

- 2 Palm Sunday**
- 3 Shaping the diocese**  
Your input requested
- 3 Divine Mercy Sunday**  
And the Cathedral's exhibit on the shroud
- 3 Reelin' it In**  
St. Joseph, Crescent Springs
- 6 Protecting kids in an online world**
- 7 World Youth Day**  
Info webinar upcoming
- 8 Promoting a culture of life**  
Pro-life Essay Contest
- 10 Chrism Mass**
- 12 Covington Lenten Pilgrimage**
- 17 UNHEARDOF**  
Shoes for students

### Alleluia! He is risen!

In celebration of Holy Week and Easter the Curia is closed April 1-6. There will not be a *Messenger* April 10. The *Messenger* will resume publication April 17. The *Messenger* staff wishes you and your family a joyous Easter season!

Bishop's Schedule .....	3
Commentary .....	5
People and Events .....	7
Shopper's Guide .....	15
VIRTUS .....	15
Classifieds .....	16
News Briefs .....	23

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



### Easter 2026

Brothers and sisters in Christ,

Blessed Easter! May the joy of the Resurrection fill your hearts and minds and lead us all along the path of peace.

On this holy day, I would like to extend a special word of welcome to those who were baptized at the Easter Vigil, and to those who professed the Catholic faith, were confirmed by the gift of the Holy Spirit, and who now join us at the Eucharistic table for the first time. For many weeks and months, the Church has accompanied you in prayer and preparation. We are deeply grateful for your witness, for your fellowship with us in Christ, and for your generous "yes" to the Lord and to his Church. May the faith you have embraced continue to flower in your lives, and may it help all of us grow in ever-deeper conversion to Christ.

Each year, in the busy days leading up to Holy Week and Easter, I find myself reflecting on and reaffirming a lesson I learned as a young priest. It took time — and more than a little humbling failure — to understand that the most productive thing I can do in ministry is to pray. The needs of the Church and of the world are so many that there is always a temptation to immerse ourselves entirely in activity and to convince ourselves that our work is all the prayer we need. Yet, experience teaches otherwise. When prayer is neglected, our efforts resemble a branch cut off from the vine: busy, yes — but ultimately less fruitful than they are meant to be.

In a similar way, I hope that on this Easter Sunday we recognize that the most practical and productive thing we can do for our weary world is to remain firmly centered on the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. At times, religious believers are accused of being distracted from earthly concerns by thoughts of heaven and eternal life. But nothing could be further from the truth. It is precisely against the horizon of eternal life that the injustices and hardships endured by so many in this world become most evident and most troubling. Confidence in the victory of Christ over sin and death frees us to imagine the world as it might be — and to work courageously for its renewal.

When we recognize that the life we are living now is the beginning of the eternal life God has promised, we come to see more clearly the dignity and sanctity of every human life. The harmony of heaven becomes both the model and the motivation for our efforts to build peace on earth. Rooted in the Resurrection, our faith becomes a wellspring of charity, hope and perseverance.

May the good news of Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, take firm root in our hearts. As it leads us more deeply into life with him, may it also lead us toward greater love and compassion for one another.

Happy Easter! Please know that I am grateful for you — for your faith, your generosity, and your perseverance in living the Gospel in your families, parishes and communities. Please know of my prayers for you and for those you love, especially those who carry heavy burdens or face uncertainty and sorrow during this season. May the risen Lord walk beside you, strengthen you with his grace, and fill your homes with his peace.

Entrusting all of you to the loving care of Mary, our Mother, and imparting to you my blessing with gratitude and hope in Christ, I remain

Yours in Christ,

+Bishop John Iffert  
 Diocese of Covington



CNS photo/Crosiers  
 The risen Christ is portrayed in a window at St. Mary Cathedral in Killarney, Ireland.

# The crucifixion reminds us of Christ's humility, Bishop Iffert says in Palm Sunday homily

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

Holy Week began with the observance of Palm Sunday, March 29. Mass began at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, on a breezy spring morning, with the congregation, carrying palms, gathering across the street from the Cathedral at St. Mary's Park — where the palms were blessed and hymns sung before processing back across the street for the Mass proper.

During the observance of Palm Sunday, the Passion of

Christ is read — describing Jesus's journey starting with his arrival into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey, until he is crucified and laid in the tomb. The Scripture is read in parts, with different speakers taking on the dialogue of characters such as the apostles, Christ, and other key players, while the congregation reads the parts of the crowd/public.

Bishop John Iffert was the celebrant and homilist for the Mass, during which he commented on the social hierarchy of Ancient Roman society and how it relates to

Jesus's humility.

"Roman society in the first century AD was a highly competitive and stratified society," Bishop Iffert said. "They were the most status symbol-conscious society of the ancient world. The elite especially thought of their lives as a contest, an honors race ... honor meant personal esteem and public office."

"Though Jesus was in the form of God, he emptied himself, becoming the form of a slave — the very bottom of the social status pecking order." Bishop Iffert described that not only did Jesus "humble himself" by stooping from divine status to the lowest form of human servitude, "but Paul establishes that Jesus lived his human life in a particularly surprising and humbling way."

"He was obedient to the Father," he said. "Even to the point of death, he was a humble servant to the Father. Throughout his lifetime, this devoted and loving servitude made him a servant even to his fellow man, even to his fellow slave."

The climax of Paul's statement, according to Bishop Iffert, was that Jesus not only accepted death, but even death on a cross.

"Death on a cross was not only the ultimate extreme of pain," Bishop Iffert said, "but especially of humiliation."

"The execution method of crucifixion was reserved only for non-citizen criminals, especially slaves," Bishop Iffert added.

"If the city of Philippi was filled with inscriptions posted by citizens eager to boast of their accomplishments in the Roman race for honors, if we are sometimes preoccupied with status, wealth, office, nationality, celebrity, social media ... if we get wrapped up in any of that," said Bishop Iffert, "Paul counters this mindset with his acclamation of Jesus Christ's self-emptying humility. Jesus, he meets our own self-promoting passions with his wholehearted embrace of the Father's will ... and he enters into the suffering passion that our selfish sins deserve. And because of this humility, meekness and obedience — God the Father exalts him."



(top) Bishop John Iffert blesses palm fronds with holy water from an aspergillum. Behind him, members of the congregation look on — many with their own palms in hand.

(above) A young girl holds a palm frond folded into a cross. Palm Sunday, which marks the beginning of Holy Week, was celebrated March 29.

(right) Members of the congregation enter through the doors of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. As part of the Palm Sunday observance, blessed palm branches are carried in reference to Jesus Christ's arrival into Jerusalem.

(far right) Bishop John Iffert blesses the altar with incense. Palms alongside the red signify the celebration's tie to the Passion of Christ.

# Help shape the future of the Diocese of Covington

Your input is important! Help shape the future of the Diocese of Covington by joining one of four pastoral planning and development Commissions.

The Diocese of Covington is launching an expansive, consultation driven process to develop a Diocesan foundation and set a pastoral course for “the next decade or more.” Bishop John Iffert is inviting parishioners from around the Diocese to be involved in the discernment and recommendation process.

The commitment involves four monthly sessions from April through July, lasting 90 minutes to two hours each.

All participants will attend an initial **kick-off General Sessions, April 14, 15 and 16, 6:30–8:30 p.m.**, followed by three focused subcommittee meetings to benchmark best practices and draft actionable strategic goals. Meetings are held at the Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington.

**Registrations are now being accepted, visit [www.covdioplanning.org](http://www.covdioplanning.org).**

**The Catholic Foundation Commission** will evaluate the feasibility of establishing a Diocesan foundation designed to inspire greater generosity and ensure sustained support for the Church’s mission. To inform this strategy, the Commission will analyze giving trends within the Diocese of Covington over the last 20 years, reviewing data across parishes, schools and Diocesan ministries.

This process includes benchmarking against peer organizations to adopt best practices in annual funds, major gifts and planned giving.

Subcommittees of the Catholic Foundation Commission are:

- Governance Committee
- Foundation Services Committee
- Communications and Technology Committee

**The Catholic Schools Commission** will work closely with the Superintendent of Schools and the Diocesan School Board to create a three-year strategic plan for the Office of Catholic Schools to ensure our diocesan school system is operating as a proactive, mission-driven model that ensures long-term viability, spiritual vitality and academic excellence. In an era of changing demographics and financial pressures, such a plan will serve as a “living roadmap” to align resources with our core values. The commission will use the National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools as the framework for the planning and sub-committee organization.

Subcommittees for the Catholic Schools Commission are:

- Governance and Leadership Committee
- Operational Vitality Committee
- Academic Excellence Committee
- Mission and Catholic Identity Committee

**The Catholic Charities Commission** will study the vital mission and history of Catholic Charities at both the local and national levels. With the Board and staff having celebrated the completion of its current three-year strategic plan and all associated achievements, this commission will develop a new strategic plan to guide Catholic Charities in the Diocese of Covington through 2030.

Subcommittees for the Catholic Charities Commission are:

- Governance Committee
- Programs and Services Committee
- Parish and Community Partnerships Committee
- Communications and Fundraising Committee

**The Diocesan Governance Commission** will meet from September–December 2026.

Specific dates and times will be determined and published in July.

Subcommittees for the Diocesan Governance Commission are:

- Governance and Organization Committee
- Finance and Financial Services Committee
- Technology Committee
- Communications Committee

## Your input is important!

Help shape the future of the Diocese of Covington by joining one of four pastoral planning and development Commissions.

Registrations are now being accepted, visit [www.covdioplanning.org](http://www.covdioplanning.org).

