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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).



(above) A sister of Divine Providence sits in the pews during the Sept. 26 prayer service. Her sweatshirt reads, "Families belong together."  
(right top) From the pulpit, Bishop John Iffert shares his homily, in which he emphasized the "truth" that migrants and refugees are our (as Christians) brothers and sisters, deserving of compassion and mercy.  
(right) Rosario Osnaya shared her immigration story ahead of the Sept. 26 prayer service commemorating National Migration Week. Behind her is Notre Dame Sister Marla Monahan, diocesan vicar for Religious.



## Migrants and refugees are missionaries and messengers of hope, Bishop Iffert says at prayer service commemorating National Migration Week

**Maura Baker**  
*Staff Writer*

People gathered in the pews of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, for a prayer service, Sept. 26. This service commemorated National Migration Week — calling back to the late Pope Francis's jubilee theme, "Migrants, missionaries of hope."  
The service opened with words from Rosario Osnaya, an immigrant herself, who shared part of her story with those gathered.  
"I want to thank the United States for giving me the opportunity to live with dignity and hope," she said, in a tearful but touching testimony. Mrs. Osnaya sent her prayers and gratitude to all immi-

grants, as well, asking God to "protect them," and for the same doors opened to her will be open to them, as well.  
Bishop John Iffert, who led the service, further commented in his homily on the dignity of the migrant, especially under their title as "missionaries of hope."  
"The theme reminds us that migrants are not takers," said Bishop Iffert, "They are and always have made a contribution to society and are a powerful force for the growth of the Church."  
He spoke on the Diocese of Covington's legacy as built on migrants and missionaries, as well, with previous bishops them-

(Continued on page 8)

## Annual cemetery visitations offer a way to honor and grow in relationship with the deceased

**Bella Bailey**  
*Multimedia Correspondent*

The annual cemetery visitations day will take place Oct. 18 at St. John Cemetery, Ft. Mitchell, 10 a.m.; St. Mary Cemetery, Ft. Mitchell, 11 a.m.; and St. Stephen Cemetery, Ft. Thomas, 12:30 p.m. At each cemetery a prayer service will be led by Bishop John Iffert, and the names of each person buried during the last year will be read. The event is open to all as this tradition is a way to honor those who have passed as they transition from this life to the next.  
The practice of cemetery visitations in the Catholic church is "as ancient as the Church," said Father Daniel Schomaker, director of the

(Continued on page 20)



### 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.



# ACUE hosts major donors to award its annual Faith, Hope and Inspiration award to Drees Home Foundation

**Bella Bailey**  
*Multimedia Correspondent*  
The Alliance for Catholic Urban Education (ACUE) hosted its annual major donor recognition event at Drees

Pavilion, Covington, Sept. 26. The event gathers major donors to ACUE to thank them for their generosity and to award the ACUE Faith, Hope and Inspiration award. This year the award went to the Drees Homes Foundation,

which has given generously since its founding. Superintendent for Catholic schools, Kendra McGuire, spoke to the donors before the presentation of the award, reinforcing the need for Catholic education.



(above) Bishop Iffert presents the ACUE Faith, Hope and Inspiration Award to chairman and CEO of Drees Home Foundation, David Drees. The foundation keeps alive the legacy of its founders, Ralph and Irma Drees, who were tireless supporters of ACUE schools.

(below) Superintendent Kendra McGuire shared with donors the impact and necessity of ACUE schools, “Our schools are welcoming and provide a safe, caring environment that is critical for learning. This is why your support matters, our ACUE schools are truly doing a phenomenal job.”



(above) Bishop John Iffert shares his gratitude to ACUE donors for their ongoing support of Catholic education, emphasizing the importance of an education rooted in Christian virtue.

(below) Thomas More University’s assistant vice president for institutional advancement, Flynn Ashley, was present at the major donor recognition event. Representing Thomas More University and its commitment to Catholic education as the Diocesan university.



# Frassati play brings life to young Italian saint — tickets available now

**Maura Baker**  
*Staff Writer*  
Lights are on St. Pier Giorgio Frassati — one of two saints canonized this September: An Italian saint from the early 20th century, St. Frassati became patron to young Catholics, students and mountaineers — dedicated to works of social action.  
The Angelico Project, a Cincinnati non-profit focused on revitalizing the Catholic arts, is teaming up with Open Window Theatre to bring the young saint to life with the play “Frassati,” coming to Cincinnati’s Aronoff Center for the weekend of Oct. 17–19.  
Jeromy Darling, an actor with Open Window, will be portraying the titular saint. “We’re privileged to do any of this for the Lord and for the Church,” said Mr. Darling. “And I think that’s really before all of us, and there’s a great desire to honor St. Frassati and to do right by him.”  
Mr. Darling, who has been performing the role for some time as the theatre tours, has developed a special devotion to the saint, even before his canonization.  
A convert, he describes his becoming Catholic as the “single most destructive force” in his life. “I lost pretty much every relationship that mattered to me,” Mr. Darling said. “The truth exacts a terrible price ... to be a disciple of Christ is to embrace being perpetually misunderstood — Jesus, of course, is still the most misunderstood figure in all of history.”  
He described Frassati’s life also as “a wonderful picture of a man who embraced being misunderstood.”  
“It was wonderful to be introduced to his life and to his

**Come see “Frassati,” a play about the titular saint’s life**  
**Presented by the Angelico Project**  
**Oct. 17–19 at the Aronoff Center, Cincinnati**  
**Tickets available online at <https://www.cincinnatiarts.org/events>.**

world, and it’s a very strange way to get to know a saint,” he said. “Most Catholics, we develop devotions to saints through books and stories and novenas — but never would we ever think to spend a couple hours a day dressing like them, talking like them, trying to act like them and embody them. And so, to be introduced to a saint that way ... was one of the most transformative experiences of my life.”  
Describing it as “sacramental, in a way,” his portrayal and devotion to St. Frassati was instrumental in helping him let go of the hurt, heartbreak and frustration of being misunderstood.



Of course, Mr. Darling said he had no idea that the saint would be canonized in his lifetime.  
“We knew right away that this is a very clear sign to take this show on the road,” he said.  
“We need folks to come see it. It’s a long way to trek, it’s a big theater, and we really want folks to see this play of this man’s life for the sole purpose of bringing glory to God.”



# How Vincentians walk with moms in need

Laura Keener  
Editor

A call for assistance for utility bills that were in arrears found two Vincentians dispatched from a local parish St. Vincent de Paul Conference to the home a young woman. When they arrived they found that she was 11 weeks pregnant with her second child. Everything (water and electricity) were shut off. She said she had called everyone for assistance, and no one will help. She was very sick, throwing up a lot, and had recently been hospitalized for a blood disorder. Her father had been diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer, so her parents are unable to help. She was receiving no child support. The Vincentians noted that, “She sounds completely hopeless and has scheduled to have an abortion in two days.”

This is but one client assisted by the Society of St. Vincent de Paul Northern Kentucky during the fiscal year Oct. 1, 2024 – Sept. 16, 2025. During that time, local parish Society conferences have assisted 413 children age 1 year old or less and 899 children age 2 years or less.

These figures represent cases which were opened and are now closed with assistance from the Society. And these cases represent people — moms and dads with their children — in crisis. Sometimes the crisis is temporary — like a pregnant mom who has been ordered to bed rest months before her due date, but who otherwise has a job that pays the bills.

“The financial assistance we have been blessed to share is a real part of how we help,” said Casey Guilfoyle, Diocesan St. Vincent de Paul Council president.

But other times the crisis is just a recurring symptom of a deeper problem. For these clients, offering financial help opens the door for the Society to assist clients in achieving true stability and a lasting path forward. To do this, Vincentians meet one-on-one with clients to truly understand his or her situation and often involve collaborating with community partners and walking with the client for the longer period.

Accompaniment is the foundation of the Walking With Moms In Need programs begun in many parishes over the last several years. It is also a hallmark of the mission and ministry of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul parish conferences.

“I love the phrase ‘Walking With Moms In Need’ because it connotes that real care and compassion that I think we’re all called to,” said Mrs. Guilfoyle. “We feel like we always walk with, not just moms in need, but dads in need and neighbors in need generally.

“Our ‘walking’ — the effort our Vincentians make to guide clients in paths forward — is based on attending to individual situations and meeting their challenges with targeted referrals to other resources. It is also where we bring the hope of a better tomorrow,” said Mrs. Guilfoyle. “Our work on that front includes referrals to agencies like CareNet, the Franciscan Daughters of Mary, Brighton Center, etc., which helps our neighbors see the beauty in the generosity of an entire community that cares. We are just happy to be part of that compassionate response.”

Vincentians have helped contact utility companies to work out payment plans to get the lights on and the water flowing for their neighbors in need. They offer resources to help find affordable housing. Through their own Microloan program, clients can qualify for a low-interest loan to help pay off crippling high-interest loans or to get a much-needed car running again. Also, through the Microloan program, clients receive financial mentoring to help better budget their money. Tips include obtaining food, clothing, and diapers at local food pantries, diaper banks, and outreach ministries, reserving limited income for bills, and saving for the unexpected.

“We understand that clients have an immediate need. But what are your usual income streams and what are

your usual expenses? Where are you behind? Let’s work on a plan to get you through, not just until you’re able to deliver the baby, but even afterwards,” said Mrs. Guilfoyle.

And while people like to hear statistics as a way of qualifying an organization’s mission and ministry, “What might be lost in that sharing of information is that it’s not really what we do financially that makes an impact with our neighbors, but what we do when we visit them,” said Mrs. Guilfoyle. “A person-to-person visit, in their home. We go in a spirit of friendship to understand what those underlying problems are. What’s bringing you to this point?”

It was through that “spirit of friendship” that enabled the client in the opening case to trust in the care and support available. To see a different way forward. She canceled her abortion and continued her pregnancy through the help of CareNet Pregnancy Center instead. St. Vincent de Paul continues to offer support, mentoring and guidance.

