prayer in Spanish to welcome everyone.”

The parishioners are not the only ones benefiting from the new missals, said Mrs. Flerlage. With St. William Parish being a mere fifteen-minute drive from the Arc Encounter, Mrs. Flerlage noted that much of the parish traffic is from travelers who

would like to attend church after their trip.

“We’re glad that they’re there, we welcome them, but we have a lot of visitors. That’s another reason why I thought that we should have Spanish in there. Some of are visitors are from other countries,” she said.

Having bilingual missals in the pews is a way to foster inclusivity as the Hispanic population continues to grow at St. Williams Parish. “We’re trying to make them feel more comfortable as part of the parish,” said Mrs. Flerlage.

# God’s love can reach anyone, even at ‘rock bottom,’ pope says

Cindy Wooden

Catholic News Service

When people hit “rock bottom,” they can be confident that God is there ready to rescue and redeem them, Pope Leo XIV said.

“No place is too far away, no heart is too closed (and) no tomb too tightly sealed for his love,” the pope said Sept. 24 during his weekly general audience in St. Peter’s Square.



CNS photo/Pablo Esparza

Pope Leo XIV passes a Costa Rican flag as he rides the popemobile around St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican before his weekly general audience Sept. 24, 2025.

In his ongoing series of audience talks on the Jubilee theme, “Jesus Christ our Hope,” Pope Leo continued to talk about Holy Saturday and the hope-filled meaning of Christ’s descent into the realm of the dead.

“When he makes this descent — which is by no means a defeat — he reveals his radical love for humanity and that death is not the final word,” the pope said in his English-language address.

Christ descended to save those who died without knowing him, Pope Leo said, but he continues to descend into the darkness to bring salvation to all who welcome his help.

“Christ enters our own struggles and touches our deepest sins with his mercy,” he said. “If at times we seem to have hit rock bottom, let us remember: that is the place from which God is able to begin a new creation.”

“May this remind us that if we allow Jesus to enter our own dark places, he is able to create new life in each of us, and we become beacons of hope that radiate the message of salvation for all people,” the pope said.

In the “daily hell of loneliness, shame, abandonment” and struggle, he said, Christ descends “to bear witness to the love of the Father. Not to judge, but to set free. Not to blame, but to save.”

And, Pope Leo said, Christ “does so quietly, on tiptoe, like one who enters a hospital room to offer comfort and help.”

Christ descends anywhere anyone has hidden because of fear, the pope said. He calls the person by name and takes the person by the hand and brings the person back to the light.

“He does so with full authority, but also with infinite gentleness, like a father with the son who fears that he is no longer loved,” the pope said.

Touched by God’s love and given new life, Christians need to share that with others, he said. “In this time of ours, among the ruins of hatred that kills, let us be bearers of the love of Jesus, which brings light and lifts up humanity.”



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**[www.virtusonline.org](http://www.virtusonline.org), enter your user id and password.**

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- Thursday, Oct. 9, 9 –11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
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- Tuesday, Oct. 14, 6:30 –8 p.m., Diocesan Catholic Children’s Home, Miller Building Training Room, Ft. Mitchell
- Wednesday, Oct. 22, 9 –11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

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# Bishop Iffert invites civil servants to ‘dare to be merciful’ at annual Red Mass

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

Civil servants came together for the annual Red Mass, held Sept. 18 at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.

Organized and sponsored by the St. Thomas More Lawyers Guild of Greater Cincinnati, the Red Mass is a tradition celebrated throughout the United States and Europe, through which lawyers and public officials seek to “invoke God’s blessing and guidance on the administration of justice.”

Bishop John Iffert was the celebrant and homilist of the Mass. In his homily, he spoke on humility, recounting the Gospel reading that accompanied the service.

In the reading, a woman, described as sinful, falls to the ground to anoint Jesus’s feet and washes them with her hair. When the Pharisees question this, Jesus asks them a simple question; “Do you see this woman?”

He’s not asking if they “see” her in the ordinary sense, Bishop Iffert said, but rather if they have taken her into account. “Have you noticed her, or is she just the sum total of her public reputation?” He elaborated, “Have you stopped to think about her, who she is, how she came to be at this point, how desperate she was to hear the good news?”

Bishop Iffert then went on to reference a 2017 TED Talk from the late Pope Francis, given at a conference discussing “how technology might reflect ethical decisions.”

In that context, Bishop Iffert says how Pope Francis questioned, with the many people facing hardships in the world, “Why them and not me?”

This falls in to the second question in the Gospel reading that stood out to Bishop Iffert, the question of “Who even dares to forgive sins?”

