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Missed an edition? Current and back issues of the *Messenger* are available online at covdio.org/messenger.



Baker photos

(above left) Bishop John Iffert gives his closing remarks at the 2025 FIRE Foundation “Ignite the Mission” event, Oct. 2.

(above) People gather outside of Thomas More University’s Academic Center for the FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky’s event “Ignite the Mission.”

(left) A bottle of matches with a tag that reads “Do you believe a small match can light a big FIRE?” sits beside a vase of flowers. The message reflects the FIRE Foundation’s mission for inclusive Catholic education.

(below) While the audience tunes in to the FIRE Foundation’s program, a presentation slide reads “Inclusive education benefits all students — academically, socially, emotionally and spiritually.”



IGNITE celebrates inclusivity

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Supporters of the FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky’s mission came together, Oct. 2, for an evening of inclusive education celebrated in Thomas More University’s Academic Center, Crestview Hills.

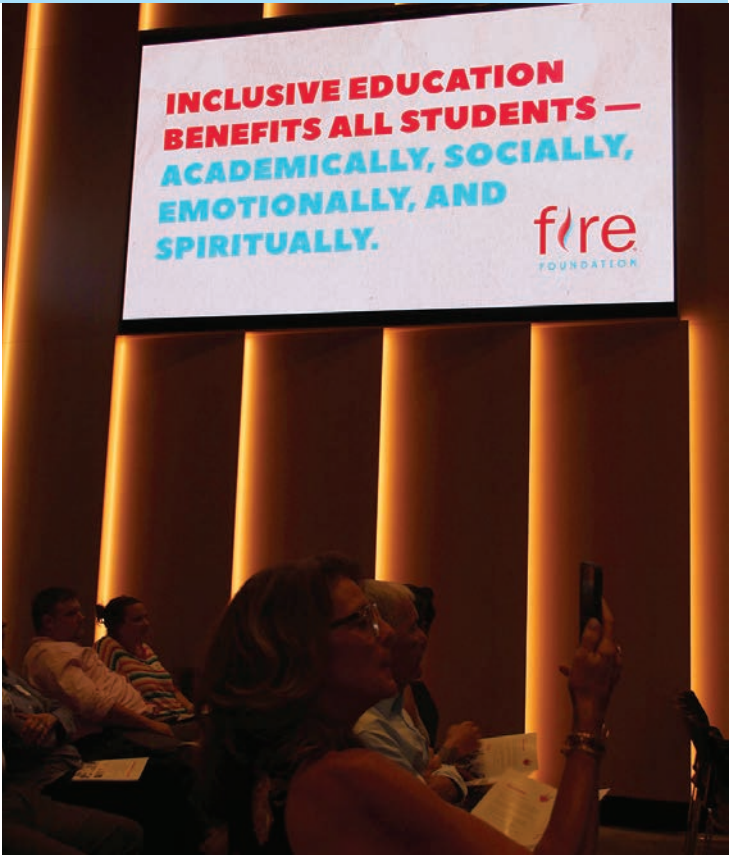
The evening, which began with an hour of socializing between guests, culminated in a program that expressed the foundation’s history and ministry — to make Catholic education accessible for all.

Officially established in November 2023, the FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky provides funding, training and personnel to Catholic schools for the purpose of inclusivity towards children with mental and developmental disabilities. Founded by parents who faced challenges with their own children’s education, the foundation has already provided vital assistance to St. Therese School, Southgate, with hopes to expand to more schools in the upcoming year.

With a goal of \$300,000, the money raised will both continue to support St. Therese School but also allow for the FIRE Foundation’s model to support four other schools for the 2026–2027 school year.

“The FIRE Foundation is ready to open the grant process to all of our schools to be able to meet their needs,” said Kendra McGuire, the Diocese of Covington’s superintendent. “But, in order to open the process, we need financial support to make this all possible.”

Schools in the Diocese of Covington are sponsored primarily by the parishes, with parishes contributing 30–70 percent of every collected dollar to their individual schools.



“That’s how important those Catholic schools have been to us,” Bishop John Iffert said in his closing remarks. “That’s how important we believe this strategy for passing on the faith is.”

The strategy of the FIRE Foundation, whose program originates in Kansas City, relieves the financial pressure from parishes while still allowing equal opportunity for children with disabilities.

“When we see a need, we work together to try to fill it,” Bishop Iffert said. “I’m very grateful for that.”

To learn more about the FIRE Foundation, or to make a donation, visit <https://www.firefoundationnky.org>.

A ministry marked by loving like Christ, Deacon McGraw celebrates twenty-five years

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

Deacon Joseph McGraw, currently assigned to Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel, Crestview Hills, celebrated 25 years of diaconal ministry with the anniversary of his ordination, May 13. Deacon McGraw’s ministry has spanned two states, five parishes and many roles.

It was his family and church community that helped him to realize his call to the diaconate. He said, “I was very fortunate to have wonderful, faithful parents and loving siblings, and I was further blessed when this continued with my wife and children. I think that kind of environment is really conducive to discerning a vocation. For me, a vocation is a calling from God, and it’s also a calling from the community.”

Following that call, Deacon McGraw was ordained in the Diocese of Cleveland, where he resided and ministered for 12 years following his ordination. There, he aided his Bishop and served two parishes each with over 2,500 parishioners.

“I did a lot of baptisms, I witnessed marriages, and, I would say, probably one of the most humbling things I did was I was with families as their loved ones passed away,” said Deacon McGraw.

After his 12 years of ministry in Cleveland, Deacon

McGraw and his family moved to the Diocese of Covington, where he was assigned to Holy Spirit Parish, Newport. It was there he remained, serving the parish for seven years before a reassignment to St. Therese Parish, Southgate, where he served for six years, before moving to his current ministry at Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel.

Currently, Deacon McGraw teaches in addition to his diaconal ministry, which he says are one and the same.

“The majority of the students here are not Catholic, and so you have to meet people where they are,” said Deacon McGraw. “I always tell the students in my class that relationships are just like with people and God. You’ve got to enter into a relationship, and you’ve got to spend time together. Then, once you do, you can start to trust the person, and once you trust the person, you can believe in that person. But you can’t expect people to start believing in a person right away.”

In the students he ministers to and teaches, said Deacon McGraw, he sees the heart of Christianity. “A lot of it goes back to what I see in the students,” he said. “They are much, much more empathetic than my generation ever was. And at the heart of Christianity is empathy.”

As for his next 25 years of diaconal ministry, Deacon McGraw hopes to do more of the same, helping draw others closer to Christ. “It’s trying to help everyone under-



Deacon Joseph McGraw

stand having faith ... There’s always talk about Catholic identity and what it is. For me, Catholic identity comes down to loving like Christ did. And if they let me do that, I’ll try it,” he said.

Celebrating the jubilarians of 2025

Bishop John Iffert and Notre Dame Sister Marla Monahan, vicar for religious, hosted the annual jubilarian luncheon, Oct. 4, at the Charleston Room, St. Charles Community, Ft. Wright, for women religious celebrating 50, 60 and 70 years of religious life.

In his remarks, Bishop Iffert said, “Thank you. Your life, your life of service has meant so much to so many, and we trust that God has this in God’s hands and is preparing something. Some way the seeds that you have sown will bear fruit in some tremendous way for the life of the Church — the Body of Christ.”

Jubilarians pictured with Bishop Iffert are: (front row, from left) Notre Dame Sister Mary Magdelyn Stritholt (70 years), Notre Dame Sister Mary Margaret Droege (60 years), Divine Providence Sister Jackie Schack (70 years), Divine Providence Sister Janet Carr (60 years), (back row, from left) Divine Providence Sister Marie Rose Messingschlager (60 years), Notre Dame Sister Pamela Mae Geiger (50 years), Bishop Iffert, Notre Dame Sister Kristel Noehring (60 years) and Notre Dame Sister Marge Mouch (60 years).

Jubilarians not pictured are: Divine Providence Sisters Armella Pietrowski (70 years), Madonna Marie Kling (60 years); Notre Dame Sisters Ruth Agnes Delaney (70 years) and Mary Patricia Bruemmer (60 years).



Keener photo

KY Colonels award and fifth ‘Gold’ ranking honor the Rose Garden’s free clinic

Staff report

The Center for Hope and Healing, a health ministry of the Rose Garden Home Mission of the Franciscan Daughters of Mary in Covington, is humbled and honored for two recent recognitions.

(right) Franciscan Daughter of Mary Mother Seraphina joined Thersa Furnish, APRN, the new executive director of the Rose Garden Center for Hope and Healing, Covington, to display the Center’s fifth Gold Standards rating from the National Association of Free and Charitable Clinics. Gold marks the highest level of achievement for breadth and delivery of patient services, responsiveness and administration.

(far right) In June Sheila Carroll, founder of the Rose Garden Center for Hope and Healing, and Franciscan Daughter of Mary Sister Catherine accepted a 2025 Good Works Program award from the Honorable Order of Kentucky Colonels. The award will support nearly \$5,000 worth of free medical tests.

