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Give Catholic on Giving Tuesday — parishes, schools and organizations prepare their campaigns for fundraising

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

This year, the Diocese of Covington is introducing the community to a new way to give in preparation for the upcoming holidays. Give Catholic NKY — a campaign for “Giving Tuesday,” which occurs annually the Tuesday after Thanksgiving — allows for individual schools, parishes and community ministries to set fundraising goals through Give Catholic NKY’s website. This process offloads the work of fundraising from these organizations and presents the different options to donors via leaderboards and a “shopping cart” system of giving.

Already, different organizations fundraising through Give Catholic have begun uploading information about their campaigns to the website — public and visible for anyone to start looking for fundraisers to support. These campaigns support many different ministries and needs, from general upkeep to scholarships to much needed improvements and repairs.

One such project comes out of St. Mary School, Alexandria, whose hopes are to raise money for a STEM enrichment program for the school’s students. This program will cultivate the interests of the students in modern technology from robotics to coding, according to Jennifer Geiman, principal.

“This market would be amazing to give those kids who have a passion in pursuing not only careers, but enrichment in the STEM area,” said Mrs. Geiman, who cites the availability of these programs rising in public schools. “We’re very limited with funding in that area, so any contribution would help us be competitive in that way — and hopefully give our kids who want to continue their

Catholic education that type of opportunity.”

Another project, belonging to St. Paul Parish, Florence, is aiming to replace the parish’s 20-year-old bell system, whose outdated system and speakers have fallen into disrepair.

“The bells are an important part of the parish,” said Father Jason Bertke, pastor. “It’s easy to forget that the bells are calling us to worship. They call us to Mass, they call us to prayer. They sanctify the time.” With a projected goal of \$17,000 — these funds would allow bells to ring from the Parish once more, returning to their important mission of “calling people to worship.”

With less than a month until Giving Tuesday, individuals are encouraged to consider “giving Catholic,” according to Jim Hess, diocesan director of Stewardship and Mission Services. “It presents a beautiful opportunity for the entire diocese to come together and to prioritize giving Catholic on Giving Tuesday.”

Information regarding the Give Catholic NKY campaign, including access to donating on Dec. 2, is available on the Give Catholic NKY webpage, <https://www.givecentral.org/leaderboard/Give-Catholic-NKY-Giving-Tuesday-2025>.

Give Catholic NKY

The Diocese of Covington’s
Official Giving Tuesday
Campaign

December 2

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community goals now
online at**

<https://www.givecentral.org/leaderboard/Give-Catholic-NKY-Giving-Tuesday-2025>



Bailey photos

Welcome back

Twenty-four of the 32 chimeras have been delivered to the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. Chimera are the terracotta mystical creatures, popularly called gargoyles, that line the parapet of the Cathedral. Each chimera takes one full day to install with instillations beginning the week of Nov. 10. The instillation of the chimera is one of the final steps in the restoration of the Cathedral as the project is intended to be completed in early 2026. Due to deterioration and safety concerns, the chimeras were removed in March 2023. Using 3D scans, artisans at New York’s Boston Valley Terra Cotta recreated the chimera.

DCCH Furnishing Futures campaign raises money for residential treatment program ahead of National Adoption Month

Bella Bailey

Multimedia Correspondent

This year is the 30th annual celebration of National Adoption Month in the month of November. Dedicated by President Bill Clinton in 1995, National Adoption Month raises awareness for the children currently waiting for their forever families in the foster care system.

“It’s a time to raise awareness for the children that are in the foster care system needing an adoptive family,” said Ron Bertsch, therapeutic foster care and adoption director for the DCCH Center for Children and Families, Ft. Mitchell.

“I love that it’s in November,” he said, “this is the month of Thanksgiving, so we offer thanks for the families that have accepted this calling and took on the challenge of adopting children from foster care.”

Currently, there are 1,234 children in the Northern Kentucky foster care system, 222 of whom have an end goal of adoption. In the whole state, there are 8,678 children in the foster care system, with 347 of those children being listed on the state website as eligible for adoption.



“In Kentucky, about eighty-five percent of the adoptions that take place are foster-to-adopt, so people have to take on that fostering role first, then adopt,” said Mr. Bertsch.

“There’s a year, two years fostering timeline that has to happen if it’s a brand-new case, that’s usually because we give the birth parents at least fifteen months to rehabilitate,” said Mr. Bertsch.

Due to this long process, many of the children available for adoption are older. “There are very few that are under the age of six or seven,” said Mr. Bertsch. However, older children are not as likely to be adopted as younger children are.

“I think people are scared of taking an older child,” said Mr. Bertsch, “they have a lot more history and trauma; they have more things that they’re bringing into the home.”

DCCH Center for Children and Families recognizes the need for older children to “feel at home while they heal for the future that awaits them,” wrote Denise Govan, president, in an August newsletter.

The DCCH Center for Children and Families residential treatment program provides 32 of those children a chance of normalcy. There are four apartments in the residential treatment program, each of which has eight bedrooms, a kitchen and common areas like a living and dining room. Currently, DCCH Center for Children and Families is running a “Furnish Futures” donation campaign to help update the furniture in those common spaces.

“The furniture in our four residential apartments is now over a decade old – worn down, patched and no longer reflecting the warm, inviting space our children need,” wrote Ms. Govan.

Mr. Bertsch said, “what we’re looking for is new, heavy-duty, sturdy and good quality that will last.”

While the “Furnishing Futures” campaign is winding down, donations are always accepted. To learn more about the campaign or to donate, go to dcchcenter.org/ff-donate/.

2025 CCKY Catholic Health Care Summit highlights importance of Catholic healthcare

Austin Schafer

Contributor

The 2025 Catholic Health Care Summit, sponsored by Kentucky’s Bishops and the Catholic Conference of Kentucky, convened this past week, bringing together church leaders, healthcare professionals and community advocates to discuss the vital role of Catholic healthcare in both the church and broader community outreach efforts. In our diocese, Austin Schafer, director of Pastoral and Spiritual Care at St. Elizabeth Healthcare, served on the planning committee for the event.

Archbishop Shelton Fabre, Archbishop of Louisville, opened the summit, emphasizing leaders recommit to the calling of Catholic healthcare and to continue to extend the healing ministry of Jesus. He shared especially about the gift of Catholic healthcare in serving the poor, especially in our rural communities.

The summit featured keynote speaker Kerry Robinson, president and CEO of Catholic Charities USA. She shared an inspirational talk focused on being healers for individuals and communities in their most vulnerable moments. She also shared about the importance of looking to moral heroes in our challenged times, as virtue is infectious in the best possible way. She shared that “Caring alone won’t save the world, but caring together will.” Her message of

being a Church of generosity and hope resonated with participants.

Following lunch, there was a panel discussion with local health care leaders, including Taylor Zumwalt, the director of Community Health and Partnership at St. Elizabeth Healthcare. The panel explored successful outreach programs that have made significant impacts, particularly in underserved areas and communities.

As the summit concluded, attendees were reminded of the Church’s commitment to both charity and justice and the call to continue encountering and accompanying those served as each bring health and healing to Kentucky communities.

Austin Schafer is director of Pastoral and Spiritual Care for St. Elizabeth Healthcare of Greater Cincinnati.



Schafer photo

Panel discussion with Jason Hall, executive director of Catholic Conference of Kentucky with Taylor Zumwalt on the panel (pictured far right).

Pilgrims from the Diocese of Covington return from Jubilee pilgrimage to Rome — an experience of a lifetime

To celebrate the Jubilee Year of Hope, Bishop John Iffert and 70 pilgrims from the Diocese of Covington, made a pilgrimage to Rome, Oct. 22–Nov. 1, to visit historical spiritual sites, pass through the Jubilee Holy Door and to attend the Angelus and General Audience in St. Peter’s Square to listen to Pope Leo XIV. Upon their return, the *Messenger* caught up with Bishop Iffert and pilgrims, Father Joseph Gallenstein, Michael and Christina Weller and Marybeth Bosko to hear about the experience.

Bishop Iffert enjoys witnessing the joy and connection among pilgrims

Laura Keener
Editor

Bishop Iffert uses a saying to differentiate pilgrims from tourists. “Tourists expect, pilgrims accept.” True to this point, the Rome pilgrimage was not without moments to accept, like the missed visit to the Basilica of St. Anthony of Padua in Venice due to heavy rains and traffic. “That’s a disappointment. But the folks did a good job of saying, ‘Well, I hate that we missed that, but it was the right decision,’” said Bishop Iffert.

