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## Annual Catechetical Awards recognize 22 catechists from across the Diocese

Bella Bailey  
*Multimedia Correspondent*

The annual Catechetical Leadership Awards, May 14, recognize catechists from across the Diocese for their outstanding work in areas of catechesis, evangelization and leadership. For 43 years, the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization has hosted the evening of celebration, this year they honored 22 catechists for outstanding work.

Keynote speaker, Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys, spoke to the catechists and their families, thanking them for their years of dedication. Praising their faith in action, “the function of catechesis is to teach, catechize, the faith of the Catholic Church ... both by word and example. We can say all the words in the world, but if we don’t live those words in the sight of others, then our words are empty,” he said.

“The words are important, teaching is important, but the living out those teachings is what really matters,” said Bishop Foys. Through their work in the schools, parishes and in youth ministry, the catechists live their faith and influence the lives of others. Their recognition by the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization is an honor which denotes their outstanding work in pursuit of the catechetical mission of the Church.

“The Churches directive for catechesis states that faith must be known, celebrated, lived and turned into prayer. This is what your called to do, the faith must be known, celebrated, lived and turned into prayer in a personal and total encounter of the heart, mind and sense with Christ,” said Bishop Foys. “It’s an awesome mission. Frightening, actuate, to put people not only in touch, but in communion, in intimacy, with the person of Jesus Christ.”

In his closing remarks, Bishop John Iffert reflected on Pope Leo XIV’s first papal exhortation, “Dilexi Te,” which focuses on the Churches love of the poor: “There are many ways of being poor,” said Bishop Iffert, “we can be poor in material goods, we can be poor in not having enough to eat, we can be poor in our prospects ... the students you work with are poor in their experience and understanding of the world. So, to wade into their lives, to invite them to share yours, to be there for them, to be rich in the Word of God and in the connection that we offer to people who we care for them, this can be a great gift.”

The first award category to be recognized was Outstanding Early Childhood Teacher/Catechist, which recognized: Jean Collins, St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs; Marci Hagedorn, St. Joseph School, Crescent Springs; Mary Beth Meisenhelder, Blessed Sacrament School, Ft. Mitchell; and Anna Webster, St. John the Evangelist Parish, Carrollton.

Mrs. Collins was recognized for her significant role in preparing students for the sacraments of reconciliation and first Communion, through hands on activities, including a child-sized Mass kit, helping them to truly understand the sacramental process.

Mrs. Hagedorn, a second-grade teacher, weaves faith into every aspect of her classroom, helping to prepare students for the sacraments in a way that not only guides them intellectually, but spiritually, so that they can see the beauty of these sacraments.

*(Continued on page 4)*



(above) Pictured with Bishop John Iffert are, (from left): Marci Hagedorn, Patty Grothouse, Alan Harsin, Anna Webster, Mary Beth Meisenhelder, Jarrod Lux, Jean Collins and Deborah Finke. The group consists of winners for Outstanding Early Childhood, Middle School and Senior High School Teachers/Catechists.



(above) Pictured with Bishop Iffert are the winners of the Outstanding Catechetical Leaders Award (from left): Pamela McQueen, Soshana Boseley, Anita Dunn, Erin Redleski and Tina Klare.



(above) The winners of the Sister Ann Adele Frtiz Catechetical Leader Award and Outstanding Homeschool Educator Award\* with Bishop Iffert, (from left): Mary Creech, Shannon Barnes, Kate Iadipaolo\*, Shannon Wells and Divine Providence Sister Lynn Stenken.



(above) Youth ministry award winners with Bishop Iffert, (from left): Bradley Barnes, Hannah Ubelhor, Eva Rousseau and Alex Chadwick.

# From India to Edgewood, pastor celebrates 25 years of priesthood

**Maura Baker**  
Staff Writer

Twenty-five years ago, Father Baiju Kidaagen was ordained in his home country of India. This year, he celebrates this jubilee in Kentucky — with St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood, where he’s served as missionary and pastor for the majority of his priesthood.

Originally from the Indian state of Kerala, vocations to the priesthood and religious life are a “very common thing” in the region, according to Father Kidaagen — with Kerala being the region where it’s believed St. Thomas the Apostle arrived in India almost 2,000 years ago.

“We are encouraged from our childhood,” Father Kidaagen told the *Messenger* in an interview commemorating his jubilee, “or we grew up in a very faithful family background.” Even in Father Kidaagen’s own extended family, he mentioned a “presence” of religious life — including several aunts who are religious sisters.

His vocation was something he’d known since his childhood and, with the support of his family, Father Baiju entered seminary and eventually became a priest of the Order of St. Vincent de Paul.

In January 2007, the Diocese of Covington agreed to receive two Vincentian priests — one of these priests was Father Kidaagen, who was assigned to St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood, and has been a part of



**Father Baiju Kidaagen**



that community ever since.

This community is very important to Father Kidaagen, who, besides administering the sacraments, said that his favorite part of the priesthood is “celebrating Mass every day with people — people who go through all kinds of problems in their personal lives — seeing them all coming to the Church and gathering around the altar, because I know them personally.”

“When I stand at the altar, I know each of them personally, and I know what they are going through,” Father Kidaagen said. “Joining them and celebrating Mass has always been a joy, and that’s my favorite thing.”

In his past 20 years in the Diocese of Covington, Father Baiju said that there “are so many beautiful memories ... I came originally for five years, to 10, to 15 — now I am 20 years here. My favorite memory, if you ask me, I wouldn’t say is one memory — but since I have been here for this long, I have baptized children ... and it’s just knowing these people who have been little children and now young adults

and seeing them becoming somebody in their life ... it’s a great, great feeling.”

