

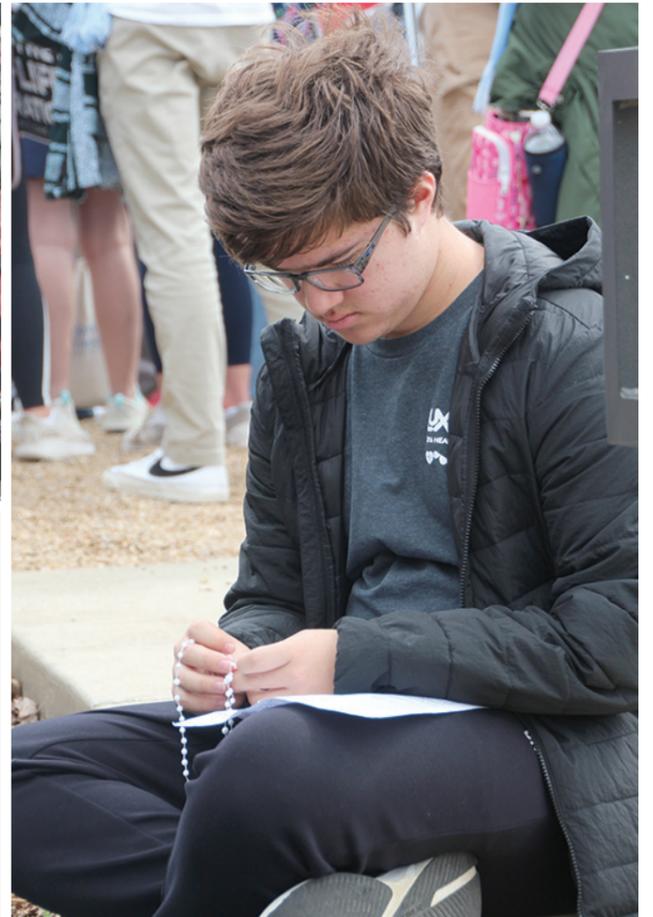


Special Section:
Senior Living
pages 9-15

- 2 **Holy Week at the Cathedral**
- 2 **Covington Lenten pilgrimage**
- 3 **DPAA**
New participation goals
- 3 **Disciple Maker Index**
There's still time!
- 3 **Dr. Mandy Sanchez**
Upcoming presentation
- 3 **Reelin it in'**
St. Cecilia Parish
- 6 **Op-ed on 'Abortion Abolition'**
- 7 **Lenten fish fries**
- 8 **Partners**
Pedaling hope
- 16 **St. Catherine of Siena**
Parish Lenten pilgrimage
- 16 **Fresh faces and fresh starts**
- 21 **Meet Cailin-Mackenzie Adkins**
OCIA at St. Timothy

Bishop's Schedule	3
Commentary	5
People and Events	7
Classifieds	18
Shopper's Guide	20
VIRTUS	20
News Briefs	23

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



(top left) A student from St. Henry District High School, Erlanger, bows her head prayerfully at Mass beginning the Kentucky March for Life.

(top right) Bishop John Iffert speaks on the steps of the Kentucky Capitol to marchers sharing a message of reconciliation and support of life.

(above left) Chancellor, Jamie Schroeder (right), and Hispanic minister, Siliva Schmidt (left), wave to the camera as they pass, walking the mile to the Frankfort Cemetery for a memorial service at the Memorial for the Unborn.

(right) A student from Holy Cross District High School sits prayerfully outside the Memorial for the Unborn, rosary in hand.

Bishop Iffert shares a message of reconciliation and the gift of life at the 2026 Kentucky March for Life

Bella Bailey

Multimedia Correspondent

Rain clouds departed, and the sun shone down on the 2026 Kentucky March for Life, March 11, where the theme was Every Life is a Gift. Students from Notre Dame Academy, Park Hills; Covington Catholic High School, Park Hills; Newport Central Catholic High School, Newport; St. Henry District High School, Erlanger; Holy Cross District High School, Covington; Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria; St. Patrick High School, Maysville; and eighth-grade students from St. Joseph School, Cold Spring, traveled to the Kentucky State Capitol, Frankfort, to march in support of life.

Joining the students at this year's Kentucky March for Life was Bishop John Iffert, who celebrated morning Mass at Good Shepherd Parish, Frankfort, and spoke on the steps of the Capitol. There, he shared with students, marchers and demonstrators alike a message of reconciliation for women who have suffered abortions and the love of God for all life.

Asking the audience to imagine a time where a meaningful gift

was imparted to them, Bishop Iffert said, "always, an important part of that is, you know, that the person who gives you that gift loves you, wants to be close to you, wants a relationship with you. That's exactly the same for every human being."

The gift of life is, in all ways, filled with the intrinsic dignity and value instilled by God. "From conception to natural death, the unborn, disabled, the weak, the poor, the imprisoned, the aging," said Bishop Iffert.

Sharing a personal experience, Bishop Iffert recalled a time before seminary when he had a "breakthrough" on the pro-life movement. "There were two stories that kept appearing in the Chicago Tribune," he said. One, was of a baby born prematurely, highlighting the work of the doctors and care staff and the "tremendous scientific and medical efforts that were being made to preserve this child," said Bishop Iffert. The other story was one of a father who was suing for rights, hoping to prevent the mother of his child from receiving an abortion.

"It occurred to me," said Bishop Iffert, "the only difference

(Continued on page 4)

The Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption prepares for a busy Holy Week with services, shroud exhibit

Bella Bailey

Multimedia Correspondent

The week preceding Easter Sunday consists of Palm Sunday, Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. These days, and the ones in between, make up Holy Week, the center of the Church's liturgical calendar.

"Holy Week is that commemoration that we walk with the Lord in his passion, and death and resurrection and that we become one with him in that through prayer and through the liturgies," said Father Ryan Maher, rector of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, the mother church of the Diocese of Covington.

Throughout Holy Week, like the rest of the churches in the Diocese, the Cathedral will be participating in the sacred celebrations. Starting with Palm Sunday, which marks the return of Jesus from his 40 days in the desert into the city of Jerusalem.

At the Cathedral, the celebration of Palm Sunday Mass begins at 10 a.m. across the street in St. Mary's Park, Covington. There the Gospel of Luke, proclaiming the entrance of Jesus into Jerusalem, will be read. Bishop John Iffert will bless the palms the lay faithful will carry as all process into the Cathedral, a symbolic gesture of Jesus entering the city, through the main doors to begin the liturgy.

On Holy Tuesday, the Cathedral will host all the priests, deacons and religious of the Diocese as well as lay representatives from every parish and mission, at 7 p.m. for the Chrism Mass. This special Mass, during which Bishop Iffert consecrates the holy oils for the upcoming year, is a symbolic show of unity between the Bishop and his priests.

Father Maher said, "The Cathedral is packed with parishioners from throughout the Diocese. All of our parishes are at that special Mass. The unity of the Church is fully visible in the Bishop with his priests and his people all together and the consecrated religious and the deacons as well ... It's always an occasion of joy to celebrate the Chrism Mass with the Bishop; to enter into the liturgy with one mind and one heart with the people there present as well."

Holy Thursday is the beginning of the Sacred Triduum,

which is the three days leading up to Easter. Each day has a different celebration, though as Father Maher said, it is one liturgy celebrated over three days.

"It's really best to immerse ourselves in every celebration, encourage all priests, encourage their people to come to everything, all of the liturgies if they can," said Father Maher.

The Holy Thursday celebration is the Mass of the Lord's Supper, which begins at 6 p.m. At this Mass the Church recalls the events of the Last Supper — the institution of the Eucharist and the priesthood.

"The Lord has that Passover meal with the apostles as the end was near and the love that he shows them at the Last Supper and where he, the Lord Jesus, really replaces all of the sacrifices of old. He becomes the true Lamb, there is no more need for the Passover lambs to be sacrificed, he is the true lamb at the Last Supper, it is really Jesus giving his body and blood to his father ... and giving his apostles his body and blood to eat and drink," said Father Maher.

Those who attend the Holy Thursday celebration will also notice an act performed only once a year, the washing of the feet. In the Gospel of John, read at the Holy Thursday Mass, Jesus washes the feet of his apostles, an act of pure love.

"The Bishop, who in the person of the Lord in a special way, will put on an apron and wash the feet of the Cathedral parishioners. That's always a very moving and really beautiful thing to witness and to participate in," said Father Maher.

At the end of the Mass of the Lord's Supper the Blessed Sacrament is carried throughout the Cathedral and placed at an altar of repose, which is an altar separate from the main altar and tabernacle. There the Blessed Sacrament will be exposed until 10 p.m.; lay faithful often spend that time in silent adoration and prayer while the altar is stripped of its candles and linens in preparation for the Passion of the Lord on Good Friday.

Good Friday is the only day on the liturgical calendar that no Mass is celebrated. Good Friday, the day of Jesus' death, is the celebration of the Lord's Passion at 3 p.m. With Stations of the Cross at 12 p.m., noon, and confessions



During the Holy Thursday Mass, the Gospel readings of the Last Supper are read and during Mass the celebrant washes the feet of 12 parishioners, reminiscent of Jesus' washing the feet of his disciples.

from 12-2 p.m.

"That liturgy is really marked by the whole gaze of the Church, the whole gaze of our hearts solely fixed on the death of our Lord. That's what that liturgy brings about for us that there is no Mass celebrated on Good Friday and so that day we are just fixed on our Lord's suffering and death. We begin that liturgy in holy silence, in prostration before the altar and then we move into the Liturgy of the Word," said Father Maher.

During the Lord's Passion there is the solemn interces-

(Continued on page 19)

Lenten Pilgrimage March 28, 9 a.m.–2 p.m.

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

Start anytime between 9 a.m.–2 p.m.

Start from any location.

Park anywhere.

Route will be clearly marked.

Lenten Pilgrimage Schedule

All churches open 9 a.m.–2 p.m.

Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption of Mary

Adoration, 9 a.m.–2 p.m.

Confessions, 9 a.m.–1 p.m.

St. Augustine Church

Confessions, 9 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

St. Benedict Church

Adoration, 9 a.m.–2 p.m.

Confessions, 9 a.m.–1 p.m.

St. John the Evangelist Church

Confessions, 9 a.m.–1:30 p.m.

Mother of God Church

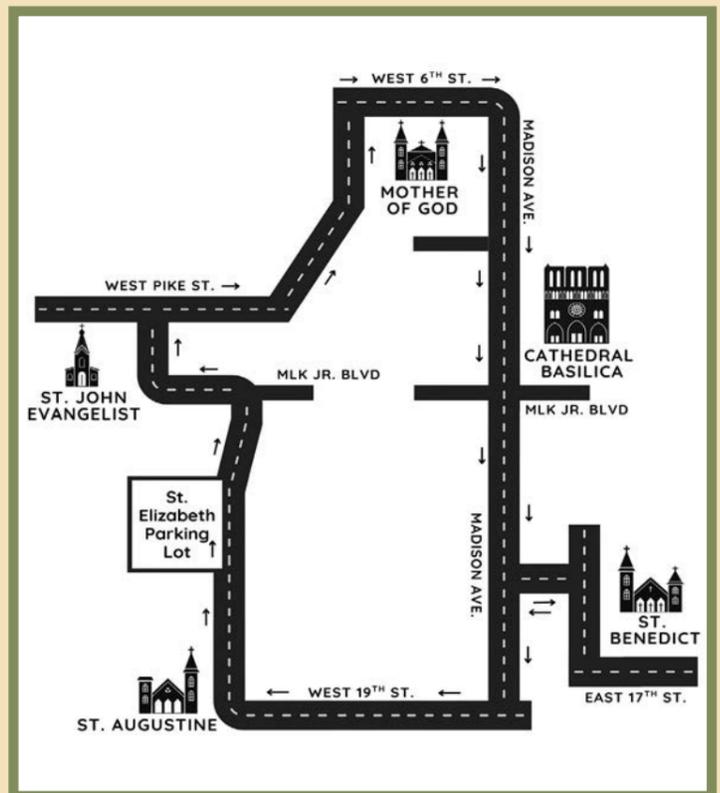
Adoration, 9 a.m.–2 p.m.

Confessions, 9 a.m.–2 p.m.

Mass, 12:05 p.m.

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
Mother of God Church



2026 DPAA unveils new participation goal with announcement weekend

Bella Bailey

Multimedia Correspondent

The 2026 Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal (DPAA), “Live as Children of Light,” officially hit the pews, announcement weekend, March 14–15, with a video message from Bishop John Iffert. In the video, Bishop Iffert detailed the good work of the DPAA for essential Diocesan ministries, including ministry services, seminarian and clergy education, care for retired priests and support of Catholic Charities.

