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**Daylight Savings Time begins March 8**

*Messenger* readers are reminded to set their clocks ahead one hour before going to bed this Saturday. Your local fire department also reminds you to change the batteries in your smoke detectors.

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



(above) Lisa Knochelmann, DPAA general chair; addresses attendees. This is Mrs. Knochelmann's second year chairing for the DPAA, having been the leadership gifts chair in 2025.

(below) An attendee of the first DPAA kick-off dinner at Blue Licks State Park reviews materials at his table. The DPAA (Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal) helps fund many pastoral ministries within the Diocese of Covington.

(right) Dr. Greg Salzman, DPAA leadership gifts chair; speaks at the DPAA dinner. Dr. Salzman thanked donors who donated during the now complete leadership gifts phase, where near \$700,000 were raised.



Keener photos

(right) Bishop John Iffert shakes hands with Amanda Yeaman, parishioner, St. Francis Xavier, Falmouth, while browsing the ministry fair, which exhibits the work of offices and ministries who benefit from the DPAA.

## Supporters invited to 'let their light shine' as first dinner kicks off public phase of DPAA

Laura Keener  
*Editor*

The public phase of the Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal kicked-off, March 3, with the first of two dinners. Over 50 people gathered with Bishop John Iffert, Lisa Knochelmann, DPAA general chair and Dr. Greg Salzman, DPAA leadership gifts chair; at Blue Licks State Park for the event.

Before the dinner, guests perused a mini-ministry fair with eight diocesan offices and 3 community ministries benefiting from the DPAA sharing their good works.

With her involvement leading the DPAA this year and last year, Mrs. Knochelmann said, "I've learned more about many of the organizations that the campaign helps support. It's a blessing to hear their stories and see the good works they do."

The theme for this year's DPAA is "Live as Children of Light,"



from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians (5:8-9): "For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light, for light produces every kind of goodness and righteousness and truth."

"When I read that Scripture, I can't help thinking of that great proclamation also from the Gospels, 'you are the salt of the earth, the light of the world. Let your light shine,'" Bishop Iffert told attendees.

This year, in addition to monetary goals each parish has been assigned a participation goal. According to Jennifer Cox, DPAA secretary, the DPAA team has been noticing a trend. Each year, while

*(Continued on page 10)*



**Take the Disciple Maker Index (DMI) survey**

As Lent is underway, the Disciple Maker Index survey is open in the Diocese of Covington. The Disciple Maker Index is a 75-question, multiple choice answer, survey that allows parishioners of the diocese to "reflect on their journey of discipleship and their parish's effectiveness in supporting that journey." The survey is available online at [covdio.org/withoneheart](http://covdio.org/withoneheart).

**Sample Question**

**My parish equips me to have conversations about my faith with family and friends by... Exhibiting care to members of our community (not necessarily Catholics)**

- Strongly Disagree
- Disagree
- Neither Agree nor Disagree
- Agree
- Strongly Agree

# Cathedral chimeras to take their rightful place in the coming weeks

Bella Bailey

Multimedia Correspondent

The chimeras, which sit atop the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, will soon make their long-awaited return, as Cathedral construction begins wrapping up. Don Knochelmann, director of Buildings and Properties for the Diocese of Covington, estimates that it will take only one day to bring the 26 chimeras to the roof of the Cathedral.

The tradesmen of Trisco Systems will soon be unloading the terracotta chimeras from their crates and placing them in a lifting basket attached to a crane. The work is expected to begin some time near the end of March.

“They’re going to take two at a time, they’ll have 13 trips to place them up there,” said Mr. Knochelmann. Once the chimeras have been safely transported to the roof of the Cathedral, it will take approximately five days for them to be attached in their respective spots.

The original chimeras — also made of terracotta — had been filled with concrete and attached via a metal rod to the Cathedral roof. As the years wore on, however, those rods deteriorated and their concrete interior caused the terracotta exterior to crack. The new chimeras are hollow and will be attached by a threaded, stainless-steel rod, which will be bolted down.

To extend the new chimera’s life, each has been equipped with vents and “weep holes,” said Mr. Knochelmann, “so that if moisture were to get in, it would weep out.”



(above and right) These photos of the chimeras still in their crates, show the weep holes cleverly installed in the opening of their mouths. A weep hole is designed to allow trapped moisture to “weep” out of masonry veneer or concrete blocks, thereby extending their longevity and ensuring they can live atop the Cathedral for the next 100 years.



Because the chimera will sit on the very top of the Cathedral, they are the last to be installed. Their gargoyle counterparts were installed throughout the winter months. Before the chimera can be transported to the roof, there are a few remaining projects to be completed.

“The big piece that remains is the center colonnade. It’s a centerpiece between the two towers ... that has a structural problem. There are four new beams that are going in to replace beams that were corroded from the original construction,” said Mr. Knochelmann.

Once the beams of the colonnade have been replaced,

the crew will begin “unloading the roof,” said Mr. Knochelmann. “They’re going to take all the scaffold down and take all the materials, all the protective covering on the roof down.”

“I am looking forward to wrapping this up and finishing what has really been the project of my life,” said Mr. Knochelmann. “You don’t really get to work on a building as beautiful and historic as this Cathedral. It’s an incredible building, and to be able to be the person that’s working on it and helping form what we’re doing to fix it has been a dream.”

## Save the Date

Start and end your individual journey on foot or by car at any of the five historic churches on the 4.3 mile pilgrimage route



Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption



St. Benedict Catholic Church



St. Augustine Catholic Church



St. John Catholic Church



Mother of God Catholic Church

March 28, 9 a.m.–2 p.m.

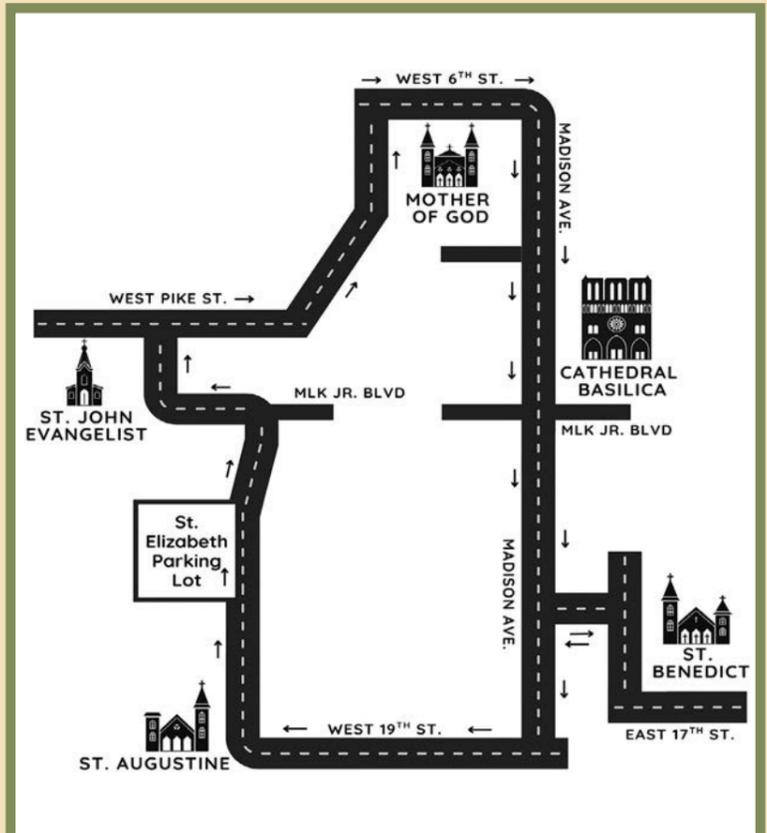
Start anytime between 9 a.m.–2 p.m.