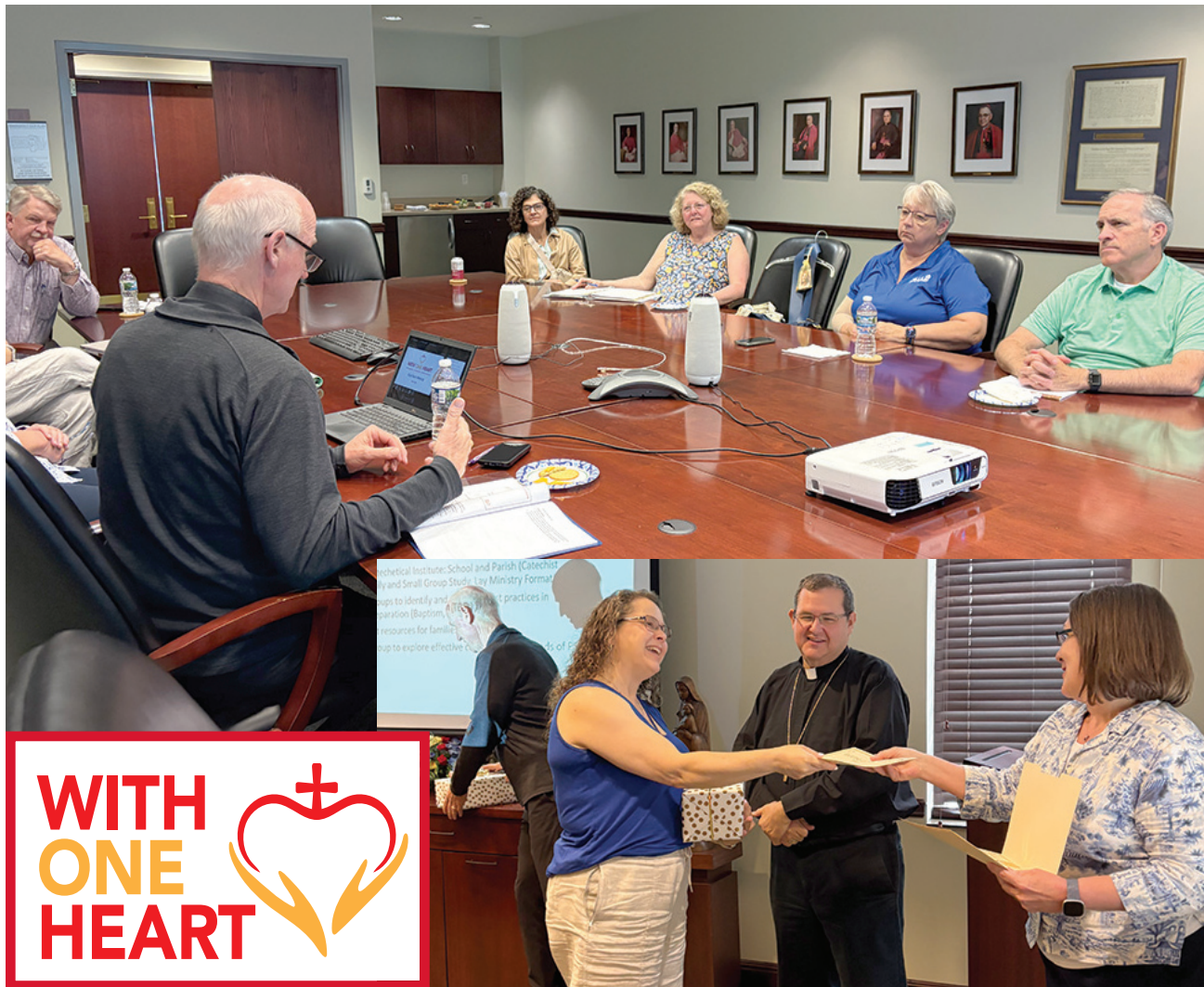
“When I am celebrating my 25th, I want to be thankful,” Father Baiju concluded in his interview. “I’m grateful to the Diocese of Covington, and to the parish of St. Pius. ... Ever since I came to this parish, I have experienced wholehearted support and love from my people here.”

He continued, saying, “I have experienced that wholehearted and supportive love, and that is why I am able to do what I’m able to do in a foreign country ... that always encourages me, that always inspires me, to do better in my ministry.”



## Bishop's Schedule

- |  |         |
|--|---------|
| <b>May 23</b><br>Graduation, St. Patrick High School, St. Patrick Parish, Maysville, 1 p.m.                  | 10 a.m. |
| <b>May 25</b><br>Curia closed — Memorial Day holiday   |         |
| <b>May 28</b><br>Diocesan Pastoral Council meeting (virtual), 6 p.m.   |         |
| <b>May 24</b><br>Mass and adult Confirmation, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption,                          |         |
| <b>May 23</b><br>Graduation, Covington Latin School, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 7 p.m. |         |



### With gratitude, With One Heart Core Team looks back and ahead

The With One Heart Core Team met for a final time, May 18, at the Curia Board Room. The Core Team has been meeting quarterly over the last three years with Deacon Jim Fortner, chief operating officer and Jamie Schroeder, chancellor, helping to guide implementation of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan. During the meeting, Deacon Fortner and Mrs. Schroeder gave a final presentation on the successes and remaining opportunities of the Diocesan Pastoral Plan. Bishop John Iffert joined the group to express his gratitude and to distribute a “thank you” gift — a statue of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. “Thank you for your good work and for sticking with us through this process,” said Bishop Iffert, sharing that he views the effort as being very successful and one that will continue. “We’re not turning back; we’re going to keep our hand to our plow. We’re going to expect goal setting and planning to become a part of the culture and the way we operate.”

### Official Assignments

*Effective May 19, 2026*

**Rev. Sibi Kurian, V.C.**  
To: Parochial Vicar, St. Timothy Parish, Union  
From: Vincentian Congregation, India

*Effective July 14, 2026*

**Rev. Michael T. Grady**  
To: Pastor, St. Therese Parish, Southgate  
From: Parochial Administrator, St. Therese Parish, Southgate

**Rev. Michael C. Hennigen**  
To: Pastor, St. John the Evangelist Parish and St. Ann Mission, Covington  
From: Parochial Vicar, St. Timothy Parish, Union

**Rev. Trinity P. Knight**  
To: Pastor, Holy Cross Parish, Latonia  
From: Parochial Administrator, Holy Cross Parish, Latonia

**Rev. James P. Schaeper**  
To: Pastor, St. Joseph Parish, Warsaw and St. Edward Mission, Owenton  
From: Parochial Administrator, St. Joseph Parish, Warsaw and St. Edward Mission, Owenton

Assigned by  
the Most Rev. John C. Iffert  
Bishop of Covington

*Jamie N. Schroeder*  
Jamie N. Schroeder  
Chancellor

# Strong start for Diocesan strategic planning as subcommittees name leadership

Laura Keener  
Editor

The strategic planning process continued in earnest the week of May 11-15. The subcommittees of all three currently active commissions met last week, with 11 meetings held across the diocese. The meetings marked an important step forward as leaders were appointed for each subcommittee and members began their work. For a listing of the commissions, their subcommittees and respective leaders, see box at right.

Deacon Jim Fortner, diocesan chief operating officer who is overseeing the planning process, said he has been encouraged by the response. "There's so much energy for this from day one," he said. He added that many people are showing strong commitment by attending meetings after a full day of work and some are serving on more than one committee.

The newly appointed leaders were chosen from the 373 people from across the diocese — lay faithful, clergy and women religious — who had signed up to take part in the planning process.

