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(top, left) Bishop John Iffert greets students attending the 2026 High School Senior Mass, April 17. Bishop Iffert was celebrant of the Mass, which brings together senior students from each diocesan high school.

(top, right) Students wearing customized sweatshirts representing the Class of 2026 stand together in the pews at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption,

(right) Kendra McGuire, diocesan superintendent of Schools, addresses students prior to the Mass.

(above) Students from Covington Catholic High School, Park Hills (left, blue), and Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria (right, green), participate in the Senior Mass.

At Mass celebrating high school seniors, bishop told students to 'stay close' to Jesus, Church community

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Students of the Class of 2026 were joined with faculty and administrators for the High School Senior Mass, April 17, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. The Mass — celebrated by Bishop John Iffert — united the senior class of each diocesan high school in prayer and celebration of their upcoming graduation in May.

Kendra McGuire, superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Covington, greeted students prior to the Mass. As students ask themselves questions regarding their futures, Mrs. McGuire challenged them to ask another question, as well. “What is God’s will in your life?” she asked students. “Our lives should be centered around Jesus, and we should always strive to follow him. Doing so will help us to reach the purpose of earthly life, which is eternal life in Heaven.”

In his homily, Bishop Iffert also addressed students, saying, “Though you have journeyed now through four years of Catholic high school, some of you maybe 12-13 years of Catholic School — some of you still don’t know how you’re going to take Jesus. Some of you still don’t know what to make of his request on your life.”

“It is a request for complete obedience of gift,” Bishop Iffert said. “Jesus teaches that he is our salvation. He is the one worthy of worship. His mission should be our mission ... Our relationship with him is more important than any other relationship. What we will have and the purpose of our life, what we should choose to do in our

life, our path forward should be guided by how we have come to know and love him, and how he calls to us.”

He said, “It is a complete and demanding invitation from Jesus Christ, the Lord.”

“If you’re having difficulty knowing how to take Jesus and the Church,” Bishop Iffert told the students gathered. “If you’re having difficulty knowing what to make of your parents and their insistence about how you behave; if you’re having difficulty knowing what to make of all the demands and requests that people are making of you right now, remember: You don’t know what you don’t know until you know it.”

“Hang with us,” said Bishop Iffert. “Be present if you haven’t already ... seek out someone who can teach you how to develop a relationship with Jesus.”

Inviting them to stay close to their Church community, Bishop Iffert reminded seniors that “We do not come to abundant life. We do not come to joy, we do not come to happiness, we do not come to full maturity, we do not come to full humanity by trying to take Jesus and make him over in our image or by trying to force him to become what we want him to be ... We come to all of that through relationship with Jesus.”

“Part of the way we know him is in one another,” he said, “and the sanctifying graces of the Church. Stay close, even if right now you don’t know what to make it about — stay close and find someone to guide you.”

Baker photos

Springtime days of service between women religious and Curia remind us of the ‘core mission of the Church’

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

The change of seasons to springtime brings with it a period of preparation and cleaning for the warm months. During this period, people in a community may require assistance with getting into the swing of spring, and the sunny spring days of April 16 and 18 brought exactly that.

Through two service days, one on April 16 where the Diocese of Covington’s Curia employees set out into their community, and another where lay people joined the diocese’s religious sisters in similar projects — neighbors helped neighbors with tasks like gardening, serving food, childcare and organizing.

Ministries such as St. Vincent de Paul, the Brighton Center, Redwood, the Emergency Shelter, the Diocesan Catholic Children’s Home and diocesan schools, benefited from volunteers on both days coming to serve. Prayer and reflection both began and concluded both days.

“To me, it’s the core mission of the Church of Jesus,” said Notre Dame Sister Marla Monahan, vicar for religious and one of the people behind planning both days. “They call it neighbor to neighbor — you don’t have to be Catholic to receive help, you don’t have to be Catholic to give help. It’s just about the dignity of each person.”

“For me,” Sister Marla said, “The relationship is totally mutual — we’re Christ to each other.”

This sentiment resonated with volunteers, many of whom spoke positively about the people they met during their time volunteering in the following reflections.

“I think our service days are really reminding us of the heart of the Gospel,” said Sister Marla, calling to mind Luke 4. “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor: He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19).

“I think that’s what we do and receive from each other,” she said. “The core mission of Jesus, the core mission of the Church — the purpose of our lives ... we’re made in the same image of community that reminds us that we’re one family, that we’re not saved alone. We’re saved with each other.”



(above) Volunteers help organize items at a food pantry during the Sisters Day of Service, April 18. (below) A woman smiles amidst the garden beds she is helping to tend as part of the Religious Sisters’ Day of Service. (left) Employees from the Diocese of Covington Curia who volunteered at St. Vincent de Paul’s donation center and thrift store, Crescent Springs, are seen wearing matching red shirts which bear the “With One Heart” logo.



(left) Diocesan secretaries Angie Smorey, Schools Office and Cindy Kraft, Chancery, help serve lunches at Holy Trinity School, Bellevue.

Parish ladies’ society celebrates dedication of relic shrine

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring, celebrated the dedication of a new relic shrine, March 19. Joined with pastor Father Andrew Young and Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys, the shrine was donated by the St. Mary’s Ladies’ Society — established more than 150 years ago — the society is a group of mostly parish women who define themselves as a social and working community who strive to meet parish needs. Along with fundraisers to raise money for the parish, members of the society also help to maintain the parish grounds.

The idea of the shrine began with the discovery of five relics, according to the society’s current president, Theresa Connaughton. “On the reredos behind the altar of St. Joseph, there are paintings on the panels of 10 saints,” she said. “What was found in the parish rectory area was five relics of those 10 saints.”

Upon discovering these relics, the thought of Father Young was that “something needs to be done” regarding the find. “He had a plan in mind, but not the funds,” said Ms. Connaughton — which is where the Ladies’ Society came in to support the project.

Instrumental also to the shrine’s construction was Father Jordan Hainsey, a priest of the Diocese of Covington. With Father Hainsey’s help, St. Joseph Parish was able to obtain relics of the five other saints on the St. Joseph reredos, as well as 10 others that are now enshrined.

Additionally, Father Hainsey was responsible for the design of the shrine’s reliquary boxes, according to Ms. Connaughton. “They’re beautiful,” she said. “They match



(left) Using a censer, Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys blesses the relic shrine with incense during its dedication.

(above) Members of the St. Mary’s Ladies Society sit together following the March 19 dedication of the St. Joseph relic shrine.

(right) A view of the relic shrine at St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring, featuring a statue of the Virgin Mary. The shrine was donated by the St. Mary’s Ladies Society, which provides funding and assistance for parish faculties.



the church perfectly — adhered to either side of our Mary statue and the altar of Mary.”

Ms. Connaughton expressed gratitude, both to Father Hainsey and to Bishop Foys, who came to celebrate a Mass for the dedication of the shrine once the work was completed.

“It was just a really wonder Mass and a wonderful gift,” Ms. Connaughton said. “We’re very excited that our group was able to provide something like that to the parish.”

Popovich photos

The Catholic Schools Commission; how prayer, discernment and community drive strategy

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

The first in a series of four meetings took place, April 14, for the Catholic Schools Commission as part of the new Diocese of Covington strategic planning process. This commission is one of three that will meet throughout the 2026 summer months to discuss a strategic plan which will carry the Diocese through 2030. The fourth commission, Diocesan Governance, will meet in the fall months and will build on the fruits of the commissions that came before.

Each commission is broken into four sub-committees. The Catholic Schools Commission sub-committees will focus on: mission and Catholic identity; academic excellence; governance and leadership; and operational vitality.

In his opening remarks, shared via video, Bishop John Iffert said to those in attendance, “The Diocese of Covington is rightly proud of its schools. In a Diocese of fewer than 90,000 Catholics, we have more than 10,000 people, 10,000 students in our Catholic Schools.”

It will be the work of the Catholic Schools Commission and its sub-committees to discuss, “a clear strategy around how do we strengthen the faith of the students and the teachers? How do we strengthen the Catholic identity,” said Deacon Jim Fortner, chief operating officer, Diocese of Covington.

The commission will, “really examine the faith, how it’s delivered, how we hire teacher’s, what’s our qualifications to be teaching,” he said.

Nearly 140 people attended the April 14 commission meeting including principals, teachers, priests, women religious and dedicated laity of the Diocese.

“It was like the Who’s Who, it was an all-star cast of experts in the schools,” said Deacon Fortner. “I’m pretty confident we have the right people. But they have got to believe in it themselves ... this is not just an exercise.”

Kendra McGuire, superintendent of Catholic schools, said, “there’s a lot of people signed up on the commissions with a lot of varying backgrounds and knowledge and experiences, and I think with their input and review of this, I am hopeful that we will come out with ... a strategic plan that we can move forward with to improve our schools.”