# St. Faustina and the visions behind Divine Mercy Sunday

**D.D. Emmons**  
*OSV News*

Between 1931 and 1938, a young nun named Sister Maria Faustina claimed to have experienced a series of visions, messages and conversations in which our Lord Jesus asked her to establish a devotion to his Divine Mercy.

Helen Kowalska, who became Sister Maria Faustina of the Congregation of the Sisters of Our Lady of the Most Blessed Sacrament in Warsaw, was born in 1905 near Lodz, Poland. When she was 20, she entered the convent and lived there the rest of her life. She began receiving messages and visions of Jesus soon thereafter.

Faustina documented all these episodes — over 1,800 entries — in her diary that

today is a classic book called “Divine Mercy in My Soul.” She was a prophet and a mystic, graced with many supernatural gifts. Her deep love of the Eucharist and love of the Blessed Mother were likely among the reasons Jesus chose her to share his message of mercy.

The messages imparted to Faustina were received during an era of growing unrest throughout Europe: Amid economic disaster, Hitler and the Nazis were taking over Germany, as were Mussolini and the fascists in Italy. The first concentration camps were built, and the German anti-Jewish Nuremberg Laws were passed. Control of most European countries was increasingly in the hands of tyrants, which

*(Continued on page 9)*



## Bishop's Schedule

- |   |  |   |
|---|--|---|
| <p><b>April 5</b><br/>Easter Mass — Resurrection of the Lord, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 10 a.m.</p> <p><b>April 12</b><br/>Divine Mercy Sunday Vespers, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 3 p.m.</p> <p><b>April 14</b><br/>Diocesan Board of Education meeting, 9 a.m.</p> <p>Newport Central Catholic athletic complex blessing and Mass, 1 p.m.</p> | <p><b>April 14 (continued)</b><br/>Confirmation, Cristo Rey Parish, Florence, 7 p.m.</p> <p><b>April 15</b><br/>Confirmation, St. Paul Parish, Florence, 7 p.m.</p> <p><b>April 16</b><br/>Curia service day</p> <p>Confirmation, Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish, Erlanger, 7 p.m.</p> <p><b>April 17</b><br/>Seniors' Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 10 a.m.</p> | <p><b>April 18</b><br/>Confirmation, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Park Hills, noon</p> <p><b>April 19</b><br/>Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 10 a.m.</p> <p><b>April 20</b><br/>Good Shepherd dinner, Pontifical College Josephinum, Columbus, 6 p.m.</p> |
|---|--|---|



## Shroud Exhibit and Divine Mercy Sunday

An exact replica of the Shroud of Turin will be displayed at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, April 6 through 10, 9 a.m.–3 p.m. with extended hours on Thursday, April 5, 3–8 p.m. The display is provided courtesy of the Knights, Dames and Squires of the Covington-Lexington Section of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

On Divine Mercy Sunday, April 12, adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will be held after the 10 a.m. Mass through the 3 p.m. Vespers at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption. Confessions will also be heard during that time. (For a related article on Divine Mercy Sunday and its devotion see above.)

CNS photo/Bob Roller  
Artwork depicting the Divine Mercy is pictured at St. Anthony's Church in North Beach, Md., July 15, 2021.

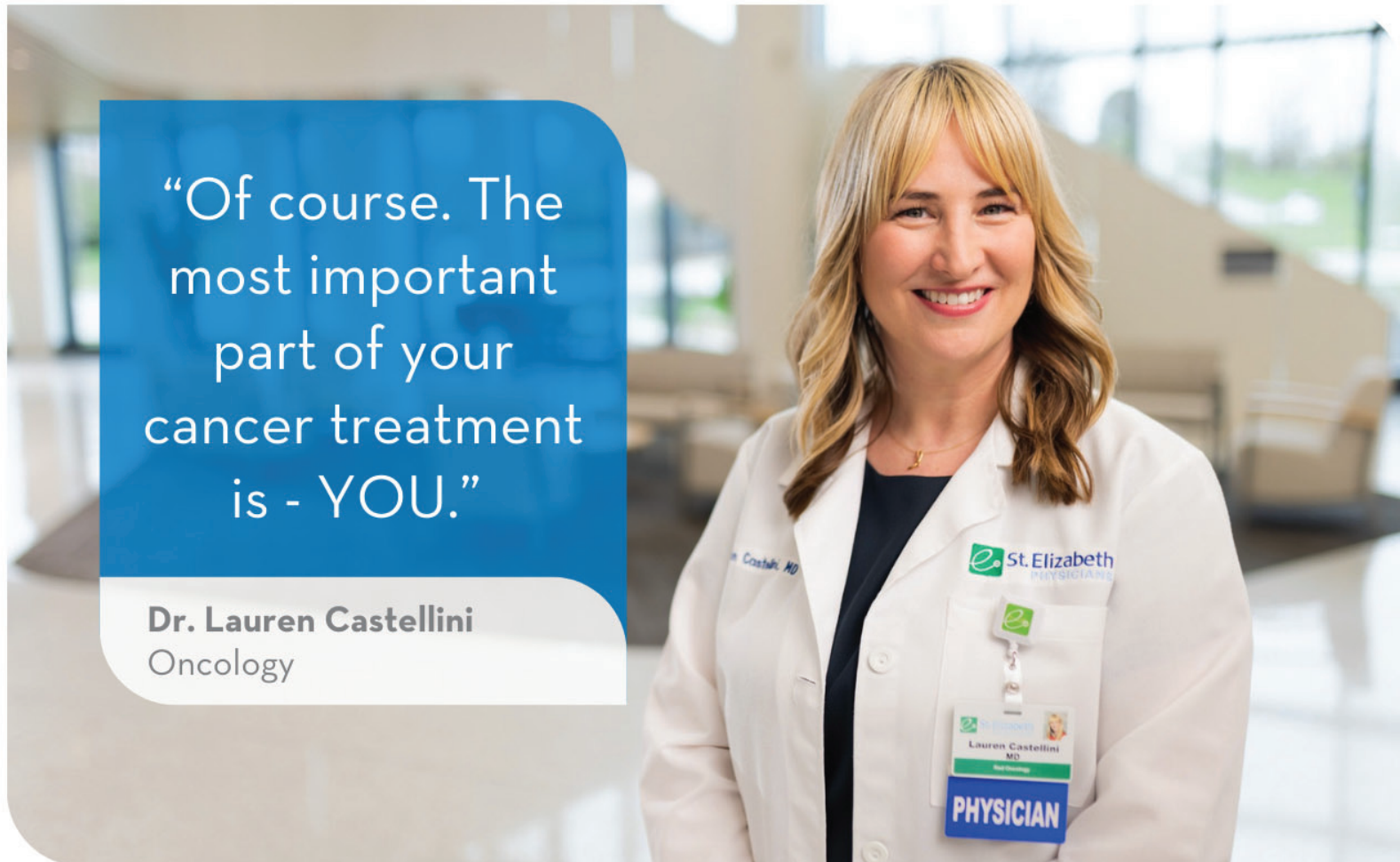


## Reelin It In Season III

The last episode of Reelin' It In season three took Maura and Bella to the St. Joseph Parish Fish Fry in Crescent Springs. Their fish fry is run by the Holy Name Society and is a true testament to their parish community. To check out their fish fry, scan the QR Code!

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- Joe, Cincinnati, OH



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# What is pro-life really about?

What is pro-life really about? Is pro-life just about the younger generations?

The broad meaning of pro-life means that you support life at any stage. It's actually much deeper than that though. Being pro-life means that you're willing to "share" dignity with others. You want others to feel valuable in this society because they're truly needed.



GUEST

Emma Haney

Everyone was made in God's image and likeness and has a soul and dignity. Pro-Life means giving hope to the hopeless, voiceless or helpless. People who are vulnerable, such as the handicapped, could be hopeless or feel forgotten, and it is our duty to help them.

Respecting all life supports our birthright to dignity, given to us by God. "Give honor to all, love the community, fear God, honor the King" 1Peter 2:17, is one specific Biblical example of how God calls us to love him by loving one another. This quote conveys the importance of respecting life. We are all created as individuals however, we also are created in the image and likeness of God. Respecting life honors our creator.

My great grandma, GG, was handicapped and had to use a wheelchair. She had limited mobility after she suffered severe kidney failure and extreme arthritis. I don't remember too much about her, but I feel like I still have the chance to know her with the wonderful stories my grandma tells about her. I know that my family will never forget her.

GG, from what I am told, loved to talk to people about her faith and was even the reason that some people chose to convert to Catholicism. Her husband passed away when my grandma was very young and she remarried. She was the mother of 13 kids, whom she cared for and loved dearly.

When she went to a nursing home, she felt like she was back home because it was on the same grounds as where she went to grade school, high school and college. Her room had a window in which she could overlook the orchards that she played in when she was a little kid.

Thursdays were her hair day and whenever my mom would visit her she would paint her nails. I'll always remember that when I visited her, I would steal her lemon drops because she usually had a small bowl of them in her room. She passed away in 2019 surrounded by all of her children.

Often, the elderly and aging are disregarded. As they lose independence, and grow to need the help of others, they might be seen as a burden. Older people have so much wisdom and experience to share with younger generations. In the example of my GG, she evangelized to others almost every day of her life.

I think that by sharing our experiences, and spending time with groups of people who can be forgotten, we shine light on life. You can be a sign of hope in the world today by doing the little things. Simple acts of kindness and even spending time with others in conversation can give them hope that might even change their life.

"The dignity of the human person is rooted in the creation in the image and likeness of God; it is filled in His vocation to divine beatitude." CCC1700. This quote shows us that we are to be treated with respect because we have dignity. It is one of our duties to be a beacon of hope for the hopeless. You can offer comfort and support to others.