Jim Hess, diocesan director for Stewardship and Mission Services who is also leading the process, said registration forms asked whether people were open to serving in leadership roles, which created "a great pool of candidates" for chairs and co-chairs.

"I think overall people are very excited to be a part of a transparent planning process in the Church, where they can have a real impact," Mr. Hess said.

Deacon Fortner said organizers also looked for people with "the right skills" and passion for each area.

The subcommittee meetings are more than discussion or listening sessions. "This is a strategic planning process," Mr. Hess said, noting that participants are helping shape the way forward. "Bishop Iffert has made it clear that he doesn't have any preconceived ideas, he doesn't have an agenda, that he wants the people in the room to be coming up with a way forward. He has given them a lot of responsibility, and it's really encouraging to see how people are taking that on."

The subcommittees have two more scheduled meetings in June and July before they will develop a plan and present it to Bishop Iffert. Committee members will also take part in scheduled webinars to hear from local and national experts in their field.

Deacon Fortner and Mr. Hess said that the strong turnout and willingness of so many to take on leadership roles show that people are ready to serve and help guide the commissions' work.

For more information and to keep abreast of the strategic planning process, visit [www.covdioplanning.org](http://www.covdioplanning.org).

For related commentary, see page 5.



Lindberg photo

Bishop John Iffert addresses the Catholic Foundation Governance subcommittee, May 14. In 11 meetings the week of May 11-15, all subcommittees of the currently active Commissions met as the strategic planning process continues.

## Commission Subcommittee Leaders

### Catholic Charities Commission

#### Parish and Community Partnership Committee

Dawn Groneck  
Mary Paula Schuh

#### Programs and Services

Tom Bosse  
Jeff Jehn

#### Communications and Fundraising

Suzanne Deatherage  
Trey Tapke

#### Governance

Randy Rawe  
Chris Wilson

### Foundation Commission

#### Services, Staffing, and Budget

Anthony Gigliotti

#### Governance Sub-Committee

John Garvey III  
Johnna Herrmann

#### Communication and Technology

Juan Aviles  
Gary Meyer

### Schools Commission

#### Governance and Leadership

Michael Schuh  
Sr. Margaret Stallmeyer, CDP

#### Mission and Catholic Identity

Father Daniel Schomaker

#### Operational Vitality

John Nienaber

#### Academic Excellence

Dr. Christy Petroze

<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>								
<b>Planners serving on each commission</b> Note: Some planners sit on multiple commissions	<b>Total unique planners overall:</b>	<b>Priest-Planners:</b>	<b>Deacon-Planners:</b>	<b>Religious-Planners:</b>								
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Schools Commission</td> <td>Catholic Charities Commission</td> <td>Foundation Commission</td> <td>Diocesan Governance Commission</td> </tr> <tr> <td>172</td> <td>86</td> <td>61</td> <td>76</td> </tr> </table>	Schools Commission	Catholic Charities Commission	Foundation Commission	Diocesan Governance Commission	172	86	61	76	<b>373</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>
Schools Commission	Catholic Charities Commission	Foundation Commission	Diocesan Governance Commission									
172	86	61	76									

## Top Ten Reasons to Celebrate the Strategic Planning Process

<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>								
<b>Parishes represented on each commission:</b>	<b>Total parishes represented across the entire planning process:</b>	<b>Parish with the most planners: Blessed Sacrament</b>	<b>Commission with highest clergy participation: Catholic Schools Commission</b>	<b>Planners serving on more than one commission:</b>								
<table border="1"> <tr> <td>Schools Commission</td> <td>Catholic Charities Commission</td> <td>Foundation Commission</td> <td>Diocesan Governance Commission</td> </tr> <tr> <td>36</td> <td>31</td> <td>23</td> <td>28</td> </tr> </table>	Schools Commission	Catholic Charities Commission	Foundation Commission	Diocesan Governance Commission	36	31	23	28	<b>43</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>14</b> clergy members	<b>108</b>
Schools Commission	Catholic Charities Commission	Foundation Commission	Diocesan Governance Commission									
36	31	23	28									

# Annual Catechetical Awards

(Continued from page 1)

A 28-year servant to the mission of Blessed Sacrament School, Mrs. Meisenhelder made her daily priority “saving little souls,” as read in her nomination. Mrs. Meisenhelder imparts on her young students the importance of prayer, service and reverence for God.

Mrs. Webster prepares second-grade children of the parish for the sacraments, while coordinating May Crowning, sacramental retreats and vacation bible school. Her hard work and dedication make learning fun for all the children in her care.

The second award category was for Outstanding Middle School Teacher/Catechist, which recognized Deborah Finke and Jarrod Lux, both of St. Agnes School, Ft. Wright.

Mrs. Finke is a middle school math teacher that seamlessly brings faith into her classroom by beginning each class with prayer. In addition to teaching mathematics, Mrs. Finke promotes faith in the school through parish youth programs such as the Y-Disciple groups.

Mr. Lux is a middle school religion teacher and an active participant in the life of the parish, lecturing and planning Masses, while coordination school activities, like school retreats. Mr. Lux is known for bringing faith to life for his students.

The third award category was for Outstanding Senior High School Teacher/Catechist, awarded to Patty Grothaus, Newport Central Catholic High School, Newport, and Alan Harsin, St. John the Evangelist Parish, Carrollton.

Mrs. Grothaus has been a key part of Newport Central Catholic’s theology department since 2019 and is retiring at the end of 2025-2026 school year. She fosters a culture of service, acceptance and humility and has been crucial in the development and execution of retreats for all grades.

Mr. Harsin has been a tireless servant of the parish youth and CCD programs for over 12 years. In addition, he works to enhance the parish and their Spanish-speaking community through a men’s group. Mr. Harsin actively participates in the life of the parish through many parish activities and his service as a lector at Mass.

The fourth award category was for Outstanding Catechetical Leader, awarded to Soshana Bosley, Villa Madonna Elementary, Villa Hills; Anita Dunn, St. Agnes Parish; Pamela McQueen, Villa Madonna Academy, Villa Hills; and Erin Redleski, St. Agnes School.

Mrs. Bosley was recognized for her outstanding work as principal of Villa Madonna Elementary, where she championed a new organizational house structure for students grades K-6, bringing students closer than ever, and forging bonds in Christ that will last a lifetime.

In her role as director and coordinator of religious education, Mrs. Dunn organizes the Parish School of Religion program and at the diocesan level trains new directors and coordinators of religious education at other parishes. She lives her faith and is a shining example to her students.

Mrs. Klare is director of religious education serving with a tireless devotion. She makes it her personal mission to bring her students closer to a life in Christ through the

development of a personal relationship with him.