But there were even more moments of acceptance that were welcome surprises, moments of meaningful spiritual experiences and joy. A standout for Bishop Iffert was a visit to the Tre Fontane Abbey, Rome. It is the site where St. Paul was beheaded. It is also a site where a mass grave believed to be of 10,000 Christian martyrs, persecuted in the Third Century under the Roman emperor Diocletian.

“They talk about two groups of people persecuted under Emperor Diocletian. One would be Christian workers who were forced to work on the construction of the Diocletian baths. And the other would be soldiers, where Diocletian was trying to rid the Roman legions of Christians,” said Bishop Iffert. “That was a very spiritual place, a very moving experience. I had never heard of that place and so it just snuck up on me how powerful that was.”

Celebrating Mass at the major basilicas — St. John Lateran, which is the Cathedral of the Diocese of Rome; the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls and in a special way, the Basilica of St. Mary Major.

The Basilica of St. Mary Major is home to an icon of Blessed Mother known to be a favorite of Pope Francis. It is known as “Protectress of the Roman People,” and is one of the oldest in existence, being attributed to St. Luke. Also inside the Basilica is a bas-relief depicting the story of Our Lady of the Snows, a rare summer snowfall which, according to legend, fell on Aug. 5, 352, on the Esquiline Hill, one of the famed “Seven Hills” of Rome. On the anniversary each year, the Basilica reenacts the “miracle of the snows.” In Bishop Iffert’s home diocese of Belleville, there is a shrine to Our Lady of the Snows.

“To have Mass there with the pilgrims in that place, those liturgies, were highlights for me,” he said.

Bishop Iffert said he delighted in watching his fellow pilgrims in St. Peter’s Square as Pope Leo XIV

Clergy of the Diocese of Covington participating in the pilgrimage included (from left) Msgr. Daniel Vogelpohl; Father Joseph Gallenstein, pastor, St. Mary Parish, Alexandria; Bishop Iffert, Father Baiju Kidaagen, pastor, St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood; Deacon Kevin Cranley, St. Timothy Parish, Union; and Deacon Barry Henry, St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas, at the Basilica of St. Mary Major and Jesuit Father Paul Lickteig, Cincinnati.



Bishop Iffert celebrates Mass at the Basilica of St. Sebastian Outside the Walls. Deacon Kevin Cranley is assisting. This basilica is one of the seven pilgrimage churches of Rome. It is built over the Catacombs of St. Sebastian and was originally dedicated to the apostles Peter and Paul before being rededicated to St. Sebastian.

passed by just feet away. And he was moved by the connectedness the pilgrims created in just a few days.

“I heard so many people on Saturday night as we were saying goodbye, and on Thursday as the group kind of

divided into two, who really talked about how sad they were to leave their new friends,” said Bishop Iffert. “People talked about not only to encounter these holy sites and holy places, but to do that with a group of fellow believers and like-minded folks. It just really meant a lot to people. I think I was surprised by that a little bit.

“I am so blessed to be able to live my life in the heart of the Church, and to see that every day — to have those supports and encouragements every day. But for the pilgrims who joined the trip, there was a great testimony to that, to be able to travel and to see these sites and to make new friends. Some of them said that they felt like people they’ve only been traveling with for a couple of weeks, that it felt like they had been friends forever. And that’s a wonderful thing.”

Pastor reflects on unity, youth, upon returning to diocese from Rome

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Accompanying Bishop John Iffert and pilgrims to Rome, Father Joseph Gallenstein, pastor of St. Mary of the Assumption Parish, Alexandria, reflected on the pilgrimage as a “wonderful trip” with “wonderful people.”

Fond memories such as concelebrating Mass with Bishop Iffert in various places, especially the papal basilicas, were just some of the experiences that Father Gallenstein highlighted about his experience across the ocean.

“I really enjoyed going to Assisi,” Father Gallenstein noted, “... what I did not realize until I was there was that Carlo Acutis is entombed in one of the churches there. That was a very moving experience.”

Being a pastor of a parish with a fairly large grade school, visiting the entombed saint stood out to Father Gallenstein. “My thoughts immediately went to young teens

... As I was going through and passing his tomb, I was thinking and praying especially for our young folks who are fast approaching the Sacrament of Confirmation.”

Another stand out memory was at the Basilica of St. Sebastian over the Catacombs, where, while concelebrating Mass, other pilgrims and tourists joined in on

(Continued on page 10)



Bishop's Schedule

- | | |
|--|--|
| Nov. 8-14
USCCB General Assembly, Baltimore | Nov. 16
Sacrament of Confirmation, Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, California, 11 a.m. |
| Nov. 15
Diocese of Covington Pastoral Council, 10 a.m.
Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 4:30 p.m. | Nov. 17
Catholic Conference of Kentucky meeting, Louisville |
| | Nov. 18
Archbishop Checcio’s welcome Mass, New Orleans |

Women religious return from Alabama pilgrimage — reflect on hope, civil rights

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

In early October, women religious from the Diocese of Covington — representing the Sisters of Notre Dame, Sisters of Divine Providence and Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery — set their sights on Selma, Alabama for a pilgrimage commemorating the Jubilee of Consecrated Life.

In 1965, Selma became the gathering place for hundreds of people, including many women religious, to march from Selma to Alabama’s capital of Montgomery in the name of voting rights for African Americans. In their visit to the city, the sisters visited Selma’s historic sights and reflected on the impact of the Civil Rights Movement today.

Reflecting on the pilgrimage, Benedictine Sister Dorothy Schuette noted that “even as we acknowledge injustice and injuries inflicted and received by our ancestors and country-women and men, we are heartened by the care and work of our sisters and brothers to repair and build up the children of God.” An example being the Edmunites — who gave the sisters a place to stay at their mission, and who serve the African American community in Selma.

“Our pilgrim group’s shared prayer and reflections at the close of each day were valuable opportunities for the six of us to express our deep emotions of compassion, sorrow, solidarity and empathy for those who have been so abused in the past,” Sister Dorothy said. “We also became more aware of the traces of racial hatred that continue to exist in the society in which we live. But we are women of hope witnessing to the deepest desire of humankind to live in peace with one another.”



(left) Sisters stand in front of Brown Chapel A.M.E. Church, Selma, Alabama. This location that served as the starting point for the Selma to Montgomery marches that helped pass the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

(above) Historical markers throughout the GWC Homes (George Washington Carver Homes), stand as important reminders to the history of Selma, Alabama’s role in the Civil Rights Movement.



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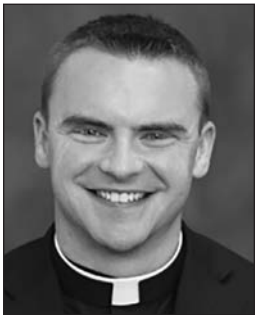
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Maura Baker Staff Writer
Isabella (Bella) Bailey Multimedia Correspondent
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One bread, one Church

The readings for the Feast of the Dedication of the Lateran Basilica in Rome are: Ezekiel 47:1-2, 8-9, 12, 1 Corinthians 3:9c-11, 16-17 and John 2:13-22.

The past couple of months have been rather unique for our liturgical calendar, as we have had a few Sundays in Ordinary Time that have been taken over by major feast days. In September, we had the Feast of the Exaltation of the Cross. Just last Sunday, we celebrated All Souls Day, and now this Sunday, we celebrate another important Feast rather than the Sunday in Ordinary Time: the Feast of the Dedication of St. John Lateran Basilica. But what is so special about the Lateran Basilica? Why is it so important that it takes over a Sunday in Ordinary Time?

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Michael Elmlinger

It may come as a surprise to some people that the cathedral of Rome in fact is not St. Peter's Basilica. It is certainly one of the most important churches in the Catholic Church, but it is not the *cathedral* of the Diocese of Rome. The actual cathedral of the Diocese of Rome is in fact St. John Lateran Basilica. If we recall just this past May when Robert Cardinal Prevost was elected Pope Leo XIV, we may recall that not long after his installation Mass at Vatican City, he had another major celebration: his possession of the cathedral of Rome, St. John Lateran Basilica. Now, since this is the cathedral of the Diocese of Rome, that also means that the Lateran Basilica is also the cathedral of the universal Church as well, the Mother Church of all churches. In other words, it is the cathedral of the entire world, of the one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church. So this day, this feast of the dedication of the Lateran Basilica, is a day where most especially we celebrate the unity of the Church of Christ.