The Catholic Schools Commission is, so far, the largest of the four commissions, helping to realize Bishop Iffert’s vision for this strategic planning process.

“I want this process to benefit from as wide a collaboration as possible,” said Bishop Iffert in his video message. “I would like to see the participation of the entire Church – clergy, consecrated religious, lay people — working together to make decisions that are in our common interest and the common interest of our community.”

About the collaborative effort, Deacon Fortner said, “it’s a synod approach of listening, engaging people. The approach, I feel is very, very rich in theology and in practice in our Church.”

Deacon Fortner said that it is Bishop Iffert’s intention to be as transparent as possible, so that conversations and recommendations can be both mission and data driven. To that end, commission members received enrollment data from the last 30 years for every elementary and high school in the Diocese and will soon receive similar financial data. Additionally, the

(Continued on page 6)

Keener photos



(above) The Catholic Schools Commission kicked off the strategic planning process for the Diocese of Covington, April 14, as the first of many commission meetings. Nearly 140 people attended this kickoff meeting, including clergy, women religious and laity.

(below) Deacon Jim Fortner spoke to those in attendance at the Catholic Schools Commission, emphasizing their role in the Catholic Schools Commission as advisors to Bishop Iffert on the state of Catholic education in the Diocese of Covington.



Cross the Bridge for Life event discontinued after 20 years

Staff report

In a Facebook post, April 17, organizers announced that after two decades the annual Cross the Bridge for Life event has officially come to a close.

Founded in 2005 by a small group of local leaders, including the Diocese of Covington’s Pro-Life Office, the annual event grew into a public celebration of the gift of human life. Each year on the first weekend of June, thousands of participants filled the Purple People Bridge —

some walking, some in strollers, some using walkers and wheelchairs — crossing between states in a symbolic and prayerful demonstration of unity, hope and commitment to life.

Over the years, Cross the Bridge for Life drew families, clergy, women religious, volunteers, sponsors, coalition members and supporters from across the region. Organizers describe the event as more than a walk — it was an annual celebration marked by prayer, fellowship and a shared belief in the joy and value of every life.

The planning team cited upcoming reconstruction at the event site and additional uncertainties surrounding future logistics as key factors in the decision to discontinue the event. After navigating challenges over the years, organizers concluded the time had come to close this chapter.

Organizers expressed deep gratitude to everyone who supported the event throughout its 20-year run. Their dedication, they said, is what allowed Cross the Bridge for Life to endure and flourish for so long.

While the annual walk is ending, leaders emphasized that its mission continues.

“Our final wish,” the post concluded, “is that all who participated in Cross the Bridge for Life encourage others to joyfully cross whatever bridge is needed to uphold the dignity of life.”



Participants are smiles as they joyfully celebrate the gift of life at the 2022 Cross the Bridge for Life. In a recent Facebook post, organizers announced that the annual celebration has been discontinued.

“Not only can one imagine the power of all those prayers with every step across state lines,” organizers said in the post, “but the impact of Cross the Bridge for Life will live on through those that came, were inspired and lived our message to celebrate the joy of life.”



Bishop’s Schedule

April 25
Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 4:30 p.m.

April 26
Vespers, Serra Club Server awards, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 2 p.m.

April 28
Sacrament of Confirmation, St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas, 7 p.m.

April 29
Sacrament of Confirmation, St. Henry Parish, Elsmere, 7 p.m.

Biannual community baby shower brings community together to aid mothers in need

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

In collaboration with the Pregnancy Care Network, a collective of agencies dedicated to pregnancy and family care, the Diocese of Covington's Pro-life Office hosted the biannual Community Baby Shower, April 21, at the St. Elizabeth Training and Education Center, Erlanger. Baby showers such as this one provide community resources as well as necessary care items, donated by parishes and schools, to mothers and families who may not otherwise have access to them.

The largest of the community baby showers yet, 188 pregnant and new mothers were served at the shower — rounding to a total of 900 total assisted since the baby showers began in 2023.

Among the services provided and offered at the shower were breastfeeding demonstrations and information about obtaining insurance and GEDs as well as smoking cessation. Donated items included handmade blankets, diapers and large items such as strollers, car seats and pack-and-plays that were raffled off to registered families.

"It is the community coming together to serve women and families," said Faye Roch, director of the Pro-life Office, who orchestrates the showers. Volunteers included religious sisters and high school students, and food was donated by the women religious and physicians of St. Elizabeth hospital, according to Mrs. Roch.

"You do see a lot of joy on these people's faces when they come through and get items," she said, emphasizing the dignity of these women, as decisions on baby clothing and blankets are left to the individuals.

"It truly is the fishes and loaves — ever baby shower, I worry if we will have enough ... but we packed up some blankets to bring back with us. So I look at these as the fishes and loaves with all the items we receive. It really is

amazing."

With the next Community Baby Shower planned for the autumn, Mrs. Roch and the Pro-life Office are working to coordinate with rural Gallatin and Owen counties on their own showers to be held in the summer — with Mrs. Roch's hope that the goodwill will "expand" into these other communities.



(above) Curia employees help to load donated items bound for the baby shower into a truck for delivery to the shower's location, April 20.

(left) Lisa Taylor, secretary, Office of Catechesis and Evangelization, pulls a cart of diapers and other goods to be given to families at the baby shower.



(above) Besides material necessities, members of the Pregnancy Care Network, which consists of agencies and organizations providing resources to mothers and families, are stationed at the baby shower to share information with those present.

(below) A mother looks over a baby blanket while carrying her child at the April 21 Community Baby Shower, which provides material goods such as diapers and clothing, as well as community resources, to mothers and families in need.



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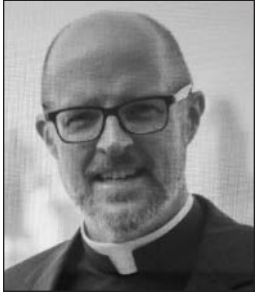
Tony Zilliox Sales Manager

Live not by lies; witness to the truth

The readings for the Fourth Sunday of Easter — Cycle A — are: Act 2:14a, 36–41, 1 Peter 2:20b–25 and John 10:1–10.

Just a few short years ago, a moral panic cascaded through the chattering classes, sacred and secular, as they announced we had arrived at a “post-truth” society.

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Phillip DeVous

There was more than a little truth to their concern, however tardy the recognition. Our post-truth reality, however, long predates the recent issues and developments the talking heads found so unnerving.

It occurs to me that our post-truth condition has morphed into an anti-truth metastasis. We deceive ourselves if we think the “natural” state of mankind is truth.

Truth, in its greatest and most significant sense, is always a grace and Revelation. This is an uncomfortable reality to contend with in our age dominated by pragmatism as the highest good, which tends to suffocate the sense of the spiritual.

Recently, I was reading parts of an excellent biography of Václav Havel. Havel was an intellectual, playwright, anti-Communist dissident, the last President of Czechoslovakia, and then the first President of the Czech Republic after Czechoslovakia split up. He was a man who, by his temperament and the circumstances of the Communist domination of his nation, was disposed to thinking seriously about what was true when all around him was dominated by lies, especially lies born of convenience. He was a man who risked everything to avoid living by lies. In the biography, I encountered Havel’s arresting exhortation: “Therefore, faithful Christian, seek Truth, listen to the Truth, hear Truth, love Truth, speak Truth ... until death”

The seeking of Truth should be the morning star of the life of a Catholic. Our Blessed Lord clearly thinks we are capable of the Truth when He says, “my sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they know me.” This is a call to a living relationship with Truth Incarnate in the person of Jesus Christ and his body, the Church. Our Holy Communion with Jesus Christ is built upon the conviction that truth is something that can be known, received, understood and lived by us — that is why it is both a revelation and a grace!

This is no small thing to have in an anti-truth age. The anti-truth society we inhabit and whose air we breathe is informed by the paradoxical assumption that there is no truth of any kind, while at the same time presuming and demanding that one’s every emotion be recognized as an absolute truth, requiring total submission from everyone around me. That is a pretty good summary of our contemporary situation of anti-truth.

Without an orientation towards truth, we cannot “know that the Lord is God” because we cannot receive the grace or see the Revelation that Truth brings. It should come as no surprise that as the grasp of the of post-truth civilization tightens, with ever more people submitting to the power of anti-truth, that we would see less true goodness because we think truth a fiction. The result is that beauty and authentic love become ever more difficult for us to perceive because we have lost the vision of God.

In ways we perhaps we never could have anticipated, this is a painful time to live, when so much appears to be false. It is in the time of the great distress of the post-truth era, and the anti-truth ferment which characterizes it, that God’s Providence has designated for us for us to live and to bear witness.