Mrs. McQueen has served as principal of Villa Madonna Academy of 30 years. A champion for an era of success, Mrs. McQueen saw three Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Awards, five Blue Ribbon School of Excellence Light House Awards, and led the school through five years of recognition as one of America’s most challenging high schools — all done in honor of the school’s Benedictine traditions of scholarship, service and hospitality.

As school principal, Mrs. Redleski has created a culture of trust and support, strengthening both the school’s academic excellence and Catholic identity. She empowers her teachers to fulfill their own vocations as catechists.

The fifth award category was the Sister Ann Adele Fritz Catechetical Leader Award. Given to Shannon Barnes, of the Diocese of Covington Offices of the Diaconate, Vocations and Worship and Liturgy; Mary Creech, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington; Divine Providence Sister Lynn Stenken, Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, California; and Shannon Wells, St. Patrick School, Taylor Mill.

Serving the Diocese of Covington, Ms. Barnes uses her knowledge of the faith, and talent has a musician to bring a reverence to diocesan liturgies. Over the years she has shared the faith with her children, grandchildren and all those she encounters in her work, bringing 11 people into the church over the years.

Mrs. Creech is the facilities manager and OCIA catechist at the Cathedral. In her role, she shares her devotion and deep knowledge of the faith to all those she meets, helping to form new disciples in the Mystical Body of Christ through OCIA. She is a true witness to a life lived in service of the Church.

Divine Providence Sister Lynn Stenken is the director of religious education. Sharing her own vocation as a member of consecrated religious, Sister Lynn meets people where they are and walks with them in faith, inviting them into relationship with Christ.

Mrs. Wells of St. Patrick Elementary also serves as the lead preschool catechist at St. Mary’s Parish, Alexandria. She shares her love for Jesus with everyone who steps into her classroom, students and parents alike, a true role model as a disciple of Christ.

Kate Iadipaolo of St. Anthony Parish, Taylor Mill, was

awarded Outstanding Homeschool Educator. She has been involved with the Lyceum Catholic Community Co-op for 13 years, teaches theology classes to high school students, and runs a small community group with other homeschool moms that offers enrichment courses that students elsewhere could not receive. In addition, Mrs. Iadipaolo utilizes her education and strong family values when leading sacramental prep for first reconciliation and Communion for the Guatemalan community at St. Anthony Parish.

Hannah Ubelhor, St. Timothy Parish, Union, received the Outstanding Catholic Retreat Minister award. Ms. Ubelhor serves as the Youth Commission Evangelization Team (YCET) co-director and uses her energy and passion for the faith to enliven each retreat she has served on.

Bradley Barnes, a volunteer youth minister in the Diocese of Covington and teacher at Newport Central Catholic High School, was awarded Outstanding Youth Ministry Innovator. Mr. Barnes is gifted in all facets of youth ministry and has served with the Diocese of Covington in a volunteer capacity for three years. He inspires, and is inspired by, the youth of the Diocese every step of the way.

The Outstanding High School YCET Leader was awarded to Alex Chadwick, St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs, and Eva Rousseau, All Saints Parish, Walton.

Mr. Chadwick serves as a disciple of Christ, living the call to evangelize, by inviting his peers and their families to join him for daily Mass before school every Friday. Each week, these students and their parents join Mr. Chadwick for Mass and breakfast, a testament to the effect of personal relationships in the faith.

Ms. Rousseau is a senior in the Divine Mercy Home School Co-Op, and attends Thomas More University, Crestview Hills. She is a living witness of the faith in her work with prayer, study and YCET leadership. She often welcomes and invites new people to Church, and faith events, spreading the Good News of Christ.

At the conclusion of the awards, Bishop Iffert, still reflecting on the papal exhortation, *Dilexi Te*, told those who were recognized, “I thank you for your work, with young people and old, who are poor in one way or another, and I ask us all to join in being a Church of the poor and broken, for the poor and broken.”



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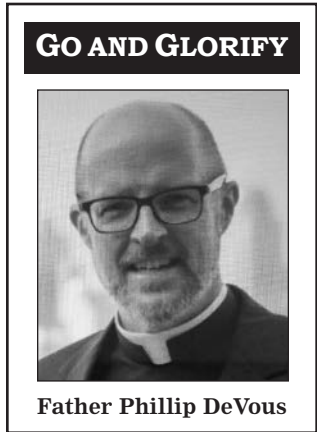
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# The Holy Spirit: The fire of truth

The readings for Pentecost Sunday — Cycle A — are: Acts 2:1-11, 1 Corinthians 12:3b-7, 12-13 and John 20:19-23.

The novelist Saul Bellow, in an interview in the early 1980s, anticipated the coming era we now inhabit, which many describe as the “post-truth” era. With great brio of description Bellow called the emerging era and its ethos the “moronic inferno.” The moronic inferno was



GO AND GLORIFY

Father Phillip DeVous

described as a situation where “there was too much of everything ... too much history and culture to keep track of ... too much news ... too much influence, too many guys who tell you to be as they are, and all of this hugeness, abundance, turbulence, Niagara Falls torment.”

When I contemplate the scene from the Acts of the Apostles, where all the various peoples with their

various languages were gathered, Bellow’s image of the moronic inferno is always in my mind. The cacophony of sounds is easy to imagine, as is the confusion likely generated by such a gathering. For me, this scene is stand-in for the “Niagara Falls torment” of the cross currents of assertions, information, news, manufactured emotions and statements we are daily subjected to, which make it hard to know what is true and worthy of attention.

I often stop and ask myself the question: What in the world is going on? Who is to be believed? What is true?

I imagine the multitudes gathered on the day of Pentecost had a similar feeling.

On the day of Pentecost, amidst the confusion of the gathered peoples, “there appeared to them tongues of fire, which came to rest on each one of them (the Apostles). And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in different tongues, as the Spirit enabled them to proclaim.”

All of those who heard the apostles proclaim somehow began to understand what the Apostles were saying about the mighty acts of God. Are we to presume the Holy Spirit had turned the preachers into human simultaneous translation machines? I think not. The Holy Spirit enabled the apostles to speak to the people the universal language of Truth. A language that spoke directly to the hearts of the people.

The Holy Spirit is the Advocate whose mission it is to effect within us a living faith founded on the most central reality of the cosmos itself: Jesus Christ is Lord. It is Jesus who is the Alpha and the Omega. It is Jesus who is the source, center and summit of our lives.