Start from any location.

Park anywhere.

Route will be clearly marked.

Start and end your personal journey on foot or by car at any of the five historic Covington churches on the 4.3-mile pilgrimage route — Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, St. Benedict Church, St. Augustine Church, St. John Church and Mother of God Church.



# Evening of prayer, reflection and conversation tackles papal documents, Catholic social teaching

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

A crowd gathered in the Curia's Bishop Howard Memorial Hall, Covington, for a presentation titled "An Evening of Prayer, Reflection and Conversation", March 2. The presentation, organized by the Intercommunity Sisters Peace and Justice Committee, welcomed Thomas More University's Hannah Keegan, director of the Center for Faith, Mission and Catholic Education, as the speaker. The presentation discussed Catholic social teaching and its key principles through the lens of two Papal documents: Pope Francis's "Dilexit Nos" ("He loved us") and Pope Leo XIV's "Dilexi Te" ("I have loved you").

The documents — which speak mutually on Christ's human and divine love — are continuations of each other: "Dilexi Te" was originally conceived by Pope Francis before his passing and later completed and published by Pope Leo XIV last October.

The presentation tackled themes such as humility, love and the dignity of the poor — with Hannah Keegan defining key principles within Catholic social teaching. (These principles being human dignity, common good, solidarity, subsidiarity, universal destination of goods and option for the poor and vulnerable.)

"Everything that Pope Leo is saying is built on the non-negotiable reality that all human beings share an intrinsic dignity due to being made in God's image and likeness," Mrs. Keegan said. "And this dignity is not dependent on wealth status, economic status, mental or physical functioning."

She described this with the words "Dignitas Infinita," or infinite dignity — as outlined in "Dilexi Te."

"There's a kind of material dignity that you can't lose," said Mrs. Keegan. "Someone who's living in homelessness is not living in a dignified place, and we have to recognize that, but they can never lose their intrinsic dignity."

"We, who have enough, have the responsibility — we're obligated — that we should have a particular preference for the poor and the vulnerable, for those who can not care for themselves adequately," she said.

Mrs. Keegan also encouraged those at the presentation to read the documents for themselves — citing them as a "great thing to read for Lent."

"It's so helpful to put your heart in the place of receiving what the Holy Spirit is asking right now," she said.

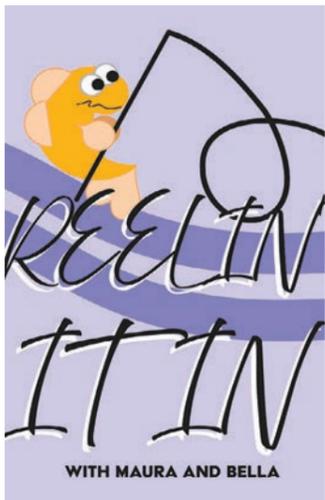


Baker photos



(left) Hannah Keegan, director for Thomas More University's Center for Faith, Mission, and Catholic Education, speaks at the Intercommunity Sisters Peace and Justice Committee's event, "An Evening of Prayer, Reflection and Conversation", March 2.

(above) Religious sisters listen to presenter Hannah Keegan. The night's program discussed papal encyclical "Dilexit Nos" by Pope Francis and exhortation "Dilexi Te" by Pope Leo XIV.



### Reelin It In Season III

Messenger staff members Bella and Maura headed out to St. Francis Xavier Parish, Falmouth, for the second Friday of Lent. The parish's volunteer and patron hospitality, along with its homemade, high quality food sets this fish fry apart! To see their fish fry and hear from volunteers and patrons, scan the QR code.



### Bishop's Schedule

**March 10**  
Catholic Charities appreciation dinner, Receptions, Erlanger, 6 p.m.

**March 11**  
March for Life, Frankfort, 9:30 a.m., Mass at Good Shepherd Church; 11:30 a.m., prayer and rally at the Capitol, remembrance service at the Memorial for the Unborn

**March 12**  
Diocesan Review Board meeting, Curia boardroom, 2 p.m.

**March 15**  
Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 10 a.m.



### Happy Birthday Johann!

The Cathedral Concert Series concludes its 49th season, March 15, at 3 p.m., celebrating J.S. Bach's 241st birthday. Guest organist Christopher Holman will perform music not only by father Bach, but also compositions by his sons. The Historic Mattias Schwab Organ (1859) is featured for the entirety of this program. The listener will hear how it sounded in Bach's time. Dr. Holman is director of Music at St. Gertrude Church in Madeira, and is the director of the Sacred Music Institute at the Cincinnati Athenaeum. The public is invited with no admission charge. A freewill offering will be accepted.

Visit [cathedralconcertseries.org](http://cathedralconcertseries.org)

# Diocese invites youths, community, to World Youth Day 2027 in Seoul, South Korea

**Maura Baker**  
Staff Writer

The Diocese of Covington is coordinating a pilgrimage to World Youth Day (WYD) 2027 in Seoul, South Korea. With the last WYD in Lisbon, Portugal in 2023, this pilgrimage provides an excellent opportunity for young adults ages 18–25 to “Experience the universality of the Catholic Church in the presence of our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, alongside millions of young adult Catholics from around the world,” according to Isaak Isaak, director of the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization and part of the team organizing the trip.

Having attended nine WYDs himself, Mr. Isaak said that he is “very excited about World Youth Day Seoul, taking place in the Capital of South Korea. This will be the first World Youth Day to take place in continental Asia. I have seen firsthand what World Youth Day can do; how much it positively impacts a pilgrim’s life. It is a celebration of both the unity of being members of the Body of Christ and the diversity of the gifts contained within.”

The diocese’s pilgrimage includes a trip to a sacred landscape of South Korea marked by the sacrifices of early Catholic martyrs. Sites like Danggogae, Saenamteo, Seosomun, and Jeoldusan Martyrs’ Shrine are on the itinerary.

Korea’s martyrs “sowed the seeds for what has become a blossoming and vibrant Church” in South Korea, the Pope Francis wrote in a telegram to Bishop Matthias Ri Iong-Hoon of Suwon, president of the Catholic Bishops’ Conference of Korea, before his passing.

“The youth of today are the heirs of this great testimony of faith, and I pray that they will carry on this precious witness to Christ as they prepare for the World Youth Day 2027,” the pope wrote.

Total costs for the trip are estimated to be around \$5,500 per person — with the initial deposit of \$800 due March 16 to reserve a spot — with plans for fundraising being considered.

Interested parties can register at <https://forms.gle/9JW61qveAUGbdWxy6>, or contact Isaak Isaak at (859) 392-1529 or [iisaak@covdio.org](mailto:iisaak@covdio.org).



CNS photo/Lola Gomez

Pilgrims from South Korea hold banners and flags promoting World Youth Day 2027 in Seoul after the closing Mass of the Jubilee of Youth in Rome’s Tor Vergata neighborhood Aug. 3, 2025.