In his homily for when he took possession of the Lateran Basilica, Pope Leo called for the Church to be "a sign of unity and community, leaven for a reconciled world." Indeed, this is one of the very marks of the Church, that the Church is one, specifically one under Our Lord Jesus Christ. He is the source of our unity, as all that we do leads to Him and from Him, especially in the Most Holy Sacrament of the Altar: the Eucharist.

Indeed, it was during the night of the Last Supper when Christ instituted the Eucharist that he prayed his high priestly prayer, "that they may be one, as We are One." (John 17:21) As St. Paul says, "The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not a participation in the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not a participation in the body of Christ? Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of one bread." (1 Cor 10:16-17) One of the most beautiful expressions of the unity that is found within the Church is how throughout the entire world, though there is great diversity within the Church, the same Eucharist is celebrated.

I say this especially from my own personal experience, as I am currently living in Canada for further studies. There are times when I get homesick, where I miss my family and friends from the Diocese of Covington, as there were when I was in seminary. One of the ways that I feel strongly connected to my homeland is through the Eucharist, through the celebration of the Mass. Even though there are slight discrepancies between how Canada and the United States celebrate the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, nevertheless, the celebration as a whole remains the same. This brings a sense of comfort, a sense of belonging, a sense that we are truly at home within the liturgy, especially the Mass, even in the midst of a foreign land.

This is one of the things that the Lord wants to give us through his Church: this sense of belonging, of being at home with him and through him. One of the ways that

(Continued on page 12)

Prayers for the hopeful

November is National Adoption Month; a time set aside to recognize and raise awareness of the children needing an adoptive family but also to thank those parents who have adopted. The theme for 2025 is Honoring Youth, Strengthening Pathways for Lasting Bonds.

VIEWPOINT



Ronald M. Bertsch

at St. Patrick Church, Taylor Mill, recently. Getting a jump start on the adoption awareness theme, I shared with the congregation the services of DCCH. The need is great for more holy adoptive, foster families, mentors and volunteers that can offer children a pathway to build attachments to last a lifetime.

One specific message that I usually deliver when at our local churches is about the youth who are 24/7 residents at DCCH. When a child is placed at the residential treatment center and needs a foster or adoptive family because he or she cannot safely return to the birth family, that child will often seek me out and ask if I have found

him or her a new mom and dad yet. That is a tough part of the job for me. As often as I have to say no, not yet. But I tell them not to give up hope. It was the focus of hope and persistent prayer that was the underlying message of the scripture readings that weekend of Oct. 18/19th at St. Pat's in Taylor Mill. Father Jeff VonLehmen delivered a homily that keeping hope and not growing tired internally is what we are all called to do. Unlike the unjust judge who rendered a verdict for the persistent widow, God will rule speedily for His chosen ones. Let us keep the faith.

The children are encouraged to keep hoping and praying for their needs for a new family. Comparable to Aaron and Hur holding Moses' hands up in prayer so Joshua could fight the Amalek troops who waged war on Israel. The connection to holy scriptures is evident, as we ask the church today to hold up foster and adoptive families in prayer too.

May we be like the persistent widow, like Aaron and Hur lifting the needs of children and parents in prayer! Let us give the children traumatized by abuse and neglect a reason to hope and wait no longer.

In the spirit of November's Thanksgiving mindset, let us also offer our community appreciation for those called to adoption ministry. Let us pray for those contemplating this call that they will respond affirmatively.

If you are interested in learning more about adoption, foster care, or mentoring, please contact DCCHcenter.org or (859) 331-2040. A special open house is scheduled for Wednesday, Nov. 19, between 6:30 and 8:30 p.m.

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

Artificial intelligence and lived discipleship

Ever since generative artificial intelligence (AI) became widely available, the Church has had something to say about the way Christians and all people should approach and use AI.

GUEST



Sister Hosea Rupprecht

Why? Because technology is a part of life and since we live our lives as whole people — not compartmentalized — our values as disciples of Jesus need to come into play when we use any kind of technology, especially artificial intelligence.

Now, the proliferation of AI has raised concerns. Will students use it to do their homework? Will AI take away jobs? What about the immense server farms needed to sustain AI systems and their impact on the environment? Will we be able to tell the difference between what is AI-generated and human created?

A must-read Vatican resource for anyone grappling with these issues and others like it is "Antiqua et Nova: Note on the Relationship Between Artificial Intelligence and Human Intelligence." It came out in January 2025 and in it, the church reflects on the impact AI is having on many aspects of our lives.

I would like to highlight three challenges (among many) that AI poses to us as Christians and offer an antidote so that we can examine ourselves to make sure that the way we engage with AI and other technologies is in accord with the virtues we strive to live by.

Challenge one: Relationships
A growing trend, especially among teens, is to use AI chatbots as companions and givers of mental health advice. When so many relationships are mediated by some kind of digital interaction, how do we teach our youth to value real, human relationships?

One antidote to this challenge is to intensify our rootedness in community. We all belong to communities: our families, the parish, work or school, common interest groups, etc. These communities are where we make

authentic human connections.

I recall watching the History Channel's show "Alone." Contestants, who are usually wilderness experts, are sent out into harsh environments with just a few items and a bunch of camera equipment. Whoever lasts the longest wins. So many times, people "tapped out" just because they missed their loved ones at home and even the possibility of \$500,000 was not enough to keep them in the game. Such is the essential nature of our connection with other people.

Relationships are complicated, but if people are turning to AI for relationships, then followers of Christ need to be the example of authentic relationships. "Antiqua et Nova" says, "Authentic human relationships require the richness of being with others in their pain, their pleas, and their joy."

Challenge two: Digital sloth
Sloth is more than just being lazy. In the context of the seven deadly sins, sloth means spiritual apathy toward fulfilling one's purpose in life or just not caring. There is sloth in the digital world as well and AI can feed right into that.

One of the blessings of AI is that it can help with repetitive tasks and intricate data analysis but when AI is employed to substitute using our brains, that's when sloth kicks in. I've used AI numerous times to put together an outline for a presentation but I wrote the presentation myself. The problems come when we don't set reasonable boundaries in the way we use AI or how often.

The antidote here is intentionality. It's good, periodically, to question ourselves about how we use AI and other technology. Does this technology and the way I'm using it draw me closer to God and others? Is the dignity of the human person always being respected? How does my use of AI hold up the principles of Catholic social teaching?

Challenge three: AI and tech overload
I try to keep up with what's going on with AI, but it can be overwhelming since there are new developments every day. Just the number of AI resources are enough to keep one's head spinning. Which chatbot to use? Which image or video generator? If you've ever experienced tech overload, you know what I'm talking about.

(Continued on page 12)

Jubilee of the Poor is about love, human dignity

Laura Keener
Editor

The Jubilee of the Poor will be celebrated Nov. 16. Jubilee days invite the faithful to recognize and honor the inherent dignity of each person. During the Jubilee of the Poor, the USCCB encourages, “We are called to observe a preferential option for the poor and vulnerable, modeling our actions on the examples seen in Scripture.”

In the Diocese of Covington, there are many ministries devoted to the care of the poor. The *Messenger* reached out to three individuals working in three ministries to gather their learned wisdom through ministry.

Upon his retirement in 2021, Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys began volunteering regularly at Parish Kitchen, sometimes twice, sometimes three times a month, “When they need me. I fill in,” he said.

Parish Kitchen is a ministry of Catholic Charities. Located at the corner of Madison Ave and 16th Street, Covington, anyone who is hungry can receive a hot meal at Parish Kitchen, 365 days a year. When volunteering, Bishop Foys hands out desserts.

“It’s a whole new experience for me, actually, being with the poor regularly on a one-on-one basis. And sometimes they’ll ask for advice, or they’ll want to talk to the priest,” Bishop Foys said.

Everyone served at the Parish Kitchen “is so grateful and respectful,” said Bishop Foys. “I find that I feel that they are giving me more than I’m giving to them.”