“Now,” Bishop Iffert said, “we who stand 2,000 years after these events, we have memorized these answers. We can answer with credo formulas — God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God.”

After a pause, he asks again, “‘Who is this man?’ still

(right) Bishop John Iffert, celebrant, welcomes the congregation consisting primarily of public servants and members of the St. Thomas More Lawyers Guild.

(top far right) Participating members of the judiciary process in at the beginning of the Red Mass, Sept. 18.

(far right) Lawyers, diplomats, judges, officials and other faithful working in law and justice attend the Red Mass, which is celebrated annually.

rings as the question in our ears. Who dares to forgive? Who dares to be merciful? Who dares to notice and see one another? ... Is he a cover we use to justify our own opinions, a kind of argument that we project into the world? Or, is he a living, acting friend of ours?”

“Luke poses that question,” Bishop Iffert said.

He goes on to reference the same TED Talk by Pope Francis, in which the pope also called for a “revolution of tenderness.” He drew from it a quote; “Tenderness is not weakness. It is instead fortitude.”

“It is the path of solidarity, the path of humility,” he said, “The more powerful you are, the more your actions will have an impact on people, the more responsibility you have to act humbly. If you don’t, your power will ruin you, and you will ruin the other.”



Baker photos

## NCCHS and NDA celebrate CAPE 2025 Blue Ribbon Schools nomination

(Continued from page 2)

National Blue Ribbon Schools nomination a reality.”

The National Blue Ribbon Schools program began in 1982 and recognizes public and private elementary, middle and high schools for high student achievement or for closing the achievement gap in schools with diverse socio-economic student populations. Initially, only public high schools could apply, opening to private schools in 1983.

In the Diocese of Covington, 19 schools have been recognized as Blue Ribbon Exemplary High Performing Schools, with one school recognized as a Blue Ribbon Exemplary Achievement Gap Closing School. (See list on page 2.)

In 2025, both NCCHS and NDA were nominated as Exemplary High Performing Schools. To earn this designation, its 2024 students placed either in the top 15 percent in the nation in reading and mathematics on a national standardized test or in the top 15 percent in the state on the state standardized test. Additionally, the graduation rate met or exceeded 95 percent.

“The nominations of Newport Central Catholic High School and Notre Dame Academy as 2025 National Blue Ribbon Schools is a proud moment for our diocese,” said Kendra McGuire, superintendent, Catholic Schools, Diocese of Covington. “It reflects the commitment of Catholic schools to provide a rigorous academic program rooted in faith and service.”

Each year, the U.S. Education Department invites CAPE to nominate up to 50 qualifying private schools for the award, with the U.S. Department of Education (USED) announcing the National Blue Ribbon Schools in late September. In an e-mail dated Aug. 4, 2025, NCCHS and NDA were notified and congratulated on being named a 2025 National Blue Ribbon School.

“Your school has met all of the requirements,” wrote Judy Cercone, director of National Blue Ribbon Schools Program for the USED, “however, I’d appreciate it if you held this good news ‘close to the vest’ until after the Secretary’s official announcement.”

However, this year instead of the anticipated announcement of National Blue Ribbon Schools, in an August 29 letter to state education chiefs, the USED announced that it was immediately discontinuing the National Blue Ribbon Schools program.

“In the spirit of Returning Education to the States, USED is ending its role in the (National Blue Ribbon ) program,” wrote Madi Biedermann, USED principal deputy assistant secretary for the Office of Communications and Outreach. “State leaders are best positioned to recognize excellence in local schools based on educational achievements that align with their communities’ priorities for academic accomplishment and improvement.”

While the U.S. Department of Education has no current

plans to publicly recognize the 2025 National Blue Ribbon Schools or to distribute the coveted award and National Blue Ribbon Schools signage, in her letter Ms. Biedermann encouraged States and associations to recognize its nominees for 2025. The Diocese of Covington welcomes and thanks CAPE not only for its nomination but also for its recognition.

“While we are disappointed that we will not be officially receiving the National Blue Ribbon Award of Excellence directly from the U.S. Department of Education, we are grateful to have been nominated by CAPE and potentially other national organizations,” said Ken Collopy, principal, NCCHS. “This does not detract from our students’ achievements and the hard work and dedication of our teachers and administrators.”

“As the only all-girls school in Northern Kentucky, Notre Dame Academy has a long history of educating young women to make a difference in the world,” said Lisa Ruwe Timmerding, principal, Notre Dame Academy. “As a school founded and sponsored by the Sisters of Notre Dame, we believe in an education that combines the timeless wisdom of our Catholic faith with the skills our students need to adapt to a continuously changing world. Through an innovative approach that integrates academics, arts and athletics, we are shaping young women of vibrant faith and passion for learning.”



NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

Pope asks everyone to pray the rosary for peace throughout October

VATICAN CITY — Pope Leo XIV asked Catholics to pray the rosary each day in October for peace. The pope made his request at the end of his weekly general audience Sept. 24. “I invite everyone to pray the rosary every day during the coming month — for peace — personally, with your families and in your communities,” he said. The pope also invited Vatican officials and employees to pray the rosary together every October evening at 7 p.m. in St. Peter’s Basilica. And he invited everyone to St. Peter’s Square Oct. 11 to pray the rosary together “during the vigil of the Jubilee of Marian Spirituality, also remembering the anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council,” which began Oct. 11, 1962.

Pope Leo XIV appoints coadjutor archbishop of New Orleans

WASHINGTON — Pope Leo XIV has appointed Bishop James F. Checchio of Metuchen, New Jersey, as the coadjutor archbishop of New Orleans. The appointment was publicized Sept. 24 in Washington by Cardinal Christophe Piere, apostolic nuncio to the United States. As coadjutor, Archbishop Checchio will assist Archbishop Gregory M. Aymond and automatically succeed him upon retirement. Archbishop Checchio called the New Orleans Archdiocese a “faith-filled” community and thanked both Pope Leo and local church leaders for their warm welcome. A Camden, New Jersey, native, Archbishop Checchio brings to his new assignment decades of pastoral and administrative experience — including 10 years as rector of the Pontifical North American College in Rome. Ordained in 1992, he has led the Diocese of Metuchen since 2016, prioritizing parish visits, child protection and accountability. Notably, the diocese said in a statement, he implemented a bishop abuse reporting system before it was required by church law. Archbishop Checchio has served on national boards, including Seton Hall and the National Catholic Bioethics Center — and once ministered as chaplain to the NFL’s Philadelphia Eagles.

At memorial, Trump says Kirk ‘influential figure’; widow says she forgives alleged shooter

GLENDALE, Ariz. — Charlie Kirk was an “influential figure” in his own election, President Donald Trump said at a memorial service for the Turning Point USA founder and conservative activist Sept. 21 at State Farm Stadium in Arizona. “None of us will ever forget Charlie Kirk, and neither now will history,” Trump said. Kirk was killed Sept. 10 during an event at Utah Valley University in Orem. After his death, Kirk received praise from his allies in conservative politics for his willingness to debate and his advocacy for their cause. However, in discussions about his legacy, his critics also pointed to his controversial political rhetoric on subjects including race, persons experiencing same-sex attraction or gender dysphoria, and immigrants. Trump’s remarks showed how tied Kirk was to his own political operation. Erika Kirk, Kirk’s widow and the new CEO of Turning Point USA, said in her own remarks she forgives her husband’s alleged killer. She said she felt “a level of heartache that I didn’t even know existed” but that “God’s love continued to be revealed to me in the days that followed.” She also told the crowd that “the answer to hate is not hate. The answer, we know from the Gospel, is love.”

Catholic immigration advocates express concern about new \$100,000 H-1B visa fee

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump raised the fee for a new H-1B visa to \$100,000 on Sept. 19, creating some confu-

sion for employers and prompting concern for Catholic immigration advocates. In a Sept. 19 proclamation, Trump argued, “The H-1B nonimmigrant visa program was created to bring temporary workers into the United States to perform additive, high-skilled functions, but it has been deliberately exploited to replace, rather than supplement, American workers with lower-paid, lower-skilled labor.” Previously, those visa fees were set from about \$2,000 to \$5,000 per application. Anna Gallagher, executive director of the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, also known as CLINIC, told OSV News Sept. 22 that the organization “strongly opposes the steep new H-1B visa fee, which sets a troubling precedent for pricing people out of legal immigration pathways.” “If left unchecked, these kinds of financial barriers could extend to other visa categories, further eroding fairness and access in our immigration system,” she said. J. Kevin Appleby, senior fellow for policy at the Center for Migration Studies of New York, said “the approach of charging such a high fee for a visa is questionable” but suggested “the idea of regulating how we recruit highly skilled foreign workers and its impact on poor nations is not.”