The Center for Hope and Healing is state licensed and is Northern Kentucky’s only free walk-in primary care clinic. Already this year nearly 300 uninsured and underinsured patients have come in for friendly, unhurried professional healthcare at no charge. All services rely entirely on donations and volunteers.

Local medical, dental and psychological professionals are urged to volunteer at their convenience for this front-line mission work within our own Diocese. Contact the Center at rghmclinic@gmail.com or visit fdofmary.org for details.



Photos submitted

The final regional Jubilee pilgrimage offers space for faith renewal among 1,200 relics with Bishop John Iffert

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

The theme of the 2025 Jubilee Year, Pilgrims of Hope, has encouraged approximately 35,000,000 people from across the world to make that titular pilgrimage to Rome. However, for most, this kind of pilgrimage is unrealistic, cost-prohibitive, and time-restrictive, though this does not mean they cannot make a pilgrimage during the Jubilee Year.

Bishop John Iffert, through the diocesan Office of Stewardship and Mission, has organized many regional opportunities for the faithful of the Diocese of Covington to make a pilgrimage with him. So far, there have been two regional pilgrimages: one to St. Mary of the Woods College, St. Mary of the Woods, Indiana, where the shrine of Saint Mother Guerin is located; the other to the Abbey of Gethsemani, Trappist, Kentucky, where Trappist Monks lead lives of prayer.

The final of these regional pilgrimages will take place Nov. 22, with Bishop Iffert and the faithful traveling to the Maria Stein Shrine of the Holy Relics, Maria Stein, Ohio. Jim Hess, director, Office of Stewardship and Mission Services, said, “The shrine itself is incredible. They have really beautiful grounds, they have over 1,200 relics, five different relics of the true cross.”

The shrine’s reliquary collection is one of the largest documented collections in the world; however, the unique opportunity to connect with the saints is not the only thing it offers. “This shrine really offers that beacon of hope for people,” said Mark



2025 Jubilee Holy Year

Fall Pilgrimage to Maria Stein Shrine of the Holy Relics

Saturday, November 22, 2025



With Bishop John Iffert and the Diocese of Covington

Discover more about the special Jubilee Year and how our Diocese is celebrating at www.covdio.org/jubilee

<div>ITINERARY</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Deluxe Motorcoach departs from Furniture Fair Campbell County• Mass with Bishop Iffert• Tour and Presentation• Relic & Adoration Chapel• Museum• Little Chapel in the Woods• Outdoor Stations of the Cross• Gift shop• Buffet Lunch• All Taxes & Gratuities for Included Features• Services of a Provident Tour Director	<div>Maria Stein is home to the second largest documented Holy Relic collection in the U.S.A.</div> 
<div>PRICING</div> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Pricing: \$250, due at time of booking.• No refunds or cancellations.• Complimentary name changes are permitted.• Financial Assistance is available. Contact Jennifer at the Diocese of Covington’s Stewardship Office to request assistance at 859-392-1540	

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Travis, executive director of the Maria Stein Shrine of the Holy Relics.

“Going on a pilgrimage is really an opportunity to be reminded of the fact that we’re meant to just sometimes be and reminded of our human beingness. To be able to take intentional time away from the to-do list, so sometimes in prayer and being in the chapel with all the relics, it’s really just a reminder of who we are as sons and daughters of Christ,” said Mr. Travis.

This year, the shrine has seen an “uptick” in their number of pilgrims as they have been designated as a Jubilee holy site by Archbishop Emeritus Dennis Schnur of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Pilgrims have traveled nationally and internationally to visit the shrine. “Having people go on pilgrimage here from all over the world definitely is a testament to how holy this place is and how necessary it is,” said Mr. Travis.

“You don’t have to travel to Europe; you don’t have to go to Italy or France to experience beautiful Catholic culture. It’s in these shrines in our region,” said Mr. Hess.

Mr. Travis said, “that special grace, by doing a pilgrimage to a holy site during a jubilee year, just making that personal recommitment of faith, no matter where you’re at in your faith journey, it’s a great opportunity to begin anew in a lot of ways.”

There is still time to sign up for the last of the regional pilgrimages; go to covdio.org/jubilee for more information.


Official Assignments		
Effective July 1, 2025		
Rev. Michael D. Barth To: Judge, Diocesan Tribunal Term: Five years Continues other duties	Rev. Gregory E. Osburg To: Defender of the Bond, Diocesan Tribunal Term: Five years	
Sister Margaret Stallmeyer, C.D.P. To: Judge, Diocesan Tribunal Term: Five years Continues other duties	Msgr. John R. Schulte To: Defender of the Bond, Diocesan Tribunal Term: Five years Continues retirement	
Rev. Barry M. Windholtz To: Judge, Diocesan Tribunal Term: Five years	Msgr. Gerald E. Twaddell To: Defender of the Bond, Diocesan Tribunal Term: Five years Continues other duties	
Msgr. William B. Neuhaus To: Promoter of Justice, Diocesan Tribunal Term: Five years Continues retirement	Betsy Djordjevic To: Ecclesiastical Notary, Diocesan Tribunal Term: Five years	
Msgr. Kurt H. Kemo To: Defender of the Bond, Diocesan Tribunal Term: Five years Continues other duties	Karen Guidugli To: Ecclesiastical Notary, Diocesan Tribunal Term: Five years	

Effective October 7, 2025

Rev. Joshua L. Lange
To: Parochial Administrator, St. Matthew Parish, Morning View
From: Sabbatical

Rev. Jacob E. Straub
To: Congregation of the Oratory of St. Philip Neri, Cincinnati
From: Pastor, St. Matthew Parish, Morning View

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



Jamie N. Schroeder
Chancellor



Bishop's Schedule	
Oct. 14 Diocesan Finance Council meeting, 2 p.m. Pro-Life Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 7 p.m.	Oct. 17 Seminary Ball, Receptions Banquet Center, Erlanger, 6 p.m.
Oct. 15 Priest Continuing Education Committee meeting, 2 p.m. Rome Pilgrimage Group meeting, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Curia, Covington, 7 p.m.	Oct. 18 St. John Cemetery visitation, Ft. Mitchell, 10 a.m.
Oct. 16 Diocesan Review Board meeting, 10 a.m. St. Agnes Parish, Ft. Wright, feasibility study meeting, 1 p.m.	Oct. 19 St. Mary Cemetery visitation, Ft. Mitchell, 11 a.m.
Oct. 17 Priest monthly Holy Hour, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 3 p.m.	Oct. 18 St. Stephen Cemetery visitation, Ft. Thomas, 12:30 p.m.
	Oct. 19 Pastor installation Mass, Sts. Boniface and James Parish, Ludlow, 9:30 a.m.
	Oct. 20 Sacred Heart Vespers and dinner, St. Thomas Parish, Ft. Thomas, 5 p.m.

Diocesan pro-life director visits grade schools encouraging students to be signs of hope ahead of the Pro-Life Essay contest

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

For the last 32 years, eighth graders across the Diocese of Covington have been invited to participate in the Pro-Life Essay contest. Every year the students submit essays pertaining to the year's theme to the Diocesan Pro-Life Office. And while the themes change each year one thing remains the same, each focuses on the dignity of life; what Faye Roch, director of the pro-life office, calls the "essence of the pro-life movement."

While visiting Holy Cross Elementary School, Covington, Mrs. Roch unveiled the theme for this year's essay contest, "Life, our Sign of Hope." Quoting Pope Leo XIV, she explained the topic further, "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."

The students are being asked to examine two key points in their essays. First, an explanation of how the Church's teaching on dignity of life from conception to natural death is a reflection of Jesus' teachings. Second, how a young person can be a beacon of hope for those experiencing "hopelessness and emptiness," and how they can inspire others to do likewise, she said.

For three decades the essay contest has been utilized as a tool to help students delve into the Church's pro-life beliefs in an increasingly polarizing world, preparing them for the "controversial things that come up when you talk about pro-life," said Mrs. Roch.

"I'm hoping I can give you some tools to have those conversations with people, especially when it comes to talking about the unborn," she said. "That's what we're called to do, to have conversations. We are called to convert people through love, not through yelling at them, not through calling them bad names, to talk to them and do it through love."

Each student was handed a small, silver anchor, which Mrs. Roch said was a reminder to them that they can be



Bailey photos

anchors of hope in this world. "You can be that person," she said addressing the eighth graders, "who can be a sign of hope. Know that it's not easy, and it may not always be popular. Just know that you, as a junior high student, have that power in you."

(above) Mrs. Roch holds up a sign depicting this year's Pro-Life Essay contest theme, "Life, our Sign of Hope," asking students to examine two fundamental aspects of the prolife movement.

(below) Holy Cross Elementary eighth grader examines the silver anchor which Mrs. Roch passed out because, "I am asking and challenging you all to be anchors of hope," she said.