Bishop Foys referred to Pope Leo XIV’s recent exhortation “Dilexi te,” (“I have loved you”), which focuses on love and care for the poor — a recommended must read.

“The Holy Father mentions in his exhortation that the poor aren’t poor because they want to be poor, or because they’re lazy. They just find themselves in this situation,” said Bishop Foys. “The Holy Father is very clear that we cannot call ourselves Christians if we don’t have a heart for the poor and that whole notion of seeing Christ in

everybody. When I’m at the Parish Kitchen, that’s the mindset I have, that everybody coming through is Jesus.”

Guests of the Parish Kitchen, said Bishop Foys, come in for food, but they are also in need of affirmation and a break.

“Sometimes they just need a break. It’s not that they don’t want to work, or sometimes they can’t. I would say for someone to give them a break, I think would be important,” Bishop Foys said. “This isn’t just a handout. What we’re telling them is that ‘you’re worthwhile and we’re here for you. We’re here because you’re precious in God’s sight. Everybody is precious in God’s sight.’”

Volunteering at Parish Kitchen, “I find myself more conscious about poverty and the needs of people and wanting to do more for them,” said Bishop Foys.

The Rose Garden Home Mission and its Center for Hope and Healing, both in Covington, is quite possibly the largest and best-known ministry for those in need, especially pregnant women and moms. Operated by the Franciscan Daughters of Mary, the Mission offers a food pantry, diapers, children’s clothes, baby equipment and more. The Center is a free medical and dental clinic, staffed by volunteer professionals. Also located at the mission is a small prayer chapel, a place of respite, where guests can renew their spirit.

“There’s a tendency to think of the poor as being less,” said Franciscan Daughter of Mary Mother Clare Borchard. “But they’re not less. They’re just as human and they have the same dignity as everyone else. They’re people who happen to be having a hard time for one reason or another.

Mother Clare also referred to Pope Leo’s exhortation. “He pointed out that there are different kinds of poverty. There’s certainly material poverty, which is what most people think of, and we definitely have an obligation to address that. But there’s also, spiritual and moral poverty, and sometimes that is the greater need. There are people, too, that have material needs, but have a remarkable faith

and trust in God. From my experience, fundamentally there is a need for God, but really, first the need to be loved and cared about; to just know that there’s somebody in the world who thinks that they have dignity. Sometimes that’s really what they’re looking for, even more than food.”

The need to be loved, Mother Clare said, is not unique to the poor. “That’s a common human need that everyone has,” she said. “In that way we are in solidarity. The more we understand that the Lord loves us, and the more we understand the great value that He has for us, the more naturally it comes to recognize that in somebody else, too.”

Cindy Carris is a founder and Board member of the Mary Rose Mission, Florence. Opened in 1995, the Mary Rose Mission serves a hot evening meal to hungry neighbors every day and “To Love as God Loves.”

“The poor I meet are just like me,” said Mrs. Carris. “They have been given more challenges than I could ever have imagined. Many begin their life with struggles that I’ve never had to deal with over my lifetime. Others have had tragedies with little or no support that create monumental challenges for them to overcome.”

Having worked with people in need has expanded Mrs. Carris’ heart for people and a concern for not just their physical needs but for the way they are treated.

“It absolutely breaks my heart to see the lack of compassion, tolerance and simple kindness we show people, especially the poor,” Mrs. Carris said. “We’ve grown so cold towards our neighbors. It makes my heart ache.”

Mrs. Carris quotes St. Mother Theresa of Calcutta, who said that being poor in the West was much greater than what she experienced in India because, “our poor were starving for love, which is a much greater poverty.”

There are many places for people to show the love of Christ to others, especially the poor. Mrs. Carris encourages everyone, “Do something ... anything. It really isn’t hard to show compassion and kindness, and it doesn’t cost a dime!”

Experts: ‘Dilexi Te’ reinforces Catholic teaching that care for the poor is essential to holiness

Kimberley Heatherington
OSV News

The words of “Dilexi Te” (“I Have Loved You”) — the apostolic exhortation on love for the poor released by the Vatican Oct. 9 — come from the pen of two pontiffs, Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIV.

With his April 21 death, Pope Francis never completed the missive, but Pope Leo — stating he is “happy to make this document my own” by “adding some reflections” — has now finished the task.

Students of papal pronouncements may discern and debate how much of Pope Francis remains and how much Pope Leo added to the text — but there’s no philosophical departure. After only three paragraphs, Pope Leo informed readers he shares the late pope’s desire “that all Christians come to appreciate the close connection between Christ’s love and his summons to care for the poor.”

Nor, Pope Leo says, is it optional: “I too consider it essential to insist on this path to holiness.”

Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, encouraged Catholics to engage with the document’s reflection on Christ’s protecting love for the poor and the weak, and let it transform their lives.

“The Holy Father reminds us of a simple, life-changing truth, ‘love for our neighbor is tangible proof of the authenticity of our love for God,’” said Archbishop Broglio, who also leads the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services. “This means that ‘charity is not optional but a requirement of true worship.’”

If concern for the poor is a critical element of Christianity, what role has the Church had, and does it still have, in a world of growing inequality — especially in Pope Leo’s home country of the United States, which has wider disparities of wealth between rich and poor than any other major developed nation? What does Pope Leo emphasize in “Dilexi Te,” and what do those who both



OSV News photo/Paul Jeffrey

A child carries home a plate of rice and beans from a feeding program for children carried out by a small Catholic community in a slum section of Manila, Philippines, Sept. 20, 2022.

serve the poor and study poverty think of it?

“The apostolic exhortation puts forth the pope’s strategic plan for the rolling out of his pontificate,” Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami told OSV News. “And in that strategic plan, the role of the Church’s advocacy for an accompaniment with the poor, the marginalized, the forgotten, is going to continue to be emphasized — as it was during Pope Francis’ pontificate; as it has been throughout the history of the Church — that faith without works is dead.”

“He’s calling us to recommit ourselves to work with the poor,” Archbishop Wenski said, “and to work with the poor in ways that are more than just throwing a few dollars in the collection basket for a second collection; but to be engaged with the poor and walking with them, while at the same time helping and empowering them to reclaim their dignity as human beings.”

Observing that some ideas have become flashpoints in the Church, Archbishop Wenski suggested Pope Leo appears to be “trying to rehabilitate the phrase ‘social justice’ — which in recent years has almost become in some circles a bad word, because of this association with certain ideological tendencies.”

“But,” he said, “the pope is trying to reclaim it, and place it within the constant social teachings of the Church — that we have to not only help the individual poor person, but help create the conditions that will help the poor person overcome the burdens of the structural sins that sometimes contribute to their poverty.”

Structural sin is a Catholic theological concept describing how sinful actions and attitudes become embedded in the structures of society, creating both harm and injustice.

Archbishop Wenski noted the document also contradicts the meritocratic pop theology purveyed by televangelists.

“This is a rejection of what is sometimes called the ‘prosperity Gospel,’ that holds wealth and prosperity are

(Continued on page 9)

PEOPLE AND EVENTS

Newsworthy

The Cincinnati 300, published by Cincinnati Magazine, recognizes Thomas More University President Joseph L. Chillo, LP.D., as one of the region’s most powerful business executives for a sixth consecutive year. Additionally, the following Thomas More alumni were also recognized in the 2025 edition of the Cincinnati 300:

- Garren Colvin ’86, president & CEO, St. Elizabeth Healthcare.
- D. Lynn Meyers ’77, producing artistic director, Ensemble Theatre of Cincinnati.
- Gary Mitchell, president & CEO, Divisions Maintenance Group.
- Crystal Morrison ’14, regional leader, Fidelity Investments.
- Moira Weir ’00, president and CEO, United Way of Greater Cincinnati.

The prayer intention for November, as recommended by Pope Leo XIV, is for those who are struggling with suicidal thoughts that they might find the support, care, and love they need in their community, and be open to the beauty of life.

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.

The weeks of Advent are filled with Oracles from the Prophet Isaiah. Spend some time reading passages from his book and discover why Isaiah is the Old Testament prophet the Church turns to most often in this special time of preparation for Christmas. Oracles of Isaiah workshops with Father Timothy Schehr, Nov. 1 – Session 1 and Nov. 15 – Session 2, 10–11:30 a.m., Diocese of Covington, Curia Office, Covington. Cost \$35 cash or checks at the door. Visit covdio.org/bible-workshops.