In support of these ministries the DPAA has a goal \$2,754,000. To reach this goal, the Diocese relies on the support of many, no matter the size of the gift, said Jim Hess, director of Stewardship and Mission Services. And while the dollar amount pledged has increased year over year, the number of gifts pledged continues to decrease. In response to this trend, the Diocese has released a participation goal, alongside the individual parish monetary goal.

This new participation goal is not incentivized finan-



cially, said Mr. Hess. Rather it is “a way to encourage giving at the parish level of every size,” he said. “It stresses the truth that we are called to be good stewards of what God has entrusted us with, whether we have the capacity to make a large gift or a small gift, every one of us is called to be good stewards.”

The participation goal was calculated by the number of families that donated to the 2025 DPAA per parish and increasing that number by five percent. “Every participation goal is attainable, and is a good stretch goal for the

parish,” said Mr. Hess.

Explaining the goal further, Mr. Hess said, “every parish has a dollar goal, because there is a minimum required amount to run a diocese and its ministries, as well as a participation goal, because we do want to encourage everybody to pray about this, and everybody to participate in some way if they feel called to do so.”

“When we are considering giving in the Catholic context,” said Mr. Hess, “we actually have a need to give as human beings. That’s

what stewardship is in the Catholic context, we are all called to be stewards of what God has given us. We’re not called, each of us to make a huge difference, but we’re called to be stewards of what God has given us.”

“It’s a good thing for us to give,” he said. “It’s a good thing to recognize that we’ve been given gifts from God and are called to invest those gifts prayerfully and where we feel called to do so.”



WITH ONE HEART
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Don't delay in completing the DMI survey

The time to complete the Disciple Maker Index survey is quickly approaching. Parishioners, 18 years of age and older, have until March 23, 11:59 p.m. to complete the 75-question survey. By completing the survey, parishioners are helping their pastor and parish leaders make data-driven decisions on how best to manage resources and serve others. The survey is available online at 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

You're invited
"AI: The Dangers of an Increasingly Digital World"

March 25,
Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Hall, Covington

Doors open 6 p.m.; program begins 7 p.m.

Join the Diocesan Safe Environment and Schools offices for a presentation by Dr. Mandy Sanchez, director of programming at Culture Reframed, on protecting children in an AI-driven world. Must be over 18 years old to attend. Preregistration preferred but not required, <https://forms.gle/hQAmpWUvnC5TKoEGA>. Questions? Contact Julie Feinauer, director, Office of Safe Environment, jfeinauer@covdio.org.

Reporting Misconduct in the Diocese of Covington

Anyone who has experienced sexual misconduct by a cleric, employee or volunteer of the Diocese of Covington is asked to contact Ms. Julie Feinauer, diocesan victims assistance coordinator (859) 392-1515. Professional assistance and pastoral support will be provided in confidentiality and with respect.

A copy of the “Diocesan Policies and Procedures for Addressing Sexual Misconduct” is available by contacting the Chancery, (859) 392-1510 or visiting www.covdio.org and going to “Sexual Misconduct Policy.”

Informando sobre conducta inapropiada en la Diócesis de Covington

Cualquier persona que haya experimentado conducta sexual inapropiada por parte de un clérigo, empleado o voluntario de la Diócesis de Covington está invitada a ponerse en contacto con Ms. Julie Feinauer, coordinadora diocesana para dar asistencia a las víctimas. Teléfono (859) 392-1515. Asistencia profesional y apoyo moral serán ofrecidos de una manera confidencial y con respeto.

Una copia de “Normas y Procedimientos sobre Conducta Sexual Inapropiada” está disponible poniéndose en contacto con la Cancillería, Teléfono (859) 392-1510, o visitando www.covdio.org y marcando “Sexual Misconduct Policy.”

Reelin' It In Season III

In the fourth episode of Reelin' It In, Maura and Bella visited the St. Cecilia Parish, Independence, Fish Fry. Run by the Holy Name Society, the Fish Fry brings together the parish community and a robust volunteer team. To hear from their volunteers and patrons scan the QR code.

Bishop's Schedule

<p>March 26 Pro-Life Essay Banquet, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington, 6:30 p.m.</p> <p>March 28 Lenten Pilgrimage, Covington</p>	<p>March 29 Palm Sunday Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 10 a.m.</p> <p>March 31 Chrism Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 7 p.m.</p>
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2026 Kentucky March for Life

(Continued from page 1)

between these two lives is that one was wanted and one was not.”

“What determines the value of a human life, what concern determines who is human and who is not, cannot be as subjective as whether that life is desired or not. It must be something more integral. What it is, is God’s creative image; that God calls this being into existence and gives that life to us as a gift,” said Bishop Iffert. And, in the same way that the unborn are filled with dignity and value, so are the women who have suffered abortions.

In response to demonstrators whose loud advocacy of Kentucky House Bill 714 supported the prosecution of women who have abortions, Bishop Iffert said, “The Catholic Bishops of the United States have affirmed again and again and again that the woman who has an abortion is a victim of that abortion, is harmed by that abortion.”

“Our approach to women who have had an abortion has been to accompany them, to walk alongside them, both women who have taken this action and who are in danger of taking this action. It is an approach that is rooted in the healing ministry of Jesus, to forgive and to help the individual person come to accept the redemptive love of Christ, and that is what we commit ourselves to.”

A robust applause and cheers rang out from Diocesan students in support of Bishop’s message, a witness to the faith of Diocesan students knowing that reconciliation is the message of Christ.

Speaking once more to the crowd, Bishop Iffert said, “...we will serve the Lord through reconciliation, not anger, and I call on you to do that same.”

For a related op-ed on Kentucky House Bill 714 (known as Abortion Abolition) and the Church’s approach to post-abortive women see page 6.



(above) A group of students from Holy Cross District High School carry rosaries and smiles as they begin to climb the hill towards the Memorial for the Unborn.



(left) Students from Bishop Brossart High School proudly hold signs that read “Human dignity has no expiration date,” and “Life is beautiful at every stage.”



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The Senior Resource Center is designed to inform, educate, and empower seniors and their families as they navigate the complexities of aging services. Our compassionate professionals offer expert guidance and support in every aspect of senior services, including:

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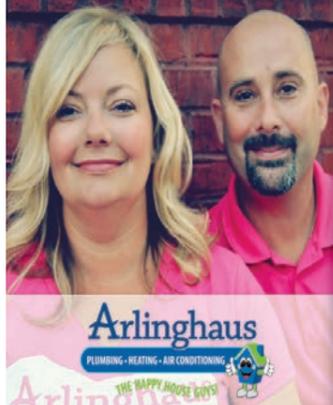
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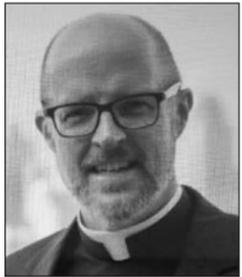
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The gift of faith begins the Resurrection

The readings for the Fifth Sunday of Lent — Cycle A — are: Ezekiel 37:12-14, Roman 8:3-11 and John 11:1-45.

Every single Sunday we profess the Creed and proclaim, “I look forward to the resurrection of the dead and the life of the world to come, Amen.” Perhaps those words are so familiar to us that we fail to give them deep consideration. Yet, it is important to recall that prior to the coming of Jesus Christ, few in the history of the

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Phillip DeVous

world thought that the resurrection of the dead was something even thinkable, much less a real possibility.

Faith is many things. One of the characteristics of faith, brought to us by the Holy Spirit, is that the Holy Spirit expands our sense of what reality entails in order that we might see clearly. We call such clear seeing Divine Revelation.

Nothing expands our sense of reality more than the idea of the Resurrection of the dead. The theologian, N.T. Wright writes, “Jesus’s resurrection is the beginning of God’s new project, not to snatch people away from earth to heaven, but to colonize earth with the life of Heaven” The resurrection does not invalidate the value of our present bodily life just because it will die. Rather, it shows us that what we do with, and in, our present bodily life matters because God has a great, eternal future in store for it, a purpose first revealed in his Incarnation.

To realize this glorified communion, we must contend with the lack of glory we now experience as part of our conversion from sin to sanctity; from vice to virtue; from death to life himself. St. Paul makes this clear when he says, “those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh; on the contrary, you are in the spirit, if only the Spirit of God dwells in you.”

The word “flesh,” as St. Paul uses it, does not mean the body. It means the whole of fallen and mortal nature, body and soul. And “spirit,” as used here, does not mean “soul,” but the whole of redeemed human nature now under God’s Holy Spirit. “The Holy Spirit is God. God performs miracles by the Holy Spirit,” as the theologian, Peter Kreeft explains. “That’s how he raised Jesus from the dead, and that is how he will raise us with Jesus, in Jesus, as part of his Body the Church.”

We are given pause to consider the first miracle all of us in the Church have received: the gift of faith in Jesus Christ. This is no small thing given how God has been eclipsed in contemporary life, where the ego and its desires are now paramount. As the darkness consequent of the eclipse of God rolls menacingly across the landscape of contemporary life, we can see just what a miracle the gift of faith is. It is gift that gives us a personal relationship with Jesus Christ, the light of the world.

The Holy Gospel relates that Martha and Lazarus were close friends of Jesus. Martha had a stronger intuition than most as to who Jesus was and of what he was capable. Yet, the death of her brother Lazarus was incomprehensible to her. Jesus himself was overcome with grief at his friend’s passing — he too wept. This teaches us that our suffering is not outside of God’s attention. Christ holds it before the Father. As the Eternal Son of God gazes at the Heavenly Father and the Heavenly Father gazes back, we are all seen and beheld in every aspect of our existence by God.

Before Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, he first raises Martha’s faith from the temptation to despair spurred by grief and death. From her he elicits an act of faith in the Spirit and power of God. “Yes, Lord. I have come to believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world.”

For a person to receive the gift of faith is a miracle greater than that of raising a corpse to life. A living per-

Taking mercy to the streets

This Holy Week, for the second year in a row, Covington residents and passers-by will see young people, families and adults giving witness to their faith in a



Carrie O'Connor

Saturday, the youth will host a “Festival of Hope” at the Rose Garden Home Mission, giving children and families an opportunity to pray and play together as we await the Resurrection.

unique way. The Holy Week Mission of Mercy invites Catholics to take the message of Christ’s love to the streets.

Young people will engage in door-to-door missions, inviting residents to participate in the Holy Week liturgies at the parishes. Many will gather on Good Friday to do a “Cross Walk” — carrying a large wooden cross and offering prayer to passers-by, nailing their intentions to the cross. And on

The youth missionaries will have formation and prayer activities as they build community with other young people from throughout the diocese. In the words of one student who participated last year, “It’s literally being an apostle in the 21st century ... encountering people on the street and experiencing both rejection and joy, and it is so fulfilling.”

For those wishing to have a new experience of evangelization and mission, this is a wonderful opportunity to do so.

The High School Holy Week Mission occurs from April 2 to April 4 and is not an overnight retreat. Youth may attend one, two or three days of the Mission. Each day has a special focus, built on living the Sacred Triduum through prayer, service and evangelization. Students receive five hours of service credit for each day they attend.

Your help is needed by inviting youth. It is ideal for a youth mentor or parent from a parish or school to attend with their youth, but it is not required. For information visit covdio.org/youth and look for “Holy Week Mission of Mercy.”

Carrie O'Connor is a chartered Service and Mission Team Leader of the Youth Ministry Office of the Diocese of Covington, Ky

Reflecting on the Our Father

I’d like to share with you a meditation I had in Adoration as I meditated line by line on the Our Father.

Our Father — My true father, my creator, all perfect, all true, ever faithful, ever loving, the beginning and end of all things, the one who knew me through and through before I was born.



Mother Seraphina Quinlan, FDM

(Jer 1:5) You formed my inmost being and knit me in my mother’s womb. (Ps 139:16) You know me, Lord. You know when I sit or stand, you understand my thoughts and know my words before one of them is on my tongue, Lord, you know it all and you love me! (Ps 139:1, 2, 5)

Who art in Heaven — Wherever you are, Lord, there is Heaven because Heaven is perfection. And you, my God, are perfect. We are called to be perfect like you are perfect, (Matt 5:48) you who are all good and worthy of my love.

Hallowed be thy name — The name of Jesus, given by the Father, is above every other name. St. Paul tells us that at your name, Jesus, every knee must bend, those in heaven, those on earth and those under the earth. (Phil 2:10) Sanctify your name in me, Jesus, that I may honor your name in my heart, in my words and in my actions.

Thy kingdom come — Come, my Lord and my God. Father, your word came to reveal you and your Kingdom to sinful man and call us back home, home to your heart. Come and reign over me, that I may know the way, so to be united to you for all eternity.

Thy will be done — Like Mary, I give my “Fiat.” Let it be done unto me according to your will. I surrender completely to you, who are ever trustworthy, you who are love. I trust completely in you and have confidence that you want only what is my greatest good. I also under-

stand that sometimes this means to suffer. This is also an act of love which is very similar to a mother giving birth to her child. While she is in labor and delivery, there is pain and suffering, yet she willingly submits to all of it for the benefit of birthing a child, her child. Lord, bring new life out of any suffering that you permit. Your will be done.