Special education funding for students with hearing and vision loss cut in DEI probe

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Department of Education has pulled funding for programs in eight states that is aimed at assisting students who are both visually and hearing-impaired, sometimes referred to as deafblind. The cut comes amid the Trump administration’s efforts to end diversity, equity and inclusion programs, sometimes referred to as DEI, within federal agencies. Kristi Arsenault, a Maryland mom whose 9-year-old daughter is on the deafblind spectrum, told OSV News those grants help fund state-based deafblind projects, including a Maryland one that has provided “so many services and resources, training, materials,” for their family and for their daughter’s education, including “things that we could use to build books for our daughter.” “In fact, they provided materials that we used for my daughter’s first communion and first reconciliation,” Arsenault said. Savannah Newhouse, press secretary for the Department of Education, said in a statement shared with OSV News Sept. 18, “The Trump Administration is no longer allowing taxpayer dollars to go out the door on autopilot — we are evaluating every federal grant to ensure they are in line with the Administration’s policy of prioritizing merit, fairness, and excellence in education.”

UN’s genocide finding in Gaza seen hampered by ‘serious weakness’ in Security Council

NEW YORK — An independent United Nations inquiry commission concluded in a Sept. 16 report Israel is committing genocide in Gaza — but a “serious weakness” in the U.N.’s Security Council could prevent taking action in accord with the Genocide Convention, said Father Elias D. Mallon, special assistant to the president of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association-Pontifical Mission. Israel has denied U.N. claims of violating the convention. In an analysis posted Sept. 17 to CNEWA’s website, Father Mallon — a Franciscan Friar of the Atonement — said while “there is no question” that the Genocide Convention is “crucial in the world today,” its “practical impact” remains “limited by one of the major weaknesses

— if not the major weakness — of the United Nations in general: its inability to enforce.” Specifically, he said, the 15-member U.N. Security Council — which is “the only U.N. body that can legally use coercive force against a member state” — is hobbled by the fact that its five permanent members (China, France, Russia, the UK and the U.S.), each have “the total and absolute right of veto,” with “no mechanism” for override. The real test of the Genocide Convention, he said, “is how to implement an effective and enforceable policy inhibiting one party from extinguishing another.”

Nigerian priest killed; killings, kidnappings prompt fear of genocide of Christians

ENUGU, Nigeria — In Nigeria, the church is mourning the brutal killing of Father Mathew Eya, shot dead on Sept. 19 in what appeared to be an execution-style ambush near his parish in Enugu state. Gunmen on motorcycles forced his vehicle to stop before killing him at close range. Police have arrested 38 suspects, and a \$6,700 reward has been offered for information. Just days earlier, Father Wilfred Ezeamba of Kogi state was freed after being kidnapped on Sept. 12. He and two parishioners were recovering after several days in captivity. These cases highlight the growing crisis of Christian persecution in Nigeria. According to church and human rights groups, at least 145 Catholic priests have been kidnapped since 2015. A recent report says an average of 32 Christians are killed daily in Nigeria, and 7,000 were massacred in just the first 220 days of 2025. Kidnappings in Nigeria have become what Bishop Mathew Hassan Kukah of Sokoto called “a criminal industrial complex” that generates millions of dollars in revenue. Church leaders are calling for justice — and international attention — amid mounting fears that the kidnapping of clergy and lay Christians is part of a genocidal campaign to wipe out Christianity from Nigeria.

Philippine clergy support massive anti-corruption protests in Manila

MANILA, Philippines — In Manila, tens of thousands — including clergy, religious and lay Catholics — joined a massive anti-corruption rally on Sept. 21, marking the anniversary of martial law under former dictator Ferdinand Marcos. The protest was fueled by President Ferdinand “Bongbong” Marcos Jr.’s recent pledge to prosecute corruption in \$9.5 billion worth of faulty flood control projects — some of which were never built. Philippine bishops, including Cardinal Pablo Virgilio David of Caloocan, urged peaceful action, calling corruption a moral crisis. Speaking from at the historic National Shrine of Mary, Queen of Peace, or EDSA shrine, Cardinal David vowed church support for whistleblowers and condemned those who squander public funds. The rally was a powerful show of unity, with seminarians, clergy, and interfaith leaders holding signs quoting Scripture and denouncing graft. Meanwhile, at a separate protest, dozens were arrested after tensions flared near the presidential palace. Archbishop Socrates Villegas of Lingayen-Dagupan, past president of the bishops’ conference, reminded Filipinos that real change starts with rejecting corruption in their own hearts — not just in politics.

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# IN-PERSON WORKSHOP *with the* FRANCISCAN UNIVERSITY'S CATECHETICAL INSTITUTE

at the THOMAS MORE UNIVERSITY, STEIGERWALD HALL, SAINTS CENTER

SATURDAY,  
OCTOBER  
**25**  
9:30-3:30pm

Join catechetical leaders, mentors, and parish volunteers across the Diocese for an interactive day of formation, practical training, and community. Whether you're new to the Franciscan University Catechetical Institute (CI) or looking to better support your learners and mentors, this in-person workshop will equip you with the tools, tips, and vision you need to succeed.