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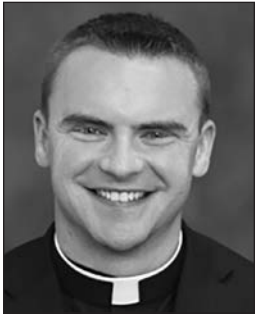
David Stutler.....Sales Manager

True faith is not magic, but obedience and thanksgiving

The readings for the Twenty-eighth Sunday in Ordinary time — Cycle C — are: 2 Kings 5:14–17, 2 Timothy 2:8–13 and Luke 17:11–19.

For those of you who do not know me, I am a huge Notre Dame college football fan, so it should not come as a surprise that almost every year during the season, there is one movie that comes to mind: “Rudy.” There is

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Michael Elmlinger

one particular scene that I was recently reminded of. It is the scene where Rudy feels like he is losing all hope of getting into Notre Dame, and he is sitting in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart when Father Cavanaugh notices him. During the conversation, Rudy says, “Maybe I haven’t prayed enough ... If I’ve done everything I can, can you help me?” Father Cavanaugh responds to him with a very simple statement, “Son, in 35 years of religious studies, I have come up with only two hard, incontrovertible facts: there is a God, and I’m not Him.”

The reason that I bring up this scene is because one of the things Father Cavanaugh is saying here to Rudy is the same as our readings this weekend: faith is not magic. It is not a matter of saying some prayers that will force God to wave his hand to cure us of whatever ailment we are dealing with. Having this kind of relationship with the Lord is not an authentic relationship; rather, it is one of superficiality or even quid-pro-quo.

Faith, instead, is about a relationship of intimacy, of trust and obedience. We are to be obedient to Him in whatever He commands us to do, because we trust in him. That obedience is meant to lead to thanksgiving.

For the sake of brevity, I am not going to retell the story of Naaman, the Syrian commander who was cured of leprosy. I do encourage everyone to read the full story themselves in 2 Kings 5, because it will help in understanding the point I want to make. I want to focus on Naaman’s reaction to Elisha telling him to go to the Jordan River and bathe seven times. Naaman is incredulous and disappointed. He thought that Elisha would simply wave his hand and cure him of his leprosy.

Not only that, but the Jordan River is hardly the best river in the land. In fact, Naaman has to be reminded that he has no other choice but to do what Elisha commands him. He had to learn this truth that relationship with God is not meant to be a magic show. It is meant to be a relationship of trust in all that he commands him to do. After deciding to listen to what Elisha tells him, Naaman goes to the Jordan and is healed of his leprosy, and the only thing that he can think to do is to see that the God of Israel is the true God and to give thanks to him.

The 10 lepers who are healed by Jesus experience the same thing. It is interesting how this time, Jesus does not heal the lepers first, like he did earlier in the Gospel in Luke 5:12-16, before sending them to the priest. Rather, he is sending them first, which likely may have been confusing, if not frustrating, for these lepers. As lepers, they were to isolate themselves from the rest of society until they were actually cured (cf. Leviticus 13:46).

What Christ is doing here is calling them to the same act of humility and trust that Elisha called Naaman, trusting that what they have been told is true, regardless of whether they may agree with it or not. That trust turns what would have been a simple display of magic into an opportunity to grow in a real relationship with the Lord, rather than a superficial relationship. It is a relationship that is built on trust, on obedience to the word that the Lord has spoken to them, and that trust and obedience is meant to lead to only one other

(Continued on page 14)

‘Hope Sustains Life’

Recently the CIB (Communion of International Benedictines) met for five days in Montserrat, Spain. All nineteen regions of the globe, approximately 13,000 Benedictines, were represented. The meeting made further progress for the CIB to become a canonical body. The emphasis of the CIB continues to be on communion with one another that encourages and fosters unity, collaboration and support.

GUEST



Sister Aileen Bankemper, OSB

A heart-rending moment of genuine communion occurred near the end of the meeting. Through Zoom, Mother Klara from Zhytomyr, Ukraine updated the delegates and shared the continuing devastating impact of the war in her country. Her monastery is located near the top of a hill and not far from much of the fighting. It is a dangerous place to live. So many deaths: soldiers, civilians and children. Sirens go off constantly. Early on, the sisters learned how to distinguish the siren’s signal from either a major threat or one that is only a warning. The commu-

nity could have moved to a safer area in Ukraine. Her community has intentionally chosen to remain with the people. Most don’t have the option of moving. Bonds with the local people have increased. The sisters’ interactions with the people are constant, giving emotional support especially to the sorrowing, praying together and providing basic necessities as they are able.

During the Zoom meeting, I was struck with the calmness in Mother Klara’s voice and the hope she both possesses and expresses. She relates learning much about real hope that is exemplified in Pope Leo XIV’s words: “True hope lies not in avoiding pain but in persevering with belief in new life, even in unjust suffering.” She does not see the war ending anytime soon (maybe even lasting years) and the amount of human suffering and death just continues. Mother Klara, her community and the people of Ukraine are a testimony to other words of Pope Leo: “Christian hope is an anchor, grounding believers in the promises of Christ, providing a lasting foundation amidst worldly challenges.” Her hope challenges my need to grow in hope. It makes me realize hope and optimism are not the same. Real hope is rooted in Christ who gave his life for all.

Benedictine Sister Aileen Bankemper is prioress of the Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery, Villa Hills, Ky. Her reflection is part of the community’s blog “School for the Lord’s Service.”

A European evangelical adventure

I have just returned from a rather extraordinary European journey that involved three countries, six separate plane trips and seven hotels. Now, it wasn’t exactly a vacation; rather, it was a multifaceted exercise in the evangelization of the culture.

WORD ON FIRE



Bishop Robert Barron

The first leg of my trip took me to France, a country where I lived for three years while pursuing doctoral studies. My purpose was to film a documentary on the Gothic cathedrals, so as to answer a basic question: Why did the Notre-Dame fire from six years ago so grab the attention of the world and galvanize so many to restore the damaged building? My instinct was (and is) that many people, especially in the secularized West, realized, however inchoately, that if Notre-Dame were destroyed, something of incalculable spiritual value would be forever lost.

And so, our film crew visited Amiens (the most voluminous of the French cathedrals), Reims (where the kings were crowned), Saint-Denis (the first truly Gothic church and the burial ground of the French monarchs), Notre-Dame (the jewel of Paris) and finally, Chartres (the greatest and most splendid of the cathedrals). What struck me over and again as I toured these buildings was how different they are from the churches constructed when I was coming of age.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the aesthetic governing ecclesiastical architecture was basically Bauhaus modernism: brick walls, no decoration, a paucity of visual symbols, a hyper-stress on the value of the congregation over the church building. In illustration of that last point, I might draw attention to a sentiment expressed in a very influential liturgical document from the seventies to the effect that the building itself is but the “skin” for a liturgical action.”

Well, I think it’s fair to say that the architects of the great Gothic cathedrals would have had no truck with any of that. For them, the cathedral was meant to be a symbolic representation of heaven and of the transfigured earth envisioned by the author of the book of Revelation. That is why they are filled with angels, saints, and idealized elements of nature and why their stained glass is meant to resemble the jeweled walls of the heav-

enly Jerusalem. How wonderful that church architects with a sensibility more medieval than modernist are on the rise today.

The next stop on my itinerary was Münster, Germany, where I was to be presented with the Josef Pieper Prize. Pieper, an intellectual hero of mine, was one of the most significant Thomist philosophers of the twentieth century. His books on the virtues, on Aquinas’s philosophy, and perhaps most importantly, on the relationship between leisure and culture had a profound impact on many Catholic thinkers of my generation. So, I was deeply honored to receive this recognition, which acknowledged a link between my work and Pieper’s.

The two days of the ceremony were rich indeed and included learned presentations on Pieper’s thought as well as an onstage discussion between me and two German Catholic academics. After receiving the prize, I gave a paper on Pieper’s notion of the philosophical act and why that intellectual move is of supreme importance today. A lovely touch: At the conclusion of the ceremony, a classical pianist came forward and performed a medley of Bob Dylan songs for me! I am deeply grateful to the organizers of the event and to the leadership of the Pieper Foundation for two unforgettable days.

Now, just before I arrived in Münster, I received word that I would be met by protesters unhappy with my receiving the Pieper Prize. Their principal complaint seemed to be my participation, at the invitation of President Trump, in a commission dedicated to formulating policy in regard to religious liberty in our country. Because I was representing a Catholic perspective at the table where a matter of great importance was being discussed, I was accused of fomenting American imperialism and of neglecting the human rights of immigrants! I mean, it was just so much nonsense.