On earth as it is in Heaven — Lord, let me do your will without hesitation and without question, like the angels, who do your bidding and are subject to your every word. (1Peter 3:22)

Give us this day our daily bread — The Lord Jesus remains with us and gives us his flesh every day to nourish us and strengthen us. This gift is love poured out, the gift of the bridegroom to the bride, the Church. Love to be completely consumed by us who receive, to bear life in us, life in our souls and life eternal. We are called to bear fruit so as to be faithful to Our Lord. To bring to birth every action according to his will, for his greater glory.

And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us — Lord, make me fruitful. We are called to be perfect, becoming more like our Father who is perfect. (Matt 5:48) We must do things as he would do them. Forgiving is a great act of love, this is denying myself, picking up my cross and following the Lord. (Matt 16:24) Living for others is a great act of perfect love. We are called to oneness with Christ, to be like him in all things. When others see us, they should recognize God within.

Lead us not into temptation — Lord Jesus, be my strength and my support. Let me not be tried beyond my capability to be faithful! Give me every necessary grace to reject evil and do good.

Deliver us from evil — Give me final perseverance and your grace, Lord, to endure whatever may come. And in my last moment, bring me to yourself, to be one with you for eternity.

Amen!
Mother Seraphina Quinlan is a Franciscan Daughter of Mary, Covington.

son can resist Jesus; people resist faith. A dead body, however, has no power to resist Jesus.

Martha’s act of faith expands her sense of reality; of what’s possible with Jesus. Now she can then see with the eyes illumined by faith, with the gift of knowledge from the Holy Spirit. She knows who Christ is. Her revived

faith gives her confidence in Jesus’s power to restore life in ways we can perceive, as well as in ways we are not yet ready to see but will.

Father Phillip W. DeVous is the pastor of St. Charles Parish, Flemingsburg and St. Rose of Lima Parish, Mayslick, Ky

Op-Ed on ‘Abortion Abolition’

Jason Hall
Contributor

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

The Catholic Church has built on our longstanding work supporting vulnerable women and families with initiatives like “Walking with Moms in Need,” a parish-based program geared toward meeting the needs of women and families in local communities. The program “works to ensure that any woman who finds herself unexpectedly pregnant, or parenting in difficult circumstances, can turn to her local Catholic Church and be connected with the resources she needs. Volunteers walk with moms throughout the motherhood journey, offering them authentic Christian friendship and ongoing support.” (walkingwithmoms.com)

Many parishes throughout Kentucky are participating in this program and adapting it to their local realities. I believe this is an effort, and an approach, of which we should all be proud. To build a culture of life means loving and supporting people in their real-life circumstances, whatever those may be, and ensuring they have the means to make life-affirming choices.

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

It is certainly true that abortion is the

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

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

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

As Pope Francis wrote, “unborn children [are] the most defenceless and innocent among us...this defence of unborn life is closely linked to the defence of each and every other human right...On the other hand, it is also true that we have done little to adequately accompany women in very difficult situations, where abortion appears as a quick solution to their profound anguish, especially when the life developing within them is the result of rape or a situation of extreme poverty. Who can remain unmoved before such painful situations?”

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

Jason D. Hall is executive director of the Catholic Conference of Kentucky



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PEOPLE AND EVENTS

The weekly TV Mass from the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption is broadcast locally on The CW, Sundays, 10—11 a.m. Viewers can tune-in on the following channels: antenna 12.2; Spectrum 117 or 25; Cincinnati Bell 17 or 517; and DirectTV 25.

Festivals, prayer services, etc. Parishes, schools and Catholic organizations of the Diocese of Covington can now have their event featured on the Diocesan online calendar. Submit your event at <https://covdio.org/calendar/>.

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, 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.

The Diocesan Safe Environment and Schools offices welcome back Dr. Mandy Sanchez, director of programming at Culture Reframed, for a presentation “AI: The Dangers of an Increasingly Digital World,” March 25, Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Hall, Covington. Doors open 6 p.m.; program begins 7 p.m. Must be over 18 years old to attend. Preregistration preferred but not required, <https://forms.gle/hQAmpWUvnC5TKoEGA>. Questions? Contact Julie Feinauer, director, Office of Safe Environment, jfeinauer@covdio.org.

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 at 10:30 a.m. and repeated at 6:30 p.m. at Mother of God Church.

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.

Come and See Retreat, March 28, 9 a.m.–7 p.m., St. Paschal Baylon Convent, Highland Heights, Ohio. Am I called to be a sister? What is the life of a Sister of Notre Dame like? Women ages 20-39 curious about religious life are invited to join us for a day of reflection and conversation. Contact Sister Kelley Rush, krush@sndusa.org or (440) 241-3124. Overnight options 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.

“Community Circle for Maternal Wellness: Resources, Stories & Support,” a free event to support the health and well-being of minority moms, April 14, 5:30–7:30 p.m., Life Learning Center, Covington. Hear from a panel of health experts, community leaders and local moms. Visit with local community supports, get free resources and enter for raffles prizes.

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.

World Youth Day 2027, Seoul, South Korea, July 30 to August 10, 2027. The Diocese of Covington is coordinating a pilgrimage to World Youth Day 2027 for young adults ages 18 to 35. 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. Bishop John Iffert hopes to join the pilgrims along with a few priests and deacons from the diocese. Estimated cost is \$5,500 per person and includes round-trip airfare, transportation, lodging, meals (from WYD) and tours. To reserve your spot, the initial payment of \$800 is now due. The full amount must be paid by Monday, March 15, 2027. For more information, go to covdio.org/register/

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.

Lenten Fish Frys

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.

St. Francis Xavier, Falmouth,
4:00 – 7:30 p.m.

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

Fridays, Feb. 20 – March 27 (continued)

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.

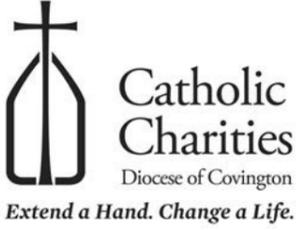
Notre Dame Urban Education Center, Covington, needs volunteer tutors for its Education Center's Homework Plus Program (Grades K-8). Volunteers work alongside students to complete homework, build academic skills and create a lifelong passion for learning. Contact Brandi at (859) 630-9475 or blenihan@nduec.org.

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.



Father Kevin Kahmann, pastor, St. Henry Parish, prayed with the cast and crew before their performance of Newsies, Jr. at the Drees Homes Auditorium at St. Henry District High School, Erlanger.

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Our Mission

Inspired by the Gospel call of Jesus Christ to serve, the mission of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington is to promote healing, restore hope and affirm human potential through services that empower, voices that speak for justice and partnerships that strengthen communities.

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For more information, visit www.covingtoncharities.org or follow us on facebook.com/covingtoncharities and instagram.com/covingtoncharities.

Pedaling Hope: Pickett's Corner begins its fourth season at Parish Kitchen

Parish Kitchen, Covington, was buzzing with activity the morning of Saturday, March 7, as volunteers wheeled out rows of freshly tuned bicycles. The familiar hum of traffic, conversations between guests, and the sound of ratchets tightening bolts set the backdrop as Pickett's Corner, Catholic Charities' bike ministry, launched its fourth season of service.

Since its beginning in 2023, Pickett's Corner has placed 1,138

tradition, it was a sign of hope.

Willie and Britney, who recently moved to Kentucky after challenging transitions from Florida and South Carolina, shared their gratitude.

"We had prayed for transportation and today ended up with a bike. That lets us know God is seeing us and hearing us, and things are going to get better," they said.



(top left) Father Aby, pastor of St. John the Evangelist Parish and St. Ann Mission in Covington, offered a blessing over the volunteers (top right), guests and every bike prepared for distribution.

(bottom left and right) Rain or shine, Pickett Corner volunteers prepare bikes for distribution 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, from 11 a.m.–1 p.m. at Parish Kitchen, Covington.

bicycles into the hands of neighbors who need reliable transportation. For many, these bikes become essential tools helping them commute to work, reach medical appointments, attend classes, reconnect with family, and maintain independence.

The start of the season began with a heartfelt prayer. Standing among the bicycles and the steady rhythm of city life, Father Aby, pastor of St. John the Evangelist Parish and St. Ann Mission in Covington, offered a blessing over the volunteers, guests and every bike prepared for distribution. His words captured the spirit of the ministry.

"As we ride our bikes, we enjoy freedom, the beauty of creation and the joy of journey. Today we ask God to bless these bikes and all who ride them. May the Lord keep us safe on the road, help us respect others and remind us that every journey in life is also a journey with God and to God. Go and ride in peace," Father Aby prayed.

For the guests who gathered, the blessing was more than a

Longtime volunteer Steve Wilmhoff, now entering his fourth year with the ministry, reflected on how transformative the work has been not only for guests, but for him personally.

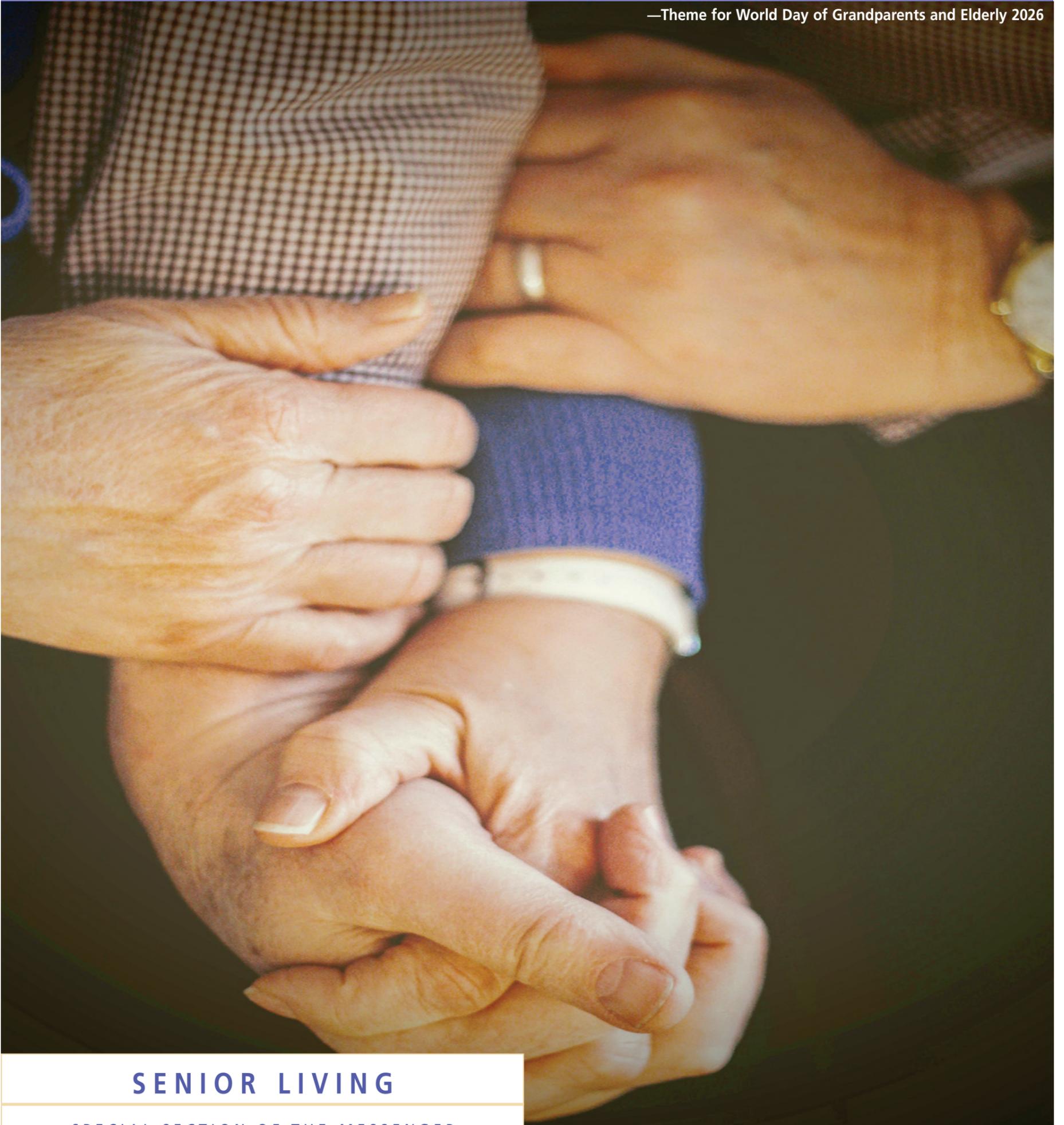
"It has been a wonderful experience to see what it means to the community... to give people transportation that helps move their lives along. I also feel like I'm part of a team with the people working on bikes and the guests we serve. It has been very enriching for me," Mr. Wilmhoff said.