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# A desire for Christ

The readings for the Third Sunday of Lent — Cycle A — are: Exodus 17:3-7, Romans 5:1-2, 5-8 and John 4:5-42.

Preaching on this story from John's Gospel, I like how St. Augustine put it. Describing the dialogue between Jesus and the Samaritan woman, he said that the Lord was "little by little finding a way into her heart."

Layered, veiled, critical and pointed at times, what the Lord was ultimately doing in his conversation with this woman on the margins was drawing her close to him. Carried by his words and her interest and desire, Jesus

draws her to him "in spirit and truth" and then says to her "I am he." (John 4:24-26) The conversation, you see, is mystical; it's revelatory.

I also like how St. Augustine said that we should "recognize ourselves in her." That makes this story from John's Gospel also about us. That means these words may little by little find their way into our hearts too.

Indeed, that's how the Church has long read this story of Jesus and the

Samaritan woman, as a story that is also about us. For centuries, this passage has been read during Lent in association with the ancient practice of the Scrutinies.

Over the next three weeks, by ancient custom, the Gospel readings are all from John. They were proclaimed alongside the final purifying rites which the Church applied to those seeking baptism; they still are. Recalling the ancient context, however, is important as we listen to these stories over the next several weeks.

You see, as rites of exorcism and repentance, the Scrutinies in ancient times were often mysterious and somewhat frightening. Sometimes involving physical examination or hissing at the devil, strange and primitive things like that, the Scrutinies in antiquity were dramatic renunciations of the demonic, the symbolic performance of the rebellion of conversion, the revolt started from within the kingdom of Satan, the fallen world, liberating the faithful for the kingdom of Christ.

This, it's helpful to remember, was the liturgical setting in which ancient catechumens heard this story. It was clearly meant by ancient Christians to be heard as a parable of their own conversion, a conversion which they saw more clearly to be an act of cosmic rebellion against the rule of Satan rather than, as many see it today, the mere expression of religious preference.

What I mean is that, in the past, conversion was conceived in far more radical terms. Which is precisely what is worth remembering as we read this story from John today in tamer times and alongside less exciting rituals, for it helps us to understand that what we are still talking about here is real conversion, deeper conversion, complete conversion, life-changing conversion.

Again, we moderns have difficulty thinking about conversion so totally; we must deconstruct much of our conventional thinking about what it means to be religious in order to remind ourselves that Christ means to convert the whole of us.

But such a total conversion is not something that we achieve on our own. Rather, conversion is completely a gift of the Spirit. This is one way to interpret Jesus's offer of "living water." He draws the Samaritan woman into conversation simply asking for a drink; that conversation then moves from the material to the mystical when he begins to talk about the "living water" able to satisfy every thirst. "Sir, give me this water," she says to him. (John 4:15) He has brought her to the moment of spiritual desire — to prayer. Now she longs for what she realizes she does not possess.

Thus, in the state of spiritual desire, now she may hear the brutal truth. Now Jesus talks to her about her five husbands and how she worships what she does not

I'm a bit of a hypochondriac. For those new to the word, it's defined by Merriam-Webster as "a person who is often or always worried about being ill." In many folks with hypochondria, the suspected culprit is often serious

— fearful constantly of cancers, irreversible damage and fatal diseases. Every ache, pain and lump is to be meticulously investigated — and worried about for at least the next 24 hours and perhaps a mostly pointless doctor's visit.

This anxious reaction, at least in my case, stems from a very human fear of death. As Christians, death should not be something feared — as it is in death from this world, we are granted eternal life. And yet, death is one of the most common human fears — with some statistics showing around 3-10 percent of people exhibiting a pathological fear of death (thanatophobia), and roughly 1 in 4 people expressing some fear of death and what comes after.

## VIEWPOINT



Maura Baker

are granted eternal life. And yet, death is one of the most common human fears — with some statistics showing around 3-10 percent of people exhibiting a pathological fear of death (thanatophobia), and roughly 1 in 4 people expressing some fear of death and what comes after.

# Just one chance

And so, I fear. Don't get it twisted: I am strong in my faith, but nothing's more human than a moment of weakness. I concern myself with what kind of legacy I'll leave, who will remember me, will my loved ones miss me? What if my passing makes them sad, gives them hardship or changes their lives for the worse? I'm sure many of you can attest to similar worries. Realistically, I trust in God and his plan, but anxiety is always easily overwhelming. Part of faith is trusting in the unknown.

Thus is my challenge for Lent: both for myself, and for you. Practice trust as a virtue — in God, in each other and in the promise of the Kingdom of Heaven. Whether you're anxious about your health or what comes after, or about a plethora of other human anxieties, have a little faith! Easier said than done, I know, but prayer and trying is the first step.

Death is inevitable: At least in the sense of the eventual passing from our physical bodies and the returning of our remains to Earth's carbon cycling. If this is true, why should I, or you, or anyone, spend all of this precious time fearing the one thing more natural than fear? Let's put the energy we'd usually waste in fear into prayer, into trusting, into loving — after all, we've only got this one chance.

Maura Baker is staff writer for the Messenger, the official newspaper of the Diocese of Covington.

# Retraining my heart

I can be a fairly judgmental person. The old-lady-school-teacher mentality can surface in my head in various situations without much provocation. Not that I have lived a life spared of error and wrong turns. But that is easy to forget when you are looking in another direction.

Living in Kenya, a culture rich in its own traditions, but marred by the scars of poverty beyond what is imaginable to the Western world, I am now forced to retrain my heart to compassion.

Rodgers is a teacher at the St. John Bosco Rehabilitation Center, the

site of my ministry with the Maryknoll Lay Missioners. Here, children between the ages of 7 and 12 are rescued from a life of extreme poverty, rehabilitated and supported to enter and complete formal school training in the hope to change the pattern of their lives.

Rodgers was four years old when SJBR found him. He was living on the streets with his teenage sister, whom he followed everywhere. Bosco rescued both of them, but their efforts failed when his sister, who had grown accustomed to such a life, ran away. Later, however, Rodgers himself was rescued again.

He tells me now stories of his young life. He said that

as a small child, he would get so hungry that he got very good at stealing food. He said he knew that he might get caught, and if caught, he would be beaten. His thoughts were that even if they beat him, they probably wouldn't kill him and at least now he wouldn't be hungry anymore.

One of our current students at SJBR (fictitious name Sylvia) comes from a home of extreme poverty and violence. Her mother was routinely beaten by her drunken father, and efforts to effect a change in this situation via the authority of the police were fruitless. One night, nearly beaten to death, the mother left. The five children were left behind. A neighbor discovered the children the next day, eight-year-old Sylvia trying to prepare porridge for her younger siblings.

I asked at first how a mother can leave five small children, the youngest two years old, to fend for themselves, with no food in the house, cold and wet in the rainy season, no blankets or supervision? But then again, I asked, with no resources, no hope for rescue, convinced of her certain death at the hands of her husband, what were her better options?

Living here, witnessing the trickle-down chaos brought on by extreme poverty and hopelessness, I now think about Jesus's life in terms of his walking in solidarity with us sinners, his Sacred Heart full of mercy in our broken world.

Theresa Glaser is a parishioner of St. Anthony Parish, Taylor Mill and a lay missionary for Maryknoll Lay Missioners. In January 2024, she began a three-year mission in Africa and will be sharing updates with Messenger. For photos see page 13.