"I may not understand what you are going through, but I am here for you." This expression of care lets others know that you are sharing the light of Jesus with them. To me, being a sign of hope for someone means acting as Jesus would. It means sharing your time, love, and talent with everyone, especially those in need.

As Catholics, it's our job to lift each other up and give hope to the world. Pro-life is about seeing Jesus in everyone, especially those who are struggling, lonely or feel like a burden.

Next time you think about what being pro-life means to you, think about some of the gifts you have received when you have spent time with the vulnerable.

Emma Haney is an eighth-grade student at St. Joseph School, Crescent Springs. This is her first-place essay in this year's Diocesan Pro-life Essay Contest.

## Family responsibilities

I listened recently to a homily given by Father Mike Schmitz for the Fourth Sunday of Lent, just two weeks ago. The Gospel reading for that Sunday was the story of the raising of Lazarus. Father Schmitz's homily centered



VIEWPOINT

Jamie Schroeder

on the question of what a person's life looks like in the days, weeks, months or years after he or she has a profound experience of God's grace. For example, what did Lazarus do in the days after he was raised? Or similarly, how did the Prodigal Son spend his time after he was welcomed home. Would the experience of grace "stick," as it were, or would it fade with time?

Father Schmitz went on to say that grace is a free gift that restores the relationship between God and us. Grace rebuilds the family: Lazarus was returned to his sisters, the prodigal son returned to his father and brother, and we are returned to a right relationship with the family of God.

But real relationships are not one-way streets. We don't just "get something" — as Lazarus received a second lease on life or as the prodigal son was given a robe, ring and sandals to signify the reestablishment of his place in the family. Rather, we also need to "give something." We have rights, and we have responsibilities.

Hearing this, I remembered my days of teaching preparation classes for parents who were bringing their babies and young children for Baptism. And I thought about the fact that very soon in our parishes (tomorrow, by the time this column is published) a record number of adults will be baptized at the Easter Vigil. It seemed an

appropriate time to re-examine the rights, and most especially the responsibilities, of being baptized into the family of God.

When we are baptized, we receive membership in the Body of Christ, God's spiritual family, the Church. We are given certain rights: "to receive the sacraments, to be nourished with the Word of God and to be sustained by the other spiritual helps of the Church" (pastoral care). (Catechism of the Catholic Church, paragraph 1269)

But what about the responsibilities? Are we familiar enough with them and do we take seriously our duty to fulfill them?

The first responsibility is to live a holy life by serving God and others, participating in the liturgy, and exercising practical charity (active, tangible expressions of love for God and neighbor). This is the personal call to holiness, the vocation of every baptized person to follow Christ, live God's will in his/her daily life, and become a saint.

Next is the responsibility to profess the faith we have received from God through the Church. This means embracing and living out the beliefs and teachings of the Church, not only the ones we like or with which we agree, but all of them. We may struggle at times with this teaching or that, but we must pray for understanding (one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit!) and remain open to learning with a view to accepting the Church's teachings with a sincere and humble heart.

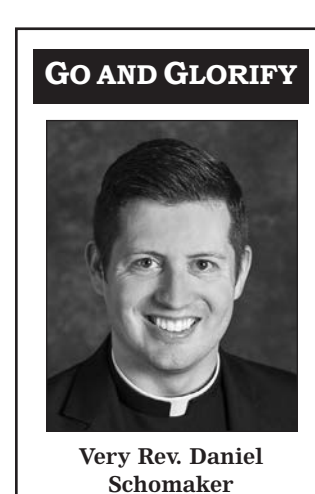
Participating in the apostolic and missionary activity of the Church is another responsibility. Spreading the Gospel and bringing souls to Christ may be the duty with which Catholics are the least comfortable. However, we are commissioned at baptism to share our faith in word and action, to witness to God's love in our lives, and to build up the Church.

Finally, baptized members have the responsibility to support the Church and to hold her leaders in respect and

(Continued on page 16)

## Christos Anesti

The readings for Easter Sunday — Cycle A — are: Acts 10:34a, 37-43, Colossians 3:1-4 and John 20:1-9. Christos Anesti! Alithos Anesti!



GO AND GLORIFY

Very Rev. Daniel Schomaker

This is a customary greeting of the Eastern Churches on Easter — hence why it is said in Greek. Instead of saying "Hi" on Easter Sunday, you say: "Christ is Risen!" and the response is "Truly he is Risen!"

We gather today to celebrate Jesus overcoming the tomb. Death was not in the original plan of creation. Death is the consequence of sin — specifically the sin of our first parents, in their desire (via the temptation of the devil) to make themselves God. What they didn't

realize is that they were already like God, for they had been made in his image and likeness. Their pride unfortunately got the better of them and had them cast out of paradise and put them at odds with the Almighty One.

Jesus entered into human history so as to bring about reconciliation between God and humanity. By his Passion (suffering and death) he took upon himself the consequence of our sin. And in his Resurrection from the dead, he restored humanity to its rightful place in creation. Paradise is once again opened for us!

On this Easter Sunday, let us give particular thanks and praise and adoration and glory to Our God, who never abandons us — ever!

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

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# Protecting kids in an online world where new dangers are rampant

Bella Bailey

Multimedia Correspondent

In an increasingly online world and with the proliferation of artificial intelligence (AI), it is not merely enough to know the technology, but to know how to use it safely, said Mandy Sanchez, director of programming, Culture Reframed. Dr. Sanchez spoke to Curia staff, Catholic schools' staff, parish staff, law enforcement, social workers and parents, March 25, about the dangers of AI and social media, and how to keep kids safe from unsavory and dangerous content.

Dr. Sanchez works for renowned international organization Culture Reframed, which strives to change the culture of a "pornified" world, said Dr. Sanchez. With resources for parents and educators on how to protect young children and teens, Dr. Sanchez said, "we talk about the dangers and harms of excessive use of social media and the harms of pornography to young people."

In her presentation, Dr. Sanchez highlighted that one in three children, approximately 25 million children in the United States, have "seen hardcore porn by age 12," she said. "Those numbers are getting younger and younger and younger ... much of this content is misleading, objectifying and degrading."

The dangers of errant, unsupervised and unrestricted social media and technology use are on the rise, with 95 to 98 percent of 13-17-year-olds being on social media platforms, and 53 percent of children owning a smartphone by age 11, she said.

"Social media can be good for teens as a way to help expand their identity, to socialize ... however, we have had numerous reports where we're looking at depression, anxiety, sleep, stress, isolation," said Dr. Sanchez.

"At Culture Reframed, we like to look at social media, not in terms of good and bad, but in terms of safety. What is safe and unsafe, healthy and unhealthy," she said.

Many children, said Dr. Sanchez, do not seek out or go looking for pornographic content; rather, the content finds them on their social media accounts and games because "porn is everywhere," she said. "What happens when we live in a pornified space is that if you can make porn of it, people will."

The effects of pornography on developing brains are evident: "The overstimulation rewires the brain. It disrupts all of the processes that are happening in the frontal lobe. We know that the frontal lobe is responsible for things like decision making, empathy, emotional regulation."

"Other risks include some mental health risks. Because of that frontal lobe rewiring, we see an undermining of self-awareness and regulation of impulse control, of course, poor body image. This is all research-based, lower self-esteem, depression and anxiety; we see higher engagement in risky and casual sex," she said.

While social media is a breeding ground for explicit content, the rise of artificial intelligence is giving life to new vices and x-rated content. Today, children and teens have the ability to create "deep fakes," which are "images and videos that are fake but appear to be real," said Dr. Sanchez. Where, children and teens are able to create videos of anyone doing anything, including sexually explicit material.

Additionally, character AI allows children and teens to create their own AI characters, with personas and characteristics, that can then interact with other AI characters from other users. "These characters are programmed with natural language algorithms. They can generate human-

like text responses. These platforms are not safe for kids, they do not have parental controls," said Dr. Sanchez.

Research shows that children and teens are turning to character AI and other "chat bots" for friendship, in lieu of personal connection with peers.

"When kids are being bullied at school, we're finding that their friendships are being severed online. So, we're finding they're pulling from their social media and in real life groups and moving into the world of AI chat bots for support," she said.

"Kids see AI bots as human and that is because kids trust anything that resembles anything that has human features. So, it's really important to get this digital literacy to children early, to let them know that AI isn't human," she said.

This, said Dr. Sanchez, is the key to keeping kids safe. Being present, watching out for warning signs, having age-appropriate conversations about online safety, "being able to point those things out, talking about AI, how they use it, encourage that critical thinking and reflection in your spaces, having them write about things. We invite everyone to the table because it is everyone's responsibility," she said.

"We want to reframe the conversation. If our kiddos are spending a good portion of their day online, then a lot of conversations are happening and there's a lot being advertised to them. So, if we don't have these conversations with kids, then I can tell you who will. We don't want them to have those conversations with a multibillion-dollar industry; that is getting really dangerous, really unhealthy messages," she said. "Everyone has to come to the table because this is an issue we all need help with."

## On first Palm Sunday, Pope Leo says Jesus cries out from the cross against war

Courtney Mares

OSV News

In his first Palm Sunday homily, Pope Leo XIV proclaimed that Jesus, the King of Peace, embraces all suffering in human history and cries out from the cross against war.

"Brothers and sisters, this is our God: Jesus, King of Peace, who rejects war, whom no one can use to justify war," the pope said in St. Peter's Square March 29.

"He does not listen to the prayers of those who wage war, but rejects them, saying: 'Even though you make many prayers, I will not listen: your hands are full of blood' (Is 1:15)."

Pope Leo repeated the phrase "King of Peace" seven times throughout his homily, weaving it through different moments of the Passion of Christ, pointing to Jesus as a victim of unjust violence who never took up arms in his own defense.