Pickett's Corner continues its mission from March through November, distributing bikes on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, from 11 a.m.–1 p.m. at Parish Kitchen. Demand remains steady, and volunteers work year-round to repair and restore donated bicycles so they are safe, durable, and ready for the next rider.

In the heart of Covington, among busy streets and alleyways, Pickett's Corner continues to remind the community that acts of service, even as simple as refurbishing a bicycle, have the power to move lives forward.

“I will never forget you.”
(Isaiah 49:15)

—Theme for World Day of Grandparents and Elderly 2026



SENIOR LIVING

SPECIAL SECTION OF THE MESSENGER

MARCH 20, 2026

Cover credit: Joshua Hoehne via Unsplash

I will never forget you (Isaiah 49:15)

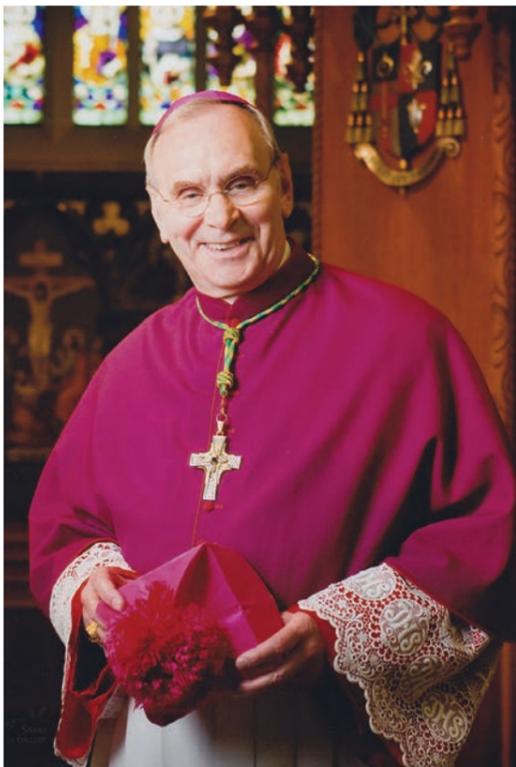
Most Rev. Roger J. Foys
Contributor

The theme for the 6th World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly, chosen by Pope Leo XIV, is taken from the Prophet Isaiah: "I will never forget you." (Isaiah 49:15) This verse is meant to emphasize how God's love for every person *never fails* (emphasis added), not even in the frailty of old age. (February 10, 2026, statement from the Dicastery for the Laity, the Family, and Life) The statement goes on: "The theme aims to be a message of comfort and hope for all grandparents and the elderly, especially those who live alone or feel forgotten ... it is also an invitation to families and ecclesial communities not to forget the elderly and to recognize in them a precious presence and a blessing."

Pope Francis established the World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly five years ago and he often spoke of the tremendous value that the elderly are to our society. He spoke with love about how much he learned from his own grandparents and how they were valued and appreciated.

Pope Leo XIV himself has described old age as a "time of blessing and grace" and has called the elderly the first witnesses of hope and the "wisdom of a people."

He has urged Catholics to combat loneliness among the elderly by creating "networks of support and prayer." He has called for a "revolution of gratitude and care" toward



Bishop Roger J. Foys, D.D.

seen as bothersome and useless, as if having lived a long life with the many varied experiences that life has provided counts as nothing and nothing is to be learned from

the elderly. He has referred to the elderly as "essential pillars of family wisdom, rather than just recipients of care."

Perhaps it seems strange that we have a special day to call attention to grandparents and the elderly, but the fact of the matter is that many elderly family members and others can and do feel superfluous, marginalized or simply a burden to carry. After almost 53 years as a priest, almost 24 of those as a bishop, I have encountered this phenomenon in the elderly more often than I care to admit.

The wisdom that the elderly possess is oftentimes not only not recognized or appreciated but is

those many years. The pain that this kind of treatment inflicts on a person of many years can be unimaginable. It makes one feel useless, counting as nothing, with nothing of substance to offer simply because one's youth is gone.

And yet, we have God's promise as spoken through the Prophet Isaiah, "I will never forget you." Isaiah also says: "Even in your old age I am He. And to gray hairs I will carry you. I have made and I will bear; I will carry and I will save." (Isaiah 46:4) God's love is everlasting no matter what one's age or station in life. God's love is real, it is genuine, it is trustworthy. It is the kind of love we are called to emulate. To honor those who have lived a long life, to appreciate their wisdom, to care for them no matter the situation, is a blessing to those who do so. (cf. Sirach, 3:12-16)

So often when people die others will ask or speculate what they left behind, what they provided for those who survive them, what is their legacy. What better legacy to leave than one of a life well-lived, a life of faith, a life of good works, a life of challenges embraced and solutions found. A life of wisdom for the ages learned by years of living in the light of the Gospel message.

But one does not have to die to leave such a legacy and others do not have to wait to benefit from that legacy. We can avail ourselves of that legacy now, learning from and appreciating the wisdom of the elderly, listening with an open heart to their story, embracing them as having meaning and worth and value even as the bloom of youth fades, recognizing them as witnesses of hope and essential pillars of family wisdom rather than just as recipients of care.

Most Rev. Roger J. Foys, D.D. is Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Covington, Ky.



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Students reflect on World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly theme

Staff Report

The theme for the 6th World Day of Grandparents and the Elderly, chosen by Pope Leo XIV, is taken from the Prophet Isaiah: "I will never forget you." (Isaiah 49:15) High school students from across the diocese were invited to reflect on this theme in their submissions to this year's Senior Living edition of the *Messenger*.

I just can't help but sing along

Ben Liedel
Contributor

There I was, standing in the freezing cold right outside that old high school football field. Leaning up against the fence in front of me, blazing cigarette in hand, was my uncle. He sat, still, as the blank, empty frost slowly fell, surrounding our feet as he took a long drag of that crimson cigarette. Then he turned to me, "Sometimes you're just gonna find people like that, Buddy. Some people who really don't know how lucky, how stupidly nice they have it." He was right, I thought to myself. And the saying rang true as I remembered how lucky I was in front of that old stadium. I wish I could have some of that advice, see that smile on his face, when I sit, empty in front of this silver engraved casket at his funeral.

As soon as I realized the reality of sitting in front of his



In this 2013 file photo, a grandfather and grandson look over Mass booklet during liturgy celebrated in honor of Pope Benedict XVI at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington.

casket, I was whisked away and in the church pews, gazing up at my grandpa as he somberly approached the podium, holding a piece of paper in his shaky hands. He opened his mouth, the microphone humming to life, as he began... "My name is Steve Bartlett. Some of you may know me as Matt's dad..."

But by then, I was already lost in a world of my own.

And suddenly I was right there — sat right in front of my uncle, on Christmas, late at night with my new drum set as he flipped the drumsticks, doing paradiddles and double stroke rolls, jamming out to his heart's content in the way that he used to, playing to the song "Boulevard of Broken Dreams."

Those next few days I would stay up into the dark hours of the night with him, as he taught me some of the basics and his favorite tips on drumming. I miss him. Drumming, one of my favorite things and core aspects of my life stemmed from a little seed that he planted in my heart. The seed remained, but now there is a massive gap left from where he was.

But my safe haven from this sad reality was cut short as Grandpa's speech ended, everyone in tears as we all collectively strolled out of the church, getting into our cars. My arm was yanked over by my two cousins, Paige and Luke, the children of my now deceased uncle. They proceeded to pull me into one of the most emotional hugs I have ever known. But the words my cousin Paige said to me in that moment were really what made that hug just so special. She whispered, "You were his third kid, Ben. You really were."

And then I cried. I cried so hard that the memories came flooding back, like the tears streaming down my face. We all fell into the car and cried together as we piled in. We turned on the radio, and it was playing "Boulevard of Broken Dreams."

Our heads were filled with countless trips to Kings Island, the late night talks about girls and Marvel, every Christmas, every Thanksgiving, every Easter, all the random mini-golfing trips and birthday parties. The song res-

(Continued on page 12)

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I just can't help but sing along

(Continued from page 11)

onated in our minds as everything came crashing down.

We all had no idea what we were going to do without him, or at least I sure as heck did not. But what mattered was that we all were each other's support and without each other we would crumble. I got so caught up in everything, that before I knew it, Luke and I were walking out of the doors of the post-funeral dinner.

Luke and I had always been close. We would often talk late, pouring our hearts out to each other at night. But I could tell something was off about him today. Who could blame him? So, we walked out onto the concrete into the baking heat, our funeral attire not doing us any favors, as Luke picked up a basketball and passed it to me.

The ball bounced off the baking concrete and flew into my hands. I felt the leather against my skin as the words spilled out of my mouth, "It's okay if you don't want to talk about it, but are you okay? Like how is everything?" I asked him.

I looked up at him, and I was met with silence and a sad stare, followed swiftly by, "Yeah. I don't really wanna open up about it, but it's hard." He and I sat in silence for a while, passing the ball and shooting.

Eventually the words fell out of my mouth unintentionally, "I don't know about you, but I try to be happy about it. He's going to a better place, and there's nothing else that matters to me..."

Luke spurted out, "I don't think like that..." I looked up at him. He held the ball still as he said, "He is gone. He may be in a better place, but I'll still be sad. He'll never see me turn 18, never see how my last varsity season ends, never talk to me again. And I can't catch a glimpse of happiness in that." He told me, and I cannot help but feel again the twinge in my heart as deep down I know I feel the same way.

What Luke said rang through my head, as the day flew by me. Countless hugs, goodbyes and all the formalities

came and went, and I did the proceedings like a hollow shell of whom I was. The truth was that I did not know how to feel, or what to do. And then I found myself again. I was sitting in front of my mirror in my room, sitting on my chair hunched forward and just staring deep into my own eyes. Without my own volition words came out of my mouth again, "I miss you, and I'm sad that you're gone. But I swear to you, I will make you proud, and one day I will see you again. I promise."

I say, then laugh out loud at how cringe it was. What had

I will never forget you

Khloe Griffith

Contributor

"I will never forget you" (Isaiah 49:15). When I think about this verse I think about the people who shape our lives and the memories we carry with us forever. For me, one of the most important people in my life has been my grandmother. She has influenced me in many ways, especially in my faith and in the things I love doing today like cooking and baking.

Even though time passes and people grow older, the lessons and love they give never truly leave us. My grandmother's faith, kindness and traditions are things I will always carry with me.

One of the memories that means the most to me is reading the Bible with my grandma in the mornings. Those moments were quiet and simple, but they meant a lot. I would read passages from the Bible to her, and sometimes we would talk about what the verses meant or how they related to life. It helped strengthen my own faith and helped me understand how important God is in our lives.

My grandmother always believed strongly in her faith, and she passed that belief down to me. Seeing her trust in God and hearing her talk about her faith helped me build my own relationship with him. Because of her, my faith is something that continues to guide me every day.

I just said? But I meant it. I spoke from my soul something I truly felt, in both a goodbye to him, and an acknowledgment of my own pain. And now, occasionally, on a long car ride I will hear "Boulevard of Broken Dreams" or some other Green Day song. Everybody else thinks nothing of it, but those songs mean so much more to me, the memories come flooding back of how I miss him, and I just cannot help but sing along.

Ben Liedel is a junior at Covington Catholic High School, Park Hills.

Another big part of my memories with my grandmother is the time we spent together in the kitchen. Almost every Saturday we would cook or bake together. Those Saturdays became a special tradition for us. I remember standing next to her while she showed me how to mix ingredients, follow recipes and make food that we could share with others. It wasn't just about the food though. It was about spending time together, laughing and learning from her. Those moments are what first made me fall in love with baking and cooking. Even now, whenever I make something in the kitchen, I think about those Saturdays and the time I spent learning from her.

Today I work as a PCA at a nursing home and that job has opened my eyes to something that relates to the theme "I will never forget you." Many of the residents I take care of do not get visitors very often, some of them hardly ever see their families. It can be sad to see people who have lived such long lives feel lonely or forgotten. Because of that, I try to treat them with as much kindness, patience and respect as possible. Sometimes just sitting and talking with them, listening to their stories or simply being kind can make a big difference in their day.

My faith and the example my grandmother set for me help guide me in the way I care for them. I think about how she treated others and how she believed in showing love and compassion. For some of the residents, the kindness they see from staff might be the only kindness they experience that day. I want them to feel seen, valued and remembered.

In a way, the lessons my grandmother taught me continue through the way I treat the people I care for now. The theme "I will never forget you" reminds me that the love and influence of the people in our lives stay with us forever. My grandmother helped shape my faith, introduced me to things I still love, like baking and cooking, and showed me how important kindness is.