## GUEST



Theresa Glaser

know. (John 4:16-22) The Lord's words here, open to various interpretations, are nonetheless morally and theologically convicting. Their conversation now is penitential; she must be brought to the point where she renounces her past sin and ignorance. Only then may she hear the words, "I am he." (John 4:26)

As I said, it's a story about conversion. It's a story that teaches us that conversion is about desiring the living water of God. That water is the water that flows from the heart of Christ; it's the water of baptism. (John 7:37-38; 1 Cor 12:13) Nothing like any water we've ever known, which has never really satisfied us, this water we can only desire, beg for it. We must also renounce whatever

keeps us from drinking this new living water, whether it be our past sins or past error.

Desire and purification, that's what this story is about. By this story, Mother Church whispers in the womb to her unborn children, to those soon to be born in baptism. Here are but the final few steps.

Is your desire for God this deep? But, of course, these are questions fit not only for those not yet baptized but also for the rest of us. Do we desire Christ like she did? Like that Samaritan woman so like ourselves?

Father Joshua J. Whitfield is pastor of St. Rita Catholic Community in Dallas.

# Catechumen's relationships helped him to grow closer to God



Photo courtesy of Mother of God

Candidates and catechumens of Mother of God Parish, Covington — including Catechumen Chris Santiago, pictured back, center in a brown jacket — stand together in the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, following the right of Election, Feb. 22.

**Maura Baker**  
Staff Writer

One of over 400 catechumens and candidates to enter into the Church in the Diocese of Covington this year, catechumen Chris Santiago of Mother of God Parish, Covington, will be baptized and receive the sacraments, of First Communion and confirmation at this year's Easter Vigil.

A teacher working for the Cincinnati nonprofit Healthy

Visions, Mr. Santiago's conversion story began with his friend and former girlfriend and her grandfather, and their influence in his life.

Although her grandfather passed away last March, Mr. Santiago describes these interactions as "integral" to his story.

"We went to Church with him all the time," Mr. Santiago said. "He had stage four cancer."

Previously having no ties to religion, Mr. Santiago's time with his previous girlfriend and her grandfather developed his relationship with God.

When they first started going to Mass together, "It was for her," said Mr. Santiago, "and her family."

Although Mr. Santiago describes going to Mass with her family as "nice and peaceful," a turning point occurred during a day of prayer in Cincinnati — where he and his girlfriend were climbing steps, praying the rosary together in a crowd of other faithful.

"All of it was kind of breathtaking," he said, "And it was, 'wow!' ... It was something that took me back."

Her grandfather, who had continued to get sicker, passed away sometime afterwards — and from there, Mr. Santiago's relationship to God continued to grow.

"I'm building this relationship with God, and it's just kind of snowballing into this thing," Mr. Santiago said. "I

started feeling close to God."

Although Mr. Santiago and his former girlfriend have since separated, the two are still friends — with her still showing up to support him on his faith journey.

"I always appreciate her for bringing me close to God," he said, "because I feel like this connection that I have ... I needed it more than anything. I was getting to a point in my life where I'm 28 years old, I have a good job, I have a good house — I'm doing all the things I'm supposed to do, but I still felt like I needed something ... and I didn't know what I needed. And, come to find out, it was this thing that every Sunday — that I was kind of like 'Oh, here we go again!' — but actually putting down my head, paying attention and worshipping ... these past couple months have been amazing."

Mr. Santiago expressed his excitement as the Easter Vigil approaches, especially towards receiving his first Communion.

"All these conversations we've had about the power of God and Jesus, and we're actually taking him in ... it's kind of overwhelming a bit to me. The idea of doing that as one of the sacraments and being able to do that for the rest of my life — it's kind of amazing," he said. "And I can't wait."

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PEOPLE AND EVENTS

**Noteworthy**

The following students are Spelling Bee champions at their school and will move on to compete in the WCPO Regional Spelling Bee, March 7.

Covington Latin School, Covington  
**Brody Gastright – 7th grade**

St. Cecilia School, Independence  
**Matthew McCubbin – 2nd grade**

St. Henry School, Elsmere  
**Serenity Melson – 7th grade**

St. Joseph School, Cold Spring  
**Nora Kremer – 8th grade**

St. Paul School, Florence  
**Cecelia Tran – 4th grade**

Sts. Peter and Paul School, California  
**Christopher Cole – 3rd grade**

St. Pius X School, Edgewood  
**Christopher Freihofer – 8th grade**

**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). Volunteers work alongside students to complete homework, build academic skills and create a lifelong passion for learning. Contact Brandi at (859) 630-9475 or [blenihan@nduec.org](mailto:blenihan@nduec.org).

**Holy Cross High School is having its 28th Annual Mulch and Pine Straw Sale selling 2 cubic foot bags** of red, brown and black mulch for \$4.95 each and Pine Straw for \$9.75 per bale. All prices include free delivery and sales tax. Holy Cross students will deliver mulch and pine straw to your home, business or rental property anywhere in Kenton, Boone and Campbell Counties. If you would like your mulch placed in a certain location on your property, please add delivery notes when you place your order. Deliveries begin March 27 and last for at least 5 weeks. Delivery dates and times cannot be guaranteed as deliveries are completed by mulch color and zip code. Order online at [www.hcmulch.com](http://www.hcmulch.com). Orders must be paid in full prior to delivery. Orders will not be delivered until full payment has been received. Call (859) 392-8999 with any questions. All proceeds benefit Holy Cross High School.

**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. 2026 Spring Workshops: Job, March 14, session 2; April 11, session 3 and April 18, session 4. Cost \$35 per session, cash or checks at the door. Register at [covdio.org/bible-workshops](https://covdio.org/bible-workshops).

**St. Benedict Parish, Covington, will be hosting a one-night only Bingo Night after the March 6 fish fry,** 7 p.m. Come support the parish's new boiler. Cost is \$20 for 27 cards, and food and drink will be available.

**Northern Kentucky St. Patrick's Day Mass,** March 12, 7 p.m., Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. This Mass celebrates local Irish families and heritage with an after-Mass celebration at Molly Malone's Irish Pub, Covington.

**This Lent, Father Michael Comer, pastor, Mother of**

**God Church, Covington, will be presenting a series of five talks on St. Francis of Assisi.** Pope Leo XIV recently declared a Jubilee Year of St. Francis in honor of the 800th anniversary of his death. The talks are on Thursdays, Feb. 19 through March 26 (no sessions March 5) at 10:30 a.m. and repeated at 6:30 p.m. at Mother of God Church.

**A Marriage Encounter Experience** will be held on March 13–15 at the Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Center in Norwood, OH. Sign up at [wwme.org](http://wwme.org) or call Andy and Melanie Reinersman at (859) 653-8464. Learn how to make your marriage better.

**St. Augustine Church, Augusta, bingo social,** March 15, 1–5 p.m., bingo, pull tabs, split the pot raffle; drinks and snacks provided. Located in the new parish hall. Must be 18 or older to participate. Cost \$10, additional bingo cards optional. Meal following for players. Proceeds benefit St. Augustine Parish Benevolent Fund. Weather permitting.