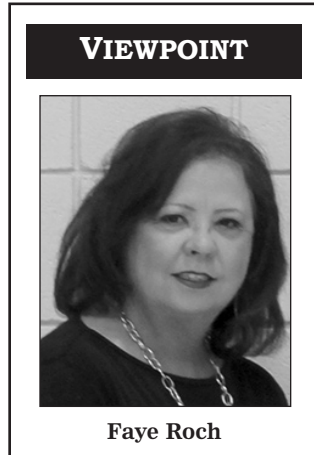
The Holy Spirit, to establish the Lordship of Jesus Christ within us, IS the language and reality of truth spoken to us. The Spirit sees to it that we really do know Jesus Christ. Then, the Spirit sees to it that the truth we know becomes the mission we live: “Grant, we pray, O Lord, that, as promised by your Son, the Holy Spirit may reveal to us more abundantly the hidden mystery of this sacrifice and graciously lead us into all truth.”

Being established in the truth of Christ’s Lordship gives us the discernment and the grace to live with integrity and truthfulness over and against the moronic inferno that confuses and consumes everything. Yet, the gift of the Holy Spirit, descending as tongues of fire, reminds us that we have been given the fire of truth that “burns out” the fires of confusion, falsehood and the disorienting torrent of “too much” that washes over us daily.

Increasingly, I find myself praying to the Holy Spirit to teach me the truth I need to know today to do God’s will. I ask the Holy Spirit to grace me with the truth I need to love as Christ commands, today. I pray throughout the day that the Holy Spirit would take me through the confusion and the madness that can invade even the

# Honoring Mary in May, not just a day, a whole month

May is a very busy month, filled with so many fun celebrations, Derby Day, Cinco de Mayo, and of course Mother’s Day. I love celebrating these fun times and am



VIEWPOINT

Faye Roch

ever so grateful that I can partake in them all, although with each passing year, I am reminded that my partying stamina is dwindling.

I know we are nearing the end of this blessed month but felt very nostalgic as I was getting ready for bed on Mother’s Day, reflecting on the great gift and blessing it is to be a mother:

I was especially grateful to have had the privilege that day of celebrating Mass with my family. The communion hymn that day was “On this Day of Beautiful Mother,” and my thoughts went directly to our Blessed Mother, and the memories of my childhood. None of these memories were of Derby Day or Cinco de Mayo, no, they were memories of May being the month of Mary, not just one day, a whole month.

In grade school, I looked forward to and loved how we celebrated Mary, with May crownings and was excited to set up a May altar in our home where we placed a statue of Mary in a special place and picked spring flowers (sometimes dandelions and clovers) to place before her statue.

As a child, I was intrigued learning about our Blessed

Mother Mary. At that time I just thought of her as Jesus’ mom who wore a lovely blue dress and veil, and I loved draping myself in my mother’s blue and white chiffon scarfs pretending I was Mary.

But now, as a mother and grandmother, I look at the uniqueness of Mary, how she was born without sin and was chosen to be the mother of God, yet she still was a mother who gave birth to and raised a child. Through Mary’s “yes” at a young age, we learn that motherhood is an important vocation.

Mary was one of us, a mother gently guiding her child through their formative years. Just like all mothers, Mary experienced great joy throughout Jesus’ life, but she also made sacrifices and suffered greatly as she watched him die on the cross.

When I was a young mom, completely flawed with really no idea what I was doing, I discovered Mary as my mother too. I looked to Mary for the grace to guide me when I was at my wits end, for the grace to guide me when my children were sick or troubled or in trouble and for the grace to guide me as they made big decisions in their life.

She continues to guide me as a much older flawed mom, mother-in-law and grandmother, giving me grace as I watch my children grow as adults and as parents themselves. I pray that my family will look to our Blessed Mother trusting in her guidance through joys and challenges, entrusting ourselves to her care through her love for us, knowing she will not abandon us, that she will love us with mercy and forgiveness just as she loved her own Son.

*Faye Roch is director of the Pro-life Office, Diocese of Covington, Ky.*

# A diocese united in planning our future

Something remarkable has been unfolding across the Diocese of Covington. In recent weeks, hundreds of faithful men and women gathered to answer one important question: Where is God calling our local Church next?



GUEST

Jim Hess

That question is at the heart of Bishop John Iffert’s strategic planning initiative. After four years of serving the diocese, Bishop Iffert invited the faithful to look honestly at what has been accomplished and discern, together, where the Spirit is leading.

The response has been extraordinary. The first round of commission meetings is now complete, and the numbers alone tell a remarkable story

The planning process is organized around four commissions, each focused on a distinct dimension of diocesan life.

The Catholic Schools Commission is building a three-year strategic plan for our school system, examining Mission and Catholic Identity, Academic Excellence, Governance, and Operational Vitality.

The Catholic Charities Commission is crafting a new

plan to guide Catholic Charities through 2030.

The Catholic Foundation Commission is working towards establishing a Diocesan foundation to inspire lasting generosity.

And the Diocesan Governance Commission, which will meet September through December 2026, will examine how the Curia serves our parishes, schools and ministries in areas of Finance, Communications and Technology.

Each commission follows a four-session arc: a SWOT (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats) kick-off, research and benchmarking, priority-setting, and finally drafting strategic goals. Sessions run through July 2026 for the first three commissions.

Subcommittee sessions are ongoing, moving now from benchmarking into priority-setting and goal drafting. The full strategic plan will take shape over the coming months.

To every planner who has already given their time: thank you. To the rest of our diocesan family: know that your neighbors, your fellow parishioners and your clergy are at the table on your behalf.

Guided by the Holy Spirit, the Diocese of Covington is building its future together. For planning commission schedules, resources and more information, visit [www.CovDioPlanning.org](http://www.CovDioPlanning.org).

*Jim Hess is director of Stewardship and Mission Services for the Diocese of Covington, Ky. For related article, see page 3.*

simplest interactions. I pray the Holy Spirit would give me the wisdom I need to lead others into all truth.

The Holy Spirit, in communicating the language of spiritual truth to us, has sent us disciples on a mission of truth to the world around us. Through that same Spirit we douse the flames and clear the noxious fumes created by the moronic inferno. Let us have every confidence that

Jesus Christ is still standing in our midst, that the fire of truth still burns, and that His words to us remain both true and vital: “Peace be with you.”

*Father Phillip W. DeVous is the pastor of St. Charles Parish, Flemingsburg, and St. Rose Parish, May’s Lick.*

## 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/>.

**Eucharistic Ministers are needed, especially on Sundays, at St. Elizabeth hospital in Edgewood.** If you are a Eucharistic minister, or are interested in becoming one, contact the Pastoral Care office or the Volunteer office at St. Elizabeth for more information, (859) 301-2000.