Witness to what? That God is real. That the Lord is holy. That we are his people, the flock he tends. That Christ is alive. That his word is true. That Christ remains with us. To living the Truth with integrity. We witness to

(Continued on page 13)

Do you really believe God loves you?

If you’re like me, you were impressed by the athletes of the Milan-Cortina Olympics. In them we witnessed both the rewards of hard work and the traumatizing effects of extreme expectation.

It’s hard to believe that most of these athletes were just teens and young adults.



Sister Constance Veit, L.S.P.

As I watched them, I was brought back to the gathering of the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS), SEEK26 in January, in which I participated.

During the SEEK conference, I was struck by the pressures and anxieties experienced by young people today, and by the number of times the speakers tried to convince them to believe in God’s

personal, unconditional love.

I started to wonder why this message was being repeated with such insistence. It seemed a little cheesy. Doesn’t God’s love go without saying?

Then I read the letter our superior general had just sent to all the Little Sisters around the world, establishing a spiritual orientation for us for 2026. In it, she proposed we spend a year of joyful confidence in God’s Providence, and she asked, “Do we truly believe in God’s Love for us?”

There was that question again!

Whether a freshman in college or a consecrated person with a life-long commitment to God through religious vows, this question is central to our lives!

So, I asked myself, why is it that so many of us find it so hard to believe in God’s love?

I decided to do a survey on this question, asking fellow Sisters, together with some friends and colleagues — anyone on my phone’s contact list — about why believing in God’s love is so difficult.

The responses I received fell broadly into three categories.

Some of those I surveyed suggested that the memory or shame of past sins deters many people from believing in God’s love. I’ll call these folks the St. Peters among us, for when Jesus called St. Peter to follow him, he immediately recoiled, protesting, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man!”

Another group seems to be victims of the prejudices

and negative judgments of others, which crush their sense of self-worth. Even if unfounded, these negative messages coming from outside ourselves can drown out the truth that God’s love is personal and unconditional.

Those who suffer from prejudices and negative judgments remind me of the Samaritan woman at the well in St John’s Gospel. Painfully aware of her inferior social status in the eyes of the Jewish majority, she shies away from Jesus. “How can you, a Jew, ask me, a Samaritan woman, for a drink?”

The third set of responses suggested that some people find it difficult to believe simply because they have never seen God or experienced his love firsthand. “How can I believe in someone or something I can’t even see?” they ask.

These folks are like “doubting” Thomas, who, after the resurrection protested, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my hand into his side, I will not believe.”

The results of my survey — unscientific as it was — gave me much food for thought. There are so many St. Peters, doubting Thomases and women at the well, including ourselves.

What can we do to convince us that God really loves us, regardless of our sins and faults?

I believe that the simplest, most direct way to overcome our doubts about God’s personal and unconditional love is to prayerfully turn to the Cross.

The image of Christ on the Cross — whether it be a very large crucifix hanging in a grand cathedral or a simple one at the end of our rosary — speaks volumes about God’s love.

From the Cross Jesus calls out to all the St. Peters among us, urging them to let go of their sins and accept his forgiveness. Just as he said to the good thief, he says to them, “You will be with me in Paradise.”

To those who distance themselves from God because others have convinced them that they are not worthy of love, Jesus stretches out his arms and says, “I love you so much that I would have died for you even if you were the only person on earth.”

And to those who say they will not believe without seeing, Jesus holds out his wounded hands and says, “See my hands and my side, these wounds were really for you.”

I pray that we will all turn to the Cross and find there the undeniable proof of God’s personal, unconditional love. Then, through our kindness and love, may we convince others that they too are worthy of God’s love.

Sister Constance Veit is the communications director for the Little Sisters of the Poor in the United States and an occupational therapist.

‘Les Misérables’ and the moral questions behind migration

On a recent vacation, I read Victor Hugo’s “Les Misérables.”

Hugo was truly a poet and philosopher. “Les Misérables” became one of his most popular works through its musical presentation on Broadway and later as a film. It tells various stories about life with distinct and complicated moral issues that need resolution.

The words ‘les misérables’ appear only once in the whole book. It is a description of the poor who were seeking justice, not necessarily a revolution, but just the basics of life. “Les misérables” is hard to translate, but it means those in difficult straits; the French dictionary explains the word more.

When I was a young boy, I asked my paternal grandfather why he had come to America from Italy, and he

answered me in two words — “la miseria.”

I understood the meaning from my grandparents’ description of life in Italy at the beginning of the last century. There was no work, no education and little food. That is why the Great Migration at the beginning of the last century brought les misérables to America from across Europe. The flow of the unwanted was stopped by the racist Immigration Act of 1924.

The new immigrants of today come for the same reasons as did those in the great migration. There are few opportunities to work in their countries, little opportunity for education for their children, as well as other deprivations. The scenes of roundups of immigrants in Minneapolis and other cities in the U.S. certainly remind us of the food riots depicted in “Les Misérables.”

The new migrants integrate quickly by working. This is why they have come to America to work, contribute and find a new life for themselves and their children. Accessing social benefits, which are few for the undocumented, is only justice for low-wage earners.

If we had policed the workplace as was promised in the legalization program of 1986, we would not have needed border enforcement. The workplace is where the problem begins and where it can be solved. Undocumented

(Continued on page 13)



Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio

Faith Community Pharmacy expands operations, Faith Community Health Network to provide comprehensive care, May 2026

Bella Bailey

Multimedia Correspondent

The Faith Community Pharmacy had humble beginnings in a “glorified closet,” inside of a Northern Kentucky St. Vincent dePaul, said Aaron Broomall, executive director, Faith Community Health Network. Since their operations began in 2002 the no-cost pharmacy has served over 10,800 individuals, dispensing more than 650,000 prescriptions.

Their community impact has decreased emergency room visits by 60 percent since 2021, and decreased hospitalizations by 74 percent. But the care provided by the pharmacy is limited by its very nature, “because we can only help people that have prescriptions,” said Mr. Broomall.

“We’ve always had dreams of opening a free clinic in Northern Kentucky, for a really long time,” said Mr. Broomall, but the timing, “never seemed right.”

In 2023 however, the team at Faith Community Pharmacy decided, it was time. “We started looking at it more in earnest, examining what we had, examining what the needs were in our community,” said Mr. Broomall.

The original strategic plan had the new Faith Community Clinic opening in 2027. However, at the beginning of 2025, legislation was passed that “has significant ramifications on our uninsured population in Northern Kentucky,” said Mr. Broomall, whose estimations has the uninsured population of Northern Kentucky rising to more than 40,000 by 2027. With this in mind the new Faith Community Clinic will be opening its doors in Newport, May of 2026, ready to serve the impoverished and uninsured with free, comprehensive healthcare.

With the addition of the clinic, the operations have turned into a health network, warranting a new name, The Faith Community Health Network. This includes both the Faith Community Pharmacy and Clinic.

The Faith Community Clinic will be staffed by volunteer providers, nurses and lab techs, a majority of which are being provided by the St. Elizabeth Healthcare System. The clinic will also have a CLIA (Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendment) approved lab onsite for urinalysis and blood work.

The clinic will also complete a social determinant of health screening. “Those are all these other factors that contribute to health that are not just diagnosis and medica-



tion. This can be anything from housing to food to workforce to abuse situations,” said Mr. Broomall.

From that screening, a patient may be directed to community resources so that they can receive what they need, outside of medicinal care.

“We’re really trying to address the holistic person, and all of the challenges that they have, so that they can get to a point of thriving,” said Mr. Broomall.

Part of holistic care is spiritual healing, said Mr. Broomall. “Healing is not just a matter of the physical body, but it has other components to it also. One of those components is spiritual healing,” he said.

“Our hospitality team will offer to pray with every one of our patients that come in ... we know that many patients that come to us, they’re stressed, they’re worried, they’re afraid ... we want to do everything we can to put their mind at ease and to meet them where they are, and that certainly includes spiritual care,” said Mr. Broomall.

The Faith Community Clinic will have a Spiritual Advisory Committee, whose founding board chair is the Dioceses own Msgr. William Cleves, pastor, Holy Spirit Parish, Newport. All lay members of the hospitality team will undergo training to ensure there is no “spiritual harm,” to patients of the clinic.

“We want to ensure that everybody who is talking to our patients, is doing it in a way that promotes a God that loves them, and God that’s there for them, and a God that wants the best for them,” said Mr. Broomall.

This comprehensive, holistic approach to healthcare will make the hour that patients spend at the Faith Community Clinic, “one of the most valuable hours they have in their year,” said Mr. Broomall.