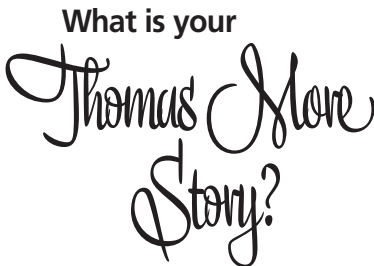
The intellectual level of the protesters was made evident in the crude slogans they spray-painted on the walls of the hall where I was speaking and on the façade of the church. That they felt the best way to express their dissatisfaction was through an act of desecration shows how corrupt they are. But I must say, little better were the objections expressed by certain members of the theology faculty at the University of Münster. They, too, accused me of Trumpism and, of course, being insufficiently “inclusive,” though their letters betrayed absolutely no engagement with any of my work. And I’ve published thirty books, over a hundred articles, and thousands of videos. When I was a young man, American students of theology looked eagerly to German academics for inspira-

(Continued on page 13)



About Thomas More University

Founded in 1921, Thomas More University stands as a beacon of academic excellence and innovation, challenging students to Make It More. Deeply rooted in the Catholic Intellectual Tradition, this timeless foundation supports a transformative educational experience as students looking to Be More are guided in the pursuit of knowledge, ethical leadership, and the integration of faith and reason. Through the high-quality, liberal arts education provided at Thomas More, students examine the ultimate meaning of life, their place in the world, and their responsibility to others which leads to the ability to think critically and contribute meaningfully to the world. Serving more than 2,300 students, Thomas More takes its place as the premier Catholic university in the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky region, being named one of the 2025 Best Colleges in the U.S. by the Wall Street Journal. For more, visit thomasmore.edu.



Alumni can share their recent news, milestones, or update their information by visiting thomasmore.edu/alumni

Playing with purpose: Saints Athletics demonstrates commitment to service through Team IMPACT

Thomas More University Contributor

Thomas More’s men’s soccer team had some special support during its season-opener match on Sept. 4 at Republic Bank Field. As the team played Roosevelt University, 12-year-old Cohen Bramlee watched from the sidelines, beaming positivity and encouragement onto the field.

This was Cohen’s first appearance at a Saints soccer game since he was officially signed to the team in August 2022 through Team IMPACT, an organization that matches children facing serious and chronic illnesses with college sports teams to create long-term, life-changing experiences for all involved.

The Facebook page run by his family, “Super Cohen’s Crusade,” details the ups and downs of Cohen’s daily life as he battles numerous health issues including a rare genetic disorder and immune disease. Throughout his life, Cohen and his family have spent long periods of time at Cincinnati Children’s Hospital — making the chance to attend a soccer game at Thomas More truly a rare and cherished experience.

“Cohen was so excited to finally be at the school for the game. These guys have been visiting him in the hospital and cheering him on through some really tough times, and he was grateful that it was his turn to cheer for them,” said Cohen’s mom, Carrie Bramlee.

Saints goalkeeper Drew Kendrick ’26 says the news that Cohen would be attending the first game of the season was met with both surprise and enthusiasm by his teammates.

“As our reaction shifted, we all realized this night was more than our season opener, as we were playing for our teammate that has been fighting for his life since birth,” Kendrick shared. “That brought a lot of emotion over the guys as many of us knew how much it meant to him to be with us on that night. It was an experience I know I’ll never forget.”

Before the game, Cohen met with the team and chatted about two of his favorite topics — Star Wars and superheroes. He even gave a pre-game pep talk encouraging the team to go out and play their best.

“Because of Cohen’s illness, he’s never been able to be on a team like his siblings. Team IMPACT has given him a chance to experience being part of a team, which has been very special. The members of



Cohen (center), cheers on the Saints at his first men’s soccer match.

the Thomas More [men’s] soccer team have gone out of their way to make him feel like one of their own, and I couldn’t get over how genuinely excited they were to have Cohen at the game,” Carrie Bramlee said.

In addition to Cohen, Saints Athletics currently engages five other Team IMPACT members, including: Allen (men’s wrestling), Avery (women’s softball), Kyra (women’s volleyball), Makenna (women’s lacrosse) and Ben (men’s track and field), with a sixth to be signed this fall. The partnership for each child typically lasts two years, fostering supportive and meaningful relationships and helping to bolster skills such as emotional resilience. Thomas More has been a supporter of Team IMPACT since 2017.

Involvement with Team IMPACT is just one example of the Saints Athletics program’s emphasis on service. As part of their

experience at Thomas More, all student-athletes are encouraged to examine their responsibility to others. In the 2024-25 academic year, Saints student-athletes completed over 3,500 service hours with organizations including Team IMPACT, the Special Olympics, Morgan’s Message, Make-A-Wish Foundation, and more. In addition, many athletics teams serve together during Saints Serve, Thomas More’s annual campus-wide day of service initiative.

“I think doing service together really brings the team closer,” says Diogo Cardoso ’26, who also serves as goalkeeper for the Saints. “[It’s] a big reminder that there’s more to this than just a sport or just a game. It builds trust and shows we’re all there for each other, both on and off the field.”

Since its founding in 2011 by eight former college classmates and student-athletes, Team IMPACT has matched 4,207 children with college sports teams on over 800 college campuses in all 50 states. To learn more about this organization, visit teamimpact.org.

Thomas More recently became a full member of the NCAA Division II and competes in the Great Midwest Conference (G-MAC). If you know a student interested in joining the Thomas More University community as a student-athlete, visit thomasmore.edu/admissions.

Save the Date — Upcoming Events at Thomas More University

Carlo Acutis: Roadmap to Reality
When: Oct. 22, 7 p.m.

Where: Ziegler Auditorium, Thomas More University
A celebration of the canonization of St. Carlo Acutis with a screening of the film “Roadmap to Reality” hosted by the Center for Faith, Mission and Catholic Education at Thomas More. Free and open to the public.

Campus Ministry Night
When: Oct. 30, 6 p.m.

Where: Saints Center, Thomas More University
Meet campus ministers, learn about the Bishop Foy’s Ministry and Service Scholarship, and discover opportunities for service, fellowship and spiritual development as a student at Thomas More. RSVP at tmuky.us/ministry25.

Religious Liberty: Where are we now, 10 years later?
When: Nov. 19, 7 p.m.

Where: Ziegler Auditorium, Thomas More University
The Wm. T. (Bill) Robinson III ‘67 Institute for Religious Liberty (IRL) welcomes back speaker Rabbi David Saperstein for an exploration of the current state of religious liberty domestically and abroad as the IRL approaches its 10-year anniversary.

PEOPLE AND EVENTS

Newsworthy

For the second consecutive year, **Thomas More University ranked highest among all colleges and universities in Kentucky and highest in the Northern Kentucky/Cincinnati region for Best Salaries.** The *WSJ/College Pulse* analysis found that a Thomas More education adds an average value of \$34,703 to graduates’ salaries, placing the University 148th nationally in this category, which examines schools’ impact on graduates’ salaries relative to cost of attendance.

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/>.

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.

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.

SEEK Conference. Want to attend? Need more information? An information meeting will be held Monday, Oct 13, 6 p.m.–7 p.m. at the Curia (BHMA). If you are interested in attending SEEK and are not registered with a group, plan to attend this meeting. SEEK is an annual Catholic conference hosted by FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students), taking place from January 1-5, 2026 in Columbus, OH. The conference is designed to inspire and equip people with skills for the Catholic faith, featuring Catholic speakers, powerful worship, community and opportunities for sacraments, with sessions suitable for college students, parishioners and families. To RSVP for the meeting, email apoat@covdio.org.

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@stjosephcnsky.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.



Blessed Sacrament School’s, Ft. Mitchell, second annual Color Run was a huge success for the second year in a row. Students raised a total of \$96,913.70 in donations, and the community enjoyed a day full of colorful fun.

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.

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; text/msg/call: Rebecca Wells (859) 240-3738; Facebook: Northern Kentucky Youth Choir; website: 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.

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/. Questions? Contact Isaak A. Isaak at iisaak@covdio.org or (859) 392-1529.

St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood, is hosting a Pro-Life Resources Fair, Oct. 26, 9 a.m.–1 pm. Come meet representatives from these local life-affirming organizations: Care Net Pregnancy Services of NKY, Madonna House of NKY, New Hope Pregnancy Center, Rose Garden Home Mission and St. Vincent de Paul, learn services and support and discover meaningful ways to volunteer in support of the precious gift of life. Questions? Contact Diane at (859) 380-6435.

Holy Cross District High School open house, Oct. 26, 1 p.m., at the high school gym. Highlights: faith-based education, A. P., dual-credit, internship opportunities, student-centered curriculum, diverse student experience and highly qualified faculty and staff. Call (859) 431-1335. Visit www.hchscov.com.

“Sexual Abuse By Clergy And Others Among Indigenous People,” a webinar for survivors and those who care for them, presented by Father Gerard Mcglone, S.J., Ph.D., Oct. 27, 6:30–8 p.m. CDT. These stories will highlight the colonial theology and colonial concepts of God that often perpetuate the abuse suffered by those in the Global South and those who are on the peripheries. This webinar is made available through the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis. To register visit https://archspm-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_-MgHug3JTOGARPPi9F4ELA#/registration.