**Notre Dame Urban Education Center, Covington, needs volunteer tutors for its Education Center's Summer Academics Program (Grades 1-9)** during the month of June. Volunteers work alongside students to reinforce math, reading and English skills, helping to prevent summer learning loss. Contact Brandi at (859) 630-9475 or [blenihan@nduec.org](mailto:blenihan@nduec.org).

**Please join your neighbors for a Memorial Day observance,** May 24, 2-2:45 p.m., Lou Hartfiel Memorial Park, Crescent Springs, for our country and military and first responders who serve at home and abroad.

**Join The Franciscan Daughters of Mary and Friends of the Rose Garden Mission,** June 4, for "20 Years of Hope" the annual Partners in Hope for the Poor dinner. The event will be held at Receptions, Erlanger, with a 6 p.m. social hour; dinner 7 p.m. Father Reynaldo Taylor will be the keynote speaker. For information and registration visit [partnersinhopeforthepoordinner.com](http://partnersinhopeforthepoordinner.com).

**St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs, will host their annual Indoor Flea Market,** June 5-6, 8 a.m.-3 p.m. in the school gym. Donations can be dropped off May 30, 10 a.m.-4 p.m. and June 1-4, 10 a.m.-8 p.m. No adult clothing, mattresses, china cabinets or entertainment centers. TV's? Flat screen only. Call (859) 341-6609 x4010 for more information.

**Join us at St William Church, Williamstown, for First Saturday Mass and Novena** in honor of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, June 6, 9:30 a.m.

**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 dis-

ussion. 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).

**There will be a Summer Marriage Encounter Weekend July 24-July 26 at Towneplace Suites by Marriott in Lexington-Keeneland.** Sign up at <http://esharing.org> or <http://wwme.org>. You can also register by calling Andy and Melanie Reinersman at (859) 653-8464. Come join us for an experience that can change your marriage, and your life!

**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/concertsvp](http://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.

**The FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky will be hosting a "FIRE in the Hole" golf outing,** Sept. 12, at Devou Golf Course. Starting with registration at 8 a.m., the event will feature a 9 a.m. shotgun start and a 3-5 p.m. cocktail hour. Price is \$500 for a foursome (\$125 per golfer.) Includes breakfast, lunch, 2 drink tickets and hors d'oeuvres included. Win exciting prizes for longest drive, closest to the pin, live auction, raffles and split-the-pot. More information and registration online at <https://www.firefoundationnky.org/golf>.

**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.

**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 section of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

**Do you have a bike no longer used? Donate it to Pickett's Corner a ministry of Catholic Charities.** Each bike makes a significant difference in the lives of those in need. Pick up available and all repairs are done at Pickett's Corner. Simply e-mail [Pickettscorner23@gmail.com](mailto:Pickettscorner23@gmail.com) and give your name, address and phone number.



*Eucharistic and Marian procession*

Students and faculty at St. Joseph Academy, Walton, held an Eucharistic Marian procession around the campus grounds, May 14. Father Damian Hills, pastor, All Saints Parish, presided and carried the monstrance.

# Crosier Guild event highlights how DPAA gifts help neighbors in need



Keener and Ziser photos

Bishop Iffert and Jim Hess, director, Office of Stewardship and Mission Services, recognized new members of the DPAA Crosier Guild, May 12.

**Laura Keener**  
*Editor*

Bishop John Iffert welcomed new members of the Crosier Guild at a special evening event, May 12, at St. Barbara Parish's Sterling Event Center, Erlanger. The Crosier Guild honors people who have faithfully supported the Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal, or DPAA, year after year. Hosted by the diocesan Stewardship and Mission Services Office, the Crosier Guild recognized 11 attending new members of the 66 total new members this year. Their gifts help fund ministries across the diocese and provide grants to local groups that serve people in need.

During the evening, guests heard from Jim Procaccino of Action Ministries and Chris Goddard of Catholic Charities. Both men shared stories that showed how DPAA support helps real people every day. Their message was simple: these gifts do more than pay bills. They bring food, hope and dignity to families across Northern Kentucky.

Mr. Procaccino explained that Action Ministries began in 1994 as a resource room in Ryle High School when school leaders saw that children were coming to class hungry. Today, the ministry serves families in several counties and provides food for more than 1,000 households. He said the group exists "to share the love of Jesus Christ by pro-

viding groceries, hope and encouragement to low-income families." He also thanked DPAA donors directly, saying, "You are an extension of what God does for us every day."

Mr. Goddard spoke about the work of Catholic Charities, especially the Parish Kitchen, the Mobile Food Pantry, jail ministry and Pickett's Corner bike ministry. He said the goal is not only to meet urgent needs, but also to build relationships and walk with people toward a better future.

At the Parish Kitchen, he said, "What they receive is more than food. They receive welcome, dignity and human connection." He shared one story about a man who once came for meals but later found work and returned with a donation to help feed others.

Mr. Goddard also described signs of hope in other ministries. In the jail ministry, Catholic Charities recently celebrated the baptism, first Eucharist and confirmation of an inmate at the Kenton County Detention Center. At Pickett's Corner, a donated bicycle helped one person get to work until he was able to save enough money to buy a car. Across all of these programs, Mr. Goddard said, "We meet people where they are. We treat them with dignity. We walk with them towards something better."



During the evening, guests heard from (above, left) Jim Procaccino of Action Ministries and (above, right) Chris Goddard of Catholic Charities.

Bishop John Iffert closed the evening by thanking Crosier Guild members for their steady support of the annual appeal. He said their gifts strengthen ministries throughout the diocese and offer "seed money to people who are making a difference" in local communities. He also pointed to the way Catholic and non-Catholic groups are working side by side at Action Ministries to care for the poor, calling that shared effort a powerful Christian witness to overcome modern day "paganism — a new kind of reaction against the message of Christ and His gospel in

*(Continued on page 8)*



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(Continued from page 7)

(left) The new members attending were called up to receive a gift of appreciation from Bishop Iffert, a Crosier Guild coffee mug.

the world," he said  
 "I think one of the ways that we can work most effectively against that is to overcome the scandalous divisions among Christians, and to work together to demonstrate love for God and neighbor," Bishop Iffert said as he thanked Action Ministries for giving witness to Christian collaboration.

In his reflection, Bishop Iffert connected the evening's stories to the Church's call to love and serve the poor: Quoting recent Pope Leo XIV's first apostolic exhortation, "Dilexi Te," ("On Love for the Poor") he said, "Charity is not optional, but is a requirement of true worship. If we worship without joining it to a life of charity, it's empty."

He reminded guests that service to people in need does more than help others. It also renews the Church and teaches deeper faith.