“By the time they give us that hour and they walk out the door, they will understand where they’re at with their health, they will have had somebody offer them care for their spiritual needs, we will have talked to them about the other challenges that they’re facing and worked with them to connect them to other resources so that they can be

holistically healed and be on a better trajectory towards thriving, and we will have provided them with critical education,” he said.



(above and below) Photos provided by the Faith Community Health Network showcases their new “beautifully built out space that promotes the dignity each person and will meet them in the way we deliver care with dignity too,” said Aaron Broomall, executive director.



Schools Commission

(Continued from page 3)

results of a recent survey of 1,200 alumni, parents, donors and priests have been shared.

Soon, leaders for the four sub-committees of the Catholic School Commission will be selected and prepared to lead the discussion of the fundamental aspects of Catholic education in the Diocese of Covington.

Mrs. McGuire emphasized that keeping the Holy Spirit at the forefront of the process is essential. “All of our work is guided by the Holy Spirit,” she said. “Our mission of Catholic education, at the center, is to be Christ-centered schools that are teaching about Jesus and the faith, and so everything we have do has to be through that lens.”

“I think the thing is, pray and trust that the Holy Spirit is going to guide us,” said Deacon Fortner. “It’s about spiritual transformation, it’s changing lives.” This, Deacon Fortner said, is why the Diocese is focusing on strategy, it is about changing the lives of those who walk through the doors of Diocesan schools.

“What is sacred in this process is the revelation that Jesus Christ is Lord, and the sacrifices of prayer, talent and treasure that our ancestors had offered in sewing the seed of faith in our region,” said Bishop Iffert. “As far as I’m concerned, there are no other sacred cows, there is no other set agenda. We need to discern together the way forward.”

Partners in Hope for the Poor Annual Dinner

“20 Years of Hope”

to benefit The Friends of the Rose Garden Mission

Thursday, June 4, 2026
6pm Social Hour | 7pm Dinner

Receptions Event Center
1379 Donaldson Road | Erlanger, KY

Keynote Speaker:
REV. REYNALDO S. TAYLOR

Honorees:
TO BE REVEALED AT THE DINNER

Go to partnersinhopeforthepoordinner.com
for more information or to register today!

Please RSVP by May 15th!

“Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer.” Romans 12: 12

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/>.

Thomas More University's Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel, Crestview Hills, will host a concert: "Because He Lives", April 30, 7-8:30 p.m. World-class, classically trained pianist Annie Takeuchi brings her talents and gifts to the Thomas More University campus for a special evening of sacred music and spiritual praise. Come join us as we celebrate in music this season of our Lord's Resurrection. All are welcome to attend this free concert. RSVP not necessary.

St. Mary Parish, Alexandria, Millions of Monicas group will have its first gathering Monday, May 4, 6:30-7:30 p.m. Join Catholic women called by the Holy Spirit to imitate St. Monica in praying for our children to return to or stay close to the practice of their Catholic faith. This is not a support group. For information, contact Carol at (859) 653-5638.

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Thomas More University Nursing presents "Learn More with Nursing", for any prospective students interested in the field. The event will be May 12, 4:30-6 p.m. at the Thomas More University's Nursing Department. Try nursing for yourself with hands-on simulations, real skills and real conversations. Sign up now at <https://apply.thomasmore.edu/>.

"Prayer Is Listening to the Heart of God", presented by Sister Marla Monahan, SND will be May 20 from 7-8 p.m. in the St. Barbara Sterling Event Center, Erlanger. Hosted by the Faith and Fellowship Committee. No RSVP needed.

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.

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 for more information; purchase at tmuky.us/concertsvp (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/

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.

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.

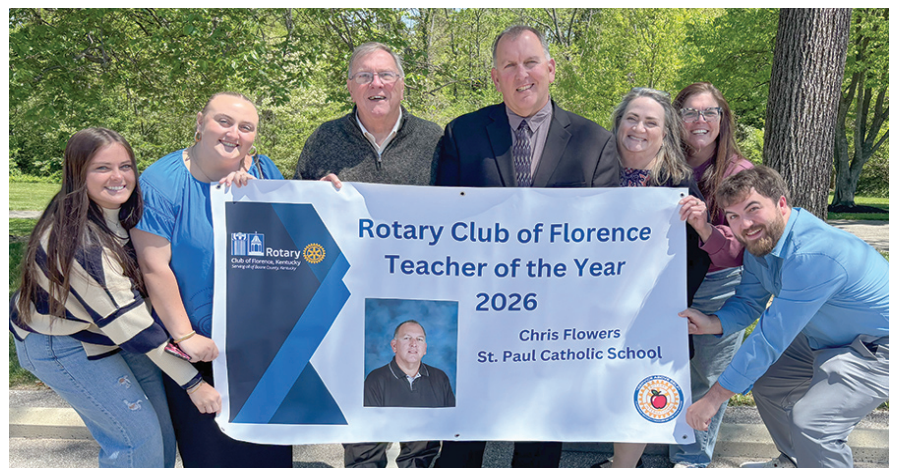
Parents of Addicted Loved Ones, (PAL) is a support group that meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, 6:30-8 p.m. at Catholic Charities, Latonia. It provides continuing education and support, at no charge, for parents with a son, daughter or spouse suffering from addiction to alcohol or drugs. No cost. 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 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 section of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.



Chris Flowers, St. Paul School, Florence, Junior High Social Studies and Religion Teacher, who was recognized as a 2026 Florence Rotary Teacher of the Year. Mr. Flowers was honored at a luncheon held in late April and was joined by his family, Principal Joanne Nesmith, Assistant Superintendent Dr. Michele Ulrich and the Florence Mayor, Dr. Julie Metzger Aubuchon.



A class of confirmandi from Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish, Erlanger, take a "selfie" with Bishop John Iffert

Pope Leo XIV brings a message of peace on his first Africa trip

Pope Leo XIV traveled more than 11,000 miles across four African countries in April on a 10-day apostolic trip highlighting peace efforts, works of mercy and the Catholic Church's vibrant presence on the continent. Pope Leo XIV's first trip to Africa — with stops in 11 destinations across Algeria, Cameroon, Angola and Equatorial Guinea — took place April 13-23. Pope Leo XIV celebrated eight public Masses and delivered 11 speeches while meeting political leaders, Catholic communities, students and missionaries. Along the way, the pope visited prisoners and a psychiatric hospital in Equatorial Guinea, an orphanage in Cameroon, a nursing home in Angola, and the Little Sisters of the Poor in Algeria. Here is his trip, so far, in brief.

Pope Leo praises witness of Algeria's Christian martyrs at meeting with local Catholics

ALGIERS — Pope Leo XIV honored Algeria's Christian martyrs during an evening visit to the Basilica of Our Lady of Africa April 13, highlighting their enduring witness in a predominantly Muslim nation. He said their sacrifice remains “a



OSV News photo/Simone Risoluti, Vatican Media

Pope Leo XIV lays a wreath as he visits the archaeological site of Hippo Regius in Annaba, Algeria, April 14, 2026

living seed that never ceases to bear fruit,” praising the 19 religious killed in the 1990s civil war, including the Trappist monks of Tibhirine, whose story was depicted in the 2010 French film “Of Gods and Men.” “It is precisely love for their brothers and sisters that inspired the witness of the martyrs we have commemorated,” the pope said. “In the face of hatred and violence, they remained faithful to charity even to the point of sacrificing themselves alongside many other men and women, Christians and Muslims.” The pope described the Church as a “discrete and precious presence” in Algeria, where Catholics number under 9,000. During a visit to the Great Mosque of Algiers earlier in the day, the pope emphasized interfaith respect, saying people can “learn to respect one another, live in harmony and build a world of peace.”

‘Son of Augustine’: Pope Leo XIV retraces St. Augustine’s steps in Algeria

ANNABA, Algeria — Pope Leo XIV offered Mass April 14 at the basilica built near the site where St. Augustine died nearly 1,600 years ago, making a deeply personal pilgrimage in the footsteps of St. Augustine in Algeria. “Here the martyrs prayed; here St. Augustine loved his flock, fervently seeking the truth and serving Christ with ardent faith,” the pope said in his homily, delivered in French. “Be heirs to this tradition, bearing witness through fraternal charity to the freedom of those born from above as a hope of salvation for the world.” Preaching to hundreds of people inside the Basilica of St. Augustine, the pope, a member of the Augustinian order who called himself a “son of Augustine” in his first speech as pope from the loggia of St. Peter’s Basilica, emphasized Augustine’s dramatic conversion from a restless seeker of truth to one of Christianity’s greatest saints. A small and very diverse Catholic community carries on Augustine’s legacy in modern Algeria, a nation that is more than 99% Muslim. Attending the Mass were many young Catholics from different African countries who are studying in Algeria. Before the Mass, Pope Leo visited the nearby archaeological ruins of ancient Hippo Regius, the Roman city where Augustine served as bishop from about A.D. 396 until his death in 430, as Vandal forces besieged its walls. Arriving in the rain beneath a white umbrella, the

pope laid a wreath of flowers, planted a small olive tree and paused in silent prayer before the ancient columns. He also visited a nursing home adjacent to the basilica run by the Little Sisters of the Poor, where five sisters and a team of volunteers and staff care for approximately 40 elderly residents, the majority of whom are Muslim.