St. Augustine Parish, Covington, warmly invites all, Oct. 28 immediately following 8 a.m. Mass, to its rosary procession and preparation for an outdoor Mary statue. The morning will include blessing of personal statues of Mary brought by participants, reflection on bringing Mary into homes as at the Wedding at Cana and prayers for life causes during Respect Life Month, promoting the protection and dignity of all human life.

St. Thomas parish, Ft. Thomas, is honored to welcome The Gesualdo Six, an award-winning British vocal ensemble praised worldwide for their impeccable blend and imaginative programming. The concert is Oct. 29 at 7 p.m. Tickets available at stthomasnky.org/concert.

An informative workshop on updates and resources on the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults/Children (OCIA/OCIC) will be presented by Dr. William Keimig, deputy director, Catechetical Institute at Franciscan University, Nov. 8, 9 a.m.–3:30 p.m., TMU’s Ziegler Auditorium, Academic Center. Register for the FREE Workshop by Oct. 29, at covdio.org/register/. Questions? Contact Isaak Abraham Isaak: iisaak@covdio.org or (859) 392-1529.

Campus Ministry night, Thomas More University, Oct. 30, 6–7:30 p.m., where you can meet campus ministers, find out about the Bishop Foys Ministry & Service Scholarship, and discover the many opportunities for service, fellowship, and spiritual development. RSVP at: tmukyus/ministry25.

Alive in Christ — Men’s One-Day Retreat, Nov. 1, 9 a.m.–5 p.m., Memorial Hall, St. Joseph Church, Cold Spring. \$25 registration fee includes continental breakfast, box lunch and retreat materials. Register by Oct. 26 at <https://stjosephcoldspring.com/church/view-only/adult-faith-formation-fall-retreats/> Questions? Contact Vicki Klocke at vklocke@stjoeparish.net or (859) 927-2291.

Newport Central Catholic High School will host “A Thoroughbred Affair” Winners’ Circle on Nov. 8, on the school campus. The evening features dinner, cocktails, silent auctions and raffles. Cost \$100. Reservations online by Oct. 22: <https://nccwinners2025.givesmart.com/>.

Jesus wants to be close, rekindle hope, on life’s journey, pope says

Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

Jesus is always walking alongside everyone, no matter how mundane or precarious their journey, Pope Leo XIV said.

“Sometimes we think that the Lord comes to visit us only in moments of contemplation or spiritual fervor; when we feel worthy, when our lives appear orderly and bright,” the pope said Oct. 8 during his weekly general audience in St. Peter’s Square.

“Instead, the Risen One is close to us precisely in the darkest places: in our failures, in our frayed relationships, in the daily struggles that weigh on our shoulders, in the doubts that discourage us,” he said. “Nothing that we are, no fragment of our existence, is foreign to him.”

Among the more than 60,000 pilgrims in the square was a group of students from Our Lady of Mount Carmel Academy in Chicago with Cardinal Blase J. Cupich. The students were wearing white and scarlet outfits and a four-cornered hat similar to what a cardinal wears. One student was dressed as a Swiss guard.

According to the Chicago Catholic archdiocesan publication, they had reenacted a “mock papal conclave” May 6, two days before the real College of Cardinals elected Chicago-native Cardinal Robert F. Prevost in Rome.

Meanwhile, in his ongoing series of audience talks on the Jubilee theme, “Jesus Christ our Hope,” Pope Leo reflected on Christ’s resurrection as being marked by simplicity and humility.

“The risen Lord does nothing spectacular to impose himself on the faith of his disciples,” he said. “He does not appear surrounded by hosts of angels, he does not perform spectacular feats, he does not deliver solemn speeches to reveal the secrets of the universe.”

“We would have expected special effects, signs of power, overwhelming evidence,” he said. “But the Lord does not seek this: he prefers the language of proximity, of normality, of sharing a meal.”

“There is a valuable message in this,” the pope said. “The resurrection is not a theatrical coup; it is a silent transformation that fills every human gesture with meaning.”

Every human body, story and relationship, he said, are “destined for the fullness of life” by “entering into a deeper communion with God and with our brothers and sisters, in a humanity transfigured by love.”

That means “everything can become grace. Even the most ordinary things: eating, working, waiting, taking care of the house, supporting a friend,” Pope Leo said.

“However, there is an obstacle that often prevents us from recognizing Christ’s presence in our daily lives: the assumption that joy must be free from suffering,” he said.

The disciples expected “a different ending” for the Messiah, he said. “But Jesus walks alongside them and patiently helps them understand that pain is not the denial of the promise, but the way through which God has manifested the measure of his love.”

Their eyes are opened when they are seated at the table with the Lord and realize “their hearts were already burning” despite their sadness, he said. “This is the greatest surprise: to discover that beneath the ashes of disenchantment and weariness there is always a living ember, waiting only to be rekindled.

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Upcoming workshop to guide parents and grandparents ‘Return: How to Draw Your Child Back to the Church’

Laura Keener
Editor

According to a 2009 report (revised in 2011) by the Pew Research Center, 10 percent of American adults are now former Catholics; 79 percent of former Catholics leave the Church before age 23.

Additionally, 50 percent of Millennials raised Catholic no longer identify as Catholic today. A person born between 1981–1996, or between the ages of 44 and 29, is considered a Millennial. Many parents and grandparents who held these children as infants as the waters of Baptism were poured over their head, who witnessed their joyful glow as they made their First Communion and who prayed with and for them at their Confirmation, are now carrying concern and hurt as they realize that the faith they intended to pass on to their children has been rejected.

Disheartened that two of his four children had walked away from the faith, John Zoburg, parishioner at St. Patrick Parish in Taylor Mill, approached Father Jeffrey VonLehmen, pastor, for advice.

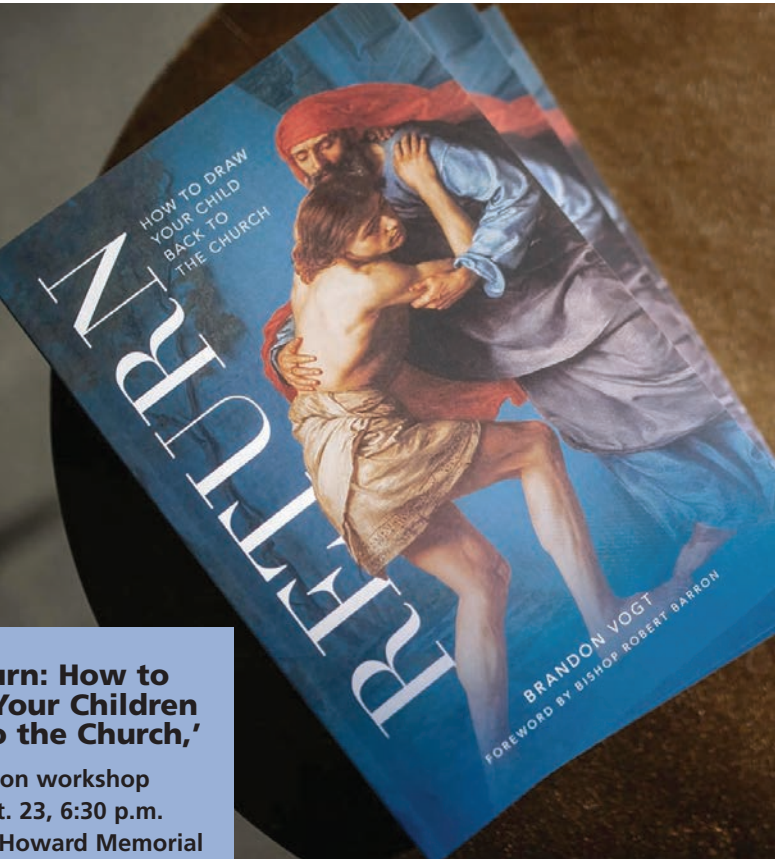
“My wife and I were very concerned about our children, whom we raised Catholic from the day they were born all the way through — Catholic high school, Catholic grade school ... we tried to be the best Christians we could be in living examples. We just didn’t understand it,” Mr. Zoburg said.

Instead of an answer, Father VonLehmen tasked him with a project.

“He looked at me, handed me a book, and said, ‘I want you to read this, and if you’re open to it, I’d like you to lead the parish through some kind of sessions wrapped around it.’ He told us we were not the only parents or grandparents to come to him with these concerns,” said Mr. Zoburg.

Together, Mr. Zoburg and Father VonLehmen developed five monthly sessions using as a resource the book “Return: How to Draw Your Children Back to the Church” authored by Brandon Vogt and published by Word on Fire.

“It is excellent,” said John Schaefer, parishioner at St. Patrick Parish, who attended the sessions. In addition to sharing statistics on the percentages of children who leave home and leave their faith, the book also “highlights the notion of hope,” he said.