“We have a lot of people praying for her. She seemed overwhelmed that we would go to such lengths to help her. She hopes to someday pay it forward,” the Vincentians noted.



(left) Pat Curran, Vincentian, St. Agnes Parish Conference, carries Society of St. Vincent de Paul banner during the procession of the Society’s annual patronal feast day Mass, Sept. 27.



(above) During Mass, Dawn Groneck was installed as the Diocesan Council President of St. Vincent de Paul of Northern Kentucky, pledging “to pray for the strength and wisdom to faithfully serve the members and those they visit.” Mrs. Groneck succeeds Casey Guilfoyle in the role.

(left) Father Andrew Young, pastor, St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring, was the celebrant and homilist, encouraging Vincentians, “To pray for the grace never to lose sight of that compassion and the mission the Lord gives to the Society to help those around us, to love them, to care for them, to show the love Christ to them. And pray that in every encounter ... that the Lord will work through you to lead souls to him.”



## Bishop's Schedule

- Oct. 3**  
All-school Mass, Mary, Queen of Heaven Church, Erlanger, 8:30 a.m.
- Oct. 6–10**  
Priest retreat, St. Meinrad Archabbey, Indiana
- Oct. 4**  
Religious Jubilarian/Religious Superiors lunch, St. Charles Community, Ft. Wright, noon
- Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 4:30 p.m.



# ‘Healing and Hope’ initiative tackles mental illness crisis at local level

Gina Christian  
OSV News

The nation’s Catholic bishops have launched a new effort to more closely engage the faithful in addressing the issue of mental health, particularly at the local level.

In a Sept. 16 press release, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops announced its “Healing and Hope” initiative as a “new component” of the USCCB’s National Catholic Mental Health Campaign.

Unveiled in October 2023, the campaign is spearheaded by Metropolitan Archbishop Borys A. Gudziak of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, and Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, who leads the USCCB’s Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth.

Several organizations partnered with Archbishop Gudziak and Bishop Barron in developing the campaign — among them Catholic Charities USA, the Catholic Health Association, the National Catholic Partnership on Disability and the Association of Catholic Mental Health Ministers.

In their introductory message for the effort, the two prelates said their goals were threefold: to raise greater awareness of the issue, to remove the sense of stigma for those suffering from mental illness, and “to advocate a clear message to all: everyone who needs help should get help.”

The “Healing and Hope” initiative takes its name from the campaign’s introductory statement by Archbishop Gudziak and Bishop Barron, who stressed that “anyone

who is suffering from mental illness or facing mental health challenges” remains “a beloved child of God, a God of healing and hope.”

“Healing and Hope” — which is aimed at both those who suffer from mental illness, and those who support them — will feature three new elements to back that message.

A revived digital campaign for the effort will include

realities,” with the first such event scheduled to take place early next year in New Jersey, said the release.

Parishes are being encouraged to “raise awareness of mental health” by observing “Mental Health Sunday” and praying at Masses during the Oct. 11-12 weekend, which follows World Mental Health Day on Oct. 10.

Resources for Mental Health Sunday are available at [usccb.org/mental-health-sunday](https://usccb.org/mental-health-sunday)

The USCCB also urged faithful to pray the conference’s Novena for Mental Health, the nine days of which commence on World Mental Health Day and conclude on Oct. 18, the feast of St. Luke, the evangelist and a patron of health care, who in the Letter to the Colossians is referenced as “the beloved physician” (Col 4:14).

Each day of the novena, which opened the USCCB campaign in October 2023, focuses on a particular aspect of mental health, addressing stigma, social relationships, and the impact of factors such as racism and poverty. Saints and others invoked during the novena include St. Dymphna, patron of those with mental illness; St. Martin de Porres, who experienced racial discrimination throughout his life; and Dorothy Day, a servant of God who twice attempted suicide as a young woman.

Novena materials can be found online at [usccb.org/mental-health-novena](https://usccb.org/mental-health-novena).

Close to 60 million U.S. adults, or one in five, experienced mental illness in 2021, with more than 14 million of them reporting a serious condition and well over 19 million battling both substance abuse and mental illness concurrently, according to the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

The nation’s youth have been particularly hard hit: In 2021, U.S. Surgeon General Vivek H. Murthy issued an advisory on the issue, citing data that showed in 2019, one in three high school students and half of female students reported feelings of persistent sadness or hopelessness, a 40 percent spike since 2009.

Among U.S. adults, anxiety disorders (19.1 percent) top the annual list of reported mental health conditions, followed by major depressive episodes (8.3 percent) and post-traumatic stress disorder (3.6 percent), according to data cited by the National Alliance on Mental Illness.

Bipolar disorder (2.8 percent), borderline personality disorder (1.4 percent), obsessive-compulsive disorder (1.2 percent) and schizophrenia (less than 1 percent) each represented less than 3 percent of reported conditions, said the organization on its website.

Those experiencing a mental health crisis can call 911 or call or text 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, which also offers support in Spanish.



The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on Sept. 15, 2025, announced a new component of its National Catholic Mental Health Campaign, “Healing and Hope.”

bishops’ reflections, posted to the USCCB’s social media platforms, that will “invite all people into deeper conversation on the realities and stigmas of mental health,” said the USCCB in its release.

In addition, bishops, clergy, religious and lay people will gather for state-level conferences on “local mental health



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## Wielding spiritual weapons

In August, the sisters and I were at a golf outing fundraiser that the Friends of the Rose Garden hosted to benefit the sisters’ apostolate, the Rose Garden Home Mission. At noon, we wanted to invite everyone to pray

GUEST



Mother Seraphina Quinlan, FDM

the Angelus prayer with us, as we always do — even with our neighbors who come to the Mission for assistance.

So, I asked the D.J. if we could use the microphone that he had just been using, but he couldn’t get it to work. He played with a few controls and tried again, still it didn’t work. He went to hand us a different mic, but that one didn’t work either, even though he tried to connect and reconnect and play with the controls.

After about a minute or two, which could seem like a lifetime if you’re waiting for something, I realized that this is simply a case of spiritual warfare. Not wanting the tempter to have any influence over the situation by getting frustrated or giving up, I just shouted as loud as I could (which is pretty loud) the prayers for the Angelus.

Ephesians 6:12 tells us, “For our struggle is not with flesh and blood but with the principalities, with the powers, with the world rulers of this present darkness, with the evil spirits in the heavens.” The microphone had been operating just before I wanted to use it, but when we wanted to praise God for His gift of the Incarnation and invite others to pray with us, both microphones would not work.

We are no strangers to spiritual warfare. Very often, it seems that when we are doing some good work for the Lord, or something holy we get resistance from the evil one. We have grown to look at these “attacks” as signs of encouragement, that we are pleasing the Lord. For if we are making the devil angry, even if he hates us, why is that a bad thing?

In another instance, we were driving on the interstate

from Williamstown when I noticed the car next to us going the same rate of speed, which is very unusual. So, I glanced over, and it was a yellow taxi like you would see on the streets on New York, with a man gesturing at me.

First of all, how many yellow taxis have you ever seen in Kentucky? This is the only one I’ve ever seen! But the driver truly frightened me, so I slowed down — and he slowed down. I sped up — and he sped up. I started weaving in and out of traffic trying to lose him, when I remembered that we had not prayed the St. Michael prayer like we always do when we travel. So, we quickly prayed the prayer, passing a semi-truck to my right. When we got to the other side of the truck, the taxi was gone!

Sirach 2:1 says, “My child, when you come to serve the Lord, prepare yourself for trials.” This is why there are gargoyles on churches like our Diocese’s Cathedral Basilica, to remind us that even though we do something holy, like participate at Mass, it won’t exempt us from the spiritual trials that are a natural part of following Jesus Christ.

To combat these spiritual trials, we Catholics have very many “weapons” in our arsenal. We have the Sacraments, for instance, of Reconciliation and Communion.

When we unburden ourselves of all the sins we remember, have a firm purpose of amendment, receive absolution and perform a penance, it closes the door on any influence the evil ones had against you and imparts grace upon your soul — the spiritual strength to turn away from evil and do good.

When is the last time you bathed your body? How long has it been since you last took a bath for your soul? I pray you take advantage of this Sacrament often!

Communion is just that, union with God. When we receive the Holy Eucharist, we take the true Presence of Jesus Christ, Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity in to our bodies and souls. We have the unfathomable grace of receiving God in to ourselves! Let Jesus be your Champion to, “bind the strongman.” Luke 11:21

For more on spiritual weapons see: Ephesians 6:10-17. *Mother Seraphina Quinlan, FDM, is a member of the Franciscan Daughters of Mary, pro-life missionary sisters operating in the Diocese of Covington.*

## Abortion abolition

The overturning of Roe v. Wade in 2022 has brought our country and the pro-life movement to a new political and legal reality. The achievement of that longstanding goal requires us all to consider anew how to best protect unborn life and support families in difficult circumstances.

GUEST



Jason Hall

The Catholic Church has built on our longstanding work supporting vulnerable women and families with initiatives like “Walking with Moms in Need,” a parish-based program geared toward meeting the needs of women and families in local communities. The program “works to ensure that any woman who finds herself unexpectedly pregnant, or parenting in difficult circumstances,

can turn to her local Catholic Church and be connected with the resources she needs. Volunteers walk with moms throughout the motherhood journey, offering them authentic Christian friendship and ongoing support.” (walkingwithmoms.com)

Many parishes throughout Kentucky are participating in this program and adapting it to their local realities. I believe this is an effort, and an approach, of which we

should all be proud. To build a culture of life means loving and supporting people in their real-life circumstances, whatever those may be, and ensuring they have the means to make life-affirming choices.