The memories of reading the Bible with her in the mornings and baking together on Saturdays are things I will always hold close to my heart. Because of her, I try to live my life with faith and compassion for others. Even as time goes on, I know I will never forget her and the impact she has had on my life.

Khloe Griffith is a senior at Newport Central Catholic, Newport.

What my grandparents taught me

Dara Jackson

Contributor

My grandparents taught me how to be patient and work hard. They showed me how important it is to keep trying, even when things are difficult. My grandparents always helped me understand how to care for others and be respectful. They are very kind and loving people.

I keep the advice they give me and try to live by what they taught me. When I was growing up, they spent so much time with me and for that I am forever grateful. They would go outside with me and play games or work on fun things together. I always felt so loved and happy. Whether it was playing air hockey in their basement or playing baseball outside, it is always so fun to spend time with them.

My grandparents helped my parents take care of me and they were always there for me. Their support made things easier for my parents, especially when they were tired or busy. My grandparents gave me a sense of comfort

(Continued on page 13)

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An act of love: Preparing for the future

Chadwick Seiter, Attorney at Law
Contributor

Our faith teaches that every human life possesses an inviolable dignity, from conception to natural death. That dignity does not diminish with age, frailty or illness. In fact, it often shines most clearly in those seasons when we are called to depend on one another. We see it in the daughter who accompanies her father to medical appointments, in the husband who tenderly cares for his wife after a difficult diagnosis, and in the quiet faith of the elderly parishioner who entrusts each new day to God.

Within the Church, love is lived in practical ways. We bring meals, offer rides, pray rosaries at hospital bedsides and shoulder burdens together. Planning for the future belongs in that same tradition of faithful stewardship. It is not simply a legal exercise. It is an act of responsibility, humility and care for those God has entrusted to us.

One important way we safeguard dignity is by ensuring our wishes are known before a crisis arises. A properly prepared Power of Attorney allows a trusted person to make medical and financial decisions consistent with our moral convictions and personal values if we become unable to do so.

Without such planning, families may face unnecessary confusion and court involvement at the very moment they most need clarity and peace. Thoughtful preparation spares loved ones from guessing what we would have wanted and gives them confidence that they are honoring our intentions.

We must also acknowledge the practical realities many families encounter: Long-term care costs in Northern Kentucky can approach \$15,000 per month. Few families are prepared for that expense. Yet careful Medicaid planning can often preserve substantial assets for a spouse, children, grandchildren or even charitable causes important to one's faith.

Planning early provides the most flexibility, but even when illness arrives unexpectedly, there are often meaningful steps that can still be taken. Seeking guidance is not a sign of distrust in providence. Rather, it reflects prudent stewardship of the blessings God has provided.

Ultimately, preparing with dignity is about love. It is the farmer who ensures his land can remain in the family. It is the grandmother who sets aside resources for Catholic education. It is the parishioner who quietly arranges her affairs so her children will not be burdened by conflict or uncertainty. These decisions reflect a desire to leave behind not disorder, but peace.

As we journey through seasons of reflection in the

(Continued from page 12)

and love because I knew they were always looking out for me. They show me how much they care about me and have my best interest at all times. Their help when I was younger was a huge deal for my family.

They inspire me to be a better person every day and help me live my life to the fullest. I am always looking at pictures and remembering all the good memories I have with them. Even though they don't live very close to me, they will always be a huge part of my life and I am so grateful for the impact they have made on me in so many ways.

I talk to my friends about them because I can help my friends learn from what my grandparents taught me. This makes me feel closer to them, even when I'm not with them. Sharing my memories with them helps remind me of all the great traits they passed down to me. I would not be half the person I am today without them.

Overall, my grandparents are very important to me. They taught me so many important lessons through their words and actions. Remembering them helps me stay motivated every day. I hope to live my life in a way that would make them proud. Their presence in my life has shaped who I am, and I will always be grateful for the time spent around them. I will never forget them.

Dara Jackson is a sophomore at Notre Dame Academy Park Hills.

Charlie's Club Adult Day Health Program: Compassionate care for your loved one, respite for you

Contributor

Being a caregiver is one of the most rewarding roles but can also be one of the most demanding. Balancing work, family and daily responsibilities while ensuring a loved one receives quality care can be overwhelming. Nestled in Covington, St. Charles Community has been serving seniors and their caregivers since 1981. Charlie's Club Adult Day Health Program offers support, peace of mind and a nurturing environment for seniors during the day. Specializing in care for older adults, Charlie's Club offers engaging activities, socialization and personalized care. From exercise and creative arts to nutritious meals and



social connections, each day is designed to help participants thrive emotionally, socially and physically. The club also specializes in supporting seniors with memory-enhancing programs that stimulate the mind and promote independence.

Charlie's Club allows caregivers time to focus on their daily needs, whether it's a few hours or a full day. Charlie's Club provides much-needed respite, allowing caregivers to recharge, attend appointments, work, or simply take a break — without worry, knowing their loved ones are in safe hands.

Charlie's Club believes everyone should have access to quality adult day care. Financial assistance is available to eligible individuals, ensuring programs remain within reach for families who need it most.

If you're a caregiver feeling stretched thin, Charlie's Club is here to help. With immediate openings available, now is the perfect time to experience the comfort, care and community the program offers.

For more information or to schedule a visit, please contact Misty Marcum at (859) 331-3224.

This article was submitted by our advertiser: St. Charles Community.

Church year, we are reminded that stewardship extends beyond our finances. It includes our witness, our relationships, and the legacy of faith we pass forward. By planning thoughtfully and prayerfully, we affirm that dignity is not lost in vulnerability. It is protected through love, responsibility and trust in God's enduring care.

Chadwick Seiter is an elder law attorney in Crestview Hills, practicing with Matthew L. Darpel. He is a graduate of St. Henry District High School, the University of Kentucky, and Chase College of Law. This article was submitted by our advertiser: Darpel Law.



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Remembering the Church in your will

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

As one ages, the question of what to do with one's assets and possessions comes into play. As someone decides their last will and testament, or their family divides resources after their passing, some may consider including their parish or school in their will.

The process is simple, according to Jim Hess, director of Stewardship and Mission services, who personally meets with people and their families who are considering including the Church in their will. Working with a financial advisor, the diocese provides example language to include in one's will to ensure that their desired parish or school can benefit from their goodwill after their passing.

"We really do encourage people, especially if they belonged to one parish their whole life, to consider their parish or the diocese in their will," Mr. Hess said, "like they do a member of their family."

Mr. Hess believes that including the Church in one's will, "sends a strong message to their loved ones and to their children — that their parish and their faith is so important to them ... It is a beautiful testament to your own faith."

For those who have been giving to their parish, or to the diocese through fundraising such as the Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal, their whole life, there are also ways that one can "set up your estate so that the annual gift is continuous," Mr. Hess said.

"You don't need millions of dollars to set up an endowed fund. It can be a much smaller amount of money ... as these funds are invested, that can perpetuate your annual gift and allow for the diocese, your parish or even Catholic Charities to continue their good work," he said.

When a family does reach out to Mr. Hess concerning their estate, Mr. Hess describes it as a "beautiful conversation."

"They're thinking about their legacy and their faith community," said Mr. Hess, "and how they want to be remembered. I think if your faith has been an important part of your whole life, it should also be a part of your financial planning at the end of your life ... That call to stewardship extends through our whole lives. I hope to be able to equip our parishes to have these conversations."



OSV News photo/Bob Roller
An elderly woman is pictured in a file photo praying during Mass at St. Peter Claver Church in Baltimore.



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- Native Northern Kentuckian
- Graduate of Chase College of Law, University of Kentucky, and St. Henry District High School.

Passing on the Catholic faith through play, prayer and everyday moments

Laura Keener
Editor

For many Catholic grandparents, sharing the faith with the next generation is a joyful mission. Jeanne Hicks believes these simple, everyday interactions can make a lasting difference. “Children learn about Jesus even when they don’t realize they are — often they’re just playing,” said Mrs. Hicks.

Mrs. Hicks is lead catechist for the Atrium, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd at St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas. The Atrium is a Montessori-like learning environment for kindergarten students. Learning at the Atrium involves listening to Scripture, praying communally and individually and through active participation using three-dimensional learning aides — some might refer to them as toys. As a grandma to 18 grandchildren, the Atrium is a natural offshoot of her home.

In the Hicks home, faith-filled play is part of the culture. Mrs. Hicks keeps a child-sized Mass kit filled with items like a chalice, cruets and small purificators. “My grandsons will pretend they’re the priest,” she said. They set up a makeshift altar, choose readings and even take up a playful collection during their “Mass.”

Her grandchildren also enjoy processions through the house while singing “Alleluia.” These moments, she says, help children understand worship in a natural, joyful way.

During Christmas, a nativity scene becomes another teaching tool. Mrs. Hicks prefers sturdy resin Fontanini figures. “They can touch them and move them around,” she explained. “They get to tell the story of Jesus’ birth.” This hands-on learning helps make Scripture come alive.

Visible signs of faith around the home create gentle invitations for children to ask questions and grow curious. Mrs. Hicks keeps liturgical-colored cloths on a family prayer table that change with the Church season. “It helps them see that the Church’s year has a rhythm,” she said.

Catholic books are also easy for little hands to reach. A

most recent favorite is Word on Fire’s children’s Bible, “The Story of All Stories.”

“My grandchildren always want me to read stories,” she said. She loves when they choose books about saints or key parts of the faith.

Some of the most touching moments come from the children themselves. Mrs. Hicks shared a proud memory: “My four-year-old grandson whispered during Mass, ‘Look, Grandma, Father’s doing the epiclesis.’” Those small comments reassure her that the seeds being planted are taking root.

Celebrating baptismal anniversaries and name days is another simple but powerful tradition. “It instills the importance of those days,” said Mrs. Hicks. Talking about the saint behind a child’s name or retelling stories from their baptism helps connect children to important dates in their spiritual life and how they are a part of God’s family. They also like that the family has another day to celebrate and recognize each child.

Whether the whole family gathers for Sunday dinner or a quick visit, prayer is part of their routine. Even the youngest grandchildren embrace it. One granddaughter, only two years old, insists on folding her hands before meals. “She’ll say, ‘We need to pray first,’ as she folds her hands” Mrs. Hicks said.

These routines teach children that prayer is woven naturally into daily life.

Mrs. Hicks recognizes that not all grandparents have children who are still active in the Church. “It’s hard,” she said gently. In those situations, she recommends keeping religious images or statues in the home, since children may ask about them on their own.

She encourages grandparents in these situations to pray



Messenger file photo

Jeanne Hicks, lead catechist for the Atrium, Catechesis of the Good Shepherd at St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas supervises as students prepare a miniaturized replica of the altar. Mrs. Hicks has a similar Mass kit at home that her grandchildren enjoy playing with as they grow in their faith.

faithfully for their families. “Praying isn’t secondhand,” she said. “It’s the first thing we should be doing.”

When appropriate, reading a simple storybook about Jesus or attending Mass together with a grandchild — if the parents allow it — can open doors. But she stresses that respecting the parents’ boundaries is key.

For Mrs. Hicks, these moments — small, everyday and often spontaneous — build a foundation for lifelong faith. “Our house is a place where they know Jesus is at the center,” she said. “Everything flows from our faith.”

Grandparents, she believes, have a special role: not to lecture or pressure, but to gently model the joy, beauty and rhythm of Catholic life. Through play, prayer and simple family rituals, they can help children discover a faith that feels like home.

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History and art help parishioners grow in faith during parish pilgrimage

Bella Bailey

Multimedia Correspondent

The season of Lent is a time of reflection, preparing oneself for the coming of Christ at Easter. It is a time of sacrifice, denying the flesh in order to grow in relationship with Christ. For the parishioners at St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas, Lent is also a time of community and togetherness, as they participate in Father Stephen Bankemper's, pastor of St. Catherine of Siena, Lenten pilgrimage.

This year, 50 parishioners joined Father Bankemper on a pilgrimage to St. Francis Seraph Parish, Cincinnati, where they learned the storied history of the parish, including the underground cemetery, beautiful artwork and the news of their imminent closing.

Every year, Father Bankemper will prepare reflections on the history and artwork of a pilgrimage church, helping his parishioners see the beauty of the faith. "Beauty is such a good way to lift your thoughts and mind higher ... art can really express the faith in a lot of ways," said Father Bankemper. "I enjoy that part because I love art myself, and I love the saints, and I love the stories of Scripture."

"When you see that beauty," said Therese Schaefer, pilgrim, "it just automatically lifts my mind and my heart to God, that you know, this is what he deserves, this is the beauty that we should be giving him."

For Mrs. Schaefer's son, Noah, these pilgrimages have brought him closer in relationship to Christ and the saints.