‘Return: How to Draw Your Children Back to the Church,’
A six-session workshop begins Oct. 23, 6:30 p.m. at Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Curia, Covington.
For information and signup contact Gerry at (513) 322-9783 or GerryOtto.PMD@gmail.com

About 40 parents and grandparents attended the sessions, with each of their children having varying degrees of separation from the Church and from their parents. Mr. Schaefer is grieved with the most severe separation; his daughter hasn’t spoken to him in four years.

“One of the strongest things that came out of it (the sessions) was this notion of staying tethered to your children, not trying to beat them over the head with a Bible, not trying to force the Catechism into them, that most of them probably already have in them, but just staying connected, just staying lovingly as much as possible. And then, when the time arises in life, hopefully the seeds grow,” said Mr. Schaefer.

Mr. Schaefer finds consolation in the witness of St. Monica, the mother of St. Augustine, who prayed unceasingly for her son to return to the faith. He continues to pray the prayer to St. Monica, for himself and for his daughter.

“Kudos to Father Jeff, who is a beloved spiritual director for us, to get this started and for having John Zoburg lead us through this really difficult thing,” said Mr. Schaefer.

For Mr. Zoburg, the prayers and techniques learned are bearing fruit. A year and a half later, his oldest daughter has returned to the Church, her husband is in the OCIA program, and their two children were baptized along with their dad at the 2025 Easter Vigil.

“The book teaches you techniques of how to gently just introduce the topic of faith,” he said. For him, the opportunity came in the form of Bible study on Church history. His son-in-law is a scientist and has a natural curiosity about science and history.

“I just casually said, ‘Hey, I’m going to go to this Bible study on the history of Church,’” said Mr. Zoburg. And then he shut up. He didn’t even ask them to join him. Later that week, his daughter asked if she and her husband could join him. “That’s what the book teaches, just dropping little seeds here and there, not to force. Not to say, hey, come to church with me,” he said.

Mr. Schaefer said that praying for children is a lifelong process. He remembered that his own father would pray for him and his five siblings who also strayed from the faith throughout their father’s lifetime.

“My father prayed for two decades, and you know, when he was on his deathbed, all six of us were back in the Church. It was a beautiful moment. You know, it’s a lifelong thing. It’s the challenge, not only of the child, but it’s the challenge of the parent,” Mr. Schaeffer said.

“Every heartbeat reminds you you’re still alive, every day is still a prayer for your children. That’s the trust.”

This article was first published in February 2025 as part of the Diocese of Covington Campaign of Mercy series. Gerry Otto, parishioner, Mother of God Parish, Covington, will lead a six-session workshop guided by the book “Return: How to Draw Your Children Back to the Church” by Brandon Vogt, starting Oct. 23, 6:30 p.m. at Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Curia, Covington. For information and signup contact Gerry at (513) 322-9783 or GerryOtto.PMD@gmail.com.

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Notre Dame Academy celebrates the installation of President Lauren Hitron

Staff report

Notre Dame Academy (NDA), Park Hills, celebrated the installation of Lauren Hitron as the school’s fifth president, Oct. 1, immediately following NDA’s Foundation Day Mass with Bishop John Iffert. The liturgy honored both the 175-year legacy of the Sisters of Notre Dame and NDA’s 120th anniversary year, uniting generations of students, educators and alumnae in faith and celebration.

President Hitron, who began her tenure in July, was formally commissioned during the ceremony, surrounded by students, faculty, staff, alumnae, family and friends. The

installation highlighted NDA’s enduring mission of educating young women to make a difference, a mission that has guided the school since its founding in 1906.

“It is an honor and a calling to serve a community so deeply rooted in faith, excellence and purpose,” President Hitron said. “As we celebrate 120 years of educating young women to make a difference, I look forward to leading Notre Dame Academy into its next chapter — one that honors the legacy of the Sisters of Notre Dame and prepares our students to lead with courage, compassion and vision.”

A native of Louisville, President Hitron brings nearly two decades of experience in Catholic education and leadership development. Before joining NDA, she served as the founding director of the Jean Frazier Leadership Institute at Sacred Heart Schools in Louisville, where she built a nationally recognized, endowed program focused on leadership formation for young women. She also previously served as Director of Enrollment and Director of Recruitment at Sacred Heart Academy.

“President Hitron embodies the heart of Notre Dame Academy’s mission,” said NDA Board Chair Jessica Rawe. “Her faith, experience and vision for young women’s leadership will ensure that the legacy of the Sisters of Notre Dame continues to flourish for generations to come.”



(above) Newly installed President Lauren Hitron addresses the Notre Dame Academy student body after an all-school Mass, Oct. 1.

(right) Students present President Hitron with Notre Dame Academy spirit wear.



Submitted photos, Notre Dame Academy

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Pope tells Swiss Guards they need each other to be all they can be

Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

Living in harmony with others requires benevolence, honesty, solidarity and mutual respect, Pope Leo XIV said. Welcoming new recruits from different regions of Switzerland to the Pontifical Swiss Guard, the pope said they are called “to form a united body, to create strong and healthy bonds of friendship.”

“Alone, you would not be able to realize your potential fully,” he said. “You need one another in order to learn, to progress, to serve in a world increasingly tempted by division and isolation.”

The pope met with members of the Swiss Guard, including 27 new recruits and their family members Oct. 3 in the Clementine Hall at the Vatican, and he attended the swearing-in ceremony Oct. 4 — the first time a pope has attended the ceremony in 57 years. The last time was in 1968 with St. Paul VI.

During the ceremony Oct. 4, held in the San Damaso Courtyard, the new recruits pledged before the pope and 800 guests to “faithfully, loyally and honorably” serve and protect the pontiff and, if necessary, sacrifice their lives for him.

Pope Leo addressed the newly sworn-in soldiers, telling them that making this oath was “a very important witness in today’s world.”

“It shows us the value of discipline, of sacrifice, of living the faith in a way that truly speaks to young people — about the value of giving one’s life, of serving and thinking of others,” he said, thanking them “in my name and on behalf of the entire Holy See for your service.”

Normally, new recruits are sworn in each year during a special ceremony on May 6 to mark the date in 1527 when 147 Swiss Guards lost their lives defending Pope Clement VII in the Sack of Rome. Only 42 guards survived, and holding the ceremony on the anniversary is meant to remind new guards of the seriousness of their commitment.

However, the ceremony this year was postponed to Oct. 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, after Pope Francis died April 21 and Pope Leo was elected May 8. The only other time the ceremony was postponed to Oct. 4 was during the COVID-19 pandemic.

During his meeting with the new guards Oct. 3, Pope Leo thanked them for their dedication and commitment to protecting the pope every day.

“Benevolence, honesty, solidarity and mutual respect constitute the pillars on which a harmonious life can be built,” he told them. “Each person can be, for the other, a model with his words and conduct, with his charity and faith. And you can be a message of unity for all the Roman Curia.”

The pope recognized the many challenges their young generation faces.



Pope Leo XIV poses for a photo with members and new recruits of the Pontifical Swiss Guard at the Vatican Oct. 3, 2025.

“They are environmental issues, economic changes, social tensions, the digital revolution, artificial intelligence and other complex realities that require discernment and a sense of responsibility,” he said.

However, their stay in Rome should help “develop your maturity also in these aspects of social life,” and he encouraged them “to remain faithful to the Gospel and to the fundamental values of your Christian faith.”

“In this Holy Year, may you be, with your simple witness, missionaries of hope for the people you meet,” he said, and “may the flame of hope illuminate your life and give you the courage to dare and to contribute together to the civilization of love.”

The Swiss Guard also unveiled a new dark blue uniform for officers during a news conference Oct. 3.

While the guard’s signature blue, red and yellow “gala uniform” and other regalia remain the same, its so-called “representation uniform,” which officers wear to officially represent the corps at formal occasions, was redesigned by Lieutenant Colonel Loïc Marc Rossier, vice-commander of the guard.

The colorful “gala uniform” had been designed by Jules Repond, commander of the guard in the early 1900s, using the traditional colors of the famous

Italian Medici family, which produced four popes.

The guards wear the colorful garb during “honor guard” duty, receiving heads of state and at papal ceremonies, and they add 17th-century armor over it at Easter, Christmas and swearing-in ceremonies.

Corps members seen guarding the Vatican’s business entrance, the St. Anne’s Gate, wear a blue, lighter weight “exercise uniform,” usually worn for training and night duty. The Swiss Guard website says, “the colorful gala uniform would cause too much distraction for the motorists.”

More than 130 Swiss soldiers are responsible for guarding all entrances into Vatican City State as well as keeping watch over the pope and his residence. They also provide security and ceremonial services during liturgical events and visits of heads of state and other dignitaries to the Vatican.