Others in the pro-life movement have chosen a different approach. A movement favoring so-called “Abortion Abolition” wants to criminally prosecute women who seek abortions. If “abortion is murder,” the argument goes, then anyone procuring an abortion should be prosecuted.

It is certainly true that abortion is the taking of an innocent human life and the Church, including Pope St. John Paul II and Pope Francis, have used the word “murder” to describe it. And, the Catechism does anticipate “penal sanctions” being appropriate in some circumstances.

However, colloquially speaking of murder to highlight the moral gravity of what is happening in an abortion is quite different from the legal definition of murder.

The crime of murder (indeed, all intentional homicides) requires a mental state (premeditation or “malice aforethought”) that is simply not present in the vast majority of women seeking abortion. Women seeking abortions are almost always facing pressures arising from a relationship, financial concerns or other fears.

As Pope Francis wrote, “unborn children [are] the most defenseless and innocent among us ... this defense of unborn life is closely linked to the defense of each and every other human right ... On the other hand, it is also true that we have done little to adequately accompany

## The unmoved mover

The readings for the Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle C — are: **Habakkuk 1:2–3, 2:2–4; 2 Timothy 1:6–8, 13–14 and Luke 17:5–10.**

In the Gospel for this weekend, the apostles ask the Lord to: “Increase our faith.” I think, along with many others, that there is a great misunderstanding in today’s culture about what faith is and what it is not. Let’s start with the negative. Faith is not a blind belief, it is not a superstition, a credulity, naivete, gullibility nor is it an irrationality.

What it is, as defined by the Letter to the Hebrews, is: “...the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.”

If we break down that definition, we see that the use of our human reason and intellect is integral and necessary for faith. “Realization” is the awareness through thought, study, contemplation, examination, etc. that something is real. “Evidence” is the proof of

that thought, study, examination, etc. Synonyms include clear, apparent and obvious.

So, faith can be the obvious proof of invisible realities that have become known in the mind through the use of human reason and experienced in the heart because of a longing for that which is hoped. In the case of God, that hope is Heaven!

St. Thomas Aquinas provides the Church with five (5) proofs of God’s existence. I’ll share just one: The Unmoved Mover. He would argue that all of creation is in some form of motion or change. Nothing can move itself; it is always acted upon by an outside force. He argues that there cannot be an infinite chain of movers – those outside forces which cause the motion or change. There must be an initial mover who is unmoved. This unmoved mover we Christians call God. As a thought process, this invisible reality becomes clear to the mind through the use of reason!

If we desire to have an increase in faith like the apostles, then we have to start using our minds and our reason as we seek belief. St. Augustine would say: “do not seek to understand that you may believe, but seek to believe that you may understand.” Belief must come first!

Let’s give ourselves over to the faith of the Church, the faith into which we were all baptized... one that is pure and perfect. Then we can watch an exposition of growth, just like the tiny mustard seed becomes the greatest of bushes.

*Father Daniel Schomaker is pastor, Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell and director, Office of Worship and Liturgy for the Diocese of Covington, Ky*

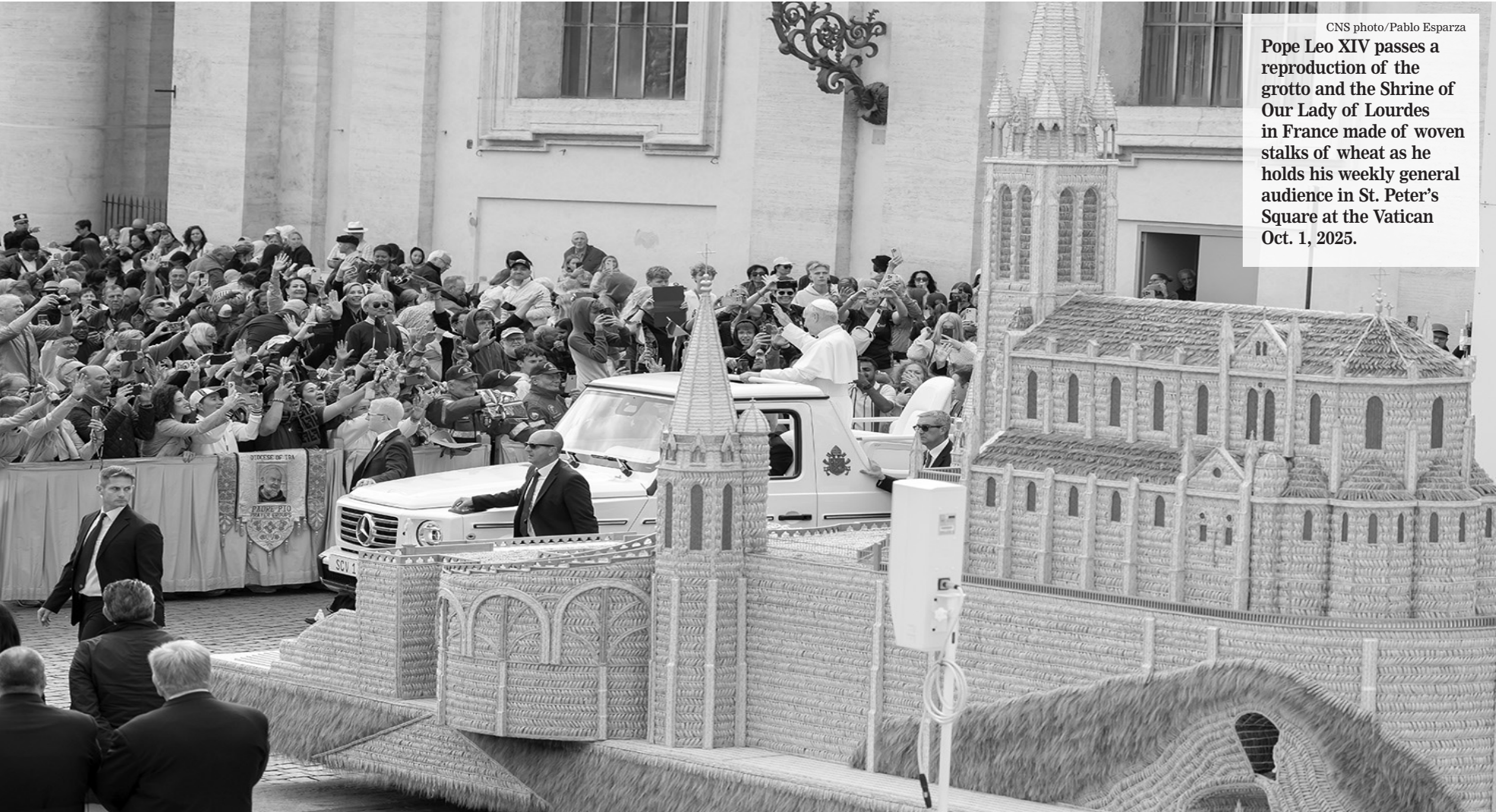
women in very difficult situations, where abortion appears as a quick solution to their profound anguish, especially when the life developing within them is the result of rape or a situation of extreme poverty. Who can remain unmoved before such painful situations?”

The mind of the Church, and indeed most of the pro-life movement, has long been that women are a second victim of abortion. Penal sanctions might indeed be appropriate in certain circumstances, for a provider or other involved person, but not the woman. Again, to impose punishment on the woman is to victimize her a second time.

*Jason Hall is the Executive Director of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky.*



# God never gives up on his children, even when they fail, pope says



CNS photo/Pablo Esparza  
Pope Leo XIV passes a reproduction of the grotto and the Shrine of Our Lady of Lourdes in France made of woven stalks of wheat as he holds his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Oct. 1, 2025.

**Carol Glatz**  
*Catholic News Service*

Sharing the joy of being loved by God despite one's human flaws is the mission of the Catholic Church, Pope Leo XIV said.

"This is the heart of the mission of the church: not to administer power over others, but to communicate the joy of those who are loved precisely when they did not deserve it," the pope said Oct. 1 during his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square.

"It is the strength that gave rise to the Christian communities and made them grow: men and women who discovered the beauty of returning to life to be able to give it to others," he said.

And as the month of October is dedicated to the holy rosary, Pope Leo invited the faithful "to pray it daily for peace in our world."

In his ongoing series of audience talks on the Jubilee theme, "Jesus Christ our Hope," Pope Leo reflected on Christ's resurrection as the source of Christian faith and hope.

Not only did the Son of God rise from the dead after his passion and violent death, he said, but he did so in a humble and loving way.

"Indeed, Jesus' resurrection is not a bombastic triumph, nor is it revenge or retaliation against his enemies," he said. "It is a wonderful testimony to how love is capable of rising again after a great defeat in order to continue its unstoppable journey."

"When we get up again after a trauma caused by others, often the first reaction is anger, the desire to make someone pay for what we have suffered," Pope Leo said.

Instead, Jesus "does not take revenge. He does not return with gestures of power, but rather with meekness; he manifests the joy of a love greater than any wound and stronger than any betrayal," he said.

The Risen Christ appears to his disciples, who had "denied and abandoned him" and are gathered in fear in the upper room, the pope said. He greets them with a simple, "Peace be with you!"

Then Jesus shows his disciples the wounds of his passion, Pope Leo said, but he does so not to shame or embarrass them, but to demonstrate how he is "fully reconciled with everything he has suffered."

"There is not a shadow of resentment. The wounds serve not to reproach, but to confirm a love stronger than any infidelity. They are the proof that, even in the moment of our failure, God did not retreat. He did not give up on us," he said.

"The Lord shows himself to be naked and defenseless," he said. "His is a love that does not humiliate; it is the peace of one who has suffered for love and can now finally affirm that it was worthwhile."

Often, people mask their wounds "out of pride or for fear of appearing weak," he said. And they may say "It doesn't matter" or "It is all in the past," even though "we are not truly at peace with the betrayals that have wounded us."