"Christ, King of Peace, cries out again from his cross: God is love! Have mercy! Lay down your weapons! Remember that you are brothers and sisters," Pope Leo said.

He emphasized that Jesus, in allowing himself to be nailed to the cross embraced "every cross borne in every time and place throughout human history."

"As we set our gaze upon him who was crucified for us, we can see a crucified humanity. In his wounds, we see the hurts of so many women and men today," the pope said.

(Continued on page 9)



Pope Leo XIV reacts as he rides past people holding branches after Palm Sunday Mass in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican, March 29, 2026. (OSV News/Remo Casilli, Reuters)

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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 Diocese of Covington is going to World Youth Day Seoul in 2027! Join us for a webinar on WYD Seoul 2027,** April 8, 7 p.m. for a discussion on the itinerary as well as Seoul S. Korea. This webinar will be recorded, RSVP and you will automatically receive the recording link. Register at <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2189025850447490651>.

**Newport Central Catholic High School, Newport, blessing and dedication of the Ciafardini Family Athletic Complex,** April 14. Bishop John Iffert will celebrate Mass, 1p.m. Following Mass and dedication ceremony, guests may tour and view the facility.

**“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.

**Serve with Sisters,** April 18, 9 a.m.–2 p.m. Meet at Mother of God Church Hall, Covington, for 9 a.m. prayer before heading out to serve at local agencies. Afterward, return for lunch and a shared reflection. Service opportunities include gardening, helping at a food pantry, assisting with bingo, and more. Participants under 18 must be accompanied by a parent or guardian. Sponsored by the Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg, the Sisters of Divine Providence, and the Sisters of Notre Dame. Register at [tinyurl.com/ServeWithSistersCovington](http://tinyurl.com/ServeWithSistersCovington). Questions? Email Sister Leslie Keener at [Ikeener@cdpkentucky.org](mailto:Ikeener@cdpkentucky.org).

**Thomas More University theatre presents: “Once Upon a Mattres,”** a delightfully silly twist on the classic tale of “The Princess and the Pea.” Showings will be April 23-25, 7:30 p.m. and April 26, 2 p.m. For information, or to purchase tickets, visit [tmuky.us/tmtheatre](http://tmuky.us/tmtheatre).

**The Thomas More University Biology Field Station third annual “Raisin’ Hellbenders on the River: Concert for Conservation,”** July 25, 3–9 p.m. Listen to live bluegrass music from local bands, enjoy a guided hike, explore laboratories, purchase raffle tickets for a brand-new kayak and paddle on the river. Visit [tmuky.us/bfsconcert](http://tmuky.us/bfsconcert) for more information; purchase at [tmuky.us/concertrsvp](http://tmuky.us/concertrsvp) (case sensitive).

**New Beginnings, a support group for separated and divorced, begins Aug. 18.** The 8-week program provides the opportunity to heal and move forward. Led by facilitators who have been through their own personal losses. The next session, held on consecutive Tuesdays, is Aug. 18 – Oct. 6, 7- 8:30 p.m. at Catholic Charities, Covington. Registration is required. Visit <https://covdio.org/new-beginnings-2/> or call (859) 392-1529.

**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/](https://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.

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

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

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

**A Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group begins at Mother of God Parish, Covington,** for family members and friends of persons who have ended their own lives. Group meetings will be held on the first Wednesday of each month at the parish office in the St. Aloysius Conference Room. For information contact Jeff Duell at (859) 801-8213.

**Zoom Support Group for family, relatives and friends of victims of clergy sexual abuse,** second Monday of the month, 6:30–8 p.m. CST; 7:30–9 p.m. EST. These meetings are confidential and no one is forced to contribute unless they want to. For information contact Paula Kaempffer, coordinator of Restorative Practices and Survivor Support, for the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, at [kaempfferp@archspm.org](mailto:kaempfferp@archspm.org) or call (763) 688-3978.

**St. Mary’s Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, offers Veneration of a relic of the True Cross,** on the first Friday of every month, from noon–1 p.m. Confessions are offered concurrently. The monthly veneration is held in silence and concludes with a blessing and the opportunity for the faithful to come forward to personally venerate the True Cross relic. The monthly veneration is sponsored by the Knights and Dames of the Covington-Lexington sec-

**WYD Seoul Korea 2027**  
Join us for a webinar on April 8, 7 p.m.



The Diocese of Covington is going to World Youth Day Seoul in 2027! Join us for a presentation on WYD Seoul 2027. We will discuss the diocesan pilgrimage itinerary as well as why Seoul S. Korea will make for an amazing experience.

This webinar will be recorded so even if you cannot make it at the scheduled time, please RSVP and you will automatically receive the recording link.

After registering, you will receive a confirmation e-mail containing information about joining the webinar. Register at <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/register/2189025850447490651>.

tion of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

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



On March 24, the St. Paul School, Florence, students had special visitors at lunch, The Florence Police Officers visited the Panther Café and helped serve lunch, and spent time talking with the students in the cafeteria.

# Young people help to promote a ‘culture of life’, says Bishop Emeritus at Pro-life Essay Banquet



(above) 20 finalists of the essay contest — including the first, second and third place winner and two honorable mentions — along with Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys, stand together for a photo following the Pro-life Essay Awards Banquet, March 26.

(below) An eighth-grade student smiles as she receives a certificate of her accomplishment as one of 20 finalists in the 2026 Pro-life Essay Contest.



**Maura Baker**  
Staff Writer

Annually, eighth-grade students from diocesan secondary schools are invited to participate in the Pro-life Essay Contest. This year, the contest’s theme aligned with the USCCB’s 2025-26 Respect Life Theme, “Life — Our Sign of Hope.”

“Bishop Daniel Thomas, Bishop of Toledo, asked us to be anchors of hope in our diocese. I took this theme and ran with it when speaking to our students,” said Faye Roch, director of the Office of Pro-life who organizes the contest.

20 finalist essays from 10 different schools were chosen out of 250 essays, including a first, second and third place winner and two honorable mentions. Winners received scholarships courtesy of the Knights of Columbus for their efforts.

On March 26, finalists and their families, along with Pro-life advocates and members of the contest’s selection committee gathered for a banquet. During which, members of the committee read to the crowd excerpts

from each finalist’s essay, as well as the winners’ and honorable mentions’ essays in full.

This year, the first-place essay was written by Emma Haney of St. Joseph School, Crescent Springs. (To read her winning essay see page 5.) Second place was awarded to Drew Marshall, St. Pius X School, Edgewood, and third place to Sammi Schmitz, also from St. Pius X. Honorable mentions were awarded to Addison Delaney, St. Mary School, Alexandria, and Briana Saalfeld, Holy Cross Elementary School, Latonia.

Awards were distributed to students by Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys, who additionally gave his remarks at the banquet.

He began by quoting Pope Leo XIV’s general audience the day before, “The sanctity of life, from conception to natural death, must be defended — especially now in a world marked by the madness of war.”

“We fought for many years, almost 50, to overturn Roe v. Wade,” Bishop Foys said. “... The easiest work is behind us, because what we need to do now is to promote a culture of life.”

Recalling the negative reception to the bills overturning on major news outlets and within communities, Bishop Foys said that “happened because, even though we were able to overturn that Roe v. Wade decision, we still had not achieved a culture of life ... It’s behind me, at my age, but it’s ahead of us, especially in these young people,” he addressed the essay finalists.

“I think these essays tonight should give us hope — should be an anchor of hope for us that there are young people who can express in many, many ways, in a profound way, their love of life,” he said. “I think that’s remarkable, and for that we should be grateful, and we should thank God, and we should thank these young people.”

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## Divine Mercy Sunday

(Continued from page 3)

led to the horrors of World War II.

All this came on the heels of World War I, which had ended less than 25 years earlier. Jesus told Faustina that “mankind will not have peace until it turns with trust to my mercy” (Diary, No. 300).

The diary reflects that to attain the divine mercy of Jesus, mankind needs a trustful relationship with Our Savior. Jesus tells Faustina repeatedly that we can depend on his love and his mercy if only we turn to him, repent of our sins and trust in him: “Sooner would heaven and earth turn into nothingness than would my mercy not embrace a trusting soul” (Diary, No. 1777).

He also repeatedly told her that he wanted her to establish a feast of mercy and hold that celebration on the first Sunday after Easter. He said: “My daughter, tell the whole world about my inconceivable mercy. I desire that the feast of mercy be a refuge and shelter for all souls, and especially poor sinners. On that day the very depths of my tender mercy are open. I pour out a whole ocean of graces upon those souls who approach the fount of my mercy. The soul that will go to confession and receive holy Communion shall obtain complete forgiveness of sins and punishment. ... My desire that it be solemnly celebrated on the first Sunday after Easter” (Diary, No. 699).

The mercy of Christ that we receive is then shared with our neighbor; as he is merciful to us, we are to be merciful to them.

After St. Faustina died in 1938, the original diary was rewritten by members of Faustina’s order and, based on the contents of that version, both the diary and proposed devotion in 1959 were banned by the Vatican. It was 19 years later that a review of the original documents of Sister Faustina led to the lifting of the ban.

On April 30, 2000, Faustina would be the first person canonized in the new millennia. Pope St. John Paul II (r: 1978-2005) not only elevated Sister Faustina Kowalska to the altar of sainthood, but he said during his canonization homily that “from now on throughout the Church (the second Sunday of Easter) will be called Divine Mercy Sunday.” Certain religious groups are advocating for St. Faustina to be named a doctor of the Church.

When we attend a Divine Mercy celebration on that special Sunday, we are touched by the beautiful prayers that Jesus gave to Faustina: “Eternal Father, I offer You the Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Your dearly beloved



OSV News photo/CNS file, Nancy Wiechec

Polish Sister St. Faustina Kowalska is depicted with an image of Jesus Christ the Divine Mercy. When St. John Paul II canonized St. Faustina in 2000, he also declared that the second Sunday of Easter would be celebrated as Divine Mercy Sunday.

Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, in atonement for our sins and those of the whole world.” And then, “For the sake of his sorrowful passion have mercy on us and on the whole world. Holy God, Holy Mighty One, Holy Immortal One, have mercy on us and on the whole world” (Diary, No. 476).

## Palm Sunday

(Continued from page 6)

“In his last cry to the Father, we hear the weeping of those who are crushed, who have no hope, who are sick and who are alone. Above all, we hear the painful groans of all those who are oppressed by violence and are victims of war.”

Pope Leo’s first Holy Week began under sunny skies with a solemn Palm Sunday procession through St. Peter’s Square, where cardinals, bishops and lay people carried large palm branches. The congregation held olive branches, as is customary in Italy.

The Passion narrative from the Gospel of Matthew was solemnly chanted during the Mass; at the moment of Jesus’ death, the square fell silent as tens of thousands of people, including the pope, knelt down in prayer.

At the end of the Mass, Pope Leo led the crowd in the Angelus prayer in Latin and made an impassioned appeal for Christians in the Holy Land, where the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem has had to cancel or postpone key Holy Week liturgies, including Palm Sunday due to wartime restrictions.

Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Latin patriarch of Jerusalem, and Father Francesco Ielpo, the custos of the Holy Land, were prevented from entering the Church of the Holy Sepulcher by Israeli police on Palm Sunday, the Latin patriarchate said March 29.

“At the beginning of Holy Week, our prayers are more than ever with the Christians of the Middle East, who are suffering the consequences of a brutal conflict and, in many cases, are unable to observe fully the liturgies of these holy days,” Pope Leo said at the Angelus.

“Just as the Church contemplates the mystery of the Lord’s Passion, we cannot forget those who today are truly sharing in his suffering,” he said, adding “their ordeal challenges all our consciences.”

The pope also prayed for migrants who have died at sea, particularly those who perished recently off the coast of Crete.

In his homily, Pope Leo quoted Servant of God Antonio “Tonino” Bello, an Italian bishop and vocal critic of the Gulf War who died of cancer in 1993 and is on the path to sainthood.

“Holy Mary, woman of the third day, grant us the certainty that, in spite of all, death will no longer hold sway over us; that the injustices of peoples are numbered; that the flashes of war are fading into the twilight; that the sufferings of the poor are breathing their last. And grant, finally, that the tears of all the victims of violence and pain will soon be dried up like frost beneath the spring sun,” the pope said, quoting Bello, whom he referred to by his nickname “Tonino.”

Pope Leo has a busy Holy Week schedule ahead, which includes a return to the tradition of Holy Thursday Mass in St. Peter’s Basilica and includes Stations of the Cross in the Colosseum.

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# Chrism Mass

## The baptized are 'instruments of Christ,' said Bishop at Chrism Mass

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

Faithful from across the Diocese of Covington came to fill the pews of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, on March 31 in celebration of the annual Chrism Mass. The great diocesan assembly par excellence, priests and deacons joined Bishop John Iffert, celebrant and homilist, as he blessed the holy oils and consecrated sacred Chrism for use diocesan wide.

Representatives from every parish and ministering Catholic organization attend the Chrism Mass to receive the three blessed oils for their institutions. These oils include the Oil of the Sick, Oil of the Catechumens, and the sacred Chrism. Each of these oils, blessed by the bishop, will be used in administering the sacraments in the coming year.

A sign of unity and service, the Chrism Mass sees clergy, religious and laity together, while priests renew their promises made during ordination.

Bishop Iffert began his homily commenting on this great unity, saying, "It does my heart so much good to be here celebrating with so many of our holy priests, our faithful deacons, our consecrated religious and baptized representatives of the whole Church — and that is the point! The Church gathers to recommit ourselves to the mission of Jesus the anointed one ... He is anointed with the Holy Spirit, and by his grace, has invited each of us into this holy and anointed life."

Referencing the Mass's reading from the book of Isaiah, Bishop Iffert commented that it's not the voice of Isaiah that we hear, but "an oracle placed into the mouth of an anticipated messenger of the end times by Isaiah."

"This expected messenger will be anointed like the king, anointed like the prophets — but this messenger will be more than a king, more than a prophet," Bishop Iffert said. "He is a proclaimer, and he is a comforter ... He announces redemption for slaves, release for prisoners. He proclaims a new order of things where there will be no more need for repression, and where peace and well-being will prevail. He proclaims a year of the Lord's favor."

Bishop Iffert said that "we can think of this year as a jubilee year — but this is a special jubilee, the ultimate jubilee. The year of the Lord's favor means the gift in time at which God shows himself to be most gracious and bestows the point of salvation in the final and definitive way."

Looking back to Gospel readings leading up to Holy Week, Bishop Iffert referenced a passage in the synagogue of Nazareth during the life of Christ.

"When he stands to read this passage," referring to the previous reading from the Book of Isaiah, "he points out that today, this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing ... and he reveals to all who hear him that he is the great prophet of whom Isaiah speaks."

Referencing the third century Christian scholar Origen, Bishop Iffert said that Christ "teaches through his instruments."

"What are his instruments? What are his methods?" Bishop Iffert asked the congregation, answering, "You. You are God's instruments, you who have been anointed with oil and with the Holy Spirit ... You are baptized to be his instruments to continue the saving comfort and proclamation of Jesus Christ."

Bishop Iffert then drew attention to the priests who had gathered for the Chrism Mass, saying, "In a few moments, I will invite these men who are called to the ordained priesthood for service to the people of God, to draw them toward holiness and sanctification — and I will invite them to renew the promises they made at their ordination ... I will commit them into your hands," he said to the congregation, "asking you to help them to be sustained by carrying them, and me, constantly in prayer through Jesus Christ, by his Holy Spirit, to the mercies of God, the Father. Because that's the way God has designed this Church of ours. He has given us to one another for our mutual care."

Concluding, Bishop Iffert asked those gathered to "Please pray that we (clergy) will never fail you in the search for holiness and please never, never fail to pray for us that we might be true servants of Jesus — servants of those who are instruments of God's sanctifying love for the world ... Pray that we might serve you, fully and completely in a self-emptying way after the pattern of Jesus Christ the Lord, pray for us."



(above left) In pairs, priests and deacons venerate the altar during the opening procession. Before the blessing and consecration of the oils, each oil is presented to the bishop.



To make the Sacred Chrism, balsam is mixed with olive oil. This fragrant oil is used during baptisms, ordinations and for the consecration of altars.



(above right) The Chrism Mass — the Mass par excellence — gathers the priests, deacons and lay faithful of the diocese around the Bishop. Banners of all the parishes and schools of the Diocese of Covington line the walls, March 31, of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.

(left) Pontifical servers surround the lectern with lighted candles as Deacon Scott Folz incenses the Gospel.

(right) Seminarians, from left, Joseph O'Bryan and William Fuller hold Bishop Iffert's crosier and miter.



(above right) Bishop Iffert extends his arms in blessing over the holy oils. These sacramental oils — Oil of the Sick, Oil of Catechumens and Sacred Chrism — will be used during the coming year in parishes throughout the diocese.

(right) St. Joseph the Worker Sister Patricia Jean Cushing reads the first reading to a cathedral full of lay faithful.

(below) A highlight of the Chrism Mass is the renewal of priestly promises and the recommitment of the faithful to pray for their priests and bishop.



(above) The Roberts family — James, Bronwyn, Olivia (pictured) and Samantha, parishioners, Our Lady of Lourdes Parish — present the gifts to Bishop Iffert.

(left) A Guatemalan family is pictured at the Chrism Mass.

(right) Adan Lopez Perez, parishioner, St. Anthony Parish, Taylor Mill, reads the second reading.



# Covington Lenten pilgrimage draws pilgrims into Holy Week through prayer, art and architecture

More than 400 pilgrims took part in the fourth annual Covington Lenten Pilgrimage on March 28, following a prayerful route through five of Covington's historic Catholic churches: the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, St. Augustine Church, St. Benedict Church,

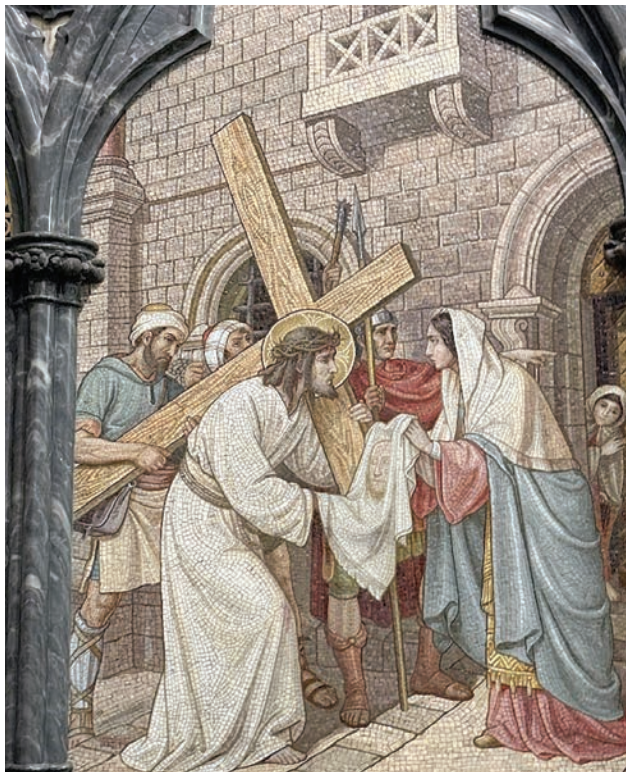
St. John Church and Mother of God Church. Father Ryan Maher, rector of the Cathedral Basilica, led one group of approximately 50 participants. Among them was Kris Staverman of St. Henry Parish, Elsmere, who shared her photos with the *Messenger*.