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The Diocese of Covington invites qualified, actively-practicing Roman Catholics to apply for the part-time (15 hours) position of Archivist. The Diocesan Archives contains instruments and written documents which pertain to the spiritual and temporal affairs of the Diocese, including specifically but not exclusively, non-current files from Diocesan offices, sacramental records, academic transcripts of certain closed schools, certain photographs, and other historical information of Diocesan archival significance. The Archivist maintains records of acquisitions, labels and houses files, updates inventory, responds to records requests, and performs research when requested by Diocesan or parish personnel. Qualifications include either a degree in history, archive certification, or archive or library experience. Interested candidates may send a letter of interest, resume or C-V with compensation history, and a list of references with contact email addresses to Stephen Koplyay, SPHR by email or by fax: skoplyay@covdio.org, 859/392-1589.

One can’t serve God and money, pope says on day he signs text on poverty

Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

The Jubilee Year requires making a choice: serving God and justice or money and inequity, Pope Leo XIV said, marking the Jubilee of Migrants and the Jubilee of the Missions.

“We pray to be a church that does not serve money or itself, but the kingdom of God and his justice,” he said during a special audience in St. Peter’s Square Oct. 4, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi.

It was the same day that the pope also signed his first apostolic exhortation, “Dilexi Te” (“I Have Loved You”), which will be released Oct. 9.

The document is expected to focus on poverty and the poor. Vatican Media footage of the pope signing the text in the library of the Apostolic Palace showed the first page of the Table of Contents in Italian with chapters dedicated to St. Francis of Assisi, “The cry of the poor,” “Ideological prejudices,” “God chooses the poor,” “Jesus, the poor Messiah,” “A church for the poor,” “The true riches of the church” and more.

St. Francis was known for his life of radical simplicity and poverty, seeking to imitate Christ and be detached from material possessions and earthly glory to better love and serve God.

Pope Leo continued the theme of poverty in his catechesis during the Oct. 4 Jubilee audience, reflecting on St. Luke’s account (16:13-14) of a group of Pharisees who loved money and sneered at Jesus’ counsel to be completely dependent on God.

The Gospel passage speaks about making the choice to serve God or to serve money, Pope Leo said in English.

“When we allow material possessions to rule over us, we can fall into spiritual sadness,” he said. “When we choose God, however, we choose hope and a life of forgiveness and mercy.”

While the Holy Year dedicated to hope is a time for seeking forgiveness and mercy “so that everything can begin anew,” he said in his main address in Italian, “the Jubilee also opens up the hope of a different distribution of wealth, the possibility that the earth belongs to everyone, because this is not the case right now.”

“During this year, we must choose whom to serve, justice or injustice, God or money,” he said.

“To hope is to choose, because those who do not choose are driven to despair,” he said, and “the world changes if we change.”

“One of the most common consequences of spiritual



CNS photo/Vatican Media

Pope Leo XIV signs his first apostolic exhortation, “Dilexi Te” (“I Have Loved You”), in the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican Oct. 4, 2025, the feast of St. Francis of Assisi, as Archbishop Edgar Pena Parra, the substitute secretary for general affairs at the Vatican Secretariat of State, looks on. The exhortation will be released Oct. 9. (The Messenger went to press Oct. 8.)

sadness, or sloth, is not choosing anything,” Pope Leo said. “Those who experience this are overcome by an inner laziness that is worse than death.”

Among those who made a courageous choice in life were St. Francis and St. Clare of Assisi, he said.

Even though Oct. 4 is the feast day of St. Francis, it was also important to speak about St. Clare because they both are “models of those who understood the Gospel and chose a life of poverty as Jesus did,” he said in English.

“Their choice continues to inspire many to remember that the earth belongs to everyone,” he said, inviting people to pray “to be a church that serves God and the poor and opens the door of hope to the world.”

“Clare understood what the Gospel asks of us,” the pope said in Italian. “But even in a city that considers itself Christian, taking the Gospel seriously can seem revolutionary.”

“Then, as now, a choice must be made!” he said.

“Jesus says: you cannot serve two masters,” Pope Leo

said, and the church remains “young and attracts young people” when it follows the right master.

“Clare made her choice, and this gives us great hope,” he said, because she has inspired vocational choices throughout the world for centuries.

She also “reminds us that young people like the Gospel,” he said. “Young people like people who have made a choice and bear the consequences of their choices.”

“This makes others want to choose” in a kind of “holy imitation” where “one does not become a ‘photocopy,’” he said, referring to a maxim by St. Carlo Acutis, who also found inspiration in Assisi’s saints, “but each person — when choosing the Gospel — chooses himself. He loses himself and finds himself.”

“Let us pray, then, for young people; and let us pray that we may be a church that does not serve money or itself, but the kingdom of God and his justice,” he said. “A church that, like St. Clare, has the courage to live differently in the city. This gives hope!”

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A European evangelical adventure

(Continued from page 5)

tion. If these professors in Münster are any indication of the state of the German academy, I would tell American students today to look anywhere else.

From Münster, I made my way to Rome for the Jubilee of Young People. On my first day in Rome, I concelebrated a Mass for “Catholic influencers,” at the conclusion of which Pope Leo made a surprise appearance, which delighted everyone in attendance. Just after Mass, I had a chance to meet him and shake his hand. I will admit that it was surreal to realize that the successor of Peter is a Chicagoan who grew up about twenty minutes from where I did.

That night, under a beautiful Roman sky, Archbishop Fisichella celebrated Mass for over a hundred thousand pilgrims, and I concelebrated that Mass as well. Afterward, once again, the pope made a surprise appearance, motoring through the massive crowd in the pope-mobile, accompanied by the screams of the throng of kids.

The next morning, it was my privilege to address about 500 young people from my ancestral home of Ireland. Though their country is marked by a rather extreme secularism and anticlericalism, these youthful sons and daughters of Ireland exhibited no cowardice of spirit. I encouraged them to return to Ireland under the inspiration of Saint Patrick, who managed, many centuries ago, to convert an entirely pagan country to the

faith.

Finally, that evening, I spoke to around 4,000 young Americans who had gathered in the massive basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls. Speaking only about 20 yards from the tomb of Saint Paul himself, I led the crowd in a little imaginative exercise. I invited them to think of the glory and power of ancient Rome, the civilization that once dominated the world and whose rulers put to death both Peter and Paul. Then I asked them, “But where is Nero’s successor? Where is the mighty Roman Empire?”

The answers came readily enough: “nowhere and turned to dust.” “But where,” I continued, “is the successor of Peter?” The answer: “We all saw him last night in Saint Peter’s Square!” I told that army of young Catholics that critics and enemies of Christianity have been predicting our demise for centuries. But we’re still standing — while they are gone with the wind.

Soaring Gothic cathedrals, scintillating intellectual dialogue about the faith, an army of young soldiers of Christ — all signs that the crucified and risen Jesus still marvelously haunts our culture.

Bishop Robert Barron is bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota. Article originally published at WordOnFire.org.

True faith is not magic

(Continued from page 5)

response: thanksgiving (from the Greek, *eucharisteo*). This is what an authentic relationship with the Lord looks like. It is not one of superficiality, where all it consists of is saying the “right words” to have the Lord wave

his magic hand over whatever happens to ail us that day. Rather, it is an intimate relationship built on trusting in what it is that he tells us to do, even if it may not make sense. When we are willing to truly listen to the voice of the Lord calling out to us, then are we able to be truly transformed by Him and cleansed by him of the leprosy of sin,

and there is only one response worthy of this wondrous gift: “Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his mercy endures forever.” (Psalm 118:29) *Father Michael Elmlinger is a priest of the Diocese of Covington, Ky. Father Elmlinger is currently studying Canon Law at the University of St. Paul, Ottawa, Canada.*

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

Bulletins: Oct. bulletin: posted Sunday, Oct. 5; due Tuesday, Nov. 4 The monthly e-mail reminder of a new bulletin posted will come from system@pub.virtus.org.

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

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NEWS BRIEFS

Local

Cincinnati Archdiocese, Girl Scouts reinstate partnership a year after breaking ties

CINCINNATI — The Archdiocese of Cincinnati and the Girl Scouts of Western Ohio have renewed their partnership. The archdiocese broke ties with the group in October 2024 over its promotion of gender ideology that conflicts with church teaching. The memorandum of understanding between the archdiocese and the scouts — signed Sept. 29 by Archbishop Robert S. Casey and Girl Scouts of Western Ohio President Aimée Sproles — reinstates the use of Catholic facilities as locations for scout activities, as approved by the pastor of those facilities. Facilities include parishes, schools, agencies and other institutions of the archdiocese. The scouts must include a footnote on their webpage saying the archdiocese does not endorse “all policies, programs or resources” of the Girl Scouts of Western Ohio or other Girl Scouts organizations.” In October 2024, now-retired Cincinnati Archbishop Dennis M. Schnurr told pastors to end their partnerships with the Girl Scouts of the USA and the Girl Scouts of Western Ohio by the end of 2025 over problematic LGBTQ+ materials promoting “sexual orientation” and “gender identity.” In a Sept. 30 statement, Archbishop Casey said there are “significant differences” between the two sides, but after several months of “constructive” dialogue, they found common ground “that allows us to be united in our commitment to young girls” and their character and leadership development.