**New Beginnings is an 8-week program that provides the opportunity to heal and move forward despite a complicated situation.** Led by facilitators who have been through their own personal losses, this program invites participants to move toward their own new beginnings. Registration is required. Visit <https://covdio.org/new-beginnings-2/> or call (859) 392-1529. The next session will be held on consecutive Tuesdays, March 17–May 5, 7–8:30 p.m., Catholic Charities, Covington.

**Blessed Sacrament Parish will host a Lenten Food Truck night,** March 20, beginning at 5 p.m. Food trucks serving Lenten classics such as pizza, fish and dessert will be available.

**Thomas More University, Crestview Hill, will continue its astronomy public lecture series and night sky viewing,** March 28, 7:30–9:30 p.m., in Ziegler Auditorium. The talk is titled "Beneath the Ice: Europa and the Search for Life" presented by Dr. Wes Ryle, Astronomer at the Cincinnati Observatory.

**The fourth annual Covington Lenten Pilgrimage will be held on Palm Saturday, March 28,** 9 a.m.–2 p.m. On the self-guided pilgrimage, pilgrims will journey to five historic Covington churches: St. Benedict, St. Augustine, St. John the Evangelist, Mother of God and the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption of Mary. Adoration and confession is available at multiple churches.

**Sisters of Notre Dame Women's Retreat, "Women of Faith,"** March 28, St. Walburg Monastery, Villa Hills, with guest speakers Jenn Ledonne and Notre Dame Sister Mary Evelyn Reinke, reflecting on women of the Bible and the 21st Century. Cost \$50 includes continental breakfast, lunch from Panera and all activities. To register contact Margie Schnelle (859) 392-8229 or [mschnelle@sndusa.org](mailto:mschnelle@sndusa.org).

**The Diocese of Covington is offering 63 FREE in-person adult Catholic faith formation workshops,** June 8–11, 2026, at Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, Administration Building (Library classrooms). All workshops are broken into two parts and scheduled for two consecutive days, 1.5 hours per day. Instructors will provide topical information, video content, and time for open discussion. Create a free account under your parish or school to access these and 200+ additional workshops at <https://franciscanathome.com>. The workshops are open to everyone who wants to learn more about their Catholic faith. There is something for everyone. Visit <https://covdio.org/register> or contact Isaak A. Isaak at (859) 392-1529 or [iisaak@covdio.org](mailto:iisaak@covdio.org).

**The Diocese of Covington is coordinating a pilgrimage to World Youth Day 2027 in Seoul, South Korea, for young adults** ages 18 to

**Lenten Fish Frys**

**Fridays, Feb 20 – March 6**  
St. William Parish, Williamstown, 4:00 – 8:00 p.m.

**Fridays, Feb 20 – March 13**  
St. Mary of the Assumption Parish, Alexandria, 4:30 – 7:30 p.m.

**Fridays, March 13 – 27**  
St. Matthew, Morning View, 5:00 – 7:30 p.m.

**Fridays, Feb 20 – March 20**  
St. Agnes Parish, Fort Wright, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

**Fridays, Feb. 20 – March 27**  
St. Barbara Parish, Erlanger 4:30–8 p.m.

St. Cecilia Parish, Independence, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

Holy Cross High School, Latonia, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

St. Joseph, Camp Springs, 4:00 – 7:30 p.m.

St. Joseph Academy, Walton, 4:30 – 7:30 p.m.

Mary, Queen of Heaven, Erlanger, 4:00 – 8:00 p.m.

St. Benedict Parish, Covington, 4:45 – 7:00 p.m.

St. Bernard Parish, Dayton, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

St. Catherine of Sienna Parish, Fort Thomas, 4:30 – 7:00 p.m.

St. Edward Parish, Cynthiana, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

**Fridays, Feb. 20 – March 27 (continued)**  
St. Francis Xavier, Falmouth, 4:00 – 7:30 p.m.

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Burlington, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs, 5:00 – 8:00 p.m.

St. James Parish, Brooksville, 4:30 – 6:30 p.m.

St. Patrick Parish, Maysville, 5:00 – 7:00 p.m.

St. Patrick Parish, Taylor Mill, 4:30 – 7:30 p.m.

St. Paul Parish, Florence, 4:30 – 7:30 p.m.

St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood, 5:00 – 7:30 p.m.

St. Thomas Parish, Fort Thomas, 4:00 – 7:30 p.m.

St. Timothy Parish, Union, 4:30 – 7:30 p.m.

**Fridays, Feb. 20 – April 3**  
St. Augustine, Covington, 4:00 – 7:00 p.m.

**March 6 — April 3**  
Father Bealer Council, Knights of Columbus, Elsmere, 11 a.m.–2 p.m.; 4:30–8 p.m.

**March 27**  
Our Savior Parish, Covington, noon–6 p.m.

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](mailto:iisaak@covdio.org).



**Learning CPR**

A long-standing tradition for eighth-grade students at St. Henry Catholic School, Elsmere, is learning CPR. The Elsmere Fire Department is a great community partner. Not only are they a phone call away if ever needed, but they also teach students how to help others in times of emergency.

# Historian reflects on Michelangelo's 'Last Judgement' with Sistine Chapel restoration underway

Courtney Mares  
OSV News

The Vatican Museums announced that restoration work has begun on Michelangelo's "The Last Judgement" in the Sistine Chapel, a fresco an art historian describes as "a clarion call to the cardinals of what it means to be Catholic."

"The cleaning of Michelangelo's magnificent fresco has begun," Barbara Jatta, director of the Vatican Museums, announced Feb. 23.

The restoration, the first major cleaning of the fresco since 1994, is being financially supported by the Florida Chapter of the Patrons of the Arts in the Vatican Museums. Jatta expects the work to be completed by Holy Week, and the Sistine Chapel will remain open to visitors throughout the three-month cleaning, though scaffolding will partially obstruct views of the fresco.

Elizabeth Lev, a Catholic art historian who has guided visitors through Rome for more than two decades, reflected on the significance of the work and what its restoration means for one of the world's most visited artistic treasures.

In an interview with OSV News, Lev described the spiritual significance of the vivid imagery in the Renaissance masterpiece, which was painted at a turbulent moment in Church history.