"As we're going through and discussing all the artwork, we're also discussing all the different saints. Especially with some of the artwork, where it shows depictions of early life but also a lot of them that are martyred," he said.

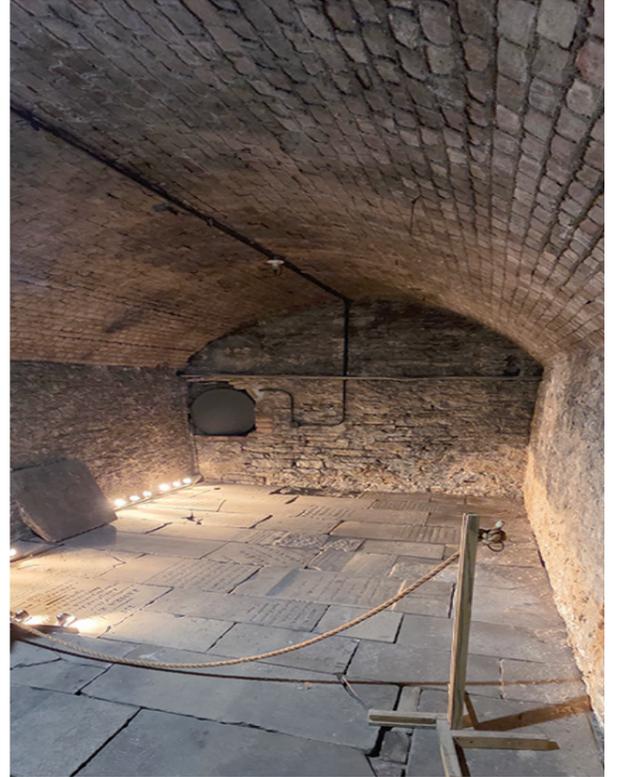


"During Lent we're called to make little sacrifices. I think it definitely shows us how much more we could be doing, depending on what the saints have done."

Father Bankemper's Lenten pilgrimages bring together his parish community, bonding them in communion during Lent. "A lot of times in Lent we can be individualistic. At times, we forget that Lent is something that we're all doing together ... so for me, it is also a way of highlighting the communal character of Lent."

"It helps our community be closer; it helps our parish be more of a family and experience these things together," said Mrs. Schaefer. A sentiment echoed by Mr. Schaefer; "It's a nice way for all of us to spend more time together. We see each other at Mass every week, but I think opportunities like this, to go outside of Mass, to be doing something that's building our faith together; it helps us to become more friends and family."

"My favorite part is always the same, being with them [parishioners] on this little faith trip. That's my favorite part, just journeying with them," said Father Bankemper.



(above left) The pilgrims sit and reflect as Father Stephen Bankemper leads prayer in front of the statue of St. Francis.

(above) St. Francis Seraph Parish is one of rich history. Built on top of one of the oldest cemeteries in Cincinnati, there are still buried remains under the sanctuary of the Church. "That might have been the most interesting part," said Mrs. Schaefer.

Giving people a fresh face and a fresh start: Tattoo Removal Ink helps remove more than tattoos

Laura Keener

Editor

When Jo Martin, a parishioner at St. Henry Parish, Elsmere, retired after a 30-year professional career, she never imagined she would spend her retirement helping people remove tattoos. She certainly did not picture herself working inside a jail. But today, she runs a nonprofit tattoo-removal program, Tattoo Removal Ink, that is changing lives across Northern Kentucky.

Her story shows how one small "yes" can grow into something much bigger.

After retiring, a friend from church asked Mrs. Martin if she would tutor people studying for the GED at the Campbell County jail. Her first reaction was, "no." She admitted, "I did not want to tutor in the jail. I was afraid of going in there."

But her friend gently pushed her to fill out the paperwork, and a week later the jail called. Soon, Mrs. Martin found herself walking down long concrete halls, knees shaking. But what she discovered surprised her: "They weren't scary. They were just people — just like me," said Mrs. Martin.

As she tutored, Mrs. Martin noticed something else: many young people had tattoos across their faces, hands and necks. She wondered, *How will they*

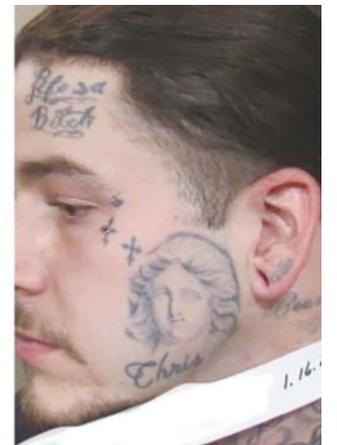
(Continued on page 17)



Staverman photo

Jo Martin, a parishioner at St. Henry Parish, Elsmere, is a daily Mass goer. Inspired by her faith and urged by fellow parishioners and friends, Mrs. Martin founded Tattoo Removal Ink, a non-profit helping people rebuild their lives after incarceration, addictions or sex trafficking.

A before and after picture of a client Mrs. Martin refers to as "Fabio."



(Continued from page 16)

ever get a job when they leave here? That question planted the first seed of an idea.

A friend told Mrs. Martin about Homeboy Industries, an organization in Los Angeles that helps people leaving gangs and prison. Begun in 1988 by Father Gregory Boyle as a way of improving the lives of former gang members Homeboy Industries has evolved into the largest gang intervention, rehab and re-entry program in the world. Tattoo removal is a part of Homeboy Industries services.

Mrs. Martin traveled to the University of Findlay, Ohio, to hear Father Boyle talk about his work. He invited her to come to California to learn more. Father Boyle encouraged her to start something similar back home.

"I said, 'How?' And he said, 'Figure it out.'" Mrs. Martin remembered. "So that's what I did."

She spent months reading government forms, writing a nonprofit application, and gathering a board of directors. Finally, she received her official nonprofit status. "I wasn't the brightest," she joked, "but every single step worked."

Next, she needed a laser. Using money from her late husband's life insurance, she bought one for \$55,000. "Eight years later, the business paid me back," she said. "But I wasn't even thinking about that at the time."

Located inside the Life Learning Center in Covington, Tattoo Removal Ink — now nine years old — removes visible tattoos for people who are trying to rebuild their lives. Many clients come straight from jail or prison. Others are survivors of human trafficking.

"They are branded," Mrs. Martin said. Recalling the case of young woman who came in to have the name of her trafficker removed, she was told that five other woman have identical tattoos placed near their breast. "That's exactly what they do is they brand them."

Other clients "are simply adults who regret choices they made when they were younger," she said.

For many clients, tattoo removal is a lifeline. Tattoos like gang symbols, hateful words, or names of abusive partners can keep people from getting jobs or feeling safe.

One young man had "KILLA" tattooed across his eyebrow when he came in. Another had devil horns on his forehead. Several had full-face tattoos. "They're not going to get hired with that," Mrs. Martin explained. "People judge them immediately."

Tattoo removal doesn't just open doors — it restores self-respect. Mrs. Martin told the story of a mother who cried during a video call with her son in jail when she saw that one of his tattoos had been removed. "It was so sweet," Mrs. Martin said. "He was too young and too innocent to be in jail."

Another client wrote Mrs. Martin a letter explaining that he had to relive his trauma every morning when he looked in the mirror. Removing those tattoos helped lift that emotional burden.

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Learn more at <https://TattooRemovalInk.org>.

Tattoo removal is not easy. Mrs. Martin explains it simply: the laser breaks up the ink, the white blood cells carry it to the liver, and the body gets rid of it. But it hurts.

"It's a different kind of pain," than getting a tattoo, she said.

Still, many keep going because they want a better future.

Not everyone gets their tattoos removed for free. Paying clients help fund the nonprofit's work. Even for paying clients Tattoo Removal Ink is a low-cost option. Prices start at \$70 for a small tattoo and go up to \$300 for larger ones. "Our bottom line is helping people," Mrs. Martin said. "Not making money."

Still, the nonprofit has real expenses: laser maintenance, insurance and supplies. Mrs. Martin and her fellow co-worker Gail work entirely for free. "We've been doing this for nine years for fun and for free," she said.

Although Mrs. Martin is 74, she isn't slowing down. In fact, she has a new dream: a mobile tattoo-removal unit that could park outside prisons.

"It's a great idea," Mary Stutler, board member, said with a smile. "But we'll need volunteers and another laser."

She hopes new volunteers — especially retired nurses or doctors — might step up to learn the laser work. But she emphasizes that anyone with compassion could help.

"They might look scary," Mrs. Martin said of the clients, "but they're just people."

Mrs. Martin never expected to spend her retirement this way. But looking back, she sees something bigger guiding her.

Like many Catholics, the 25th chapter of Matthew's Gospel has informed her faith. Jesus said, "For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, a stranger and you welcomed me, naked and you clothed me, ill and you cared for me, in prison and you visited me." (Matt 25:35-36) Throughout her life, most of these works of mercy came easy for Mrs. Martin. The verse about visiting those in prison. "I could never check that one," she said. "But now I can."

Her work is more than removing ink — it is restoring dignity and opening doors. It is giving people a chance to build lives they can be proud of.

Mrs. Martin says, "Every step worked. And now I'm here, doing something I never imagined — but something that really matters."

Communion of faithful, not just clergy shares role in safeguarding faith,



CNS photo/Lola Gomez

Pope Leo XIV greets visitors and pilgrims from the popemobile while riding around St. Peter's Square at the Vatican before his weekly general audience March 18, 2026.

Josephine Peterson
Catholic News Service

All baptized Christians share in the Church's mission and, guided by the Holy Spirit, are fit for renewing and building up the Church, Pope Leo XIV said at his weekly general audience.

Every person who has been baptized is called to bear witness to Christ, and the whole Church, beyond its leaders, has a role in preserving the truth of the faith, the pope said March 18 in St. Peter's Square.

Continuing his series of reflections on the Second Vatican Council, the pope focused on the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church ("Lumen Gentium"), and the participation of the lay faithful in Jesus Christ's "priestly, prophetic and royal offices," that is, the offices of teaching, sanctifying and governing.

Everyone enters the Church as a layperson, he said. Through Baptism and Confirmation, the faithful are "more perfectly bound to the Church" and are endowed "with special strength" by the Holy Spirit, so that they are "more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith, both by word and by deed, as true witnesses of Christ," he said, quoting the document.

"This consecration is at the root of the common mission that unites the ordained ministries and the lay faithful," Pope Leo said. In fact, everyone is called to bear witness to the truth of the faith.

The Doctrinal Commission of the Council specified that the sense of faith "belongs to individual believers not in their own right, but as members of the People of God as a whole," the pope said.

The function of the Holy Spirit is to lead Christians to the truth, and because the entire body of the faithful is anointed by "the holy one," he said, "the Church, therefore, as the communion of the faithful — which naturally includes the pastors — cannot err in matters of faith."

"From this unity, which the Magisterium of the Church safeguards, it follows that every baptized person is an active agent of evangelization, called to bear consistent witness to Christ in accordance with the prophetic gift which the Lord bestows upon His whole Church," he said.

The Holy Spirit, who comes from the Risen Christ, he said, distributes "special graces" among all the faithful, who are then able to contribute to the renewal and building of the Church.

"Dear friends, let us rekindle in ourselves the awareness of and gratitude for having received the gift of being part of God's people; and also the responsibility that this entails," he said.



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Pope Leo XIV urges media to show human face of war, not propaganda

Courtney Mares
OSV News

Pope Leo XIV has urged the media to show the human face of suffering amid war and to verify news so as not to recirculate “propaganda” or become a “mouthpiece for those in power.”

“Always, but especially in the dramatic circumstances of war, such as those we are currently experiencing, the media must guard against the risk of becoming propaganda,” the pope said in an address March 16 to broadcast journalists who produce the TG2 news programs for the Italian state-owned television channel, Rai 2.

The pope underlined that the essential and delicate task for journalists is “verifying the news so as not to become a mouthpiece for those in power.”

“It is up to you to show the sufferings that war always brings to the people; to show the face of war and to relate it through the eyes of the victims, so as not to transform it into a videogame,” Pope Leo said.

The pope acknowledged that “it is not easy in the few minutes of a news broadcast and its in-depth segments,” but underlined that “this is the challenge.”

Reflecting on the challenge of artificial intelligence today, Pope Leo underlined the need to “the need to regu-

late communication according to the human paradigm and not the technological one.”

People today are living in “an age dominated by polarization, ideological closed-mindedness and slogans,” the pope said, adding that makes it more difficult to see and understand “the complexity of reality.”

There is a “temptation,” he added, “to seek out, see and listen only to what confirms our own opinions.”

“But there can be no good communication, nor true freedom and healthy pluralism, without this openness,” he said.

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St. Patrick's Day celebration twist: Catholic Irish actress brings pro-life message to Oscars stage

Michael Kelly
OSV News

On March 17, as the world's 80 million people of Irish descent celebrate Ireland's national patron St. Patrick — a Briton who brought Christianity to the island in 432 — the Irish convent school that gave the world Oscar-winning actress Jessie Buckley is brimming with pride.