Throughout the pilgrimage, participants spent time in quiet adoration and experienced the rich spiritual art and architecture that distinguish each church. The following pages offer a visual journey through this year's pilgrimage.

Staverman photos



For about 50 pilgrims, the 2026 Covington Lenten Pilgrimage began in adoration of the Blessed Sacrament at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption.



The Cathedral's mosaic Stations of the Cross offered pilgrims a spiritual reflection on the Passion of Christ. Pictured here, Veronica wipes the face of Jesus, the sixth station.



Father Ryan Maher, rector of the Cathedral, leads pilgrims in prayer as they begin their pilgrimage.



A marble angel holds holy water for entrants to bless themselves, one of the many pieces of spiritual art for pilgrims to reflect on.



(from left) Kris Staverman, Rita Cahill and Father Michael Elmlinger snap a selfie on the west side of Mother of God Church, Covington. Father Elmlinger is studying in Canada and is home for the Easter holiday.



A sign welcomes pilgrims to Mother of God Church, with the interior of the Church inviting all to sit, stay and pray. All churches along the route featured similar signage.





The interior of St. John the Evangelist Church features pastel colors, and with the nave's wooden ceiling and beams mimicking the bottom of a boat — the Barque of Peter — a metaphor that the Church is a ship guided by St. Peter and his successors.



A welcome surprise for pilgrims is a stained-glass window depicting the Bible story of Jonah and the whale, seen in the bottom portion of this stained-glass window at St. John Church. Above Jonah is the risen Lord. Key parallels include both being in a state of death/entombment for three days before emerging, bringing messages of repentance, sacrificing themselves to save others (passengers/humanity), and bringing salvation to Gentiles.



Pilgrims pass the Pilgrim Shell sign marking the path from St. John Church to St. Augustine Church. St. Elizabeth Healthcare can be seen in the horizon.



The interior of St. Augustine Church features a blue ceiling with stars representing the night sky and eternity — God's creation.



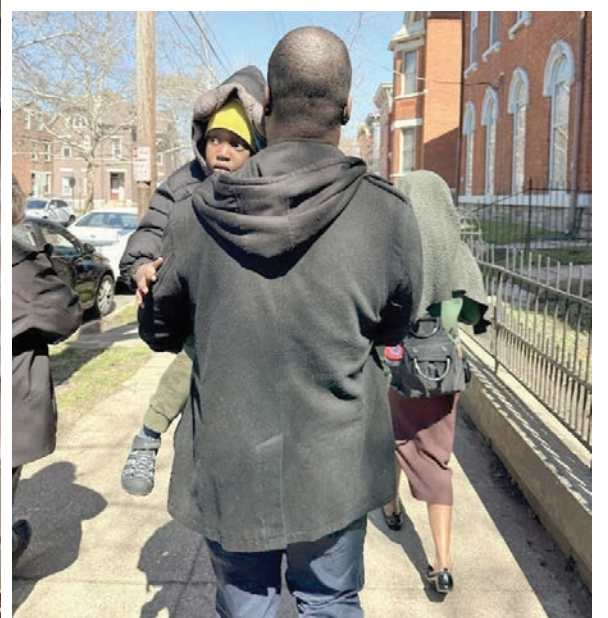
A pilgrim gets her program stamped at St. Augustine Church. Many popular pilgrimages offer stamps along the way as official proof of the journey.



Relics of St. Augustine Church were on display for veneration.



Pilgrims take a moment for silent prayer at St. Benedict Church. The church was designed by renowned architectural firm Samuel Hannaford and Sons, giving homage to the architect's impeccable acoustic reputation.



Parishioners from St. Cecilia Parish, Cincinnati, were among the 400 pilgrims that made the 4.3-mile pilgrimage.

# What are the three holy oils?

D.D. Emmons  
OSV News

The Church makes use of three holy oils: the oil of the sick, the oil of the catechumens and the holy chrism oil. The first two are blessed, and the bishop consecrates the third, ordinarily during the annual chrism Mass. Each has a distinctive purpose in the Church.

## Oil of the sick

The oil of the sick, which is pure olive oil, is used for the sacrament of the anointing of the sick. While ideally celebrated with the community during the Mass for the anointing of the sick, this sacrament can be administered any time and in any place. The priest lays hands on the sick or elderly person, says special prayers, and anoints the person by placing oil in the form of a cross on the forehead and hands.

Through this sacrament, God gives the sick person grace and strength to bear the illness or infirmity. In addition, many Catholics have witnessed the power of this anointing to bring spiritual, emotional and even physical healing.

## Oil of the catechumens

Both adults and infants prior to baptism are anointed with the oil of the catechumens, which is also pure olive oil. For adults, this pre-baptismal anointing often takes place during a special initiation ceremony when the person begins to prepare for the sacrament of baptism. At the beginning of the process known as the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults (OCIA), each person preparing for initiation is anointed with the oil of the catechumens.

This rite most often takes place during Mass, prior to holy Communion. The priest or deacon anoints the catechumens. Then he prays that God will instill them with wisdom for discernment and with the strength necessary to avoid evil during their inquiry into the Catholic faith and their preparation for a life with Christ.

In a similar way, an infant is anointed just before receiving the waters of baptism. This anointing is to help the child ward off evil, avoid temptation and possess the faith necessary to carry the cross of Christ throughout life.

## Holy chrism oil

The third oil, holy chrism oil, is olive oil mixed with balsam. The oil symbolizes strength, and the fragrant balsam represents the “aroma of Christ” (2 Cor 2:15). Anointing with chrism oil signifies the gift of the Holy Spirit. It is used to consecrate someone or something to God’s service.

Each year we witness the use of the holy chrism when young people are confirmed, and at the Easter Vigil when adults are confirmed after baptism. The bishop traces the



In this 2025 *Messenger* file photo, Bishop Iffert blesses the holy oils at the Chrism Mass.

sign of the cross with chrism oil on the forehead of the one being confirmed and says, “(Name), be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit.”

Chrism oil is also part of the baptismal rite. Following an infant’s baptism with water and before he or she receives the white garment, the cross with chrism oil is traced on the crown of the child’s head, marking him as a Christian. Anointing on the head is also administered at the baptism of an adult if the person does not immediately receive the sacrament of confirmation.

Holy chrism oil is used as well during the ordination of a priest (the sacrament of holy orders) and the consecration of a bishop. It is the anointing used in the consecration of a church and the blessing of an altar and the vessels used at Mass.

## The chrism Mass

Each year the local bishop blesses enough new oils for every parish during the chrism Mass. The holy oils are then transported to individual parishes, where they are available for use during that year. Though the bishop can-

not be physically present at every baptism or confirmation in his diocese, he can be symbolically present through the holy oils he blesses.

After the Liturgy of the Word, the blessing of the oils takes place. In a formal procession, olive oil is brought forward in special urns; the oil of the sick is presented first, next the oil of the catechumens, and finally oil for the holy chrism. The bishop prays over and blesses each oil individually.

The ritual for creating and consecrating the holy chrism is different from the others. To make it, the bishop mixes oil from the balsam plant with the olive oil, breathes on the mixed oil to signify the presence of the Holy Spirit, and then says a prayer to consecrate it.

Once blessed in this way, the chrism and the other oils are no longer ordinary ointments. Instead, they are a holy, precious gift from God to the Church, signifying cleansing and strengthening, healing and comfort, and the life-giving grace of the Holy Spirit.

# Easter evidence: Why Jesus’ resurrection is trusted as true

Sister Anna Marie McGuan  
OSV News

Easter Sunday is the Church’s greatest feast day — a day in which we celebrate Jesus Christ’s resurrection from the dead.

It is the “feast of feasts” and the “solemnity of solemnities.” The Catechism of the Catholic Church states: “Beginning with the Easter Triduum as its source of light, the new age of the Resurrection fills the whole liturgical year with its brilliance” (No. 1168).

Christians believe that Jesus “crushed death,” and the “mystery of the Resurrection ... permeates with its powerful energy our old time, until all is subjected to him” (CCC, No. 1169).

Jesus Christ truly died on Good Friday. There was no mistaken prognosis that Jesus did not really expire on the cross; there was no accidentally identifying Jesus as someone else. There was no theft of Jesus’ body from the tomb; no swallowing up of the body in an earthquake.

From the beginning, Christians proclaimed not only the resurrection of Jesus, but also his very real death. His human soul separated from his human body. All of the Gospels testify to this. Without that death, his appearances to the women and to his apostles on Easter morning would have been humdrum. Instead, people were terrified, overjoyed and astonished.

There are factors that confirm the Church in her faith in the resurrection of Jesus. First is the empty tomb. The apostles saw the empty tomb and heard the testimony of the women who went there on the first Easter morning: “...



CNS photo/Pablo Esparza

A statue of the Risen Christ on top of the facade of St. Peter’s Basilica at the Vatican is seen in a Nov. 13, 2024, photo.

(T)he empty tomb was ... an essential sign for all. Its discovery by the disciples was the first step toward recognizing the very fact of the Resurrection” (CCC, No. 640).

Second, the apostles saw Jesus with their own eyes. They disbelieved at first — and who wouldn’t? — but were convinced by the fact that they could touch him, speak to him and eat with him. Jesus’ body was clearly different than it was before, and almost always the women, the apostles and the disciples do not recognize him at first. Each time, however, Jesus reveals himself to them, and they are able to make the connection that this one standing before them was the same one who died by crucifixion on Good Friday.