The Kenton County Veterans Memorial annual Veterans Day Memorial Service for the country, military and first responders is Nov. 9, 2–2:45 p.m., Lou Hartfiel Memorial Park, Villa Hills. Children and young adults including Scouts, athletes, etc. especially encouraged to participate in the patriotic and prayerful memorial service. Uniforms welcomed, yet optional.

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: 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 Intercommunity Sisters Peace and Justice Committee will host a “Rosary for Vulnerable Migrant Populations,” Nov. 13, 11:30 a.m.–12:30 p.m., St. Mary Park, Covington, (across the street from the Cathedral) as part of the USCCB Committee on Migration’s national You Are Not Alone initiative.

Everyone is welcome to join in prayer.

After Jesus, St. Peter is the most developed character in the New Testament. He is also, perhaps, the most human and most flawed, and the most courageous and remarkable of Jesus’ disciples. Peter’s story extends into the Acts of the Apostles, as we see him leading the early Jerusalem community, becoming the figure later known as the First Pope. Join Father Michael Comer on a four-week series of talks on St. Peter, Thursdays, 10 a.m. or 6:30 p.m., Mother of God Church, Covington. Dates are Nov. 13, 20, Dec. 4 and 11.

In celebrating 10 years as an institute promoting civil dialogue surrounding religious freedom, the Wm. T. (Bill) Robinson III ’67 Institute for Religious Liberty at Thomas More University presents “Where are we now, 10 years later? The current state of religious liberty domestically and abroad,” Nov. 19, 7–9 p.m., Ziegler Auditorium, TMU, Crestview Hills, featuring keynote speaker; Rabbi David Saperstein, and guest speaker; Msgr. William Cleves. Free and open to the public.

Women’s One-Day Retreat “Beloved by the Father, Rooted in the Son, Renewed by the Spirit,” Nov. 22, 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 Nov. 16 at <https://stjosephcoldspring.com/church/view-only/adult-faith-formation-fall-retreats/> Questions? Contact Vicki Klocke at vklocke@stjoeparish.net or (859) 927-2291.

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

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

The National Catholic Youth Conference is a pilgrimage for Catholic high school students, Nov. 20-22, in Indianapolis. Teens spend three days at the nation’s largest Catholic youth gathering and experience the transformative power of the Church and God’s presence through music, talks, community and sacraments. The Youth Ministry Office coordinates the overall pilgrimage (conference ticket, transportation, housing and food). Parishes and schools register as a group. For individuals not identified with a group, contact Angie Poat, apoat@covdio.org. Bus space is limited.

The Holy Cross High School cheerleaders and coaches are sponsoring a Polar Express fun(d)raiser, Dec. 6, 6-9 p.m. in the Finn Center/Holy Cross gym, Latonia, for children ages 4+ (must be potty trained). Cost \$25 per child/\$50 family maximum. Wear pajamas, bring a blanket and pillow to enjoy the movie, snack, crafts and games. Register online www.hchscov.com or contact Karen Bunton at karen.bunton@hchscov.com.

Advent REVIVE! Dec 9. at St. Thomas Church, Ft. Thomas, 6:30–9 p.m. High School youth and families invited for Mass. Adoration. Confession. Music. Social. Sponsored by the Diocesan Youth Ministry Office & St. Thomas Youth Ministry. RSVP appreciated, email youth-ministry@covdio.net.

Women’s Advent Day of Recollection at St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs, Dec.13, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. Features keynote speaker Anna Mitchell, co-host of Sacred Heart

Radio Son Rise Morning Show. Lunch is provided. Free of charge. To register email dkittyallen@gmail.com or text (859) 957-7595.

The Diocese of Covington’s Advent tradition — the Bambinelli Blessing — returns this year to St. Mary’s Park, Covington, Dec. 13, 5:30–7:30 p.m. Come together with the community for a free event including music, story time, hot chocolate and cookies — and stay for a special blessing of the Nativity infants from Bishop John Iffert.

The Diocese of Covington is coordinating a pilgrimage to World Youth Day 2027 in Seoul, South Korea, for young adults ages 18 to 35. Bishop John Iffert hopes to join the pilgrims along with a few priests and deacons from the diocese. The estimated cost is \$5,500.00 per person and includes round-trip airfare, transportation, lodging, meals (from WYD) and tours. To reserve your spot, the initial payment of \$350 is due Dec. 31, 2025. The full amount must be paid by March 15, 2027. If you are interested in attending, leading a group, or making donations to help the young adults of our diocese attend, contact Isaak Abraham Isaak at (859) 392-1529 or e-mail iisaak@covdio.org.

Bishop Iffert and the priests of the Diocese of Covington will pray a Holy Hour for survivors of sexual violence and for the sanctification of priests, 3 p.m., every third Thursday monthly, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. All are welcome.

The Holy Face of Jesus devotion, every Tuesday 6 p.m., St. Cecilia Church, Independence, with Benediction 7 p.m., for reparation of sins against the first three commandments: denial of God, blasphemy and the profanation of Sundays and Holy Days; includes praying the Litany of the Holy Face of Jesus, the Holy Face Chaplet, prayers of petition and silent devotion, all during Exposition.

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

Zoom Support Group for family, relatives and friends of victims of clergy sexual abuse, second Monday of the month, 6:30–8 p.m. CST; 7:30–9 p.m. EST. Most often family members, relatives and friends do not have anyone to talk with about their loved one’s abuse. They are considered secondary victims of abuse. These meetings are confidential and no one is forced to contribute unless they want to. The support group is not there to give answers but to share experiences. Participants are free to bring a friend if that makes them feel more comfortable. Everyone is welcome to attend no matter geographical location. For information contact Paula Kaempffer, coordinator of Restorative Practices and Survivor Support, for the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, at kaempfferp@archspm.org or call (763) 688-3978.

Are you interested in helping men and women change their lives? Catholic Charities Jail Ministry Program is looking for people willing to volunteer to minister one of the county detention centers (Boone, Kenton, Cambell and Mason Co). We are especially in need of Spanish-speaking volunteers in Boone County detention center. All training is provided. For information go to www.covingtoncharities.org/volunteer or contact Jill Walsh at (859) 581-8974 jwalch@covingtoncharities.org.

Catholic Charities volunteer opportunities: Volunteer Receptionist — Be the welcoming face for visitors and clients. Most shifts are four hours long. Mason County Jail Ministry Volunteers - Prayer/Scripture Ministry — Join a group of inmates in the detention centers for prayer and Scripture discussions during scheduled evening sessions. Commitment is flexible; volunteers are not required to attend every week. Visit <https://covingtoncharities.org> and click on the volunteer tab, or e-mail jwalch@covingtoncharities.org.

Annual art exhibition accepting submissions showcases ‘invisible realities,’ exemplifies goodness, truth and beauty

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

The Angelico Project’s annual Juried Art Exhibition comes to St. Francis Xavier Church, Cincinnati, Jan. 24 — and artwork submissions are open now through the new year.

The exhibition, which will run Jan. 24–April 6, is open for entries from local artists around the Greater



Cincinnati area — accepting many mediums, including painting, illumination, sculpture, printmaking, drawing, photography; work in precious metals, enamel, glass, liturgical textiles; forms of digital media, graphic design and digital illustration.

The juror, whose responsibility will be to curate submissions for the gallery, is Emma Cassani, graphic designer for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati’s magazine, *The Catholic Telegraph*. Next in a chain of “excellent jurors,” according to Angelico Project founder and trustee Nancy-Carolyn Smith, the juried show “keeps the standard high,” for what the organization shows as a Catholic organiza-

tion. “Our mission is to evangelize through beauty,” said Ms. Smith, about both the exhibition and the mission of the Angelico Project as a whole. “Part of the Angelico Project has always been the Angelico Catholic Arts Guild and our outreach is to artists, because you’ve got to engage artists in goodness, truth and beauty in order to have an impact on our culture.”

After the first exhibition in January of 2020 was exceptionally well received, the Angelico Project saw the response as a sign that they were “moving in the right direction,” she said.

The goal of the exhibition is to showcase visual representations of “invisible realities,” according to the official call for entry. Such themes include love, hope, the Creator’s imagination and the created world — artwork that moves the viewer to prayer, whether it is of an explicitly religious nature or not. As such, submissions should demonstrate evidence of the elements of

“goodness, truth, beauty; witness to the dignity of the human person; attest to the reality of the spiritual life; and demonstrate mastery of the artist’s medium.”