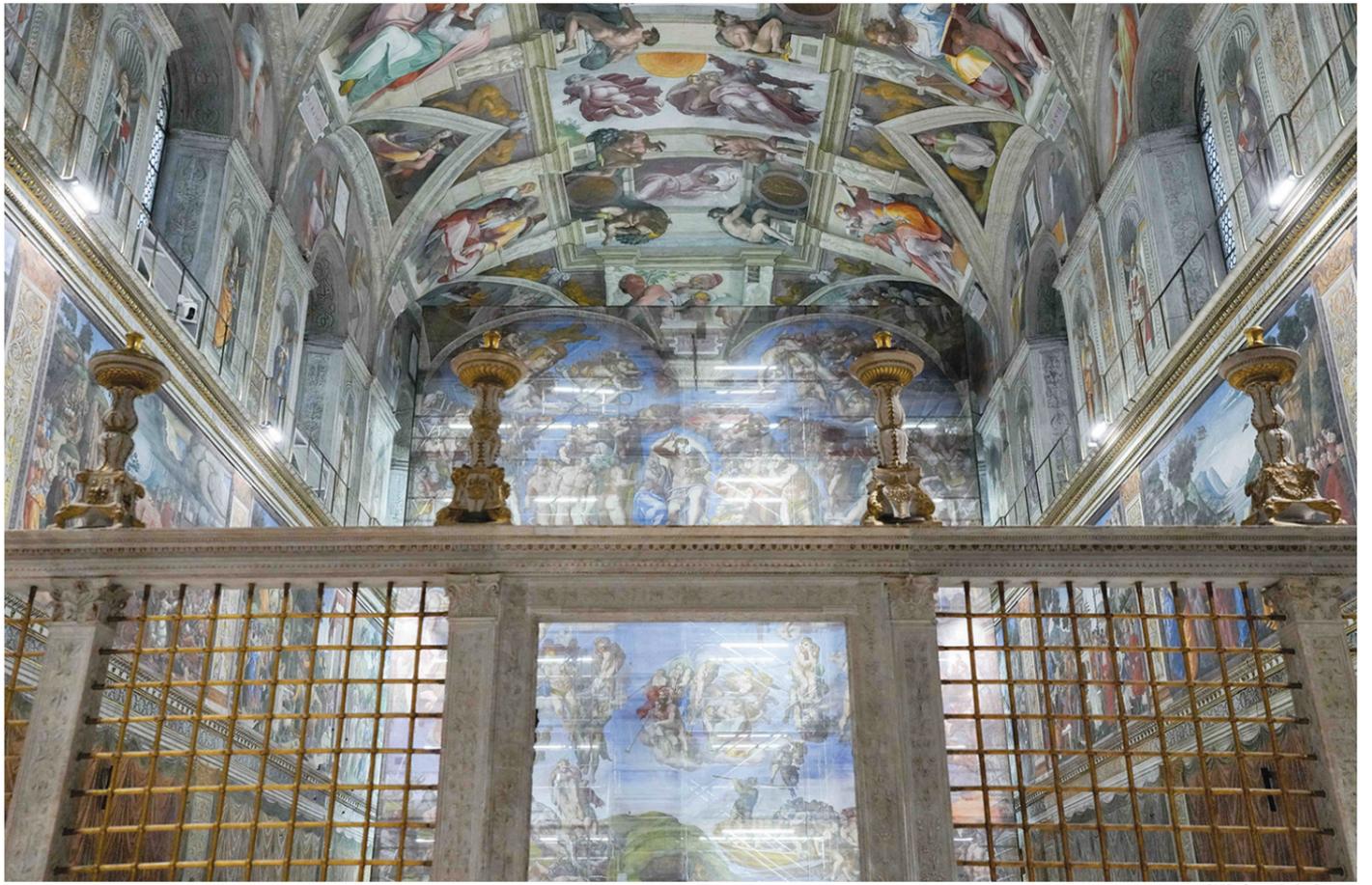
"Painted by Michelangelo at the height of the Protestant Reformation, post Sack of Rome and Henry VIII's announcement that he was starting his own church, 'The Last Judgement' is a clarion call to the cardinals of what it means to be Catholic," she said, noting that the fresco serves as the backdrop for a conclave to elect the pope.

"It represents the end of the world, the awaking of the dead, the second coming of Christ, and the final pronouncement by God of the fate of every soul, salvation or damnation," she said.

Michelangelo was 60 when he began the work, which was commissioned in 1533 by Pope Clement VII and ultimately completed in 1541 under Pope Paul III.

The monumental fresco covers the entire altar wall of the Sistine Chapel and depicts the second coming of Christ and the final judgment of souls. At the center stands a powerful figure of Christ, surrounded by saints and martyrs, as the dead rise from their graves below. Angels sound their trumpets while the saved ascend toward heaven and the damned are dragged downward into hell by demons.

Lev noted that Michelangelo showed "the forces of evil seeking the ruin of souls," but emphasized that the artist "spent most of his energy, not on the damned, but on the



CNS photo/Lola Gomez

A protective screen depicting a reproduction of Michelangelo's "Last Judgment" covers scaffolding during maintenance work in the Sistine Chapel at the Vatican Feb. 28, 2026. The Vatican Museums said restorers are removing a whitish film, identified as calcium lactate, from the fresco. The chapel remains open to visitors while the work is expected to be completed by Holy Week.

glorious bodies of the martyrs." She also pointed out "the notable lack of women in Michelangelo's hell."

"He revealed that every human being is a protagonist in the story of his or her salvation, our actions, our choices, our decision to 'exercise' heroic virtue, determine whether we can hope to join Michelangelo's celestial Olympic podium" with "heaven's athletes, men and women who suffered for Christ," she said.

Among the fresco's most striking details, Lev pointed out, is that "a demon above the altar is looking at you," but at the same time "the crucifix on the altar shows Christ body blocking him from you."

"The angels descend, spiraling above the crucifix reminding us of what Christ did for us and asking, with their books of the deeds, what have we done," she added.

In a gesture to Pope Paul III, who published the papal bull "Subliminus Deus" prohibiting the enslavement of indigenous peoples, Michelangelo depicted in "The Last Judgement" a Black man and a white man being "pulled up by the same rosary beads, an image of universal salva-

tion."

Tens of millions of visitors have walked through the chapel since its last cleaning in 1994, and their presence has taken a toll. Jatta said the cleaning will remove a light patina of microparticle buildup invisible to the naked eye, with the goal of restoring Michelangelo's colors to their original brilliance.

Lev explained the state of the deterioration. "There is a whitish build up on the surface, which is obscuring the definition of Michelangelo's figures," she said, adding that vibrations from years of foot traffic may have loosened pigment, particularly the lapis lazuli background, which was applied to dry plaster and is especially vulnerable.

"The Vatican restorers, I am proud to say, are the finest in the world," Lev added. "Mostly I am struck by their humility. They are keenly aware of their immense responsibility towards this masterpiece."



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**FISH FRY**

# The source and summit

Bailey photo

**Bella Bailey**

*Multi-media Correspondent*

The Office of Youth Ministry hosted the annual SUMMIT retreat, at Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, Feb. 27-March 1. Twenty-two schools and thirty-four parishes were represented at the retreat making it one of the most diverse and robust in retreat history.

The weekend retreat focuses on the Eucharist and how to connect with Christ through the Blessed Sacrament. Hannah Ubelor, core team member and associate director of youth ministry at the Jesuit Spiritual Center, Milford, Ohio, said, “the goal is for the teens to really encounter Christ, specifically in the Eucharist. Our main goal is the Eucharist, it’s adoration, it’s Mass and really having an encounter with Christ and personal relationship with him.”

Between guest speakers and breakout sessions, students had the opportunity for spiritual renewal through confessions, adoration and Mass. On the second day of the retreat, following guest speaker Mercedarian Sister Eucharist, (below) Father AJ Gedney, parochial vicar at St. Joseph Catholic Church, Cold Spring, led the students in Eucharistic Adoration. Joined by seminarians Will Fuller, Joseph O’Byran, Aaron Batson and Evan Ihrig, Father Gedney processed throughout the Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel holding the monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament.

Many students, moved by the reverence of adoration, chose to lay prostrate as the Eucharist passed.



“They all have a heart for Jesus in the Eucharist,” said Ms. Ubelor. “They were all very reverent. For most of them their favorite part is adoration and just being with Jesus, nothing can beat that.”



Staverman photo



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# Supporters invited to 'let their light shine'

(Continued from page 1)

the DPAA monetary goal is greatly exceeded, fewer parishioners have been making pledges.