Jesus, however, "offers his wounds as a guarantee of forgiveness. And he shows that the resurrection is not the erasure of the past, but its transfiguration into a hope of mercy," he said.

Jesus then entrusts the apostles "with a task that is not so much a power as a responsibility: to be instruments of reconciliation in the world," he said. It is "as if he said: 'Who will be able to proclaim the merciful face of the Father, if not you, who have experienced failure and forgiveness?'"

Jesus gives them the gift of the Holy Spirit, which "sustained him in obedience to the Father and in love even to the cross," the pope said. "From that moment, the apostles will no longer be able to remain silent about what they have seen and heard: that God forgives, lifts up and restores trust."

"Dear brothers and sisters, we too are sent," he said. "Do not be afraid to show your wounds healed by mercy. Do not be afraid to draw close to those who are trapped in fear or guilt."

"May the breath of the Spirit make us, too, witnesses of this peace and this love that is stronger than any defeat," he said.

When greeting Arab-speaking pilgrims, especially those from Lebanon and the Holy Land, Pope Leo said every Christian "is called to be a witness of love and forgiveness being greater than every wound and stronger than every injustice."



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PEOPLE AND EVENTS

**The prayer intention for October, as recommended by Pope Leo XIV,** is for collaboration between different religious traditions; that believers in different religious traditions might work together to defend and promote peace, justice and human fraternity.

**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).

**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.

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).



***Celebrating the St. Henry High School Class of 1975***  
St. Henry High School Class of 1975 joined the parishioners of St. Henry Parish, Elsmere, for Saturday evening Mass before heading off to their festivities. Class members were lectors and brought up the gifts. At the end of Mass, Father Kevin Kahmann, pastor, offered them a blessing.

**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 [apokat@covdio.org](mailto:apokat@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).

**Northern Kentucky Youth Choir (NKYYC), a regional choir serving people ages 7 (6 reading) to 17, welcomes new singers and families throughout the year.** Programs: Oct. 21 (St. Walburg Monastery, Villa Hills); Nov. 11 (Holly Jolly Carolling at Behringer-Crawford Museum); and the Vatican initiated Pueri Cantores (“children sing”) Festival, Feb. 28 (all day). Autumn weekly rehearsals: Behringer-Crawford Museum. For information e-mail: [nkyYouthChoir@gmail.com](mailto:nkyYouthChoir@gmail.com); text/msg/call: Rebecca Wells

(859) 240-3738; Facebook: Northern Kentucky Youth Choir; website: [nkyYouthChoir.org](http://nkyYouthChoir.org).

**“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).

**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.

**Officials of National Merit Scholarship Corporation** announced the names of over 16,000 semifinalists in the 71st annual **National Merit Scholarship program.** These academically talented high school seniors have an opportunity to continue in the competition for some 6,930 national merit scholarships worth nearly \$26 million that will be offered next Spring. Eight students from five Catholic schools in the Diocese of Covington are among the semifinalists, they are:

**Covington Catholic High School, Park Hills**  
Jackson Germann  
William Jennings  
Brayden Proud

**Covington Latin School, Covington**  
Quinn Schulte

**Notre Dame Academy, Park Hills**  
Jacie Hail  
Jane Schuh

**St. Patrick High School, Maysville**  
Jada Dickson

**Villa Madonna Academy, Villa Hills**  
Drew Thomas



# March for Life reveals 2026 theme in ‘critical moment’ for the pro-life cause

Kate Scanlon  
OSV News

The 2026 National March for Life theme is “Life is a Gift,” The March for Life Education and Defense Fund announced Sept. 30.

Jennie Bradley Lichter, who became president of the March for Life earlier this year, noted the group chooses a theme each year for the annual pro-life march in Washington as “an opportunity to focus our attention on a key message or a timely element of the prolife mission.”

“We’re now at a critical moment in our country where the march for life and what we stand for is more important than ever,” Lichter told reporters at a launch event, adding, “This year, with this theme, we really want to speak to the heart.”

“It is really a moment for boldness,” she added.

Lichter also cited the recent murder of Charlie Kirk, a conservative activist and Turning Point USA founder, arguing its aftermath shows that “young people are looking for opportunities to come together, to hear the truth spoken boldly and persuasively, to recover the fundamental goodness of family life, and to help to hear people speak into that, to be affirmed in their desire for children as something that’s fundamentally good, and to hear people witnessing to what’s good and true and beautiful.”

“That’s my diagnosis of our moment,” she said. “The March for Life offers all of these.”

Organizers of the March for Life describe it as the nation’s largest annual human rights demonstration.

The 53rd annual National March for Life is scheduled for Friday, Jan. 23, 2026. A pre-rally concert will feature the Christian band Sanctus Real, Lichter said, and the Friends of Club 21 Choir, which is comprised of individuals with Down syndrome, will lead the national anthem at the event.

Georgetown University Right to Life will carry the banner at the start of the March.

Lichter said the group is also launching a “Marchers’ Stories Project” where they will seek video submissions from participants to document the group’s history.

## ACUE hosts major donors

(Continued from page 2)

“A Catholic education provides more than academic excellence,” she said. “It provides a faith-filled learning environment where students learn about their importance as a child of God, students learn about the love of Jesus and how to live that daily.”

Bishop John Iffert said to those gathered, “I thank you for giving young people opportunities that they may not otherwise have, to encounter good, solid education, by people who care for them, and especially to encounter the love and strength of Jesus Christ, the Lord.”

ACUE schools serve in the urban core of the Diocese of Covington, with schools operating in Covington, Bellevue and northern Taylor Mill. The organization’s primary function is to ensure that all children, regardless of economic status, have the opportunity to receive a high-quality, Catholic education.

Mrs. McGuire shared a story of one of those students, now a graduate of Holy Cross High School, Covington. Giselle entered St. Augustine Elementary, Covington, unable to speak English.

“Although St. Augustine didn’t have a Spanish speaking teacher or staff member, the school went above and beyond to support her, to welcome her and to include here in their school,” she said.

Giselle now plans to attend Purdue University and study cybersecurity. “Giselle is just one of countless examples of students who needed our schools, students who without this opportunity, may fall through the cracks or fail to reach their full potential due to a school environment that cannot fully support their needs,” said Mrs. McGuire.

The Drees Home Foundation has been a tireless supporter of ACUE and its mission. Ralph and Irma Drees, founders of the foundation, were the first to receive the ACUE Faith, Hope and Inspiration award, for their contributions to ACUE, both in time and money. They were also the first to achieve the title of “Cornerstone Donor,” with a donation in the amount of \$250,000.

Beth Ruehlmann, director of development for ACUE, said, “Ralph has a true heart for ACUE, his love for our ministry and his legacy of support continues now through the Drees Homes Foundation, which we honor this evening as Cornerstone Donors. They have renewed the commitment of our first Cornerstone Donors ... we are so grateful for your enduring support.”

## National Migration Week

(Continued from page 1)

selves having immigrated or came to America from countries such as Germany and Belgium.

“We know that all people who are baptized in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit are our brothers and sisters in Christ,” Bishop Iffert continued. “We understand that those who are of Christ are never truly at home in this world, but living as a pilgrim people in anticipation of fullness of life.”

He emphasized further, that “migrants and refugees are more than brothers and sisters who deserve our compassion and mercy ... migrants bear an infinite dignity, and are entitled to keep that dignity ... They are the foundation upon which church buildings,” referencing Bishop Camillus Maes, a former Bishop of Covington and Belgian immigrant who began construction of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, “and Church, the people of God, spring from and are supported by.”

Quoting Pope Leo XIV, who called migrants “messengers of hope,” Bishop Iffert said, “Many migrants, refugees and displaced persons are privileged witnesses of hope ... Indeed, they demonstrate this daily through their resilience and trust in God as they face adversity, while seeking a future in which they glimpse that integral human development and happiness are possible.” He goes on, Bishop Iffert said, that “in a world, darkened by war and injustice, even when all seems lost, migrants and refugees stand as messengers of hope.”

Circling back, Bishop Iffert once again brought light to the legacy of the Diocese of Covington, and the Church as a whole.

“It was the missionary mission of a migrant who first envisioned this place for you. It was a migrant architect who translated those dreams into stone and glass ... these people who come to us, whether because of a missionary zeal or from fear of violence or from desire for economic opportunity — they are not merely a duty. They are not a burden. They are certainly not, as some people have said, an infestation, a plague or a problem. They are brothers and sisters in Christ; they are messenger of hope,” Bishop Iffert said.

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# LIFE

OCTOBER IS  
RESPECT LIFE MONTH

SPECIAL SECTION OF THE MESSENGER

Our Sign  
of Hope

## RESPECT LIFE MONTH

October 2025



# As a community, we are gift to one another and challenged to love as God loves

**Most Rev. John Iffert**  
*Bishop of Covington*

This morning as I walked into church to celebrate Mass, the pastor excused himself for a moment as he rushed across the parking lot to greet a young family. “New baby,” he said in explanation. As I watched, a young family slowly unpacked themselves from the car, Dad carried a covered car seat.

“I just had to check on the newest member of the parish,” the priest said, as Dad smiled and lifted the light blanket shielding the newborn from the sun and breeze. She was barely two weeks old and had come early. “We’re having a good morning this morning,” Dad said.

As the pastor’s eyes widened and he cooed over the tiny baby (whose crop of black hair was as large as she was) a knot of people gathered. A neighbor leaned over the baby carrier, took a pronounced whiff and proclaimed, “new baby smell.” Another asked the four-year old in the family how she liked being a big sister and teased an answer out of the shy, dimpled child. The oldest boy slipped out of the front seat carrying two boxes of donuts to share after Mass. He was quiet and blushed a little from all the attention his family was receiving.