Pope finds the embodiment of the ‘guiding principle above all’ in Algeria

ANNABA, Algeria — In a country marred by hardship, deep faith and hard-won independence, Pope Leo XIV pointed to Algeria as a living witness to what he called the Church’s “guiding principle above all,” a charity that transcends power, binds community and makes peace. Throughout the first leg of his 11-day trip across Africa, the pope returned again and again to one idea: peace comes not through power or dominance, but through a sacrificial love, exemplified in Christ. In the Basilica of St. Augustine, his spiritual father, Pope Leo presented the Christians of Algeria as an example of this aspect of the Church’s mission, asking that they remain a humble

and faithful sign of Christ’s love. “Your presence in this country is like incense: a glowing grain that spreads fragrance because it gives glory to the Lord and joy and comfort to so many brothers and sisters,” he said during his final Mass in the country April 14. In his homily, he described a Church of charity, “where there is despair, she kindles hope, where there is misery, she brings dignity, and where there is conflict, she brings reconciliation.”

Pope Leo on papal plane to Cameroon: St. Augustine invites all to search for God and truth today

ABOARD THE PAPAL FLIGHT TO YAOUNDE, Cameroon — Pope Leo XIV spoke to journalists aboard the papal plane on April 15 on the five-hour flight from Algeria to Cameroon, underlining St. Augustine’s enduring importance today, saying that the saint’s invitation “to search for God and to search for truth is something that is very much needed today.” Reflecting on the past two days in Algeria, the first leg of the pope’s 11-day tour of four African countries, the pope said that his return to the modern Algerian city of Annaba and the ruins of the Roman city of Hippo on April 14 was not only “a special blessing for me personally,” but also “symbolically significant” to “offer to the Church and the world a vision that St. Augustine offers us in terms of that search for God and the struggle to build community.” The papal plane touched down in the Cameroonian capital of Yaoundé around 3 p.m. local time on April 15. The pope was welcomed with a full honor guard on the tarmac at the foot of the staircase of the plane. Pope Leo is visiting the central African nation April 15-18, during which time he will meet with religious and political leaders, traditional chiefs, peace-makers, as well as the more than 8 million Catholics living in the country.

Pope Leo arrives in Angola, calls for fostering ‘just model of coexistence’

LUANDA, Angola — Pope Leo XIV arrived in Angola’s capital April 18 for an apostolic visit to a nation of more than 20 million Catholics, as the country continues to face deep social and economic challenges despite its natural wealth. In his first address to government leaders, the pope warned about the human cost of resource exploitation. “Dear friends, I have

mentioned the material riches upon which powerful interests lay their claim, even within your own country. How much suffering, how many deaths, how many social and environmental disasters are brought about by this logic of extractivism,” he said. The scars of Angola’s brutal civil war, which killed between 500,000 and 800,000 people between 1975 and 2002, have not fully healed. Land mines still litter the countryside, and Bishop Vicente Sanombo of the Diocese of Kuito-Bié said he hopes the papal visit will serve as a catalyst for continued national healing, an aspiration expressed in the motto for the papal visit, “Pope Leo XIV, pilgrim of hope, reconciliation, and peace, blesses Angola.” Part of his 11-day apostolic journey to Africa, the papal visit to Angola is scheduled to run through April 21, with the pope set to travel to the pilgrimage site of Our Lady of Muxima Shrine, the northeastern city of Saurimo to celebrate an outdoor Mass and visit a nursing home, as well as meeting members of the local Catholic community at Luanda’s Parish of Our Lady of Fatima.

Pope Leo XIV arrives in Cameroon as ‘a servant of dialogue’ amid violent separatist conflict

YAOUNDÉ, Cameroon — Pope Leo XIV arrived in Cameroon April 15, urging peace in a country marked by separatist conflict. Addressing civil leaders in Yaoundé, he said he came “as a shepherd and as a servant of dialogue, fraternity and peace,” underlining that “there is such a hunger and thirst for justice” in the country. Sitting next to Cameroonian authoritarian President Paul Biya, Pope Leo described the toll of violence since 2017, saying, “Lives have been lost, families displaced, children deprived of schooling and young people no longer see a future,” adding, “behind the numbers are the faces, stories and shattered hopes of real people.” Just days before the pope’s visit, separatists announced a temporary ceasefire. Despite political tensions, local Church leaders voiced hope. One bishop told OSV that he hopes the Holy Father’s visit will be a “moment of conversion.” Pope Leo stressed that peace “is everyone’s responsibility, beginning with civil authorities.”

At Cameroonian orphanage, Pope Leo tells children they can always find a friend in Jesus

YAOUNDE, Cameroon — Pope Leo XIV brought joy to 64 orphaned and abandoned children on the evening of April 15 when he visited the Ngul Zamba orphanage in Cameroon, blessing the children and assuring them that despite their suffering, Jesus “cares especially for children like you.” The orphanage, whose name means “the power of God” in the Ewondo language, is run by the Congregation of the Daughters of Mary and currently houses children ranging in age from 3 to 20 years old. “Dear children, I know that many of you have endured difficult trials,” the pope told the children, speaking in French. “Some of you have known the pain of loss through the death of parents or loved ones. Others have experienced fear,



OSV News photo/Alberto Pizzoli, pool via Reuters

Pope Leo XIV watches children perform as he visits the Ngul Zamba Orphanage in Yaounde, Cameroon, April 15, 2026.

rejection, abandonment, deprivation and uncertainty. Yet, you are called to a future that is greater than your wounds.” The pope drew on the Gospel to remind the children of Christ’s particular love for the young, noting that Jesus “would often place them at the center of a gathering” and looks upon each child “with that same affection” today. The visit became a spontaneous moment of celebration when the children sang for the pope — and he joined in. Afterward, children and religious sis-

ters alike, including some elderly sisters in wheelchairs, danced and sang in praise, offering a hymn drawing from the Blessed Virgin Mary's Magnificat. The visit to the orphanage took place on Pope Leo's first day in Cameroon, and the third day of an 11-day apostolic visit to four African countries.

'We can always begin anew': Pope Leo leads peace meeting in heart of Cameroon's conflict zone

BAMENDA, Cameroon — In Cameroon's conflict-scarred northwest, Pope Leo XIV delivered a forceful call for peace during an emotional gathering in Bamenda April 16. Among those addressing the pope was Sister Carine Tangiri Mangu, who recalled being kidnapped by separatists and held for three days without food or sleep. She said constant prayer of the rosary sustained their hope. The region's long-running Anglophone crisis has killed thousands and displaced many since 2017. At St. Joseph's Cathedral, the pope declared, "I am here to proclaim peace," while condemning those who profit from war and exploit religion for violence. Local leaders shared harrowing accounts, including attacks on worshippers and entire communities forced from their homes. Despite deep trauma, religious leaders described ongoing efforts to mediate dialogue. Pope Leo encouraged the faithful to remain hopeful, insisting that God has not abandoned them. The cathedral visit ended with a symbolic release of doves, drawing cheers from the crowd. Before flying back to Yaoundé, Cameroon's capital, Pope Leo offered Mass at Bamenda's airport, which was only recently renovated in anticipation of his visit. "Consolation for broken hearts and hope for change in society are possible if we entrust ourselves to God and God's word," the pope said in his homily in English.

Pope Leo XIV celebrates Mass with 120,000 people in Cameroon: 'Bring the bread of life to your neighbors'

DOUALA, Cameroon — Pope Leo XIV celebrated Mass for more than 120,000 people in Cameroon's largest city April 17, urging the "beloved children of the African continent" to respond to hunger with both charity and faith, sharing material food and "the bread of life." Held in a parking area near Douala's Japoma Stadium due to large crowds, the liturgy drew faithful who waited overnight. Remerit Ngwe, 28, said, "Since yesterday 7 p.m. we slept here on the stone waiting for the pope. We are so happy we finally saw the pope, Pope Leo, a once in a lifetime experience. Long live the pope!" In his homily, the pope asked, "where is God in the face of people's hunger?" Citing the Gospel, he said, "A serious problem was solved by blessing the little food that was present and sharing it with all who were hungry." "There is bread for everyone if it is given to everyone," he said, adding the Eucharist is "the source of renewed faith." In an interview with OSV News, Father Gabriel Abega Owona of the Diocese of Sangmélima said that for priests in Cameroon, "our daily challenge is to nurture faith within a context of material poverty, yet of immense spiritual richness."