“That’s our mission,” Ms. Smith concluded. “We’re going to change the world, starting with changing our own hearts ... That’s where it starts.”

For more information on the Angelico Project, including how to submit to the 2026 Juried Exhibition, visit <https://angelicoproject.org>.



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‘Dilexi Te’ reinforces Catholic teaching

(Continued from page 6)

signs of God’s favor — and that poverty is a sign of God’s disfavor, or somehow reflects the fault of the poor person himself,” he said.

Asked if — as the first American pope — Pope Leo’s exhortation might be relative to the platforms of America’s warring political parties, Archbishop Wenski was doubtful.

“Some might try to hijack this exhortation to make it a defense of one political party’s priorities or direction. I think that would be a mistake — because I think the purpose of it is beyond that. He doesn’t go into policy prescriptions, but underscores principles,” stressed Archbishop Wenski.

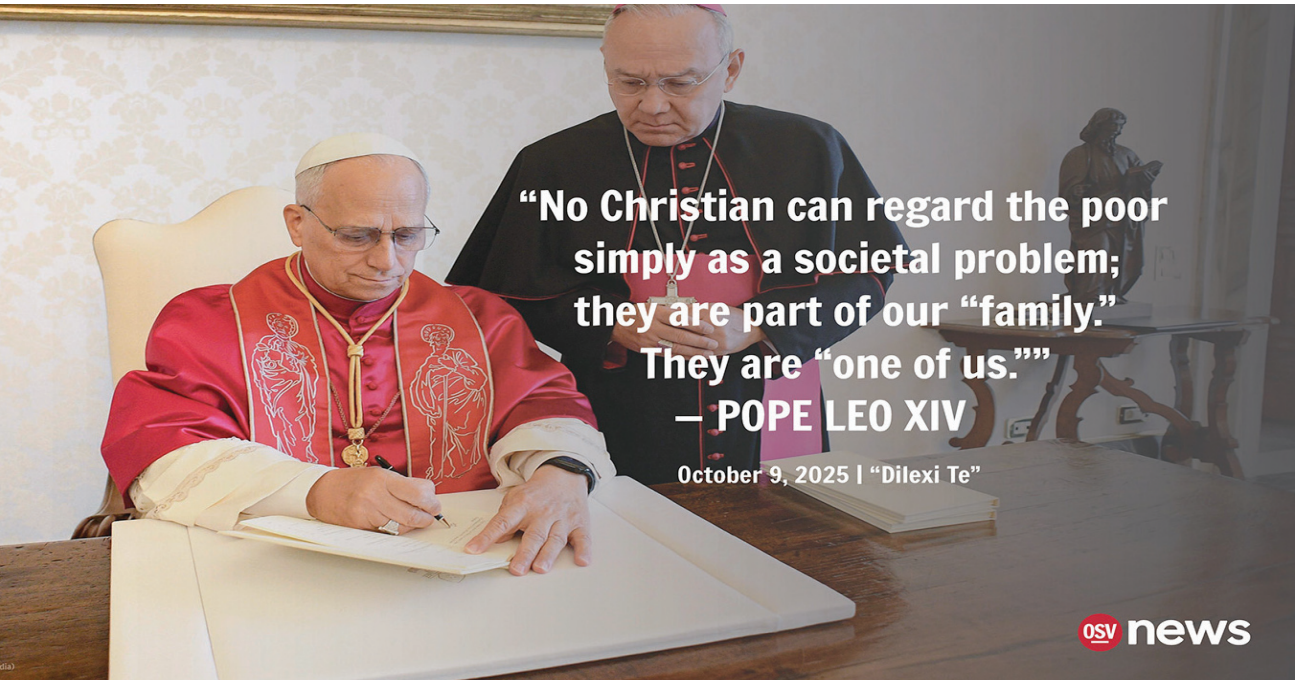
“People on both sides of the ideological spectrum say they want to help the poor — or we would hope they say that. If they do want to help the poor, they’ll find in this — whether they’re on the right or the left — inspiration for doing so. Some might take umbrage at some of the words,” he added, “and that probably is a call or a deeper examination of conscience.”

Archbishop Wenski — who spent 18 years of his priesthood working with Haiti’s “boat people” in Miami and has been an outspoken critic of Florida’s “Alligator Alcatraz” immigrant detention camp — also responded to the exhortation’s assertion that the Catholic Church doesn’t regard migrants as a threat.

“People are not problems. They’re human beings, flesh and blood human beings,” he said. “Immigration might be a problem, but the people themselves are not problems — and we have to acknowledge their humanity, and seek to affirm it.”

James Sullivan, a professor of economics at the University of Notre Dame and co-founder and director of its Lab for Economic Opportunities, a center researching effective solutions to reduce poverty in America, agreed the exhortation emphasizes the indispensable role of care for the poor in the life of the faithful.

“It addresses a lot of concerns about what it means to prioritize those living in poverty,” Sullivan told OSV News.



“He’s calling us all — it’s fundamentally part of who we are as Christians. This isn’t something that is an idle fancy of those who prioritize social justice. This is all of us, as Christians, are called to love the poor in the same way that they love God.”

A Pew Research Center poll released in June indicated that 47% of U.S. Catholics regard “working with the poor and needy” as essential to what being Catholic means to them. It ranked just behind a personal relationship with Jesus Christ (69%) and devotion to the Virgin Mary (50%), but ahead of receiving the Eucharist (46%).

“He emphasizes that this comes straight from the Gospels,” Sullivan added. “This is not a new opinion of a papacy. This is something that’s core to who we are as Christians.”

Sullivan also took note of Pope Leo’s critique of social disparities.

“He is clear that when we have inequities in power — and then people use that power to enrich themselves — that’s injustice, and we are called to act against that. And that should cut across political ideologies,” he said.

John Berry — national president of the Society of St. Vincent DePaul USA, which provides more than \$1.7 billion in aid to more than 5 million people every year through person-to-

person services, food pantries, disaster response and more — noted the exhortation’s awareness of contemporary social failings.

“The pope’s message does not shrink from a candid and profound criticism of the ills of modern society, and its focus on materialism over care for others,” he told OSV News. “His pastoral guidance on how to overcome those shortcomings is clear.”

Berry declared himself “thrilled” and “encouraged” by Pope Leo’s “strong comments on the need to not only serve the poor — but advocate for the poor, and try to change unjust systems, policies, and practices.”

He also found the pontiff’s words concerning migrants timely.

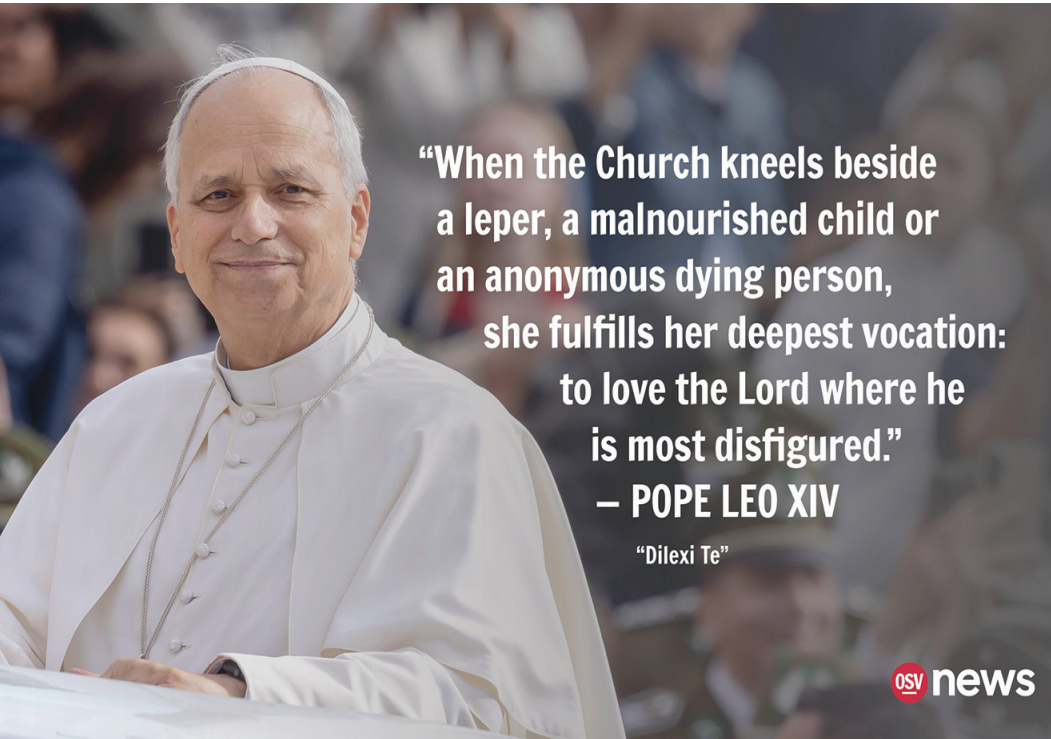
“Pope Leo’s strong scriptural teaching on the importance of treating immigrants and migrants with dignity, respect, and love is also so very important given the situation in America and other countries, today,” Berry said.