A couple of older women from the parish were especially attentive to the mother of the new baby, cooing over her with “Dears” and “Loves.” They took her hands and patted her arms tenderly, making over her as they led her across the parking lot toward the open doors of the sanctuary. After Mass I learned that this mother suffered Eclampsia



**Bishop John Iffert**

during pregnancy and postpartum depression that had been a cause of great concern for her husband and her parents. The church gathering was caring for this one who had suffered bringing this new child into the world.

As I celebrated Mass, my eyes and thoughts drifted repeatedly to this little family. The father cuddled his little “bean” against his heart, tucking her vulnerable head beneath his protective chin. The flesh of his cheek pressed against her crown and hair. Contact. Devoted, human, reassuring, loving contact was what the day called for, and what this little family received from this church community to whom they were clearly dear.

As we left Mass and shook hands that day someone nodded to the new father saying, “There’s the picture of a happy father.” This simple sentence summed up the gratitude and relief that everyone felt to see this new life come safely into the world and the risk and difficulties experienced receive tender care and begin to recede.

Humanity flourishes when each child born into the world is so cherished and warmly received. Holiness abounds when we revere the elderly, value human life regardless of ability or dependence, and regard every moment of life as a moment for the building of friendship and loving relationship. When we realize that we are gift to one another and, for love of Jesus, hold each of his dear ones close in community, we image the Divine, Trinitarian, love that is the source of every life and the origin of creation.

We celebrate October as Respect Life Month. It is a month dedicated to our aspiration to see as God sees, value as God values and love as God loves. This month we pray that tenderness and care may be at the heart of every Christian and the organizing principle of every community. They will know we are Christians by our love.

P.S. On the same morning that I witnessed this little icon of respect for life in a Catholic community, the parish announced that ushers would lock the street-facing doors as Mass began for the protection of those attending. Later that morning, a shooter ran his car into the Church of Latter-day Saints in Grand Blanc, Michigan, set the building on fire, and shot worshipers. This is only the latest in a chain of acts of violence against religious targets.

I beg you, please do not allow events like these to discourage us from gathering for worship and to practice the art of being caring community to one another. Isolation is part of the mix of factors that drive these men toward terrible acts of violence. Let us not let violence drive us toward the contagion of isolation. Our life together as community in Christ is an aid to happiness, an antidote to isolation, a stance against the corruption of violence, and an opportunity to respect and cherish one another and the life God shares with us. May this peril drive us into the arms of God and community, rather than discourage us from the way of love.

## Let us be anchors of hope

**Faye Roch**  
*Director, Pro-Life Office*

This year’s USCCB Respect Life theme comes from our ongoing Jubilee Year of Hope, “Life: Our Sign of Hope,” a message to all that we are called to be a sign of hope to the world.

Last month, I had the privilege to attend the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Respect Life Conference. At the



**Faye Roch**

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# Serve Boldly.

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*“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations!”*  
Matthew 28:19



(Continued from page 10)

conference, Bishop Daniel Thomas of Toledo, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, challenged us to be “anchors of hope.”

What is hope and how does it apply to our Catholic faith? According to the Catechism of the Catholic Church, Christian hope is “the theological virtue by which we desire the kingdom of heaven and eternal life as our happiness, placing our trust in Christ’s promises and relying not on our own strength, but on the help of the grace of the Holy Spirit” (CCC 1817).

“Hope keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude” Catechism of the Catholic Church [CCC], 1997

As I reflect on this, I realize that through Christ and the power of the Holy Spirit, I can achieve the grace to be hope in action to others, and through these graces have the exterior witness that shows others the joy of hope.

“How important it is that each and every baptized person feel himself or herself called by God to be a sign of hope in the world today,” said Pope Leo XIV in an address

to African Ambassadors in May.

These words of our new pope challenge us to reach out to those in our society today who are experiencing hopelessness and emptiness: women facing unexpected pregnancies, those with serious or terminal illnesses, the handicapped and those with mental illness, the elderly, the homeless, the immigrant, and many others.

We have so many opportunities right here in our Diocese to be living anchors of hope.

To that woman who finds herself in an unexpected or unwanted pregnancy, many times she may feel that her only solution is to have an abortion because she has lost hope. Our response is the Walking with Moms in Need Program here in the Diocese of Covington. This parish-based initiative has helped women facing very difficult circumstances to make the decision to choose life.

After choosing life for her unborn child, our WWMN programs have helped women with mentoring, assisting with financial and material resources and offering ongoing support in helping them to become successful parents. This encouragement and being pointed in the right direction give a person facing an unexpected pregnancy the

hope of moving forward.

Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Covington is an anchor of hope to families and individuals facing difficult situations. They embody the corporal works of mercy in feeding the hungry at Parish Kitchen, visiting the prisoner through its prison ministry program, sheltering the homeless in its St. Joseph Apartments, and providing mental health services to children and adults. Those they serve may feel hopeless and not be motivated to move forward, but through the love and compassion provided by Catholic Charities, they see and witness hope in action.

In our parishes, those who take the Eucharist to the homebound have the opportunity to not only deliver the Body of Christ, but to be the face of hope to those who feel the heavy burden of suffering. Hope is a light we can pass on to others; we are living reminders that we are all loved by God and that every human life, to the very last breath, has inestimable value and demands our protection and care.

Pope Benedict XVI in his encyclical, “Saved in Hope,” declared, “The one who has hope lives differently; the one who hopes has been granted the gift of a new life.”

# Thomas More University establishes family-friendly resources for mothers on campus

Caitlin Dwyer  
Contributor

Thomas More University has always sought to help pregnant and parenting students on an individual basis; however, this summer, the university made a more visible, institutional commitment to supporting all pregnant and parenting members of its community.

In October 2023, members of the diocesan We Choose Life committee shared a flyer with me detailing the Guadalupe Project — an amazing initiative at Catholic

University of America which seeks to build a culture of radical welcome for moms, dads and babies on campus. As a faculty advisor of Thomas More’s Saints for Life club, I knew many of CUA’s initiatives fit with the hopes of SFL’s president, Amber Konerman, to pursue similar advancements on campus. Their efforts were also in keeping with our administration’s desire to be more family-friendly, evidenced by an expansion of the parental leave policy. I sent the flyer along to Thomas More’s Vice President of Strategy and Chief-of-Staff, Kelly French, and she quickly

called together an Administrative Council Pregnancy and Parenting Taskforce including Amber, myself and other representatives across campus.

Over the next couple of years, the group worked to outline and implement feasible initiatives that would advance the following mission:

“As the Catholic university of the Diocese of Covington, Kentucky, Thomas More University welcomes and celebrates

(Continued on page 14)



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Young children bow their heads in prayer at the beginning of the Cross the Bridge for Life program, June 2025.



Candles placed before the statue of The Pieta.



A Franciscan Daughter of Mary plays in the soil with a little girl in front of the Capitol during the 2025 March for Life.



Diocesan students carry signs reading "I am the Pro-life Generation" during the 2025 March for Life in this archive photo.



A young girl stands with one of the members of a community resource agency in attendance as her mother signs up for the resource at the 2025 Community Baby Shower.



(left) Faye Roch, diocesan director, Pro-Life Office and (right) Julie Gallenstein, parishioner and Saints for Life chair, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington, accept vigil candles in memory of each child lost. (above) The candles are placed before the statue of The Pieta.



# RESPECT LIFE

## Programs and Activities of the Pro-Life Office

The Pro-Life Office actively implements the Pastoral Plan for Pro-Life Activities of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), which calls upon the Church, its people and its institutions in a four-prong program in defense of human life. The Pro-Life Office employs the four components of prayer, pastoral care, education and public policy called for in this Pastoral Plan throughout the diocese through the following programs and activities:

**Parish Coordinator Gathering for Prayer and Education\*** — Parish and pro-life leadership members are invited to gather for prayer, information and education. This evening allows parish pro-life leaders to learn about resources available to them and they have the opportunity to share information, resources and ideas.

**Respect Life Program Materials** — These materials are published by the USCCB Secretariat for Pro-Life Activities and are distributed by the Pro-Life Office to be used as a resource in preparation for October, Respect Life Month. These resources are also for use throughout the year. This year's theme is "I came so that they may have life."

**Diocesan Pro-Life Mass** — Held during October, Respect Life Month, all in the diocese are invited to join together to show our solidarity for the cause of life by celebrating the Eucharist with our Bishop and the priests of our diocese at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption.

**Grade School Essay Contest and Banquet\*** — This contest is offered to all eighth graders in our diocese during the

month of October to provide students with an opportunity to reflect on the Church's teaching concerning the sacredness of life from conception to natural death. A banquet is held in March honoring the top 20 contestants of the Essay Contest. The Knights of Columbus along with the Pro-Life Office provide scholarship awards to the top three essays.

**March for Life and Kentucky March for Life** — For 50 years hundreds of thousands of people gathered annually to participate in the annual March for Life which takes place in our nation's capital every January, commemorating the Supreme Court Decision that legalized abortion on January 22, 1973.

Since the overturning of Roe v Wade, all states have been focusing on bringing awareness to the sanctity of life within their community. In 2024, the first Kentucky March for Life was held. 2025 Kentucky March for Life TBA.

**Catholics at the Capitol** — Led by the Catholic Conference of Kentucky, Catholics at the Capitol hosts a day giving the diocesan community the opportunity for education and advo-

cacy around issues like the death penalty, abortion, gun violence, school choice, and criminal justice reform. In 2025, Catholics at the Capitol event will be held in the Diocese of Covington at the Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, date TBA.

**Spiritual Adoption** — The Pro-Life Office encourages all schools and parishes to offer the opportunity to pray for the health and life of an unborn baby. This program, designed for first grade on up educates children at an early age about the dignity and sacredness of all human life. The Pro-Life Office provides all the necessary resource materials needed.

**Memorial Mass for the Loss of a Child** — The intention of this memorial Mass is to offer support and God's healing embrace through prayer and community outreach to help lift the burden of grief experienced by parents and families who have lost a child.