In the encounter with the apostle Thomas, Jesus actually points to his wounds as the way for Thomas to make the connection that the man standing before him, talking and breathing, is the same man who was crucified. Jesus had to lead Thomas and the others to that understanding, because his glorified and risen body was no longer subject to the limitations of space and time. He could appear as he wished, when he wished. He could be in their presence and not reveal himself, and then allow them to recognize him in an instant.

All of this has to do with his glorified, risen humanity and its new properties. “At Jesus’ Resurrection his body is filled with the power of the Holy Spirit: he shares the divine life in his glorious state, so that St. Paul can say that Christ is “the man of heaven”” (CCC, No. 646).

The Resurrection also brought St. Paul, who hated Christians, to believe in Christ and to be baptized in Damascus, after having encountered him on the road there. He saw him with his own eyes. He heard his voice. He spoke to him. Later, in his letter to the Galatians, Paul

(Continued on page 18)

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## Family responsibilities

(Continued from page 5)

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*Jamie Schroeder is chancellor for the Diocese of Covington, Ky.*

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# UNHEARDOF designer gives shoes to diocesan students, promotes friendship, community and perseverance



(top) Colorful pig heads wearing Adidas brand logos decorate the front windows of the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati. Phil Lipschutz, designer and owner of the UNHEARDOF brand, held a shoe drop at the gallery, March 27. School students from select diocesan schools were invited to the drop, and each received a free pair of sneakers from Mr. Lipschutz's newly released line.

(above center) A student holds a "Cupcake" green colorway Piggy Runner sneaker, signed by designer Phil Lipschutz with the words "oink oink."

(above bottom) Pig mascot "Porkchop" hands plastic Easter eggs to students from St. Therese School, Southgate. The name "Porkchop" was a nickname held by shoe designer Phil Lipschutz in his youth.

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

Seventh and eighth-grade students from St. Therese, Southgate; St. Paul, Florence; St. Philip, Melbourne and Prince of Peace, Covington, were invited to join UNHEARDOF brand shoe designer Phil Lipschutz, March 27, along with representatives from Adidas and shoe influencer and photographer Andrew Dutton, to the launch of his new collaborative sneaker at the Contemporary Arts Center, Cincinnati.

The "Piggy Runners" released during the drop were given for free to each student present, in bright, nostalgic spring colors. Specifically, students received the shoe in a green "Cupcake" colorway, named for one of Mr. Lipschutz's childhood friends.

The Contemporary Arts Center welcomed students with colorful, springtime and Easter-themed décor matching Mr. Lipschutz's shoes, and mascots of Mr. Lipschutz's pink pig mascot "Porkchop" (named after his own childhood nickname) and green pig mascot "Cupcake" joined in the festivities.

Donating these special shoes has become a tradition for Mr. Lipschutz as a way to give back to his community, crediting especially the efforts of his former teacher and current diocesan Safe Environment director, Julie Feinauer, for his success following a turbulent childhood growing up in Latonia.

Speaking directly to the students present, Mr. Lipschutz said, "I know what it's like with some of the challenges and some of the experiences that you guys go through, but what has really helped me through my life is my friends and building new friends and communicating with my friends. I've done a lot of shows with Adidas over the last few years," he said, "I'm not going to run through them all,



Phil Lipschutz of the UNHEARDOF brand speaks to students at the March 27 drop. Beside him are a box of green "Piggy Runny" sneakers he designed. The green colorway is named "Cupcake", after a childhood friend of Mr. Lipschutz.

but a lot of them talk about mental health and suicide prevention."

Mr. Lipschutz, who lost his sister to suicide, said that he advocates in particular for kids to "continue to talk each other" and "continue to speak up."

"If we quit the name-calling, quit the picking on one another, and we just hash out our differences and our problems — we can 'oink' the whole world," said Mr. Lipschutz, humorously referencing his pig-themed branding and mascots.

"You guys are going to change the world," Mr. Lipschutz told students. "You guys are going to make an impact and make this an even cooler, dooper planet that it already is. Without a doubt, I'm so fortunate and I'm so thankful to be alive, and you should too, because you only get one life. You've got to maximize it. You can't waste it. You can't give up on yourself."

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# The truth about how early Christians really celebrated Easter

James L. Papandrea  
OSV News

Like Christmas and other Catholic holy days, Easter is often misunderstood and mis-celebrated. Either its origins are said to be based on pagan holidays (a myth we will bust), or we treat it as a day to binge after a season of fasting. So, to fully embrace Easter, let's look at how the early Christians understood and celebrated the day of Christ's resurrection.

To begin with, they didn't call it "Easter" — that word would be meaningless to them. The early Christians

believed that Jesus' passion and resurrection were the central part of the whole story of God's saving activity in the world. These events were not seen as a single, isolated moment in history, but part of the great trajectory of God's providential interventions.

More specifically, the passion and resurrection of Jesus were understood to be a continuation and fulfillment of the events of the Passover and the Exodus. And not coincidentally, the crucifixion and resurrection of Jesus happened at the time of the festival of Passover, so when the early Christians referred to the annual commemoration of Jesus' passion and the celebration of his resurrection, they simply called it Passover.

It's just like the way that Pentecost continues to be named after a Hebrew festival, even though it is given new meaning in the Church as the celebration of the gift of the Holy Spirit.

And so in the early Church, the feast day of the Resurrection of the Lord was simply called Passover, or some translation of that word, as it still is to this day in most languages of the world. This is where we get the word

"paschal" in the Paschal Mystery. That just means, "the Passover Mystery."

So what about the English word "Easter"? Where did that come from? Near as we can figure, it comes from an Old German word for "dawn," as in, facing toward the dawn — facing east. This is a bit of an oversimplification, but think of the way we can talk about a storm that's heading in the northeastern direction, and call it a "nor'easter."

By the same logic, the day we face the dawn in anticipation of our own resurrection is called "easter." At least that's how it comes into English, translated from Old German. But it helps to remember that "Easter" is only a word used in English. Most other languages still call it something that is a version of the word for Passover. For example, in Italian, it's Pasqua.

Just as the Eucharist was never just a "remembering" of the passion of Christ, the Pasch was never just an "anniversary celebration" of his resurrection. The celebration of the Pasch every spring was a way to relive the events of that week in a way that brings them back around so that we can participate in them — just like the celebration of the Passover brought back the events of the Exodus for faithful Jews.

"Past history made present mystery," as they say.

In a Paschal sermon Pope St. Leo the Great preached in the fifth century, he encouraged the people to use the season to make real changes in their lives, and after Lent, not just go back to their old ways. So it could be said that a homily for Resurrection Day was a real call to conversion, for as St. Leo said, no one who is proud, or greedy, or who denies the reality of Christ's divinity and his bodily resurrection, can properly celebrate his Resurrection Day.

## Easter evidence

(Continued from page 14)

had to compare his authority to preach the Gospel as being on par with that of the first apostles, and so he based his valid apostleship on his encounter with the risen Jesus. He himself saw the Lord Jesus risen from the dead, and from that encounter, Paul's life was transformed, and he became God's apostle.

It was the fact of the resurrection that compelled the apostles to preach that Jesus was and always will be the true messiah and the savior of the world. It is still the Resurrection of the Lord Jesus that compels Christians to share his life and message and to dedicate their lives to him.

Without the resurrection, Paul says, Christianity is useless: "For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised. If Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile and you are still in your sins" (1 Cor 15: 16-17). He continues: "But in fact Christ has been raised from the dead, the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. For as by a man came death, by a man has come also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (v. 20-22).

Because of the evidence of the empty tomb and the encounters of the risen Jesus with the women, the apostles and disciples, and St. Paul, the Church has always believed and preached the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It is the moment that definitively changed human history forever.

Jesus' rising from the dead was the catalyst for all evangelization, meaning the fact of Jesus' resurrection impelled the apostles to go and tell people what had happened.

That is still what the Church proclaims today, and she always will.

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National/World

**‘Proclaim the Gospel of life,’ Pope Leo says in visit to Monaco**

MONACO — Pope Leo XIV used his first visit to Monaco March 28 to challenge the wealthy principality to center its life on the poor and the protection of human life, warning that the Last Judgment “places the poor at its center.” “Within your community, many people hold positions of considerable influence in the economic and financial spheres,” the pope said from the Prince’s Palace, adding that the kingdom of God “shakes up the unjust configurations of power.” Hosted by Monaco’s Prince Albert II and Princess Charlene, the pope became the first in modern history to visit Monaco, arriving by helicopter for a quick 13-hour trip to the microstate — his first international journey of 2026. Entrusting the nation with “protecting every human life,” he urged Catholics to defend life “from conception until natural death” and resist secularism rooted in wealth and individualism. At the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Monaco-Ville, he called the faithful to “proclaim the Gospel of life, hope and love,” later encouraging young people at the iconic church of St. Devota to deepen prayer and imitate saints including St. Carlo Acutis before heading to lunch and the visit’s concluding Mass at Louis II Stadium.

**Israel to allow Church leaders to celebrate Holy Week, Easter**

JERUSALEM — The Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem said an agreement with Israeli authorities will allow Holy Week and Easter liturgies at the Church of the Holy Sepulcher, after Catholic leaders were initially barred on Palm Sunday. In a March 30 statement, church officials said access is now secured for clergy, though wartime limits on public gatherings remain, with celebrations livestreamed worldwide. The dispute followed a March 29 incident in which Israeli police blocked Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa and Father Francesco Ielpo, drawing global backlash. Israel’s president, Isaac Herzog, expressed regret, citing security concerns tied to missile threats. World leaders, including Emmanuel Macron and Pedro Sánchez, condemned the move as a violation of religious freedom. Israeli officials later reversed course, while Pizzaballa described the episode as a misunderstanding, urging respect for both safety and the right to worship. Cardinal Pizzaballa

sought to ease tensions in the aftermath of the incident. In an interview with TV2000, the television network owned by the Italian bishops’ conference, the Latin patriarch said the incident was the result of a “misunderstanding.” “There were no clashes; everything was done very politely. I don’t want to force things; we want to use this situation to better clarify in the coming days what to do, respecting everyone’s safety but also respecting the right to prayer,” he said.