Michele Dunne — a professed Secular Franciscan and executive director of the Washington-based Franciscan Action Network, which describes its mission as “seeking to transform United States public policy related to peace making, care for creation, poverty and human rights” — was also encouraged by the pope’s significant emphasis on serving the poor.

“St. Francis and St. Clare are very well known in the Franciscans as a movement for caring for the poor,” Dunne told OSV News. “But I think what the Holy Father really does here is to signal them just briefly, and really go into how care for the poor is at the very heart of the Church from the very beginning.”

Pope Leo devotes multiple paragraphs to illustrating the continuity of the Church’s mission to the poor, noting “all the different examples and ways — from the life of Jesus himself to the early followers and then through centuries and centuries of the Church — to say care for the poor is not something that just a few people have done at a few times,” Dunne said.

“It’s not something exceptional,” she affirmed. “It’s something essential to Christianity — and the preferential option for the poor is not optional, it’s essential.”



OSV News graphic/Megan Marley



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(Continued from page 3)

Communion.

“It was evident that other people, moved by the fact that we were having Mass, wanted to receive the Eucharist,” said Father Gallenstein, recalling how other travelers joined the line for Communion line and were coming up to



The roped off section of pathway, differentiated by the different stone, is the road St. Paul walked before his beheading.

the alter to share it with them.

“So many other people wanted to receive the Eucharist,” Father Gallenstein said. “That was strangely moving to me. We were there as our own pilgrims, but yet there were millions of pilgrims coming on any given day. And those few had been moved by the Spirit and joined us in that Mass, at the table of the Lord. It really speaks to how big and diverse our Church really is.”

Pilgrimage to Rome renews spirit in the midst of tangible connections to early Christians

Bella Bailey

Multimedia Correspondent

After a whirlwind 10 days in Rome on a pilgrimage during the Jubilee Year: Pilgrims of Hope, the 70 Diocesan pilgrims have all made safe arrival back to the Diocese. While on their spiritual journey the pilgrims enjoyed the sights of early Catholicism, including the catacombs and centuries-old basilicas, while also enjoying the newer sights like St. Carlos Acutis’ resting place.

It was these tangible aspects of the Church and those

early Christians that made the trip so impactful for pilgrims Michael and Christina Weller and Marybeth Bosko.

“Just connecting with the faith of Christians that came before us a millennia ago, seeing the Holy Doors and knowing that they were built around the fourth century and connecting with the faith of the people before us,” is what made the trip impactful said Mr. Weller; parishioner of St. Augustine Parish, Covington.

“You had a feeling of history in the sense of the permanence of these basilicas,” said pilgrim Marybeth Bosko, parishioner at St. Barbara Parish, Erlanger. “As you’re walking through the Holy Doors you get this feeling like ‘how many people and how many saints actually walked through these doors that I’m walking through right now.’”

For Mr. Weller it was the Abbey of the Three Fountains, or Abbazia dele Tre Fontane, where St. Paul was martyred, that stood out above the rest.

“Just the fact that St. Paul was there, and you could see his jail cell and where he was executed, and the road, the place was very powerful,” he said. “We all have our own St. Paul moment where we know we have to shape up a bit, I feel like that’s pretty tangible.”

For Ms. Weller, also a parishioner of St. Augustine Parish, Covington, it was a similar connection to Catholics before that made an impact, however the saint she felt connected to was not

so far removed.

“We went and we saw St. Carlos,” she said, “I really liked that because I feel like seeing a saint who’s so close to our age, this guy worked on computers, it’s something so tangible to our generation.”

“I can definitely see why so many saints came from that region where Assisi is because it’s very peaceful,” said Ms. Weller; remembering her newfound fondness of the Assisi region.

For Ms. Bosko the Santa Scala, or Holy Stairs, was the most impactful. The stairs were brought over from Jerusalem by St. Helena and were originally in front of Pontius Pilate’s house. They have since been encased in wood and in order to further protect them pilgrims must “walk” up the stairs on their knees.

However, this was not a deterrent, “as you head up the stairs and the pain becomes more and more real, you’re focused only on Christ and his pain. When you complete it, you’re standing in front of this painting of Jesus on the cross, you get a sense of that you did something for him as he died for us,” said Ms. Bosko.

Father Baiju Kidaagen, pastor, St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood and Msg. Daniel Vogelpohl in St. Peter’s Square before a papal event.



Steve Kopyay, standing just feet away from the papal convoy, snaps a picture of Pope Leo XIV as he passes by for his general audience, Oct. 29.

Kopyay photos



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These experiences cultivated in the Diocesan pilgrims not just a newfound appreciation for Rome and early Christians, but a renewal of heart.

“It was not just a trip to Italy,” said Ms. Bosko. “It was a spiritual journey.”



Hess photos

The more than 70 pilgrims from the Diocese were a diverse group of men and women, clergy and lay faithful, young and old, singles and married couples. (above) Julie and Vicki Bauerle, daughter and mother, and (below) Jenny and Jerry Bergman, husband and wife, are pictured in St. Peter's Square.



While on pilgrimage, a group of Notre Dame Academy alumnae gather with Bishop John Iffert at the Basilica of St. Mary Major for a photo for the school news magazine, the Notre Damian (also pictured).

Koplyay photos



(above left) Bishop Iffert celebrates Mass at the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi in Italy. The basilica is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a popular pilgrimage site. UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) is an agency dedicated to strengthening humanity through the promotion of education, science, culture and communication.

(above right) Bishop Iffert runs into an old friend during the visit to Assisi.



Hess photo

Mark and Sheree Rodgers, parishioners, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, enjoy a gondola ride in Venice.

One bread, one Church

(Continued from page 5)

He does this is through the very sacrament of his Body and Blood, the One Bread of Life. In a world that at times can be greatly individualistic, we have a wondrous gift from the Lord that brings us into one with Him and with one another. Every time that Eucharist is celebrated and we receive the Body and Blood of Our Lord, our bond of communion with one another and with him is strengthened ever more, so that indeed we may be one, as he, the Father, and the Holy Spirit are one.

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.

Artificial intelligence and lived discipleship

(Continued from page 5)

“Antiqua et Nova” offers a surprising antidote to overload: an intensification of spirituality. “Only the human person can be morally responsible, and the challenges of a technological society are ultimately spiritual in nature. Therefore, facing these challenges demands an intensification of spirituality.”

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Sister Hosea Rupprecht, a Daughter of St. Paul, is the associate director of the Pauline Center for Media Studies.

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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.

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Mobile food pantry feeds the hungry amidst government shutdown

Laura Keener
Editor

With the government shutdown entering its second month and the news that families depending on the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program could see their assistance lapse or reduced, the *Messenger* reached out to local Catholic ministries that help feed hungry men, women, and children.

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington operates a mobile food pantry that makes stops once a month at six rural counties in the Diocese of Covington. The Society of St. Vincent de Paul Northern Kentucky not only operates three regional food pantries. Additionally, 26 parish conferences maintain a pantry at their parish. In the last month, both are seeing an increase in individuals and families seeking food assistance.

“We’ve seen a steady increase in guests visiting our Erlanger pantry in particular. From the first week in October to this week, our visits to our pantry have doubled,” said Karen Zengel, executive director of St. Vincent de Paul NKY.