**Cross the Bridge for Life\*** — The annual Cross the Bridge for Life takes place on the first Sunday of June. Walk across the Purple People Bridge with people from the Greater

Cincinnati community to witness on behalf of the sanctity of all human life.

**We Choose Life** — A monthly page in the Messenger, featuring timely articles and information concerning life issues.

**Project Rachel\*** — God's greatest desire is to forgive, and the Catholic Church wants to reach out showing its mercy and offer healing and reconciliation to women and men who have had an abortion experience. Project Rachel is a confidential ministry; healing sessions are held throughout the year. For more information, please call our confidential phone number (859) 392-1547, or confidential e-mail [projectrachel@covdio.org](mailto:projectrachel@covdio.org).

**Catholic Medical Association** — The Catholic Medical Association is a growing professional organization that is committed in supporting physicians and healthcare professionals in offering health care in conformity to Christ the Divine Physician. The Diocese of Covington has established a guild of the Catholic Medical Association, the Sts. Teresa of Calcutta and Faustina Guild.

**Walking with Moms in Need** — In 2020, the USCCB asked all dioceses to participate in an initiative to create an (arch)diocesan-wide, parish-based program that supports women and families emotionally, spiritually and materially so they and their children can thrive during pregnancy and the critical first year of the baby's life.

**Pregnancy Care Network** — A network of non-profit agencies and ministries collaborating to improve the overall health and well-being of childbearing families in Northern Kentucky. Working with Walking with Moms in Need, the PCN hosts community baby showers two times a year, assisting pregnant and parenting families.

**Safe Haven Baby Boxes** — Is a national organization with a primary goal to raise awareness of Safe Haven Laws. Women in crisis can call the national 24-hour hotline and can receive counseling and assistance free of charge and offer the Safe Haven Baby Box as a last-resort option for women to surrender her baby while maintaining complete anonymity. Visit [www.shbb.org](http://www.shbb.org) for more information.



Hundreds make the walk from Festival Park across the Purple People Bridge, filling the bridge with joy in support of life.



This file photo from March, 2025, shows the top 20 students in the 2025 Pro-life Essay Contest — held annually for diocesan eight-grade students.



A mother holds her newborn baby at the fifth annual community baby shower hosted by the Pregnancy Care Network of Northern Kentucky, which includes the Diocese of Covington Pro-Life Office. The baby shower seeks to support new and expectant mothers in need.

## Resources of the Pro-Life Office

Faye Roch, Director  
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Website  
[www.covdio.org](http://www.covdio.org)

Project Rachel  
Confidential  
post-abortion healing  
(859) 392-1547  
[projectrachel@covdio.org](mailto:projectrachel@covdio.org)



# Family-friendly resources for mothers

(Continued from page 11)

brates students and employees who are parents or may become parents. TMU strives to ensure that the university is a supportive and encouraging presence in the lives of all students, faculty and staff in keeping with its recognition of the dignity of every human person as made in the image and likeness of God.”

This summer, TMU finally brought the plan to fruition. They published a central website outlining legal rights and resources for pregnant and parenting students and employees. The goal was to communicate clear support for parents and to create a “one stop shop” for answers to questions related to continuing education and employment at Thomas More while pregnant or parenting.

Two convenient parking spaces were designated as

maternity parking for pregnant students and employees. Permanent changing tables were installed in the men’s and women’s restrooms of the Connor Convocation Center and the



Gallagher photo

(above and below) Images of the lactation room on Thomas More University’s campus, featuring comforting chairs and calming colors.



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Gallagher

Mary Seat of Wisdom Chapel. TMU confirmed that, as members, students and employees of Thomas More can utilize Five Seasons’ childcare services while working or attending classes.

Lastly, an unused office in the lower level of the Saints Center was converted into a lactation space for students, employees and guests on campus with the help of the late Krista Wilmink. Ms. Wilmink freely offered her design expertise to create a beautiful, welcoming, relaxing space on campus for moms and their babies. On one wall, there is a raised St. Edith Stein quote that affirms the dignity of motherhood that Ms. Wilmink believed in and embodied, “To be a mother innately means to cultivate, to guard and to develop true humanity.”

Thomas More community members are excited about these developments with one pregnant employee saying, “This is the best time ever to have a baby at Thomas More!” TMU hopes these initiatives help all Thomas More parents feel valued and empowered to finish their education or continue their employment at the university. These efforts are a step toward building the “civilization of love” that Pope St. John Paul II so often talked about, making Thomas More a community characterized by radical hospitality, a place where all people experience their intrinsic worth as beloved children of God.



# Safe Haven Baby Boxes provide a valuable lifeline to infants and mothers in crisis

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

A mother in crisis, with her newborn, approach the fire station. A heated and monitored box on the side of building is marked with signage designating it as a “Safe Haven Baby Box.” If the mother is to leave her baby in the box, an alarm will sound to ensure their immediate safety — and the mother can be assured of this, with no shame or blame associated.

This is the function of the Safe Haven Baby Boxes — a lifeline for both mothers and infants in need. In an article published by the American Academy of Pediatrics, almost 1,000 infants have been found deceased after being illegally abandoned in the U.S. since 1999, with numbers seeming to be rising. Typically an act of desperation, parents now have access to Safe Haven laws to potentially lower the number of fatalities — with these boxes at the forefront of that mission. The laws dictate a possibility for a parent to safely abandon their baby under 30 days old anonymously, without fear of prosecution, so long as the infant is unharmed.

With more than 50 baby boxes in the state of Kentucky, and eight in the diocese, the Diocese of Covington’s Pro-life Office and other pro-life members of the community help to sponsor the installation of these life-saving locations — with more in the works, today.

Besides providing the option for safety for both infant and mother, Safe Haven also provides other options at the box — including resources inside to help her, should she decide to

keep the child.  
“I think what leads a young woman to use a baby box is that she’s lost hope,” said Faye Roch, director, Pro-life Office. “Having knowledge that there is somewhere that they can surrender their baby, knowing that we’re not going to shame her ... this is an option when she feels like she’s lost that hope. There should not be these cases where babies are being abandoned, because there are options out there.”



In this file photo from December 2023, Bishop John Iffert (center right) stands in front of the Edgewood fire station’s Safe Haven Baby Box.

No shame. No blame. No names.

Safe Haven Baby Boxes can be found at the following locations:

Carrollton Fire Department

Gallatin County EMS

Edgewood Fire Department

Hebron Fire Protection District

Florence Fire Department


Ludlow Fire Department

Ft. Mitchell Fire Department

Pendelton County Ambulance

Help can be reached at Safe Haven’s 24/7 hotline. 1-866-99BABY1

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RESPECT LIFE

# ‘If we want to be pro-life, we need to be pro-child,’ said Care Closet Diaper Bank organizer

Bella Bailey  
Multimedia Correspondent

While not a Catholic or Christian organization, the mission of the Care Closet of Northern Kentucky Diaper Bank is deeply aligned with the pro-life values of the Catholic Church. Their goal, to help as many families as possible with the rising costs of diapers and feminine hygiene products, both of which are considered luxury items and are therefore not eligible for government assistance.

“Most people don’t realize that these are not items that are covered by any kind of governmental assistance,” said Diane Beach, organizer and volunteer of the Diaper Bank.

Katie Herms, also an organizer and volunteer, said, “If we want to be truly pro-life, we need to be pro-child. Giving birth to the baby is obviously what we want people to do, but taking care of the baby long term is also just as important.”

Now, the Diaper Bank operates completely off the generosity of the community and grants, however it was not always this way. Upon its inception the Diaper Bank was partnered with an organization to help supply diapers, however due to “philosophical differences with how they wanted us to distribute versus how we felt like it was best for our families,” said Mrs. Beach, they decided to become independent.

“I remember how scared we were,” said Mrs. Herms. “We literally had no dollars.”

This led the two to explore grant writing. It was that first grant, in the sum of \$9,000, that they said, “Oh my gosh we can do this,” said Mrs. Beach.

In addition to grants, the support of the community helps to sustain the diaper bank. Whether it be student volunteers, local companies and churches or other volunteer groups, the community is a vital piece of the Diaper Banks mission and success.

“We’ve had great partnerships with different churches and groups that have come and helped us wrap diapers,” said Mrs. Herms.

When people sign up to volunteer for the Diaper Bank, they can expect to spend their time wrapping and sorting diapers into groups of 25. Each child served, receives 50 diapers a month.

“That may not be enough to make it the whole month, but our goal is to help as many with some instead of a few with all,” said Mrs. Herms.

She continued saying, “We take for granted that we can go out and buy a couple cases of dia-

pers. But for these families that’s a real decision. ‘Am I buying diapers this week or do I have enough money for groceries?’”

“We’re all just doing a teeny, tiny bit for the picture. To let moms know that there’s help, so they can keep their baby,” said Mrs. Beach.

Bailey photos



(above) Diane Beach labeled each bag prior to a diaper drop off, ensuring each family gets what they need.

(below) Katie Herms grabs the pre-packaged diapers off the shelves in their room at Holy Spirit Parish Center, Newport.



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RESPECT LIFE

# US bishops’ president begs Americans to see Christ ‘in every person,’ reject political violence

WASHINGTON — Five years after the release of Pope Francis’ encyclical on fraternal love, and amid a rise in political violence, the leader of the nation’s Catholic bishops is pleading for a rediscovery of — and respect for — a common humanity. “I ask every American to reflect on the value of every human life. I beg you to see Christ in every person, even those whose politics you oppose,” said Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and head of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services. The archbishop shared his thoughts in an Oct. 1 pastoral invitation for reflection ahead of the fifth anniversary of “Fratelli



OSV News photo/Tim Evans, Reuters

Flowers fill bullet holes on a Holy Family statue outside Annunciation Church in Minneapolis Sept. 2, 2025, which was the scene of a shooting Aug. 27. The shooter opened fire with a rifle through the windows of the church and struck children from the parish school who were attending Mass during the first week of school, killing two and wounding 21 others.