Pope Leo tells African students AI revolution risks changing 'our very relationship with truth'

YAOUNDÉ, Cameroon — Pope Leo XIV has warned that artificial intelligence could reshape how humanity relates to truth. Speaking April 17 at the Catholic University of Central Africa in Yaoundé, he urged students to pair technical skill with ethical formation in a rapidly digital world. "Like every great historical transformation, this too calls not only for technical competence, but also for a humanistic formation," he said, cautioning that some digital spaces are "structured to persuade." He warned that simulated environments risk eroding real human connection, "When simulation becomes the norm, it weakens the human capacity for discernment." He added: "What is at stake is not merely the risk of error; but a transformation in our very relationship with truth." Calling students back to reality, the pope said, "Dear friends, you, however, are real persons!" He also urged Catholic universities to form ethical leaders, confront corruption as a "scourge," and prepare graduates to serve the common good with integrity.



OSV News photo/Simone Risoluti, Vatican Media
Pope Leo XIV greets a person during a visit at Jean Pierre Olie Psychiatric Hospital in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, April 21, 2026, during his apostolic visit to the African nation.

The Eucharist can 'rekindle lost hope,' Pope Leo says at Sunday Mass in Angola

KILAMBA, Angola — Pope Leo XIV celebrated an outdoor Mass April 19 in Kilamba, drawing an estimated 100,000 faithful and delivering a message of hope to a nation still marked by civil war. Speaking in Portuguese, he connected the Gospel story of the Road to Emmaus with Angola's struggles, urging Catholics to rediscover hope in the Eucharist. "The history of your country, the ongoing difficult consequences you endure, the social and economic problems and the various forms of poverty call for the presence of a Church that knows how to walk alongside you," Pope Leo said, adding that the Eucharist can "rekindle lost hope." He described Angola as a "beautiful yet wounded country, which hungers and thirsts for hope, peace, and fraternity," warning against discouragement. "When one is long immersed in a history so characterized by pain, one can risk losing hope and remaining paralyzed by discouragement, just like the two disciples" on the way to Emmaus, he said. The pope also cautioned against syncretism, saying: "Remain faithful to what the Church teaches, trust your pastors, and keep your gaze fixed on Jesus..." Pilgrims traveled long distances, reflecting a young, vibrant Church. Pope Leo closed his homily entrusting the nation to Mary, Our Lady of Muxima.

The heart of the Church is 'alive and beating': Pope Leo XIV leads rosary at beloved Muxima Marian shrine in Angola

MUXIMA, Angola — Pope Leo XIV led tens of thousands of Angolan Catholics in praying the rosary April 19 at Angola's most visited Catholic Marian shrine. Pope Leo made the pilgrimage to the Sanctuary of Mama Muxima, which means "Mother of the Heart" in the local Kimbundu language, after celebrating morning Mass for roughly 100,000 faithful in Kilamba, a district near the Angolan capital city of Luanda. Local authorities estimated approximately 30,000 pilgrims gathered on the Muxima shrine's esplanade for the recitation of the glorious mysteries of the rosary. "We are in a sanctuary where, for centuries, many men and women have prayed in times of joy and also in moments of sorrow and great suffering in the history of this country," the pope said, speaking in Portuguese. "For a long time now, Mama Muxima has quietly worked to keep the heart of the Church alive and beating." The church, formally dedicated to Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception, was first established in 1599 during the era of Portuguese colonial Angola and is tied to the history of the transatlantic slave trade and Queen Nzinga. More than 1 million pilgrims visit the shrine during its largest pilgrimage

alone, which occurs each year between Aug. 31 and Sept. 1.

In Angola, Catholic Church steps in to give a voice to mining-affected communities

LUANDA, Angola — When more than 100 villagers' homes were torn down because they sat atop mineral-rich land, it was the Catholic Church that went to court. The case, brought by a commission of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Angola and São Tomé and Príncipe, resulted in new homes for displaced families in the southern province of Huíla, according to church officials. Across Angola, church leaders say such interventions — legal, advocacy and negotiations — with mining companies are becoming more common. As the Catholic Church's global leadership increasingly looks to Africa as a wellspring of vitality and growth, communities across the continent are pressing it to take a clearer stand on one of their most urgent concerns: the human and environmental cost of mining. In resource-rich regions like Angola, Catholic leaders are navigating a fraught reality, caught between governments and multinational mining companies on one side, and communities facing displacement, pollution and deepening poverty on the other.

Pope Leo meets Equatorial Guinea's dictator, quoting St. Augustine's 'City of God'

MALABO, Equatorial Guinea — Pope Leo XIV arrived April 21 in Equatorial Guinea, the fourth and final country of his 11-



OSV News photo/Simone Risoluti, Vatican Media
Pope Leo XIV walks with President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo of Equatorial Guinea upon the pontiff's arrival at Malabo International Airport April 21, 2026, to begin his apostolic visit to the African country.

day apostolic journey in Africa, where the pope met the country's longtime ruler and urged the country's civil authorities to choose justice over power, quoting St. Augustine's "City of God." The pope flew northwest from Luanda, Angola, crossing central Africa before landing on the island of Malabo, which served as the country's capital until January. Crowds lined the streets from the airport to the presidential palace, waving Vatican flags and cheering as Pope Leo passed in the popemobile. Many wore yellow hats bearing his image, while women in brightly colored dresses emblazoned with his image danced and sang. At the airport, Pope Leo was welcomed by a military band and President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, who has ruled the oil-rich Central African nation since seizing power in a 1979 coup and is widely regarded as one of the world's most authoritarian leaders. Speaking in Spanish at the presidential palace, with Obiang seated beside him, Pope Leo delivered a pointed appeal for justice and ethical governance in a country long criticized for corruption and human rights abuses. "In a world wounded by arrogance, people hunger and thirst for justice," the pope said, telling the authorities that the Church can help to form "free and responsible consciences." Roughly 75% of Equatorial Guinea's population of about 1.6 million is Catholic, making it one of Africa's most Catholic countries. The visit marks only the second papal trip to the nation, following St. John Paul's visit more than four decades ago.

Trump administration ends contract with Miami Catholic Charities to shelter unaccompanied minors

Gina Christian
OSV News

The Trump administration has canceled an \$11 million contract with Catholic Charities of the Archdiocese of Miami for sheltering unaccompanied migrant children, leaving just three months to place an unspecified number of children.

The federal Office of Refugee Resettlement advised the agency of the funding termination “at the end of March,” said Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski of Miami in an email to OSV News.

The move comes amid the Trump administration’s ongoing crackdown on immigration, which saw the abrupt end in 2025 of a decades-long partnership with the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops for refugee resettlement.

Archbishop Wenski said the children “that were in our custody have been transferred” by the ORR “to other facilities,” noting the archdiocesan Catholic Charities agency “had the capacity to care for up to 81 children.”

He noted that some of the children could be at risk of deportation, if their parents are found to be “outside of the country and wish to be reunited with the children.”

“Some children are very traumatized as you can imagine,” Archbishop Wenski told OSV News. “A child without parents on his or her own cannot cross the territory of Mexico, for example, without incurring some trauma, including in some instances rape.”

According to an April 15 article by the Miami Herald, the Department of Health and Human Services’ Office of Refugee Resettlement had contracted with Catholic Charities for several years to shelter migrant children entering the country without parents or supervising adults.

The agency provided what the newspaper called “the equivalent of a federally funded foster care system” parallel to that operated by state agencies.

Archbishop Wenski of Miami had declined direct comment to the newspaper for its article, but his office instead provided a statement the archbishop had written for the Miami Herald’s editorial board.

In that statement, the archbishop said, “The U.S. government has abruptly decided to end more than 60 years of relationship with Catholic Charities in the Archdiocese of Miami.”

He added that “the Archdiocese of Miami’s services for unaccompanied minors have been recognized for their excellence and have served as a model for other agencies throughout the country.”

“Our track record in serving this vulnerable population is unmatched,” said Archbishop Wenski in his statement. “Yet, the Archdiocese of Miami’s Catholic Charities’ services for unaccompanied minors has been stripped of funding and will be forced to shut down within three months.”

Emily G. Hilliard, press secretary for HHS, told the Miami Herald that “ORR is closing and consolidating unused facilities as the Trump Administration continues efforts to stop illegal entry and the smuggling and trafficking of unaccompanied alien children.”

HHS also told the outlet that the population of unaccompanied children cared for by Catholic Charities was “significantly lower” under the Trump administration — 1,900 as compared to a peak of 22,000 under President Joe Biden.