"By giving a participation goal, we thought it would encourage those that just want to get started," she said, encouraging everyone to give a little.

The participation goal is calculated using last year's number of parishioner participants and adding five percent. It's important to note that an increase in participation and any increase in DPAA monetary donations does

not affect a parish's future DPAA goal. Instead, DPAA goals are calculated using a three-year average of a parish's weekly collections. Also, like in year's past, all monies collected over and above a parish's goal is rebated back to the parish for parish projects.

At the dinner, Dr. Salzman announced that the DPAA's first phase, the leadership gifts phase, has raised \$690,065 in pledges from 146 donors towards the DPAA's \$2.754 million goal. During the leadership gifts phase, 50 solicitors

reached out to the top 250 donors of last year's DPAA asking them to match or increase their gift to the DPAA.

"To those who have already donated and committed, we say 'Thank You,'" said Dr. Salzman.

The second DPAA kick-off dinner is planned for March 5 at Receptions, Erlanger. Other important dates are announcement weekend, March 14-15 and commitment weekend, March 21-22, both in parishes.

Keener photos



(above) Jim Hess, director, Office of Stewardship and Mission, greets guests. The diocesan Office of Stewardship and Mission handles the logistics and organizing of the DPAA.



(right) Silvia Schmidt, diocesan Hispanic Minister, speaks with Father Phillip DeVous during the ministry fair. A newly established office in the Diocese of Covington, Hispanic Ministry provides services and outreach to the diocese's Hispanic and Latino communities and parishes.

## LENTEN FISH FRIES

### St. Joseph Parish in Camp Springs invites you to its Lenten Fish Fries.



**Dinners are served each Friday, February 20th –  
March 27th, 2026, from 4:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m.**

The menu features hand-breaded fried cod and catfish fillets as well as baked cod, shrimp, crab cakes, salmon, and a wide variety of homemade desserts.

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For more information or to place a carry-out order, please call 859-635-2491 or visit [stjosephcampsprings.org](http://stjosephcampsprings.org).

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# Church is holy by Christ's presence, not human perfection, pope says

Josephine Peterson  
Catholic News Service

The Catholic Church is both a community made up of fragile and limited human beings and a divine reality, Pope Leo XIV said at his weekly general audience.

The pope continued his series on the Second Vatican Council March 4 in St. Peter's Square, emphasizing one of its principal documents, the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church, "Lumen Gentium," which examines the nature and identity of the Church.

He said the Church is "a community of men and women who share the joy and struggle of being Christians, with their strengths and weaknesses, proclaiming the Gospel and becoming a sign of the presence of Christ who accompanies us on our journey through life."

However, he added, it also has a "divine dimension." Its divine nature "does not consist in an ideal perfection or spiritual superiority of its members, but in the fact that the Church is generated by God's plan for humanity, realized in Christ," he said.

As proof of this coexistence, Pope Leo pointed to the life of Jesus Christ to illustrate the two dimensions of the Church. People were moved by his humanity, the sounds of his voice, as well as his message.

"Those who decided to follow him were moved precisely by the experience of his welcoming gaze, the touch of his blessing hands, his words of liberation and healing," the pope said. "At the same time, however, by following that man, the disciples opened themselves to an encounter with God. Indeed, Christ's flesh, his face, his gestures and his words visibly manifest the invisible God."

It is through this humanity, through the struggles and fragility of the faithful that Christ's presence is manifest-



CNS photo/Vatican Media

Pope Leo XIV holds a gift as he poses for a photo with Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of Chicago and Greek Orthodox Metropolitan Nathanael of Chicago during a private audience at the Vatican March 4, 2026. The cardinal and metropolitan stopped in Rome as part of an ecumenical pilgrimage together to celebrate the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.

ed, the pope said.

"This is what constitutes the holiness of the Church: the fact that Christ dwells in her and continues to give himself through the smallness and fragility of her members," he said.

Pope Leo said this dichotomy is quintessential of God's love, making himself visible through the weakness of his creation and "continuing to manifest himself and to act."

The faithful are called to act through communion and charity among all.

"Let us strive to be authentic witnesses of the love of Christ so that all can recognize in us and among us the charity that characterizes true Christians and builds up the Church," the pope said in his greetings to English-speakers.

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school offers music, art, P.E., library, an academic team, sports  
programs, and other extracurricular opportunities. Candidates  
must be Roman Catholics, who love and actively practice their  
Catholic faith and can share this faith with the school commu-  
nity. They must be eligible for the appropriate Kentucky  
certification and have a commitment to building on our  
school's strengths in leading us forward. Our goal is to fill this  
position by May 1st. Interested individuals should send a letter  
of interest along with a comprehensive resume including at  
least five references with contact email addresses to Stephen  
Koplyay, SPHR at [skoplyay@covdio.org](mailto:skoplyay@covdio.org).

## MESSENGER

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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

**Pope Leo warns of ‘irreparable abyss,’ if diplomacy doesn’t take over violence in Iran, Middle East**

VATICAN CITY — Pope Leo XIV is urging an immediate return to diplomacy as violence intensifies across the Middle East following the U.S and Israel launching major ongoing combat operations against Iran. Speaking during his Angelus prayer March 1, the Holy Father said he is following with “profound concern” what he called a potential “tragedy of enormous proportions,” warning that the growing conflict risks becoming “an irreparable abyss.” Stability and peace, he said, are not built with weapons or mutual threats, “but only through reasonable, authentic, and responsible dialogue.” His appeal came hours after the United States and Israel announced that Iran’s supreme leader, Ali Khamenei, was killed in their sweeping Feb. 28 assault targeting Tehran and other cities. As Israeli and Iranian strikes continued into March 1 — with reported casualties mounting on both sides — world leaders traded sharp warnings. Pope Leo also cited unrest between Pakistan and Afghanistan, renewing his plea: “Only peace, a gift of God, can heal the wounds between peoples.”

**Lebanese archbishop: Innocents are ‘paying the price’ of Middle East war**

TYRE, Lebanon — As war intensifies across the Middle East, a Catholic archbishop in Lebanon said civilians are bearing the brunt of the violence. In a March 2 message to OSV News, Melkite Greek Catholic Archbishop Georges Iskandar of Tyre described waking up to “intense airstrikes” following a deadly escalation involving Israel, the U.S. and Iran. The crisis erupted after a Feb. 28 strike that killed Iran’s longtime supreme leader, 86-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, prompting missile and drone attacks by Hezbollah and swift Israeli

*(Continued on page 15)*

**CATHOLIC CHARITIES**

Catholic Charities Invites You to Join Our Mission of Service

Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington is growing, and we’re seeking compassionate, mission driven professionals who want to make a meaningful difference in the lives of our neighbors. If you feel called to serve and bring hope to our community, we invite you to explore the following opportunities:

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Details: [covingtoncharities.org/news-events/job-opportunities](http://covingtoncharities.org/news-events/job-opportunities)

These photos are shared by Theresa Glaser, a parishioner of St. Anthony Parish, Taylor Mill and a lay missionary for Maryknoll Lay Missioners. In January 2024, she began a three-year mission in Africa and is sharing updates with the *Messenger*. To read her column see page 5.

(right) A child sleeps in the streets in Kitale, Kenya. SJBRC is the site of her ministry with the Maryknoll Lay Missioners. Here, children between the ages of 7 and 12 are rescued from a life of extreme poverty, rehabilitated and supported to enter and complete formal school training in the hope to change the pattern of their lives.