- Learn how to onboard learners, leaders, and mentors
- Explore CI dashboards, reports, and diocesan features
- Understand how to track progress, submit workshops, and run reports
- Discover how CI supports formation in your school or parish
- Connect with others building a culture of lifelong catechesis



*presented by*

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

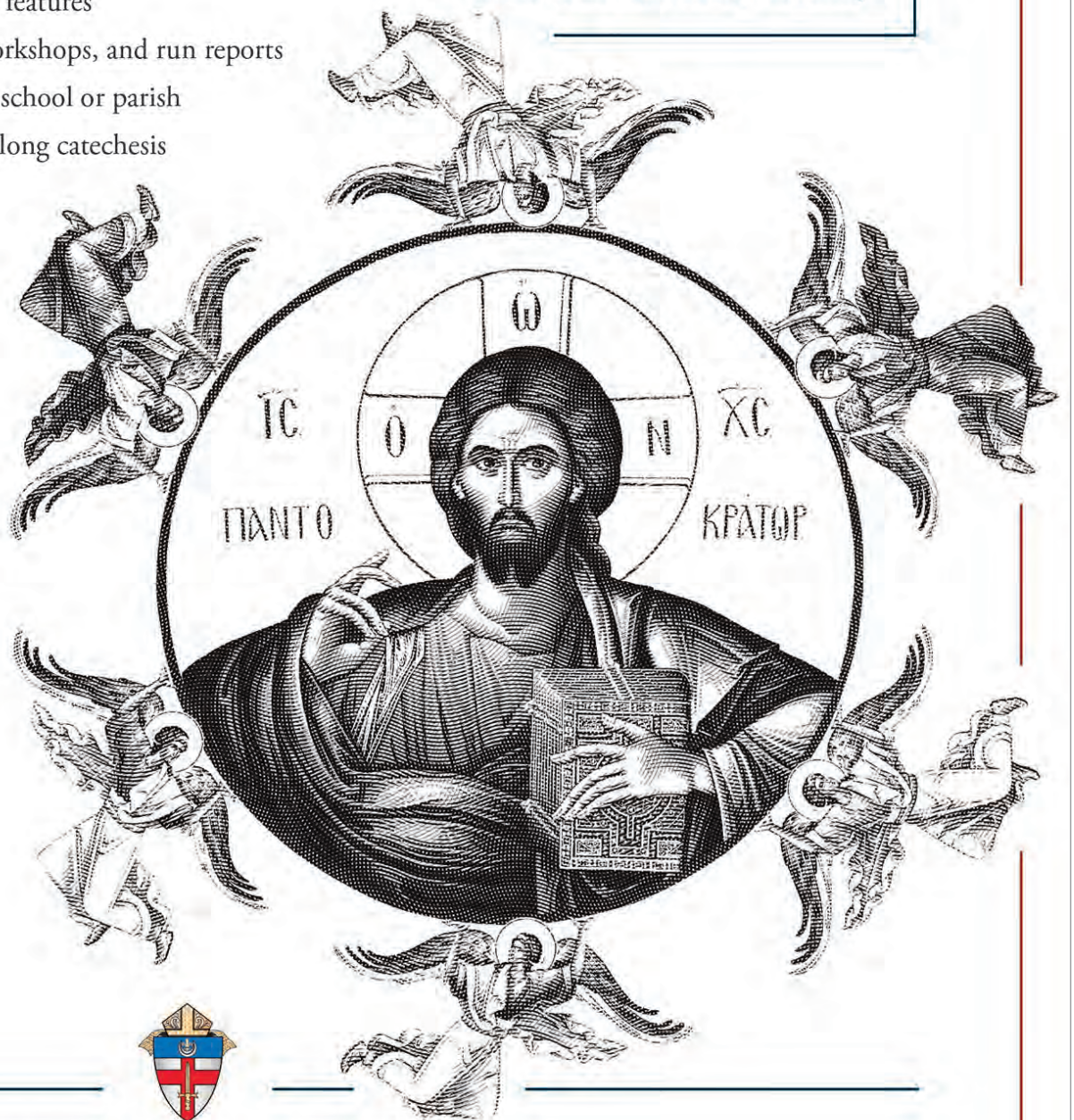
Webmaster of the Catechetical  
Institute at Franciscan University

## The Schedule:

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

Please register by October 15,  
at [covidio.org/register/](https://covidio.org/register/)

Audience: This training is for everyone who uses the Franciscan University's Catechetical Institute Website for Learning the Catholic Faith!



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