**French Church gives ‘best to the poorest’ architectural project**

PARIS — After years of legal battles — including opposition from French cinema figures — a major Catholic project is moving forward in the heart of Paris. The Archdiocese of Paris is transforming a former convent in the upscale 6th arrondissement into a large community complex where vulnerable people will live alongside young volunteers. The site, once owned by the Sisters of the Visitation, was entrusted to the archdiocese with a mission rooted in Gospel-inspired fraternity. The project brings together three associations supporting people with disabilities, pregnant women in crisis, and formerly homeless individuals. New housing is being built, while historic buildings are being restored. Despite delays caused by court appeals, the project received final approval in 2019, with construction now visibly underway. The 78,500-square-foot property in today’s affluent 6th arrondissement includes a 43,000-square-foot garden. On one side lies the picturesque Rue du Cherche-Midi, lined with charming shops and restaurants; on the other, the long Rue de Vaugirard, home to the French Senate. Church officials said the decision to dedicate such valuable real estate to the poor is intentional. As one project leader put it: The Church chose not profit, but “to give the best to the most vulnerable.”

**7,000 show up for Palm Sunday service at Minnesota State Capitol**

ST. PAUL, Minn. — One speaker at a Palm Sunday prayer service that drew 7,000 Christians to the Minnesota State Capitol in St. Paul called the gathering an act of resistance

because participants were walking into places of power to challenge policies that keep food from the hungry, snatch safety from strangers and deny health care. “When policies wound the poor; creation groans with them, and our faith compels us to respond,” said Sister Kathleen Storms, a School Sister of Notre Dame. “I am here today because we are here today, people of faith, refusing to be silent when human dignity is threatened.” True security, she said, comes from trust, justice and solidarity among people. The March 29 service, called Palm Sunday Path, drew Catholics and Christians from other denominations. The prayer service, which began with a procession of signs, palm fronds and prayers to the Capitol steps, was supported by the Minnesota chapter of the Laudato Si’ Movement, and similar gatherings were held throughout Minnesota and in a dozen states. Faith is never private, but rather “public, courageous and lived in the streets,” Sister Kathleen said in her remarks to the crowd.

**Euthanasia for young Noelia a ‘social defeat,’ ‘collective failure’**

MADRID — Spain’s bishops are urging a renewed commitment to care and accompaniment following the euthanasia death of 25-year-old Noelia Castillo. In a March 26 statement, leaders of the Spanish bishops’ conference said the response to human suffering “cannot be to shorten the path, but to walk it together.” Castillo, who became paraplegic after a suicide attempt in 2022 following years of trauma and abuse, was granted legal permission to end her life. Courts in Catalonia and Europe upheld the decision. She died March 26 in Barcelona. The bishops said her case reflects not just personal anguish but broader societal failures, including gaps in psychological care and support. They stressed that euthanasia is not a true medical response, but a “breaking of the bond of care.” Reaffirming the Church’s defense of human dignity, they called for stronger mental health resources, deeper human accompaniment, and a culture that “abandons no one,” especially the most vulnerable. Bioethics professor Elena Postigo said in her viral X post that Castillo did not need the Spanish state “to offer her death” but to give back “meaning, help, and the possibility of healing” in her life.

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## 2026 DIOCESAN PARISH ANNUAL APPEAL

### THANK YOU FOR YOUR GENEROSITY!

Goal: \$2,754,000

Total Commitments as of 3/21/26:

**\$1,053,175.76**

Number of gifts: 521

Parishes over Goal: 3

### WAYS TO GIVE —

- Cash/Check
- Stock
- Matching Gifts
- Pledge  
(final payment due 3/31/27)
- Online at  
[www.covdio.org](http://www.covdio.org)



Numbers reflect unaudited pledges and gifts recorded as of March 21, 2026

Parish	Donor	Donor Goal	Total Commitment	Dollar Goal	Over Goal* (Under)
Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption	28	170	\$45,563.75	\$54,100	(\$8,536.25)
All Saints Parish	6	75	\$4,350.00	\$53,800	(\$49,450.00)
Blessed Sacrament Parish	19	285	\$62,595.00	\$112,600	(\$50,005.00)
Cristo Rey Parish	1	150	\$4,000.00	\$68,600	(\$64,600.00)
Divine Mercy Parish	2	100	\$5,000.00	\$59,900	(\$54,900.00)
Holy Cross Parish	9	125	\$8,550.00	\$9,900	(\$1,350.00)
Holy Redeemer Parish	0	15	\$-	\$2,700	(\$2,700.00)
Holy Spirit Parish	20	170	\$28,765.00	\$48,300	(\$19,535.00)
Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish	20	305	\$25,785.00	\$171,100	(\$145,315.00)
Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish	20	235	\$72,920.00	\$40,900	\$32,020.00
Mother of God Parish	10	215	\$14,375.00	\$70,900	(\$56,525.00)
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish	0	25	\$-	\$35,900	(\$35,900.00)
Our Savior Parish	0	25	\$-	\$5,000	(\$5,000.00)
St. Agnes Parish	51	320	\$115,120.00	\$140,200	(\$25,080.00)
St. Ann Mission	2	35	\$14,850.00	\$8,700	\$6,150.00
St. Anthony, Taylor Mill	4	70	\$6,300.00	\$27,000	(\$20,700.00)
St. Augustine Parish, Augusta	3	70	\$6,500.00	\$37,300	(\$30,800.00)
St. Augustine Parish, Covington	5	135	\$30,640.00	\$32,500	(\$1,860.00)
St. Barbara Parish	19	350	\$55,885.00	\$134,500	(\$78,615.00)
St. Benedict Parish	5	80	\$5,420.00	\$26,600	(\$21,180.00)
St. Bernard Parish	2	90	\$7,150.00	\$21,500	(\$14,350.00)
Sts. Boniface and James Parish	1	45	\$2,100.00	\$13,900	(\$11,800.00)
St. Catherine of Siena, Fort Thomas	12	115	\$17,898.50	\$59,900	(\$42,001.50)
St. Cecilia Parish	7	195	\$22,000.00	\$97,900	(\$75,900.00)
St. Charles Borromeo Parish	3	30	\$2,850.00	\$13,800	(\$10,950.00)
St. Edward Parish, Cynthiana	21	60	\$16,400.00	\$18,000	(\$1,600.00)
St. Edward Mission, Owenton	0	25	\$-	\$4,500	(\$4,500.00)
St. Francis Xavier Parish	8	70	\$9,450.96	\$26,500	(\$17,049.04)
St. Henry Parish	16	245	\$31,690.00	\$43,500	(\$11,810.00)
St. James Parish, Brooksville	2	35	\$4,600.00	\$14,000	(\$9,400.00)
St. James Mission, Minerva	1	25	\$300.00	\$5,500	(\$5,200.00)
St. John the Evangelist Parish, Carrollton	5	40	\$9,460.00	\$27,800	(\$18,340.00)
St. John the Evangelist Parish, Covington	4	80	\$950.00	\$23,600	(\$22,650.00)
St. John Mission, Dividing Ridge	1	15	\$200.00	\$3,900	(\$3,700.00)
St. John the Baptist Parish, Wilder	1	20	\$400.00	\$3,400	(\$3,000.00)
St. Joseph Parish, Camp Springs	3	85	\$11,320.00	\$50,200	(\$38,880.00)
St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring	24	335	\$32,815.00	\$104,900	(\$72,085.00)
St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs	23	255	\$63,030.00	\$149,100	(\$86,070.00)
St. Joseph Parish, Warsaw	2	55	\$200.00	\$11,000	(\$10,800.00)
St. Mary of the Assumption Parish	18	435	\$21,410.00	\$135,400	(\$113,990.00)
St. Matthew Parish	2	35	\$1,200.00	\$13,400	(\$12,200.00)
St. Patrick Parish, Maysville	11	140	\$21,050.00	\$55,600	(\$34,550.00)
St. Patrick Parish, Taylor Mill	8	155	\$17,065.00	\$61,400	(\$44,335.00)
St. Paul Parish	23	235	\$40,375.00	\$75,900	(\$35,525.00)
Sts. Peter and Paul Parish	3	145	\$8,500.00	\$32,500	(\$24,000.00)
St. Philip Parish	2	75	\$9,700.00	\$12,600	(\$2,900.00)
St. Pius X Parish	28	550	\$87,575.00	\$226,100	(\$138,525.00)
St. Rose of Lima Parish	1	25	\$3,000.00	\$11,400	(\$8,400.00)
St. Therese Parish	6	160	\$20,006.55	\$7,200	\$12,806.55
St. Thomas Parish	22	270	\$30,345.00	\$144,400	(\$114,055.00)
St. Timothy Parish	32	360	\$53,350.00	\$121,600	(\$68,250.00)
St. William Parish	5	60	\$166.00	\$20,500	(\$20,334.00)
Transfiguration Mission	0	15	\$-	\$2,600	(\$2,600.00)
<b>Totals</b>	<b>521</b>	<b>7,435</b>	<b>\$1,053,175.76</b>	<b>\$2,754,000</b>	<b>(\$1,700,824.24)</b>

**QUESTIONS: PLEASE CALL THE DIOCESAN STEWARDSHIP OFFICE AT 859-392-1500**