(below) Rodgers, head teacher at St. John Bosco Rehabilitation Center (SJBRC) and mentor to current Bosco residents heading out to formal school this year — for most of the students this is the first time to have their picture taken.



Glaser photos



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### Protecting God's Children for Adults Safe Environment Trainings

**For all employees and volunteers** of the Diocese of Covington who in any way provide a safe environment for children.

**Step 1: Contact parish/school institution leader** to review the Policies and Procedures and fill out the Application and Acceptance Forms.

**Step 2: Go to [www.virtus.org](http://www.virtus.org)** and click on Registration. Follow the prompts to create an account and to request a background check. Selection.com is a secure site; the background check is posted on your account and you receive a copy if you request it during the registration process. You will sign 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](mailto:system@pub.virtus.org) unless your computer program blocks them.

**Bulletins:**  
 ■ March bulletin: posted Sunday, March 1; due Tuesday, April 7.

The monthly e-mail reminder of a new bulletin posted will come from [system@pub.virtus.org](mailto:system@pub.virtus.org). **[www.virtusonline.org](http://www.virtusonline.org), enter your user id and password.** If your account is suspended contact your primary location where you volunteer or are employed. Your primary location contact information is found under your Contact Tab.

**VIRTUS Training:**

- Thursday, March 19, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Thursday, March 19, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Wednesday, April 15, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Wednesday, April 15, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Thursday, April 30, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Thursday, April 30, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

- Tuesday, May 19, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Tuesday, May 19, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Wednesday, June 17, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Wednesday, June 17, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Wednesday, July 1, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Wednesday, July 1, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

- Tuesday, July 28, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Tuesday, July 28, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

**Note: If your Training Tab is missing** or you cannot access your account, contact your parish, school or institution. For other difficulties, contact Marylu Steffen at (859) 392-1500 or [msteffen@covdio.org](mailto:msteffen@covdio.org)

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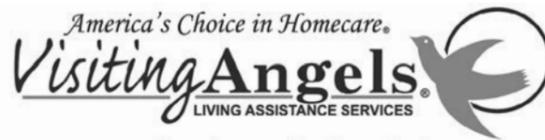
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Call David at the Messenger to place your ad in the SHOPPER'S GUIDE.

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Looking for something to do?



Check out the diocesan calendar online now at <https://covdio.org/calendar/> to keep up with what's happening in the Diocese of Covington!

**National/World**

*(Continued from page 13)*

retaliation in southern Lebanon. Archbishop Iskandar said evacuation warnings came within minutes, triggering mass displacement and traffic gridlock as families fled with little more than what they could carry. Lebanese Prime Minister Nawaf Salam condemned the rocket fire, warning it endangers national security. Meanwhile, the papal foundation Aid to the Church in Need, led by Regina Lynch, cautioned that escalating violence could devastate already fragile Christian communities in Iraq, Syria, Gaza and the West Bank, as well as Lebanon. Despite the turmoil, the local Melkite Church has opened its doors to displaced families, offering shelter — and hope — amid growing fear.

**Vatican synod study group proposes creation of pontifical commission for new technologies**

ROME — A Synod on Synodality study group has recommended the creation of a new “Pontifical Commission for Digital Culture and New Technologies” in the first of 15 synod study group reports expected in the coming weeks. The Vatican published the first two final reports from its Synod on Synodality study groups on March 3. The first report contains recommendations on navigating the Church’s presence in digital spaces. The second report focuses on guidelines for the formation of future priests and includes a call for more women to play a role in aiding the formation of seminarians for the priesthood. The report also lists 26 real world examples of “best practices” from seminaries around the world. Among those highlighted: a program in eight U.S. dioceses focused on healing wounds caused by the excessive use of technology and family breakdown, centered on an eight-day silent retreat and a small-group chastity program; and a Nigerian seminary that

requires seminarians to perform all maintenance work and cleaning of their seminary building to “experience the dignity of human labor.” The General Secretariat of the Synod will publish 13 more study group final reports, according to its website, with the next batch expected March 10.

**Catholic legal network’s coalition challenges key claim blocking immigration from 75 countries**

WASHINGTON — A Catholic legal network and other opponents of the Trump administration’s suspension of immigration from 75 countries are calling into question a key claim the government made in support of that policy. When it announced the policy in January, the State Department said on social media it would pause immigrant visa processing from 75 countries “whose migrants take welfare from the American people at unacceptable rates.” The State Department called the 75

countries that it chose for suspension “Nationalities at High Risk of U.S. Public Benefits Reliance.” The State Department did not immediately respond to a request for comment from OSV News about the data behind that claim. A lawsuit, *CLINIC v. Rubio*, was filed Feb. 2 in the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of New York, challenging that policy by a group of American citizens, immigration nonprofits including the Catholic Legal Immigration Network, and other legal organizations. Opponents of the policy, as well as the lawsuit challenging it, disputed the government’s claim that immigrants from the 75 countries disproportionately use public benefits. The complaint argues that the government’s claim is “unsupported and demonstrably false.” The Cato Institute, a libertarian thinktank based in Washington, recently published an analysis finding that immigrants consistently have lower welfare participation than native-born Americans for nearly every program across income levels. As of Feb. 26, the government had yet to respond to the suit in court.



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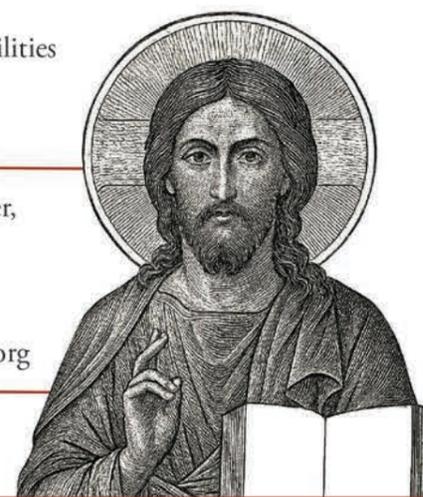
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The Diocese of Covington, in partnership with the Franciscan University's Catechetical Institute, is offering FREE in-person Adult Faith Formation Workshops in TMU's Administration Building (Library classrooms). All workshops are broken into two parts and scheduled for two consecutive days, 1.5 hours per day. Instructors will provide topical information, video content, and open discussion time. Create a free account under your parish or school to access these and 200+ additional workshops at [franciscanathome.com](http://franciscanathome.com).

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- Family Systems in a Catholic School
- Jesus: The Cristo-Centricity of Catechesis
- The Deposit of Faith: An Intro to the Catechism
- Essential Link Between Liturgy & Catechesis
- Scripture: The Heart of Catechesis
- Sacred Scripture: The Big Picture
- Scripture: The Driving Force of Doctrine
- Introduction to the Old Testament
- Trinity
- Preventive System of St. John Bosco
- Introduction to the New Testament
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- Faith and Moral Development: Ages 12–18
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- The Sacrament of the Eucharist
- First Penance and First Eucharist Preparation
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- Confirmation Preparation
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- Prayer: Introduction to the Spiritual Life of the Catechist
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For questions, please contact Isaak Abraham Isaak at 859-392-1529 or [iisaak@covdio.org](mailto:iisaak@covdio.org)



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