While Mrs. Zengel cannot say with certainty that the increase is directly related to the shutdown, incidentally in staff conversations with new guests, some of them commented that they haven’t had a paycheck in almost a month. For new guests, who are struggling and reaching out for assistance for the first time, Mrs. Zengel said, “I think the most important message is to let them know that it’s okay, because it’s really hard to ask for help.”

“I think that our Vincentians and our volunteers are really good at saying it’s okay. That’s why we’re here. We’re



John Hehman, coordinator, Mobile Food Pantry snapped a picture of cars winding their way to the Mobile Food Pantry in Bracken County for October’s food stop.

here to help you,” said Mrs. Zengel. “And then the second thing is to just be a person who is listening and providing that empathetic ear; to hear what they’re going through and do the best we can to try to meet the needs that they’re bringing to us and add some calm in the storm that they might be facing right now.”

There are three ways to support the work of the St. Vincent de Paul food pantries. By donating non-perishable food items at the St. Vincent de Paul pantry or at a parish with a pantry, by donating gift cards to grocery stores, or by donating cash.

“We’re associated with the Freestore Foodbank,” said Mrs. Zengel. “Here at the central Council, we can order food on behalf of those parish pantries from the Freestore, leveraging a significant discounted rate because we’re a

nonprofit partner. This helps our parish pantries stock their shelves at much less cost than buying things at a retail store.”

The Catholic Charities’ Mobile Food Pantry is also a nonprofit partner of the Freestore Foodbank, which is a source of fresh produce. Most of the Pantry’s food supply is provided through a Federal TEFAP (The Emergency Food Assistance Program) grant, which is administered through the Northern Kentucky Area Development District. Without a warehouse to store items, the Mobile Food Pantry depends on financial donations to help support its ministry.

“We’re bringing as much food as we can, and we’re going to hand that out,” said John Hehman, coordinator of the Mobile Food Pantry.

The Mobile Food Pantry stops once a month in six rural counties — Bracken County, Gallatin County, Grant County, Mason County, Owen County and Pendleton County. Mr. Hehman said that the pantry served a record crowd in Bracken and Owen Counties last month. In Bracken County, 302 individuals across 99 households were served, its highest number in 2025, while Owen County set a new all-time record serving 201 individuals across 82 households.

Acknowledging that the food truck can carry only a limited amount of food, when the need is so great, “Our goal is for everybody to get something,” said Mr. Hehman. Typically, a family can expect to receive 40 food items; when turnout peaks, the goal is for everyone to at least get 20 items. He never knows from day to day what food items will be available. Sometimes, the food provided is unfamiliar, or its preparation is unfamiliar to families.


Mr. Hehman gave a recent example where they were provided four types of dried beans — black beans, red beans, Great Northern beans, and garbanzo beans. To avoid waste, volunteers provide recipes on how to prepare and serve these types of unusual food items.

Five of the six Pantry stops are at Catholic parishes, with the Mason County stop at the Maysville Lions Club. Volunteers from the parish and neighboring parishes and the community greet the Mobile Food Pantry to help distribute food. “We couldn’t do this without them,” Mr. Hehman said of the volunteers.

For people navigating a financial crisis for the first time, Mr. Hehman advises “look for resources. They are out there. Be patient. Most of the people working at pantries are volunteers, and they’re doing a great job. They want to help you,” he said.

For information on the Mobile Food Pantry, including its schedule, click the “Services” tab at <https://www.covingtoncharities.org>.

The St. Vincent de Paul of Northern Kentucky website walks you through ways to connect for help and also provides a “Directory of Assistance,” which is a list of community resources. Visit <https://www.svdpnky.org/> and click on the “Get Help” tab.



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RABBI DAVID
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For 40 years, Saperstein served as director and counsel for the Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism. He was the first rabbi in American history to have been designated a U.S. Ambassador, serving as the Ambassador-at-Large for International Religious Freedom during the second term of the Obama administration. Saperstein has taught at the Georgetown University Law Center, Georgetown’s Foreign Service School and Center for Jewish Civilization, and has served as a Distinguished Fellow at the PM Glynn Institute at Australian Catholic University. His work as a rabbi, attorney, academic, and diplomat has been recognized over the years from many sources, earning the designation by Newsweek Magazine as the “most influential rabbi in America” and by the Washington Post as the “quintessential religious lobbyist on Capitol Hill.”

GUEST SPEAKER
MSGR. WILLIAM
CLEVES

Msgr. Cleves serves as the director of Ecumenism for the Diocese of Covington and pastor of Holy Spirit Catholic Parish in Newport, Kentucky. An alumnus of Covington Latin School (1970), Msgr. Cleves studied at Saint Pius X Seminary, the Athenaeum of Ohio, and the Pontifical Gregorian University in Rome, Italy. In October 1979, Saint John Paul II awarded him the Papal Silver Medal in Theology for his research on miracles while at the Pontifical Gregorian University. Msgr. Cleves taught at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, Ohio for five years and at Thomas More for 24. He served as President of Thomas More University from 1992-2001, and was recently bestowed the honorary title of President Emeritus.



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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

Dominican master recalls Cardinal Duka’s courage, perseverance in faith

PRAGUE, Czech Republic — Cardinal Dominik Duka — a former political prisoner who helped rebuild the Catholic Church in communist-era Czechoslovakia — has died at age 82. The Master of the Dominican Order, Father Gerard Francisco Timoner III, praised Cardinal Duka for secretly training young friars and ministering underground after his priestly license was revoked in 1975. Arrested in 1981, Duka spent 15 months in prison, where he prayed with inmates — including future Czech president Václav Havel. Born in 1943 in Hradec Králové, the future Cardinal Duka entered the Dominicans in 1968 and was ordained two years later. St. John Paul II appointed him bishop in 1998; Pope Benedict XVI made him archbishop of Prague and a cardinal. Known for his conservative views and defense of church teaching, Cardinal Duka remained an influential voice in one of Europe’s most secular nations — remembered as both a dissident and defender of faith under fire. “Throughout his 27 years of episcopal ministry, he remained deeply connected to the Order and supported it in many ways,” Father Timoner said in his letter. Two major issues he tackled during those years were the restitution of church property seized by the communist regime and growing secularism in one of the world’s least religious societies.

Pope answers questions about migrants, Venezuela, Rupnik trial

VATICAN CITY — Catholics in immigration detention centers have “spiritual rights” that Catholic clergy should be allowed to serve, Pope Leo XIV said. Speaking briefly with reporters late Nov. 4 outside his residence in Castel Gandolfo, Pope Leo was asked about a detention facility in Chicago denying access Nov. 1 to an auxiliary bishop and a delegation of clergy, religious sisters and laity, who wanted to bring Communion to Catholics detained there. Pope Leo prefaced his remarks by noting how, at his Mass at a Rome cemetery Nov. 1,

the Gospel reading was from Matthew 25 with its litany of feeding the hungry, welcoming the stranger and clothing the naked. The Lord says, “Whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine, you did for me.” “Jesus says very clearly that at the end of the world, we’re going to be asked, you know, ‘How did you receive the foreigner? Did you receive him and welcome him or not?’ And I think that there’s a deep reflection that needs to be made in terms of what’s happening” with how immigrants in the United States are being treated today, the pope said.

Bishops urge bold, courageous action at UN climate conference

WASHINGTON — Ahead of the United Nations’ annual climate conference, two U.S. Catholic bishops and the leader of a top Catholic aid agency called for urgent, long-term action to safeguard both creation and humanity. Government officials, scientists, business leaders, activists and others from more

than 190 nations will gather for the U.N.’s COP30 Nov. 10-21 in Belém, Brazil. The gathering “convenes while the Catholic Church celebrates the Jubilee Year of Hope,” which marks “a sacred opportunity to restore relationships and renew creation at a time when the gift of life is under grave threat,” said Metropolitan Archbishop Borys A. Gudziak of the Archeparchy of Philadelphia, Bishop A. Elias Zaidan of the St. Louis-based Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, and Sean Callahan, president and CEO of Catholic Relief Services, in a joint statement issued Nov. 4. All three work directly on addressing climate policy, with Archbishop Gudziak and Bishop Zaidan respectively chairing U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ committees on domestic and international justice, and Callahan as head of CRS, the USCCB’s international humanitarian and development agency. The three stressed the need for implementations that remain centered on human dignity, while balancing both economic opportunity and climate care.

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