Archbishop Wenski said in his statement to the Miami Herald that although the number of unaccompanied minors had declined and that “some programs may be scaled back” or closed outright, “it is baffling that the U.S. government would shut down a program that it would be hard-pressed to replicate at the level of competence” shown by Catholic Charities.

He pointed to the program’s ability to provide a range of resources, including supportive services, “given the trauma that many of these children have endured before arriving in the U.S.”

The archbishop also noted the historic partnership between Catholic Charities and the federal government, particularly in regard to Operation Pedro Pan, which in the early 1960s saw 110 Catholic Charities agencies throughout the nation shelter thousands of children from Cuba, in collaboration with the U.S. State Department.

Between 1960 and 1964, some 7,000 of the 14,000 Cuban children who entered the U.S. were temporarily housed by Catholic Charities under the “Cuban Children’s Program.”

“The positive impact of this cooperation between the federal government and Catholic Charities can be readily seen in the lives of former Pedro Pan children who, through this intervention, grew up to be successful members of our communities,” Wenski wrote.

He noted that among the alumni of the program are professionals, clergy and political leaders — including former U.S. Republican Sen. Melquiades (Mel) Martinez.

Asked by OSV News if he believed the ORR contract cancellation had resulted from the Trump administration’s recent clashes with the nation’s Catholic bishops over several issues — especially immigration and the U.S.-Israel war on Iran — Archbishop Wenski said, “Correlation does not mean causation.”

“However,” he added, “during the end of the Biden administration, some politicians on the right make calumnious allegations that ‘Catholic Charities’ was working with the cartels in bringing children into the U.S.”

“The truth is that border patrol or ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) when apprehending an unaccompanied minor is required to turn them over to HHS’s ORR, who is to seek the ‘best interest of the child’ in placing him/her,” said Archbishop Wenski. “Our contracts are with ORR — an agency of the federal government and no one else.”



OSV News photo/Rocio Granados, La Voz Catolica, Florida Catholic
Msgr. Roberto Garza, center, board member of Miami Catholic Charities, poses with some of the agency’s staff at St. Bede’s Village in Key West March 13, 2025, the day before the blessing and ribbon-cutting ceremony for 10 new apartments. The affordable housing development will serve people with disabilities in Key West.

One year ago today: The pope from the peripheries died on Easter Monday

Catholic News Service

One year ago today, Pope Francis died at 7:35 a.m., April 21, 2025.

It came the day after Easter, when — barely able to raise his hands — he gave his blessing “urbi et orbi” (to the city and the world). Looking drawn and worn, the 88-year-old pope from Argentina took his final ride in the popemobile,



CNS photo/Vatican Media

Pope Francis appears on the central balcony of St. Peter’s Basilica to deliver his Easter blessing “urbi et orbi” (to the city and the world) at the Vatican April 20, 2025. Pope Francis, formerly Argentine Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, died April 21, 2025, at age 88.d

spending about 15 minutes among the crowd.

But then, the next morning, which was a major holiday in Italy, church bells tolled the death knell after U.S. Cardinal Kevin J. Farrell, chamberlain of the Holy Roman Church, announced that Pope Francis had died just a few hours ago.

“His whole life was dedicated to the service of the Lord and his church,” Cardinal Farrell said in a video announcement broadcast from the chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae, where Pope Francis lived.

The Wikimedia Foundation said that its “Deaths in 2025” entry, which included Pope Francis, was their second most-read entry during the year. And plenty of people took the occasion to learn more about his life too, adding that “His English Wikipedia article was the 11th most-read (page) of the year.”

Elected March 13, 2013, Pope Francis was the first pope in history to come from the Southern Hemisphere, the first non-European to be elected in almost 1,300 years and the first Jesuit to serve as successor to St. Peter. Following in the footsteps of his predecessors, Pope Francis was an untiring voice for peace, urging an end to armed conflict, supporting dialogue and encouraging reconciliation.

He gave new energy to millions of Catholics — and caused concern for some — as he transformed the image of the papacy into a pastoral ministry based on personal encounters and strong convictions about poverty, mission and dialogue.

His simple lifestyle, which included his decision not to live in the Apostolic Palace and his choice of riding around Rome in a small Fiat or Ford instead of a Mercedes sedan, sent a message of austerity.

Although he repeatedly said he did not like to travel, he made 47 foreign trips, taking his message of Gospel joy to North and South America, Europe, Africa and Asia.

He was elected after Pope Benedict XVI retired in 2013. Then-Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio was already a known and respected figure within the College of Cardinals, so much so that no one disputed a respected Italian journal’s report that he had received the second-highest number of votes on all four ballots cast in the 2005 conclave that had elected Pope Benedict.

Cardinal Bergoglio chose the name Francis to honor St. Francis of Assisi.

“Go out” was Pope Francis’ constant plea to every Catholic, from curial cardinals to the people in the pews. More than once, he told people that while the Bible presents Jesus as knocking at the door of people’s hearts to get in, today Jesus is knocking at the doors of parish churches trying to get out and among the people.

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Candidates should have a bachelor's degree or higher with 3-5 years of experience in education, admissions or a related field. If you are a strategic thinker who thrives on building community and inspiring future students, we encourage you to apply.

Learn more at ndapandas.org.

Interested candidates should submit a resume and cover letter to Ms. Lauren Hitron at ndahr@ndapandas.org.

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Notre Dame Academy is seeking an Executive Director of Institutional Advancement responsible for developing a culture of philanthropy among the NDA community.

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For more information go to ndapandas.org. Interested candidates should submit a cover letter and resume to Ms. Lauren Hitron at ndahr@ndapandas.org.

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Live not by lies; witness to the truth

(Continued from page 5)

the world, raising our voices, proclaiming: "Let the whole house of Israel know for certain that God has made both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified!"

How do we witness to this? We repent! We seek the forgiveness of our sins! We pray for the gifts of the Holy Spirit! We stay faithful to the Truth revealed to us in the

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tell lies, no matter how comfortable, convenient, or socially acceptable the lies might seem.

Father Phillip W. DeVous is the pastor of St. Charles Borromeo, Flemingsburg and St. Rose of Lima, May's Lick.

'Les Misérables' and the moral questions behind migration

(Continued from page 5)

workers will continue to fill labor gaps as long as our economy depends on low-wage jobs.

The brutal tactics displayed by ICE in Minneapolis and other places, which ended in the killing of two innocent protestors, are unnecessary. They were in the wrong place at the wrong time with a gun and in a car because they saw it as just cause. They did not merit the death penalty.

In a previous article, I mentioned the immigration roundups and workplace invasions of the 1970s, which caused harm to immigration agents as well as migrants. There are better ways to control our unknown population. Unknown legally, although most pay social security and taxes.

In the workplace, some have become les misérables, and sometimes they are treated unjustly.

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What we learned from the 1986 legalization is that it is possible to regularize the workers among us and to give them the justice that comes from their contributions earned by hard work. The enormous amount of money being spent on enforcement could easily be turned into a massive legalization program.

We could register all those working and, more easily, detect the criminal element. In the book "Les Misérables," the revolutionary elements who participated in demonstrations did not even understand the causes for which they risked their lives. But they did see injustice that needed a solution.

The American way of protesting comes from our constitutional rights. We believe in justice as defined by our laws. And if we do not like the laws in a constitutional democracy, we can peacefully change the laws. We cannot

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suppress opposition with brutality against the undocumented or those who choose to defend them.

If we take time to understand the root causes of our working immigrant population, we will understand better solutions. In 1924, racially biased laws blocked certain groups of migrants, namely from southern and eastern Europe.

Today, the unwanted are being penalized by the cancellation of their previous legal status and deportation. Every social issue has some moral content, but it seems that only the poets and philosophers can discern possible solutions to our human problems, while lawmakers are reluctant to collaborate in finding them.

Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio is the retired bishop of the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York. He writes the column "Walking With Migrants" for The Tablet and OSV News.