Fresh from the glitzy Hollywood ceremony, Catholic Jessie Buckley is being praised across social media for her acceptance speech with an uncompromising pro-life and pro-family message, reassuring young women that they can prioritize both their career and their family.

It was at the Ursuline convent in Thurles, in Tipperary County where Buckley first showed a flair for acting, and the community there said the former student has "filled us with great pride."

She won the best actress award at the 2026 Academy Awards March 15 for her portrayal of Agnes Shakespeare in "Hamnet." Speaking while clutching the coveted Oscar statuette, Buckley recalled that the ceremony coincided with Mother's Day in her native Ireland.

"I would like to dedicate this to the beautiful chaos of a mother's heart. We all come from a lineage of women who continue to create against all odds," she said.

Referring to her husband, Fred, she said: "I love you, man. I love you. You're the most incredible dad. You're my best friend, and I want to have 20,000 more babies with you. I do! I do!"

Buckley became a mother for the first time in 2025 and told the audience — which included dozens of Hollywood A-listers — that she wanted to dedicate the award to her daughter.

"Isla, my little girl who is 8 months, who has absolutely no idea what's going on and is probably dreaming of milk, but this is kind of a big deal, and I love you and I love being your mom, and I can't wait to discover life beside you," Buckley said.

In a Facebook post March 16, the Ursuline Secondary School in Thurles said it is "immensely proud to congratulate past pupil Jessie Buckley on her Oscar win for Best Actress at the 2026 Academy Awards."

"The tender, intuitive and resilient portrayal of Agnes Shakespeare in 'Hamnet' that brought her this accolade



OSV News photo/Mario Anzuoni, Reuters

Jessie Buckley, winner of the Oscar for best actress for "Hamnet," poses in the Oscars photo room at the 98th Academy Awards in Los Angeles March 15, 2026.

marks an extraordinary high point in what has been a stunning career to date," the post read.

"Following Jessie's remarkable career trajectory has filled us with great pride and her work has brought honor to our school community through her remarkable passion, talent and commitment to her craft," it continued.

"From our school stage, and onto the world stage, Jessie's success is testament to her exceptional ability and

hard work. She has always been, and is now more than ever, an inspiration to all those associated with our school."

"Jessie's journey," the school community added, "represents all of the values we cherish here in the Ursuline — excellence, dedication, creativity and humility. This win also exemplifies the potential we believe is in every one of our students."

The school recalled with pride a visit that Buckley made in 2019 to address the entire school community.

"She told the students that as young girls they should never be afraid of their own potential, and reminded them that they are more powerful than they can even begin to imagine," it said. "Jessie remains a shining example of this, and of what can be achieved with talent and dedication."

"We extend our warmest congratulations to Jessie, her family, and all who have supported her throughout her career. The entire Ursuline community celebrates this momentous achievement with her and we consider ourselves privileged to have been part of her journey," the school community added.

It was in the convent school where Buckley first took to the stage and perfected her acting and performing skills. She played three leading roles in the school musicals, Freddy in "Chess," Adam in "Children of Eden," and Tony in "West Side Story," and her star quality was evident even from those earliest roles, according to her former teacher.

Music teacher Joan Butler told a local radio station that she had seen this award coming for Buckley from her Ursuline days.

"I remember, the whole room just stopped, mouths open, watching this rehearsal. And I remember turning to some of the students and going 'watch her' — she's gonna win an Oscar one day," Butler said.

The Ursuline convent first opened in Thurles in 1787 at a time when Irish Catholics were persecuted under the cruel penal laws, and Catholic education was severely restricted.

Holy Week with services

(Continued from page 2)

sions, where the Church prays for the Holy Father; the Church and the intention of every person.

Father Maher said, "It's the Church praying for the world and everyone in the world and then we move from that to the veneration of the cross."

The veneration of the cross is unique to the Celebration of the Lord's Passion. "That is where the cross of the Lord is lifted up. Literally, lifted up as Moses lifted up the pole with serpent on it in the desert. So, the Cross of the Lord is lifted up and it is raised high for us to gaze upon and then the cross is venerated by the Bishop, the clergy and all the lay faithful. That, too, is just a beautiful moment as a priest celebrant to be in the sanctuary and watch the faithful come up and see the devotion, the love, the tears, the heart," said Father Maher.

People can venerate the cross with a bow, genuflection, touch or kiss of the cross. Following the veneration, hosts that were consecrated during the Mass of the Lord's Supper are brought to the altar for the lay faithful to receive the Eucharist.

The liturgical event of Holy Saturday will be the Easter Vigil at 8:30 p.m. The Easter Vigil Mass is unique because it begins in total darkness. But, as the flame from the Easter fire, blessed by Bishop Iffert, is passed from candle to candle inside the walls of the Cathedral, slowly the light of Christ spreads lighting the way for those inside.

The church remains shrouded in darkness until the Great Alleluia at which time the lights come on, signifying the resurrection of Christ.

This celebratory Mass includes the baptism and entrance into the church of the catechumens and the entrance into full communion with the church of the candidates through the sacraments of First Communion and confirmation. The lay faithful also renew their baptismal promises with the sprinkling rite.

"The Easter proclamation," said Father Maher, "recounts the Lord's goodness in salvation history. His work, the working of grace, the working of the Holy Spirit, the working of the Lord's love for his people. Then, we begin the Liturgy of the Word and that's marked really by those great Old Testament readings."

Easter season festivities at the Cathedral include the return of an Exhibit featuring a replica of the Shroud of Turin viewable in the Cathedral. This special exhibit will be open for all to view and venerate, 9 a.m.-3 p.m. from April 6-April 10, with extended hours until 8 p.m. on April 5.

While the times of the celebrations throughout Holy Week may vary from church to church one thing does not change, the outpouring of love from Christ to his people as the Church celebrates salvation through Christ.

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Step 3: Your account becomes active when your background check, VIRTUS session and Acceptance Form are posted on

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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. **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.

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■ Tuesday, May 19, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

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■ 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

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Catechumen cites sponsor, parish community, as strength during a long faith journey



The OCIA class of St. Timothy Parish, Union, stand together inside their church. This year, St. Timothy's OCIA program welcomed more than 40 candidates and catechumens, including catechumen Cailin-MacKenzie Adkins.

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Cailin-MacKenzie Adkins is one of over 40 candidates and catechumens of St. Timothy Parish, Union, welcomed as Elect during the Feb. 22 Rite of Election. She will be baptized alongside other catechumens during the upcoming Easter Vigil Mass.

This year is Ms. Adkins third year going through OCIA — overcoming challenges to reach the point of being able to receive the sacraments this Easter.

Growing up in Florence, Ky., Ms. Adkins' interest in the faith began with her family. Despite having Catholic family, Ms. Adkins was never baptized herself but attended Church with her grandmother "whenever (she) could" at St. Henry Parish in Elsmere.

"Around my senior year of high school, I really just started becoming curious about the Catholic faith," Ms. Adkins said. "I didn't know why I didn't get baptized. When I was little, I didn't understand it, so I got really interested. I did a lot of research, and that's what drove

me."

The first year in OCIA, Ms. Adkins was a student at Lincoln Memorial University in Tennessee. Due to the distance, Ms. Adkins remembered that she could not attend the OCIA meetings on Sundays. "I didn't feel like I was putting in the effort, so I didn't go through with it then," she said.

The following year, Ms. Adkins attempted OCIA again — however, health issues put a speed bump in the process. Medical issues, including six surgeries in the course of the year, kept Ms. Adkins from completing the OCIA process — but in 2026, she tried once more.

"This year has actually been a really great year," Ms. Adkins said. "I've been able to go to all my classes, and why I think it's been so successful is because of my sponsor, Debbi Cranley (the OCIA coordinator at St. Timothy Parish, Union) assigned me my sponsor and she's amazing ... She's really gotten me into the spirit and helped me through this spiritual warfare."

Citing her parish as another contributor to her spiritu-

al growth, Ms. Adkins said that "I feel like St. Timothy's is a very close-knit family community. Father Bolte and Father Hennigan stand outside Church every Sunday and shake every person's hand that walks into the Church. It's a really tight knit group, and I think that's why my faith journey has gone so strong this year, because I've been fully committed to it, and everyone's just very supportive."

Now, after three years of trying and spiritual journeying, Ms. Adkins looks forward to finally completing the OCIA process — and especially the sacrament of Reconciliation.

"I think it's so powerful," she said, "and the priests at St. Timothy are really kind in helping you through these things, so I'm really looking forward to my first confession."

Excited also for her baptism itself, Ms. Adkins said that she looked forward to "just being renewed, and one with God in that moment."

Archbishop, witnesses testify to religious freedom risks health care providers face

Kate Scanlon
OSV News

Conscience protections for faith-based health providers remain a key religious freedom concern, witnesses at a March 16 meeting of the Department of Justice's Religious Liberty Commission said.

Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of San Francisco, one of the witnesses at the hearing, said in his testimony that "without the freedom to publicly witness to our faith through charitable works, everyone suffers."

"In California, where I am from, there is a Catholic hospital being sued by the state because it refuses to offer abortions," Archbishop Cordileone said in reference to a lawsuit filed by California Attorney General Rob Bonta against Providence St. Joseph Hospital in Eureka. Bonta sued the hospital in 2024, arguing its policy against performing an abortion when a fetal heartbeat is present constituted unlawful discrimination.

"Should the courts rule the wrong way, in this case, all Catholic hospitals in California will be threatened," Archbishop Cordileone argued.

One area witnesses identified as rife with potential religious liberty concerns is medically assisted suicide, which involves doctors prescribing lethal drugs for a patient to take their own lives under certain criteria. Assisted suicide and euthanasia, which involves a health practitioner lethally injecting a patient that meets certain criteria, are sometimes referred to as medical aid in dying, or MAiD. They are opposed by the Catholic Church as being grave violations of human life and therefore morally unacceptable responses to treating human suffering.

Dr. Kenneth Prager, a pulmonologist and director of clinical ethics and chairman of the Medical Ethics Committee at Columbia University Medical Center, said that he believes

that while it "may be permitted to remove an impediment to a peaceful death," one is "never allowed to intentionally hasten death or to intentionally cause death."

Pointing to a growing number of states that have legalized the practice, Prager said that while all states "allow physicians to recuse themselves from participating in MAiD on the basis of conscientious objections," current laws "vary as to institutional opt-out provisions."

"States also vary," he said about what is required of "physicians who recuse themselves to enable their patients to obtain MAiD."

Elsewhere in the hearing, other health care providers or those in related fields argued that matters of abortion and gender remain among other areas of potential violations of conscience rights.

In another Colorado case, Kaley Chiles, a Christian counselor at the center of Chiles v. Salazar, which the Supreme Court heard in October, said in comments at the hearing, "Young people wrestling with identity deserve counselors who are free to speak, ask questions, listen with compassion and walk alongside them in their

search for hope and restoration."

Chiles challenged a Colorado law banning professional counseling services that practice "conversion therapy" for minors, efforts intended to change a minor's gender identity, when it is at variance with the young person's biological sex, or to change their sexual orientation.

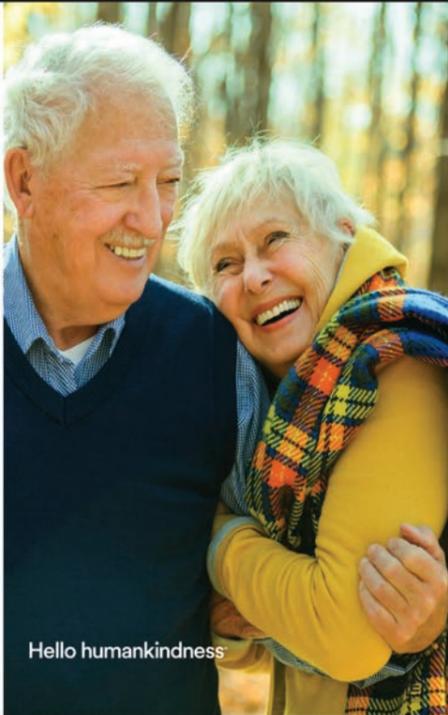
A ruling in that case is still pending from the high court. Chiles said she is "hopeful they will reaffirm that the government can never censor conversations simply because it disagrees with the client's personal goals or viewpoint expressed."

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Hello humankindness

At 10, 'Amoris Laetitia' still shapes landscape for marriage, family ministries

Kimberley Heatherington
OSV News

In the decade since Pope Francis issued a wide-ranging document on pastoral care for the family, the Catholic Church in the U.S. has leaned into ministries that address often hidden suffering, including infertility, child loss and domestic violence, according to an expert who assists the U.S. bishops on marriage and family ministry.