National/World

Pro-life advocates object as Trump FDA approves new generic pill for abortion, again

WASHINGTON — The Food and Drug Administration recently approved a new generic form of the abortion pill mifepristone, drawing criticism from pro-life advocates. On Sept. 30, the FDA notified Evita Solutions that its generic version of mifepristone was approved, despite previous suggestions from FDA and Department of Health officials that mifepristone would undergo a review. The move was met with condemnation by multiple pro-life organization leaders and other political leaders opposed to abortion. Former Vice President Mike Pence, wrote in a post on X the approval is “a complete betrayal of the pro-life movement that elected President Trump.” Pence argued the approval should prompt the resignation of Robert F. Kennedy Jr., a Catholic and scion of the famous Kennedy political clan, as secretary of Health and Human Services. The Evita Solutions generic is actually the second approved generic pill for mifepristone. The first generic pill for abortion — from GenBioPro — was also approved in 2019, during the first Trump presidency. Approved by the FDA for early abortion in 2000, mifepristone — the first of two drugs used in a medication-based abortion — gained the moniker “the abortion pill.” However, the same drug combina-

tion has become used sometimes in recent years for miscarriage care, where an unborn child has already passed, a situation that Catholic teaching would hold as morally licit use.

Pope condemns ‘rise of antisemitic hatred,’ Manchester synagogue attack

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Leo XIV decried “the rise of antisemitic hatred in the world,” particularly as evidenced by “the terrorist attack in Manchester,” England, Oct. 2, an attack that killed two men. The attack on the Heaton Park Hebrew Congregation Synagogue in Manchester took place on Yom Kippur, the holiest day of the year in Judaism. The attacker, who was killed by police, drove a car into a crowd of people and stabbed the two Jewish men. Pope Leo condemned the attack in his remarks before praying the Angelus prayer Oct. 5 with visitors and pilgrims who had just attended his Mass in St. Peter’s Square for the Jubilee of Migrants and the Jubilee of the Missions. Speaking just days before the second anniversary of Hamas’ terrorist attack on Israel and Israel’s massive military attack on Gaza, the pope told the crowd that he continues “to be saddened by the immense suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza.” However, he said, “in recent hours, in the dramatic situation in the Middle East, some significant steps forward have been taken in peace negotiations, which I hope will achieve the desired results as soon as possible.”

New graphic novel features Father Emil Kapaun: Army chaplain, Korean War POW

ARLINGTON, Va. — A nonprofit dedicated to supporting the U.S. Army recently released a graphic novel highlighting the story and service of Father Emil Kapaun, the Catholic military chaplain who gave his life in a prisoner-of-war camp during the Korean War. Since 2018, the Association of the United States Army, a nonprofit dedicated to supporting the U.S. Army through education and professional development initiatives, has released four graphic novels every year, highlighting the stories of Army Medal of Honor recipients. The organization chose to feature the story of Father Kapaun, who received the Medal of Honor posthumously in 2013. Father Kapaun is the first military chaplain to be featured in the comic book series, which was released Sept. 23. Ordained in 1940 a priest for the Diocese of Wichita, Kansas, Father Kapaun served as a military chaplain during World War II and the Korean War. While deployed in Korea, he was forced to surrender with his unit to Chinese forces. He was sent to a prisoner-of-war camp in North Korea where he continued to minister and serve his fellow POWs until he fell ill and died in May 1951. He is a candidate for sainthood, and in February he was declared “Venerable.” Those interested in the graphic novel highlighting the story and service of Father Emil Kapaun can view it or download a free copy at ausa.org/kapaun or ausa.org/moh.

Mexican priest murdered in cartel-ravaged Guerrero state

MEZCALA, Mexico — Another Catholic priest has been murdered in Mexico’s violence-stricken Guerrero state. Father Bertoldo Pantaleón Estrada, pastor of San Cristóbal Parish in Mezcala, was found dead Oct. 6 — two days after disappearing. According to press reports, he was shot twice in the neck, and federal officials have named his driver as the prime suspect. “At this time, we have no indication that the father was involved in anything wrong,” Federal public security secretary Omar García Harfuch said Oct. 7. Father Pantaleón’s death underscores the growing danger for clergy in cartel-controlled regions. Guerrero, once a hub for heroin production, remains plagued by organized crime, extortion, and kidnappings. The Diocese of Chilpancingo-Chilapa, where the priest served, has suffered multiple clergy killings in recent years. The Mexican bishops’ conference condemned the violence, calling for a full and transparent investigation. Since 2006, at least 52 priests have been killed in Mexico — making it the deadliest country in the world for Catholic clergy. Guerrero’s four bishops attempted to broker a peace accord between the state’s drug cartels in 2024 , but the priest’s murder highlights the ongoing risks faced by those ministering in the country’s conflict zones.

Justices hear faith-driven free speech challenge to conversion therapy ban

WASHINGTON — The Supreme Court heard oral arguments Oct. 7 in Chiles v. Salazar, a First Amendment challenge to a Colorado law banning professional counseling services that practice “conversion therapy” for minors, efforts intended to change a minor’s gender identity that differs from the young person’s biological sex or to change their sexual orientation. Colorado’s law on conversion therapy for minors, which passed in 2019, prohibits licensed physicians or other licensed mental health care providers from providing “conversion therapy” to minors, which the state defined as “efforts to change an individual’s sexual orientation, including efforts to change behaviors or gender expressions or to eliminate or reduce sexual or romantic attraction or feelings toward individuals of the same sex.” Colorado licensed counselor Kaley Chiles filed a First Amendment challenge to the law, arguing it could impact her work with her clients, which she has said she considers an extension of her Christian faith. Jim Campbell, chief legal counsel with Alliance Defending Freedom, the legal group representing Chiles, argued the counselor’s one-on-one conversations with clients count as speech protected under the First Amendment. Colorado Solicitor General Shannon W. Stevenson argued that there is a lack of evidence that conversion therapy has any effectiveness. However, Justice Elena Kagan did raise a hypothetical concern that the Colorado law could lead to the state improperly regulating speech, which she suggested would conflict with existing court precedent.



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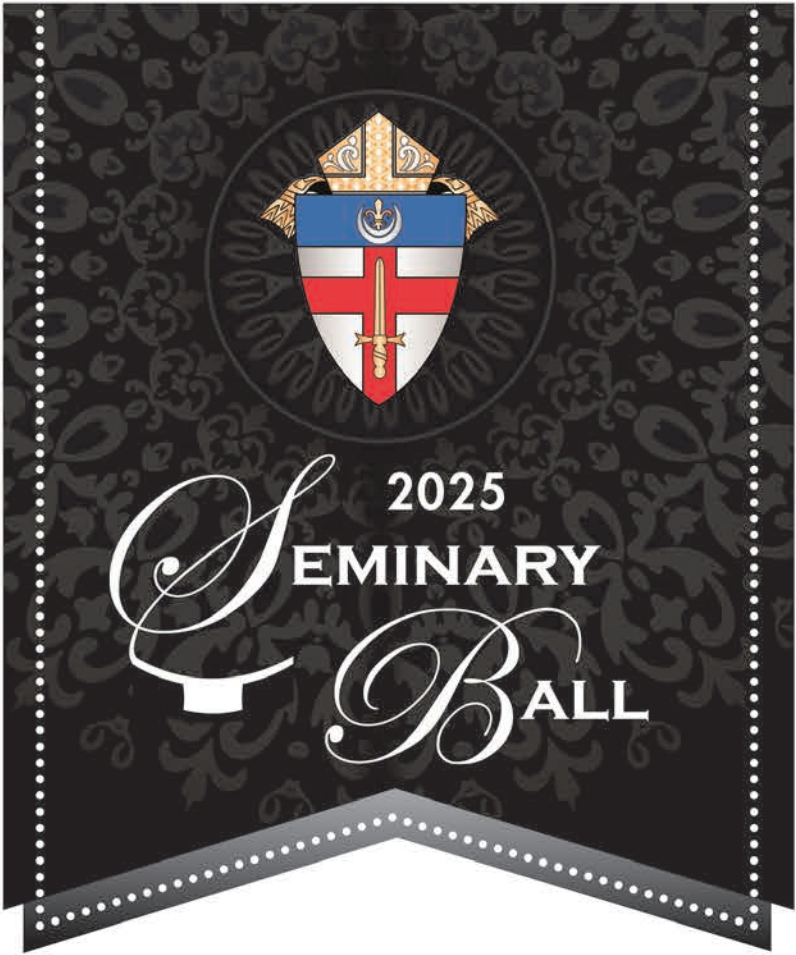
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