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If you feel called to be part of something special, we would love to hear from you. Come lead. Come serve. Come grow with us. Interested candidates must be practicing Roman Catholics. Please mail or email a letter of interest along with a comprehensive resume, including compensation history and references with contact email addresses to **Stephen Kopyay, SPHR, P.O. Box 15550, Covington, KY 41015-0550, or skopyay@covdio.org.**



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

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■ Thursday, April 30, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

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

■ Tuesday, May 19, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, June 17, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, June 17, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, July 1, 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, July 1, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

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NEWS BRIEFS

National/World

Pope Leo named one of Time magazine’s ‘100 Most Influential People of 2026’

NEW YORK — Time magazine has named Pope Leo XIV to its “100 Most Influential People of 2026” list. The accolade was announced April 15, with the first U.S.-born pope joining a diverse group of individuals — some famous, some lesser known — distinguished by their contributions as leaders, innovators, icons, artists and pioneers. Each list member was feted on Time’s website with a short reflection from a prominent figure, with filmmaker Martin Scorsese saying in his commentary about Pope Leo that he was “struck by his bravery and his common touch.” He noted that Pope Francis, whom he knew and loved as a friend, “always stressed that the church was not a building or a symbol but the actual teachings of Jesus,” adding, “I believe that Pope Leo shares that view.” Scorsese said that like his predecessor, Pope Leo “seems to be committed to giving the laity a more active role in the leadership of the faith and the practice of charity.” The filmmaker also pointed to Pope Leo’s endorsement of the Christian classic “The Practice of the Presence of God,” which Scorsese said, “offers a model for finding God in daily life, and for taking the church out of buildings, no matter how majestic, and into everyday existence.” He quoted Pope Leo’s introduction to a new edition of the book — “All Christian ethics can truly be summed up in this continual calling to mind the fact that God is present: He is here” — adding, “I’m encouraged by his words.”

Eucharistic Congress says ‘one nation under God’ is about ‘spiritual renewal’

CROOKSTON, Minn. — Amid what it called “a moment of heightened tension” in the U.S. and the world, the National Eucharistic Congress said its use of the phrase “one nation under God” is “not about political statements, but about spiritual renewal.” The phrase forms the theme of the 2026 National Eucharistic Pilgrimage May 24-July 5, traveling through most of the nation’s 13 original colonies as the U.S. marks its 250th anniversary. The National Eucharistic Congress, chaired by Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, made the comments in an April 21 statement. The NEC, which is working in partnership with the U.S. bishops to implement the National Eucharistic Revival, did not specifically reference the U.S.-Israel war on Iran, amid which President Donald Trump, Vice President JD Vance and House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-La., have openly challenged Pope Leo XIV’s repeated calls for peace, while invoking Christian symbolism and Scripture in support of the administration’s initiation of the conflict. “The ‘One Nation Under God’ pilgrimage is a united prayer of petition to God on behalf of our country and for peace in the world,” the NEC said.

Church concerned about Costa Rica’s deal with US to receive deportees

SAN JOSE, Costa Rica — The Catholic Church in Costa Rica is raising concerns about a new migration agreement the Central American nation has with the United States that allows up to 25 deported migrants per week to be sent to the country. The first group arrived April 11 in San José, including people from Africa, Asia and Latin America. Under the deal, signed by outgoing President Rodrigo Chaves and U.S. envoy Kristi Noem, migrants will stay in a hotel for a week under the International Organization for Migration. What happens next remains unclear. Auxiliary Bishop Daniel Blanco of San José said the church was not consulted when the church has much to contribute to the government when it comes to immigration, helping meet material and spiritual needs of migrants, and he

warned the country may lack the capacity to assist such a diverse group, especially given language barriers. Church leaders also pointed to a troubled 2025 case, when migrants were held in poor conditions until a court intervened. Catholic officials called for policies that prioritize human dignity, while expressing hope for dialogue with incoming President Laura Fernández Delgado.

Christians protest after Pakistani court says forced marriage of 13-year-old legal

LAHORE, Pakistan — Christians in Pakistan are protesting a controversial court ruling that upheld the marriage of a 13-year-old Christian girl to a 30-year-old Muslim man, a case widely known as “Maria.” The girl’s family says she was abducted and forcibly converted. Church leaders, human rights groups, and politicians warn the decision could set a dangerous precedent for minority protections. In response, the federal government has quietly formed a 37-member national committee — including Catholic and Protestant bishops — to review the case and propose safeguards against forced conversions and marriages. Officials said a formal announcement about the committee is pending. Catholic leaders have strongly condemned the ruling, calling it unjust and harmful to vulnerable girls. Activists estimate nearly 1,000 non-Muslim women and minors face forced conversions annually. Meanwhile, lawmakers in Punjab have advanced legislation to set the minimum marriage age at 18, signaling possible reform amid growing pressure. Father Khalid Rashid Asi, diocesan director of the National Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Faisalabad, welcomed the development regarding efforts to curb forced marriages of Christian girls. Speaking to OSV News, he emphasized that Church leaders, theologians and other stakeholders should be consulted on such matters.

US saw more than 1.12 million abortions in 2025; actual figures likely higher

WASHINGTON — New data estimates show the number of abortions in the U.S. remained stable in 2025, totaling some 1.126 million, with apparent declines in out-of-state travel for abortions offset by increasing access to telehealth abortions. The actual number of abortions is likely higher, given certain exclusions in the estimates. At the same time, abortion data remains incomplete amid the lack of a mandatory, federal-level reporting system, researcher Mia Steupert of the Charlotte Lozier Institute — the education and research arm of Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America — told OSV News April 15. The Guttmacher Institute, a national policy and research firm that supports legalized abortion, released data March 24 from its “Monthly Abortion Provision Study” for calendar year 2025. Guttmacher found that the 2025 figures were “largely unchanged from 2024,” when the institute counted 1.124 million clinician-provided abortions. Steupert detailed a number of

gaps in abortion data, in the absence of a federally mandated reporting system, and given the inability to count the actual number of abortions from telehealth abortion pills. “Even Guttmacher, in their methodology, notes that they’re not tracking the number of completed abortions,” said Steupert. “They’re only talking about abortion drugs sent.”

Israeli military to investigate soldier who destroyed Jesus statue

JERUSALEM — Catholic leaders in the Holy Land expressed their “unreserved condemnation” after a picture of an Israeli soldier striking the head of a statue of Jesus in Debel, a Christian village in southern Lebanon, went viral on social media April 19. In an April 20 statement signed by Cardinal Pierbattista Pizzaballa, the Assembly of Catholic Ordinaries of the Holy Land expressed its “profound indignation and unreserved condemnation of the desecration of a representation of Jesus Crucified by an Israeli soldier in a Lebanese village.” In an April 19 statement, the Israel Defense Forces confirmed the photo’s authenticity and condemned the act as “wholly inconsistent” with its values, promising disciplinary action. The image, shared by journalist Younis Tirawi, appears to show a soldier striking a crucifix statue with a sledgehammer in the village of Debel. The incident sparked widespread outrage, especially among Christians, amid reports of rising harassment against Christian symbols in the region. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said in an April 20 X post: “I condemn the act in the strongest terms.” U.S. Ambassador to Israel Mike Huckabee took to X to say, “Swift, severe, & public consequences are needed” after the incident. Reuters news agency confirmed that the cross smashed by the soldier was part of a small shrine in a family’s garden on the edge of the village.

Bishops’ pro-life chair concerned about ‘uneven enforcement’ of FACE Act

WASHINGTON — After the Department of Justice released a report alleging the Biden administration “weaponized” a federal law crafted to protect access to both reproductive health facilities and houses of worship, Bishop Daniel E. Thomas of Toledo, Ohio, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities expressed concern about that law and its “uneven application.” Bishop Thomas told OSV News he is “thankful for the DOJ’s investigation into enforcement of the FACE Act.” In its 882-page report released April 14, the DOJ accuses the Biden administration of weaponizing the Freedom of Access to Clinic Entrances Act, or FACE Act, by collaborating with groups that support legal abortion to target pro-life organizations and individuals. It also says that in some criminal cases, there were disproportionate sentences for pro-life defendants and defendants who support abortion. However, some of the communications and actions detailed in the report took place in 2020 and January 2021, the final months of Trump’s first term. The DOJ report comes as that department faces scrutiny from some pro-life leaders for recent filings asking courts to dismiss or pause state lawsuits to roll back the Biden administration’s eased restrictions on mifepristone, a drug commonly used for first trimester abortion, but which is also used in some miscarriage care protocols.

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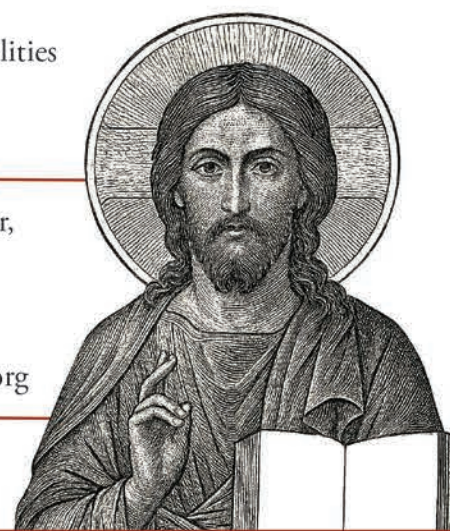
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For questions, please contact Isaak Abraham Isaak at 859-392-1529 or iisaak@covdio.org



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