"If you're tempted to despair about the condition of our society, of our world, of our Church, here's how you can work for its renewal, love and serve the poor," Bishop Iffert said. "This is an important piece of teaching. It teaches that we can speak of a preferential option on the part of God for the poor, which is not an attribution of bias to God, but a truth that emphasizes God's actions, which are moved by compassion toward the poverty and weakness of all humanity, including mine, including ours."

Bishop Iffert said many people discover they receive more from serving others than they give. Citing *Dilexi Te*, he said Pope Leo XIV teaches that this is "literally true."

"While we extend ourselves to serve the poor, we are actually receiving from them lessons about how to live under the yoke of Jesus Christ," he said. Then quoting a favorite paragraph from the document, paragraph 120, Bishop Iffert said, "It says this, 'love is above all a way of looking at life and a way of living it. A Church that sets no limits to love, that knows no enemies to fight but only men and women to love, is the Church that the world needs today.'"



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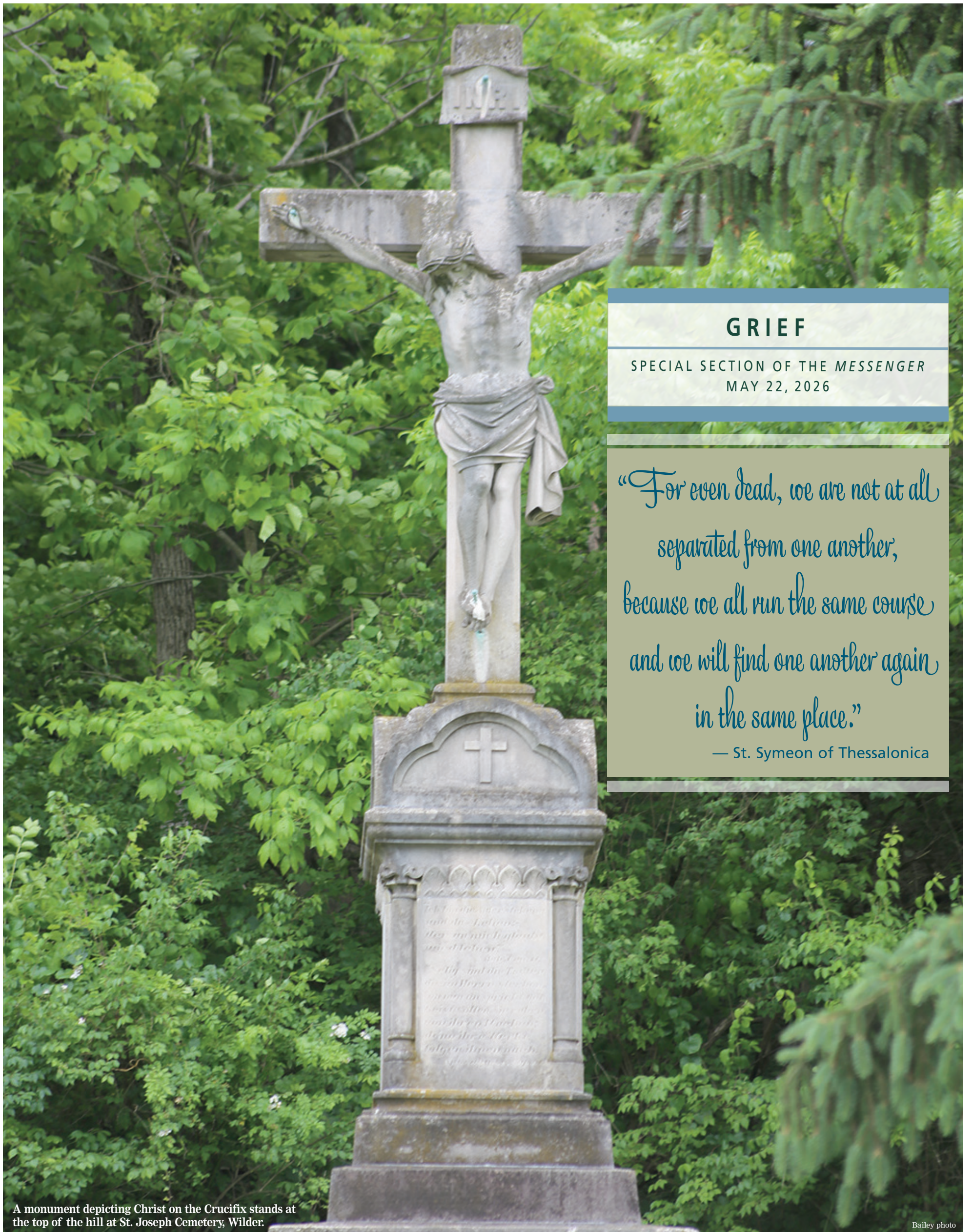
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in the same place.”*

— St. Symeon of Thessalonica

A monument depicting Christ on the Crucifix stands at the top of the hill at St. Joseph Cemetery, Wilder.

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Diocese of Covington

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- Provide a focus for the Christian community for prayerful remembrance of the dead.
- Speak of life beyond life, life after death.

Printed with permission from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee Cemetery Office, [www.cemeteries.org](http://www.cemeteries.org).



The pictures above were taken at diocesan cemeteries.

Left top: A monument depicting the pietà, Mary cradling Jesus after he's taken from the cross, stands in St. John Cemetery, Ft. Mitchell.

Left bottom: A dual gravestone honors both a family's mother and father at St. Joseph Cemetery, Wilder.

Above: A windchime erected in St. Stephen Cemetery, Ft. Thomas, is surrounded by graves decorated with colorful flowers.

Top center: A blue jay stands atop a headstone at St. John Cemetery, Ft. Mitchell.

Top right: A statue placed at a monument depicts a mourning woman at St. Mary Cemetery, Ft. Mitchell.

Above center left: The niches in a columbarium in St. Stephen Cemetery, Ft. Thomas, are decorated with flowers, flags and other tokens.

Above center right: A pair of monuments overlook the hills past St. Joseph Cemetery, Wilder.

Above center far right: A monument at St. Mary Cemetery, Ft. Mitchell, features engravings depicting roses and a cross.

Bottom right: A statue of a cherubim sits on a bench at St. Stephen Cemetery, Ft. Thomas.