"There are also ministries that are shedding light on the beauty of caregiving (for) aged family members, and families that are welcoming their homes to children in foster care or by way of adoption," said Julia Dezelki, associate director of Marriage and Family Life for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth.

"'Amoris Laetitia' emphasized the need for the Church to meet families in every situation of need," Dezelki told OSV News. "These ministries are doing this."

Released in April 2016, "Amoris Laetitia" is a lengthy papal missive on married life and love, children, extended family, education and related challenges, with special attention to integrating wounded or marginalized families into the life of the Church.

Latin for "The Joy of Love," "Amoris Laetitia" is drawn, as is customary, from the opening phrase of the post-synodal apostolic exhortation, which runs more than 50,000 words. Pope Francis issued the document to synthesize and offer guidance on topics addressed in the back-to-back, worldwide synods of bishops on the family at the Vatican in 2014 and 2015.

"Amoris Laetitia" garnered an uneven reception. While Church leaders generally praised the exhortation's aim of improving pastoral care for families, it met swift and sharp criticism for some ambiguities that appeared difficult to reconcile with Church teaching, especially pertaining to divorced Catholics in new civil unions, without a prior declaration of nullity, and their reception of the Eucharist. Disagreement among theologians and Church leaders persists over these elements.

These lingering questions, however, have not dampened efforts to integrate Pope Francis' wider reflections on pastoral accompaniment for families. Some U.S. dioceses issued local guidance on the implementation of "Amoris Laetitia," and the Diocese of San Diego used it to convene a local synod on families that led to a new diocesan department for family life.

Five years after the release of "Amoris Laetitia," the USCCB in 2021 approved "Called to the Joy of Love: National Pastoral Framework for Marriage and Family Life Ministry," which was designed to assist U.S. dioceses with the pastoral planning "Amoris Laetitia" envisioned.

"God's plan for marriage and family life corresponds to the deepest desires of men and women for lasting happiness and true joy," the USCCB document states in its introduction.

"Today, pastoral leaders face the challenge of addressing numerous marital and family situations that are more complex than in previous decades," it stated. "This framework attempts to present pastoral approaches to many of these situations with the hope that all people experience the Gospel of the family as a joy that fills hearts and lives."

"Called to the Joy of Love" identifies four pillars for ministry with families and "recommendations for nearly every area of pastoral care," Dezelki said.

Now, 10 years after "Amoris Laetitia" was issued, efforts

continue to realize the document's vision, which relies on "meaningful structures in parishes that can meet the needs of families individually," she said.

"The spirituality of marriage and the family remains an area of great theological depth that has not yet been fully developed," she said. "However, there are signs that the family is becoming better understood and appreciated as a domestic church, and the unpacking of what this means for the family — in its fullest meaning — is still underway."

Other ministry experts say that "Amoris Laetitia" has not yet led to major programmatic changes in their fields, but may have opened minds to fresh approaches.

That appears to be the case for marriage preparation, according to Mary-Rose Verret of Witness to Love, a "catechumenate model" of marriage formation which she co-founded with her husband, Ryan Verret. While "Witness to Love" preceded "Amoris Laetitia," its central elements track with the exhortation's call for marriage preparation to be rooted in a parish community and include virtues-based formation with mentors chosen by the couple. The mentors, who meet certain objective criteria, accompany the couple in their sacramental journey to the altar, help integrate them in parish life, and provide trusted support and friendship beyond the day they say "I do."

"I think the first few years after 'Amoris Laetitia' came out, there wasn't any change," Mary-Rose Verret said. "But we saw that people who were the decision-makers at the diocese or parish level were at least open to a conversation and open to the idea that doing the same thing we've always done that's not working, (and) maybe we need to revisit that."

In 2025, according to Ryan Verret, the Witness to Love platform saw a 50% increase in use. They and their volunteer mentors anticipate guiding 5,500 engaged couples in 2026.

"Amoris Laetitia" underscored "accompaniment," but "I don't think people really know what it means," Verret said. "It's not to walk just at someone's side, with no direction. It's not just to leave them either. And it's also not to walk behind and push them, or think you have a better understanding than they do of where they're going. Our ultimate goal is to be just one step ahead of them, and

walking with them."

The Verrets are the only North American married couple appointed to a consulting role with the Vatican's Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life. In 2022, that dicastery released "Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life: Pastoral Guidelines for Local Churches," a pastoral outline that drew from on preparing engaged couples for the sacrament of matrimony through continuous, lifelong formation that begins even in childhood.

The guidelines drew from "Amoris Laetitia," and "we are now seeing the implementation of these guidelines across dioceses," confirmed Dezelki.

But leaders in ministries focused on divorced Catholics say they have yet to see the same attention given to their challenges.

"I think 'Amoris Laetitia' was opening the door. I think we have to still walk through the door," said Patty Breen McNeil, a Catholic who has spoken and written about going through divorce and the process for a declaration of nullity, commonly called an annulment.

Lisa Duffy, founder of Journey of Hope, a ministry that supports separated and divorced Catholics, noted that the Church prepares couples for marriage, not divorce, so there are naturally more questions about that area of pastoral accompaniment. However, "In my estimation, 'Amoris Laetitia' simply added to those questions," especially around annulment timelines and admission to the Eucharist, she said.

"I've spoken with people who believe the annulment process across the board now only takes 30 days, and they're surprised when they hear that's not the case," she said. "Typically, they've heard other changes have been made, but length of time seems to be the one they're most interested in discussing."

Although pastoral ministry for divorced Catholics lacks the framework articulated for those leading marriage preparation, McNeil and Duffy said individual Catholics and parishes should be mindful of the existing need and work to meet it.

"What the Church can do to be more supportive — more pastoral — is to just recognize folks," McNeil said. "That there are divorced and annulled and civilly remarried people who are in our pews every Sunday."

Pastoral inattention will increase the risk of parish and even drift from the Church into other Christian denominations, she warned.

"If you don't have a place where you can feel like you're seen, or you're noticed, or you're cared for — and you're going through one of the most difficult situations in your life — it's really easy to walk away from an institution," she said. Duffy agreed.

"I see a lot of Catholics distance themselves from those who are divorced instead of offering friendship and support," she said. "Just because you're a friend and a support to someone who's divorced, doesn't mean you condone divorce. It simply means you're showing Christian compassion for those who are suffering."

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National/World

Easter boom: US dioceses say rise in new Catholics may point to ‘revivals’

COLORADO SPRINGS, Colo. — Several U.S. dioceses and archdioceses are reporting an uptick in adults preparing to join the Catholic Church at Easter, with some dioceses saying they are seeing “record” numbers. That tracks with 2023 and 2024, which also saw increases over the previous year. Sherry Anne Weddell, an expert in Catholic evangelization, said that the “high point” of adult Catholics joining the Catholic Church in the U.S. was in 1999, with 172,000 adult baptisms and receptions, followed by decline. But she has been watching the upswing. “There was significant growth between 2023 and 2024,” she told OSV News. And while the data for 2025 and 2026 have yet to be published, “the numbers that are being reported are getting bigger and bigger.” Increases in this year’s enrollment in the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults have been noted across the country, from Boston to Portland, Oregon, and Newark, New Jersey, to Fort Wayne, Indiana. The Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University counseled that reports of increased numbers of converts are still at this point anecdotal. The nation’s nearly 200 dioceses and archdioceses will not begin formally reporting 2025 sacramental data until early 2026, and those figures will only be publicly available with the release of the 2026 Official Catholic Directory later this year. And yet, “There’s this growth in the numbers,” affirmed Weddell, who visits dioceses from coast to coast. “Many of the parishes I’ve talked to say, ‘Yeah, we’re seeing it — in our own small way.’”

Archbishop, witnesses testify to religious freedom risks health care providers face

Conscience protections for faith-based health providers remain a key religious liberty concern, witnesses at a March 16 meeting of the Department of Justice’s Religious Liberty Commission said. Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of San Francisco, one of the witnesses at the hearing, said in his testimony that “without the freedom to publicly witness to our faith through charitable works, everyone suffers.” Archbishop Cordileone referred to a lawsuit filed by California Attorney General Rob Bonta against Providence St. Joseph Hospital in Eureka. Bonta sued the hospital in 2024, arguing its policy against performing an abortion when a fetal heartbeat is present constituted unlawful discrimination. “Should the courts rule the wrong way, in this case, all Catholic hospitals in California will be threatened,” Archbishop Cordileone argued.

The commission, established by President Donald Trump in May, includes Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York and Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, among its members. The commissioners gathered at the Museum of the Bible in Washington to examine what recommendations they should make to the president about promoting and protecting religious freedom in a report when it concludes its hearings, expected later in spring. Another area witnesses identified as one rife with potential religious liberty concerns is physician-assisted suicide, which along with euthanasia is sometimes referred to as medical aid in dying, or MAiD, a practice the Catholic Church teaches violates the dignity of human life and is a morally unacceptable response for treating human suffering.

A life well coached: Lou Holtz remembered for faith, family and football

SOUTH BEND, Ind. — The late legendary football coach Lou Holtz was remembered at his March 16 funeral as “a man of faith whose faith guided his life; a man of love who showed that love to everyone he encountered,” said Notre Dame’s president, Holy Cross Father Robert Dowd. Football stood yards behind Holtz’s most important legacy, the priest told a packed Basilica of the Sacred Heart at Notre Dame. He was “a man committed to excellence not just for himself, but for everyone around him,” Father Dowd said. One of the most decorated college football coaches of all time, Holtz completed a career of more than five decades with 249 victories, a national championship during his 11 years at Notre Dame, numerous prestigious awards, and the distinction of being the only coach to lead six programs to bowl games and four programs to top-15 final rankings. Holtz, described as a motivator, taskmaster and perfectionist, championed his Catholic faith both privately and publicly. He died March 4 in Orlando, Florida, after more than a month in hospice care. He was 89. His wife, Beth, preceded him in death, in 2020. He is survived by four children, nine grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

Supreme Court to hear arguments in Trump effort to end temporary protections for Haitians

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court announced late March 16 that it will hear oral arguments in April on whether the Trump administration can end a program temporarily

shielding eligible Haitians living in the U.S. from deportation. The Trump administration on March 11 asked the high court to pause a ruling by a federal judge that barred the government from ending the program for Haitians, a move opposed by Catholic bishops as “not realistic” given the turmoil in their country of origin. The request for emergency relief from U.S. Solicitor General D. John Sauer argued that numerous challenges related to the Trump administration’s efforts to end Temporary Protected Status for several nations “cry out for immediate resolution.” The Trump administration also seeks to end TPS for Syrian nationals, and the Supreme Court said it will hear oral arguments in that case as well. The program, sometimes called TPS, authorized the U.S. government to grant protection from deportation to people from countries experiencing dangerous conditions such as war, disaster, or other unrest. Its uncertain future impacts more than 350,000 Haitians, a typically Catholic population, who are living and working in the U.S. legally under the program.

Nicaragua’s Sandinista regime halts ordinations in 4 dioceses

MANAGUA, Nicaragua — Ordinations to the priesthood and diaconate have come to a standstill in four dioceses in Nicaragua, deepening an already critical clergy shortage as government pressure on the Church intensifies. According to researcher Martha Patricia Molina, the dioceses of Jinotega, Siuna, Matagalpa and Estelí — each led by bishops now in exile — have seen no recent ordinations. The move follows broader restrictions by the Daniel Ortega-Rosario Murillo regime, which has increasingly targeted Church leadership and activity since 2018. In Matagalpa, only about 30% of priests remain, many of them elderly and forced back into ministry, and more than 300 clergy and religious have been exiled or blocked from returning. Observers say the policy may be aimed at reshaping Church leadership, even as surveillance, restrictions on worship and expulsions continue across the country. The Central American country has come under U.S. pressure to release political prisoners in 2026, following the Trump administration’s Jan. 3 ouster of Venezuelan president Nicolás Maduro, a close ally of the Sandinista regime. According to a source, the co-presidents have a strategy of placating the U.S. government enough to keep attention on other regimes in the Western Hemisphere at odds with the United States.

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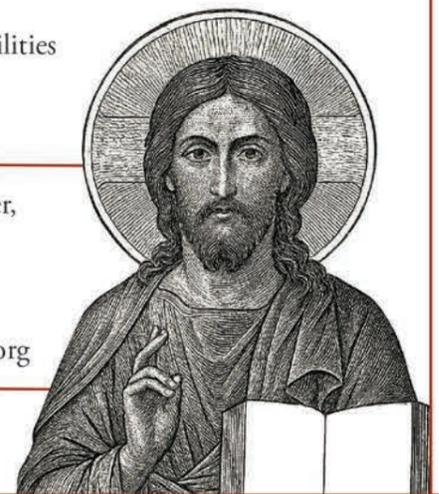
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For questions, please contact Isaak Abraham Isaak at 859-392-1529 or iisaak@covdio.org



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