Tutti,” which Pope Francis penned in 2020 as an exploration and exhortation on the issues of human fraternity and social friendship. Archbishop Broglio’s reflection was released just days after several high-profile killings, including deadly attacks on a Latter-day Saints church in Michigan and a Catholic church in Minnesota, and the assassination of conservative political activist Charlie Kirk at a Utah university campus. While not naming those specific incidents, Archbishop Broglio lamented that

“places once regarded as safe harbors to grow and learn — our schools, universities and churches — have become sites of heartbreaking tragedy and bloodshed.” He called for a renewed embrace of the Gospel values, including the corporal works of mercy, listening and dialogue. The archbishop concluded his reflection with a call to pray “that we may discover anew that all are important and all are necessary, different faces of the one humanity that God so loves. Amen.”

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## ARCHIVIST

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# Annual cemetery visitations

(Continued from page 1)

Office of Worship and pastor of Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell. With its roots developing in early Christians visiting the tombs of those who have passed to ask for their intercession.

“It’s this prayer of intercession,” said Father Schomaker, “and so we visit our cemeteries where our

loved ones await the resurrection of the dead because we believe in the resurrection of the body.”

We visit, he said, “to maintain that relationship, between those who have died and the living. It doesn’t end in death, so we encourage that relationship to be continued.”

“As Catholics, we understand that death does not bring the end of life, it just brings a transition, change, in that life,” he said.

In the same way that we offer petitions at Mass for the deceased, Father Schomaker said that we offer our prayers at the cemetery, months and even years later.

“We’re dealing with a God who is outside of time, outside of space, who we believe to be eternally present. So, those prayers for the dead are as efficacious years and years after the death as they are on the day,” said Father Schomaker.

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**Bulletins:**

■ Sept. bulletin: posted Sunday, Sept. 7; due Tuesday, Oct. 7

The monthly e-mail reminder of a new bulletin posted will come from [system@pub.virtus.org](mailto:system@pub.virtus.org).

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■ Thursday, Oct. 9, 6 –8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ 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

■ Wednesday, Oct. 22, 6 –8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

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

■ Tuesday, Nov. 11, 6 –8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Thursday, Nov. 20, 9 –11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Thursday, Nov. 20, 6 –8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

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# Capuchin-run music school changes the region through culture in the Central African Republic

OSV News

The Central African Republic is one of the poorest and most unstable countries in the world. For years, it has been ravaged by civil war, tribal conflicts, and a lack of prospects for young people. It was here that a Capuchin priest decided to start something that might have sounded too crazy to many — a music school.

Now, the school runs the only radio station in the region and seeks to build a concert hall for the children to perform at.

“The hall is currently at the stage of building walls. We spent three months laying the foundations, and now we have the walls and roof ahead of us,” said Capuchin Father Benedykt “Benek” Paczka, the school’s founder.

There is no concert hall within a 300-mile radius in the western town of the Bouar region. “During the rainy season, it is essential. We need the funds that we are fighting for. The hall will accommodate 600 people,” Father Paczka said.

“Despite the war and constant killings in this country, we opened a music school,” Father Paczka told OSV News, recalling the modest beginnings: a few rooms in a monastery in Bouar, a few instruments, and a great desire for children to hear a different world.

Recently, Father Paczka launched a new project — Radio Siriri. “Siriri means ‘peace,’ the Capuchin said.

With solar panels powering it — “it is the only media outlet in our area.” It has an evangelization purpose, but Father Paczka said, “it also provides information about the rebellion, among other things.”

According to a United Nations report, “insecurity, armed conflict, and climate shocks continue to drive displacement across the country, where over 460,000 people are internally displaced and more than 700,000 remain refugees in neighboring countries.”

“Imagine that people buy small radios to listen to us when they go to work in the fields,” Father Paczka said. “We Capuchins want to bring the Good News to people here in the same way that it has long been done in Europe and the United States — through the media. There is no television here, but there is radio — our radio,” he said.

When the recruitment was announced back in 2017, several hundred children applied. They wanted to play, learn, and escape from everyday life, where the sound of weapons was more frequent than laughter.

Teachers from Europe started to come for a short-term contracts to teach the local kids.

Then, the music school quickly became more than just a place of learning, but a place of refuge.

“A few years ago, one of my students came and said he hadn’t eaten anything for two days. I thought my heart would break,” Father Paczka said.

When asked why he came so late, the boy answered that he was ashamed. “That was the moment when I didn’t wait, I set up a canteen for all the children,” the Capuchin friar said.

Today, every child eats first before classes every day. “It’s like in the Gospel: Jesus showed us how to love, but to also feed first,” Father Paczka said.

The same boy who went without food for two days is now studying in Nancy, France. The symbolic journey from hunger to a European university gives Father Paczka reasons for special pride.

“There is not a single music-trained teacher in the country. That’s why we want our kids to become educated musicians,” he told OSV News.

“The African Music School takes on the cost of tuition, but in return, we expect the youngsters who get this chance to return to the country and, with their talent and knowledge, open the door for more kids. It’s a very fair deal — they get a chance and then share what they’ve received.”

Parents place great trust in the school, Father Paczka said. “For the families of our students, it’s often the hope for a better life. A young person who studies helps not only himself, but also his family. When he goes abroad, he takes responsibility for his loved ones — and knows that he is not alone.”

The school teaches



OSV News photo/courtesy Father Benedykt Paczka

**Guitarists of the African Music School, established in the Central African Republic in 2017, perform on an undated photograph. The Central African Republic, where the school was established, is one of the poorest and most unstable countries in the world. For years, it has been ravaged by civil war, tribal conflicts, and a lack of prospects for young people. A Capuchin-run music school, where they can learn to sing and play instruments, changes lives of local youth.**

everything from keyboard instruments, drums, bass guitar, electric guitar and classical guitar. There are also saxophones, trumpets and cymbals.

“That’s really a lot. It’s a chance to hold an instrument in your hands, not a rifle. And that changes everything,” Father Paczka said.

Students regularly give concerts, record, and the best ones go to music schools around the world. Several have received scholarships in Poland, France and the U.S.

The new hall is not just about having a roof over their heads during heavy rains. Father Paczka sees it as a space that will combine sports and music. A playing field where children can play soccer and a stage where concerts “for peace” will be held, the Capuchin told OSV News.

“Music changes people. When we play together, people forget themselves and become different,” he said.

Thanks to such initiatives, the town of Bouar gains something that cannot be bought — a sense of normality and community. “The parents feel the pride, they feel their children have a future,” Father Paczka said.

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# Abortion is never medically necessary, ‘even in an emergency,’ experts say

Katie Yoder  
OSV News

Abortion — an act performed with the sole or primary intent of ending human life in the womb — is never medically necessary, according to medical doctors and Catholic experts on the issue.

“The direct killing of an unborn child is never necessary, even in an emergency,” Dr. Kathleen Raviele, a retired, board-certified OB-GYN and past president of the Catholic Medical Association, said of abortion.

Instead, these experts said, doctors must endeavor to care for the two patients involved in every pregnancy: the woman and her unborn baby.

“When the lives of mother and child are both in danger, the goal should always be to do all we can to save both patients,” said Bishop Daniel E. Thomas of Toledo, Ohio, chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

These experts spoke about so-called emergency abortions in emailed comments to OSV News. Life-affirming alternatives to abortion exist in situations where a mother or her unborn baby faces a life-threatening condition, they said. Some procedures, they added, are also mistakenly called “abortion.”

Most of all, they wanted women facing pregnancy complications to know they are not alone.

Their comments followed the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services’ decision earlier this year to revoke guidance that instructed hospitals to perform abortions in emergency situations regardless of state law under the federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act, or EMTALA.

The term “emergency abortion,” Joseph Meaney, past president and senior fellow of the National Catholic Bioethics Center, or NCBC, said, is “often used by abortion supporters to describe situations where a pregnant mother’s life is at risk and they believe a direct abortion is indicated as a means to prevent the mother’s death.”

He and the other experts began their discussion by defining abortion itself.

The definition of “abortion” includes the purpose or intent to end human life, experts agreed.

An induced abortion is “a medical intervention to end a pregnancy such that it does not end in a live birth,” Dr. Christina Francis, a board-certified OB-GYN and CEO of the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, or AAPLOG, cited the definition provided by the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology,

known as ACOG.

“Note the phrasing ‘such that it does not end in a live birth,’” she said, “which reveals that the purpose of induced abortion is to end the life of the child in the uterus.”

Raviele agreed, saying, “Every procedure or medication whose intention is to directly kill a human life from fertilization until birth, is a direct abortion.”

Meaney cited the U.S. bishops’ Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services, which identify abortion as “the directly intended termination of pregnancy before viability (or before a baby can survive outside the womb) or the directly intended destruction of a viable fetus (who can survive outside the womb).”

With this definition in mind, these experts said that abortion is never necessary.

“It is never medically necessary to purposely end the life of a preborn child in order to save her mother,” Francis said, adding that “under certain circumstances where a pregnancy complication threatens a mother’s life, a physician must separate mom from baby, sometimes when the baby is too young to survive outside the womb.”

This separation of a mother and her baby is not an abortion, she said.

“AAPLOG recommends referring to these interventions as ‘maternal-fetal separations’ given the clear difference of intent between those lifesaving treatments and induced abortion,” she said.

According to the Guttmacher Institute, a reproductive research organization that supports abortion, only 7 percent of women cited their physical health or possible problems affecting the health of their unborn baby as their “most important reason” for an abortion in 2004.

More recently, a 2022 analysis from Charlotte Lozier Institute, the research arm of pro-life advocacy group SBA Pro-Life America, found that over 95 percent of abortions are for “elective and unspecified reasons” rather than “risk to the woman’s life or a major bodily function” (0.03 percent) or “abnormality in the unborn baby” (1.2 percent).

Raviele and Meaney recognized situations can exist where a pregnant woman may receive life-saving treatment for herself even if it threatens or indirectly leads to her baby’s death. The intent, here, is to save her life, not end her baby’s life.

Both cited the bishops’ directives: “Operations, treatments, and medications that have as their direct purpose the cure of a proportionately serious pathological condi-

tion of a pregnant woman are permitted when they cannot be safely postponed until the child is viable (or can survive outside the womb), even if they will result in the death of the unborn child.”

Raviele gave an example.

A woman “who is 12 weeks pregnant and diagnosed with ovarian cancer, could undergo a complete hysterectomy with the baby in utero, even though there is no chance the child will survive,” she said. “The surgery is to treat her cancer, not to kill the baby.”

Meaney cited the principle of double effect attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas, which “involves evaluating certain good actions intended for a good purpose that can also have foreseen but unintended bad effects,” as he describes in an NCBC essay.

“What the church is saying is that the principle of double effect can justify treatments to save the life of the mother if everything is done to also save the child and there is no other option available,” Meaney said of the directives. “What is never ethically acceptable is to directly kill or abort the preborn child as a ‘treatment’ for the mother.”

Francis echoed Meaney and Raviele while responding to claims that women need abortion for complications such as miscarriages or ectopic pregnancies, a life-threatening situation where an embryo implants outside the womb.

“In the case of miscarriage management, the preborn child has already passed away, and the purpose of the physician’s interventions is to help the mother’s body safely pass the baby’s body and pregnancy tissue,” she said. “In the case of ectopic pregnancy treatment, early delivery for preeclampsia, and other similar interventions, the purpose is to save the mother’s life, not to end the baby’s (life).”

She added: “By contrast, in the case of induced abortion, if the baby survives, the procedure is considered to have failed.”

Bishop Thomas also addressed “certain rare and life-threatening conditions” that “may require medical interventions that unintentionally and indirectly lead to the death of the preborn child,” including ectopic pregnancies.

“(E)thical treatment for an ectopic pregnancy is not considered an abortion,” he said. “These interventions may include the removal of the damaged fallopian tube containing the embryo or, if the death of the embryo has already occurred, medication may be used to resolve the ectopic pregnancy.”

Addressing church teaching, Bishop Thomas said that abortion is “never the right moral decision” and that “(w)e must make a clear moral and legal distinction between tragically losing a child and intentionally taking the life of a child.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, which summarizes church teaching, recognizes the inherent dignity of the human person beginning at conception and condemns any “crime against human life,” such as abortion.

“Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion,” it reads. “Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law.”



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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

US pilgrims at Jubilee of Catechists have private audience with pope

VATICAN CITY — Among the estimated 20,000 pilgrims in Rome for the Jubilee of Catechists, a group of three dozen from the United States had their own private audience with Pope Leo XIV. The pilgrims — an archbishop, volunteer parish catechists, diocesan employees, religious sisters and two staff members from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops — met with the pope Sept. 27 before his Jubilee audience. The pope told them that all Catholics, by virtue of their baptism, are called to be teachers of the faith, said Marilyn Santos, associate director of the USCCB Secretariat of Evangelization and Catechesis. The next morning, during Pope Leo’s Jubilee Mass, he formally installed in the ministry of catechist Santos and David Spesia, executive director of the secretariat. The first reading at the Mass was proclaimed by another member of the pilgrimage: Robert Gallagher, a volunteer catechist at the Basilica of St. Edward in Palm Beach, Florida.

World must recommit to peace, justice, truth, Vatican diplomat tells UN

UNITED NATIONS — As the world grapples with “mounting challenges,” the global community must “recommit to the foundational pillars” of peace, justice and truth, learning from history and building a more equitable future, a top Vatican diplomat told the United Nations. Archbishop Paul R. Gallagher, who serves as the Vatican’s secretary for relations with states and international organizations, shared his thoughts Sept. 29 while addressing the U.N. General Assembly, amid the opening of its 80th session at its New York headquarters. The theme of this year’s general debate is “Better Together: Eighty Years and More for Peace, Development and Human Rights,” which Archbishop Gallagher said “highlights the ongoing importance of multilateral cooperation in addressing global issues.” Among those are conflict, the arms race, poverty, debt, climate crises and the rapid advance of artificial intelligence, he said. With the U.N. marking eight decades since its 1945 establishment, the body’s “core values of fostering international peace, development and universal human rights” are “all the more important in an increasingly fragmented world,” said Archbishop Gallagher.

Mass and procession in the US capital calls for solidarity with migrants facing mass deportation

WASHINGTON — Nearly 1,000 people joined the procession

for the 111th World Day of Migrants and Refugees in the nation’s capital, which had “Migrants, Missionaries of Hope” as its theme. They paused at seven reflection stops, traveling through Northwest on that Sunday, Sept. 28, before concluding the walk at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle, where Washington Cardinal Robert McElroy celebrated a Mass marking the day. The procession and reflections were organized by the Archdiocese of Washington and Jesuit Refugee Service/USA. City noise gave way to hymns and testimonies as people carrying sacred images led the walk. Many pilgrims also carried rosaries, fingering the beads in prayer as they moved along the route. The two-and-a-half-hour procession ended with a final blessing on the steps of the Cathedral of St. Matthew, where many participants wiped their brows in the late-afternoon sun before entering the church for the 5:30 p.m. Mass celebrated by Cardinal McElroy. In his homily marking the World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Cardinal McElroy said Jesus’s Parable of the Good Samaritan should guide Catholics’ response in standing in solidarity with those immigrants facing the government’s mass deportation campaign, regarding them as neighbors just as the Samaritan did to the robbery victim needing help.

Graduate, college-level seminary enrollments continued to slide

WASHINGTON — Graduate-level and college-level enrollment at Catholic seminaries in the U.S. were down significantly in the 2024-2025 academic year, while high school seminary enrollment has held steady, according to statistics released by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University in its Fall 2025 CARA Report. The figures highlighted in its quarterly newsletter were drawn from the organization’s June 2025 “Statistical Overview of Catholic Priests’ Formation in the United States for 2024-2025,” produced by CARA executive director Jesuit Father Thomas P. Gaunt and researcher Emma C. Mitchell. CARA — which has collected data on U.S. Catholic seminary enrollment since the 1967-1968 academic year — said that the 2024-2025 college seminary enrollment stood at 840, down 6% from 889 the previous academic year. At 300, current high school seminary enrollment was up 2% from the previous academic year’s 295. But enrollment in graduate-level seminary studies dropped 8% from 2,920 in 2023-2024 to 2,686 the following academic year. Overall, the numbers show the slide in seminarians has continued both long-term trends since the 1970-1971 academic years and since the 2020-2021 academic years marked by the COVID-19 pandemic. In the 1970-1971 academic year, graduate-level priestly formation stood at 6,426 seminarians. During the 2020-2021 academic year, there were 3,110 such seminarians. Similarly, the number of college seminarians has declined from 7,917 in the 1970-1971 academic year, and from 1,118 in the 2020-2021 academic year. High school seminarians have dropped off precipitously from 8,611 in 1970-1971, and from 336 in 2020-2021.

Catholic bishops mourn deadly attack on Latter-day Saints church in Michigan

GRAND BLANC, Mich. — Several Catholic bishops are expressing their sorrow over a deadly attack at a Michigan house of worship, which took place just weeks after a mass shooting at a Minnesota Catholic church. At least four were killed when a suspected gunman, a former U.S. Marine who served in Iraq, drove his truck into the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints in Grand Blanc Township during a Sept. 28 service, and then set the building on fire while shooting into the congregation. Eight victims remain in the hospital, with one in critical condition, and authorities said they expect to find more victims in the chapel’s rubble. In a statement provided to OSV News Sept. 29, Bishop Earl Boyea of Lansing, Michigan, in whose diocesan territory the Grand Blanc congregation is located, assured the congregation of his prayers and “assuring those who mourn, and those who are injured” of his “solace and support.” In a Sept. 29 statement, Archbishop Edward J. Weisenburger of Detroit said he was “heartbroken” by the attack. Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda of St. Paul-Minneapolis noted in a Sept. 28 statement that the Catholic and LDS communities now share a common sorrow, as just over a month earlier a gunman had killed two children and injured 21 individuals in an Aug. 27 shooting during a school liturgy at Annunciation Catholic Church in Minneapolis.

Patriarch Bartholomew marks ‘historic moment of Christian unity,’ says Virginia bishop

ARLINGTON, Va. — Meeting with Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew I during his apostolic visit to the U.S. was “incredible,” and marked a “historic moment of Christian unity,” said Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of Arlington, Virginia. The bishop shared his thoughts during the Sept. 23 episode of his weekly “Walk Humbly” podcast, recalling how he was “deeply honored to have been invited to be part of” what he called a “very impactful occasion.” Patriarch Bartholomew — the spiritual leader of the majority of the world’s Orthodox Christians, numbering some 300 million worldwide — made his eighth apostolic visit to the U.S. Sept. 14-25, accompanied by Greek Orthodox Archbishop Elpidophoros of America and other Orthodox clergy. Bishop Burbidge was a special guest at a Sept. 17 welcome doxology service for the patriarch, which took place at St. Katherine’s Greek Orthodox Church in Falls Church, Virginia, followed by a patriarchal audience and blessing. The encounter was “a local blessing with global significance,” with the doxology service taking place “right here in Falls Church, Virginia,” said Bishop Burbidge — something that “shows how the work of ... Christian unity is not just global, but also local, alive in our own neighborhoods and communities.”

NOVENA

A NOVENA TO SAINT JUDE AND THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved, and preserved throughout the world, now and forever. Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us. St. Jude, worker of miracles, pray for us. St. Jude, help for the hopeless, pray for us. Amen. **L.D.**



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