**Diocesan Cemeteries:**

- St. Mary Cemetery, Ft. Mitchell (859) 414-2204
- St. John Cemetery, (859) 414-2380
- St. Stephen Cemetery, Ft. Thomas (859) 414-2567
- St. Joseph Cemetery, Cold Spring, (859) 414-2567
- St. Joseph Cemetery, Wilder, (859) 414-2567

**Parish Cemeteries:**

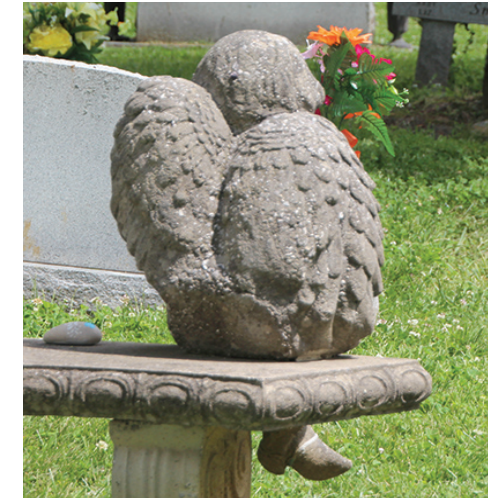
- St. Mary (Alexandria) (859) 635-4188
- St. Augustine (Augusta) (606) 756-2377
- St. Joseph (Blanchet; St. William, Williamstown) (859) 824-5381
- St. James (Brooksville) (606) 735-2271
- Sts. Peter and Paul (California) (859) 635-2924
- Immaculate Conception (Stepstone) (859) 635-2924
- St. Joseph (Camp Springs) (859) 635-2491
- St. John the Evangelist (Carrollton) (502) 732-5776

- St. Edward (Cynthiana) (859) 234-5444
- St. Francis (Dayton; St. Bernard Parish) (859) 261-8506
- St. John (Dividing Ridge; St. William, Williamstown) (859) 824-5381
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- St. Charles (Flemingsburg) (606) 845-4601
- St. Cecilia (Independence) (859) 363-4311
- St. Patrick (Maysville) (606) 564-9015

- St. Mary (Morningview; St. Matthew, Kenton) (859) 356-6530
- Guardian Angels (Sandfordtown; St. Pius X, Edgewood) (859) 341-4900
- St. Patrick (Verona; All Saints, Walton) (859) 485-6131
- St. Joseph (Warsaw) (859) 567-2425
- St. Patrick (Washington; Maysville) (606) 564-9015

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- Mother of God (Covington) (859) 431-0614



Bailey and Baker photos



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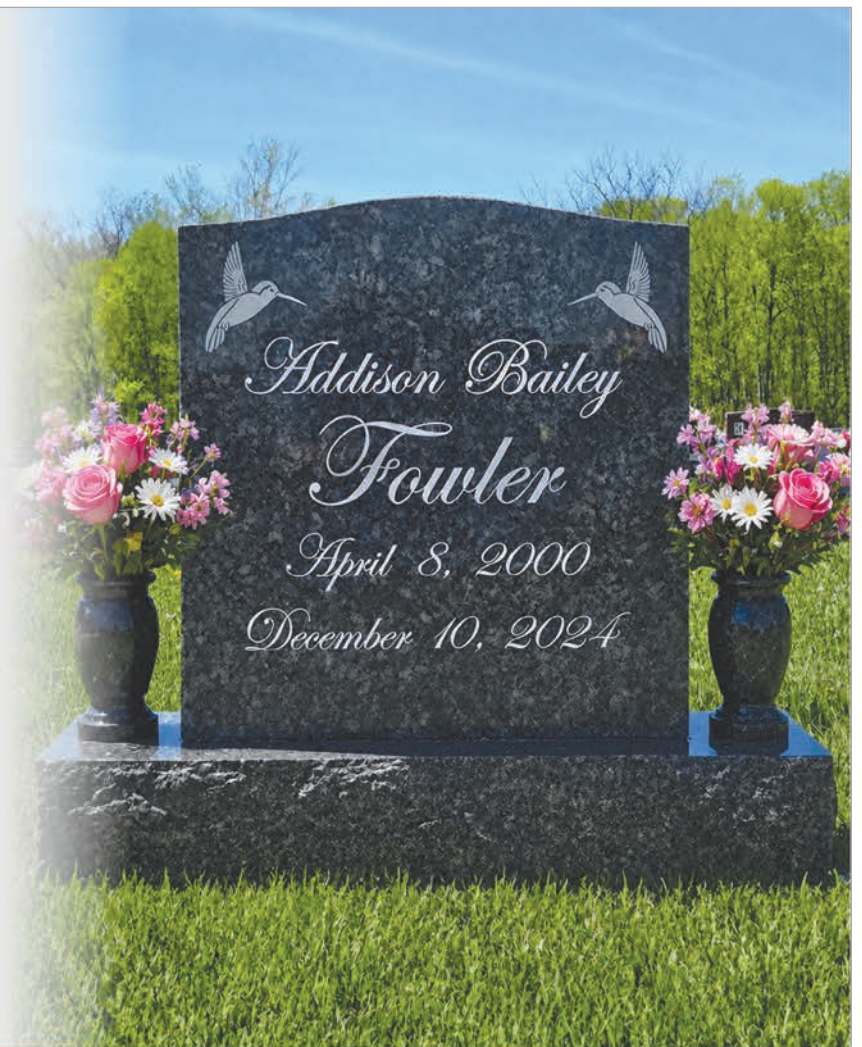
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# Mother of God superintendent retires after 35 years of caring for families, history

Maura Baker  
Staff Writer

Cemetery superintendents are responsible for the care and upkeep of the cemetery grounds — establishing and maintaining all of the day-to-day operations to keep their cemetery a beautiful, welcoming and accessible place to mourners and other visitors.

At Mother of God Cemetery, Ft. Wright, this role was filled by Phil Zumdick for the past 35 years. This May, Mr. Zumdick retired from this position to past the torch to successor Tim Norris.



Tim Norris (left) takes over as superintendent of Mother of God Cemetery in Ft. Wright from Phil Zumdick (right), who has been on the job for 35 years.



Photo courtesy of Mother of God Cemetery

The gate of Mother of God Cemetery, Ft. Wright, where retired superintendent Phil Zumdick served for 35 years.

When Mr. Zumdick first was hired to Mother of God, his role was called “sexton” — and though the name of the job has changed, Mr. Zumdick maintained all of the responsibilities the title carried through the years. Responsibilities as Mr. Zumdick described them included managing the office, records, sales and a seasonal landscaping team.

When asked what inspired him to the role in the first place, Mr. Zumdick said that he “loved all the history of the property — the things that I could glean from the records about different individuals who were buried there, and eventually meeting their families or someone doing genealogy ... it was always a lively place in terms of history.”

“Local history has always been an interest to me,” he said, “... Getting to know the local history and the different business owners and prominent as well as common folk around Covington and Latonia,” Mr. Zumdick listed as highlights of the job.

The cemetery is a place where “people feel confident,” that things are being cared for, he said, “and are not distracted by unsightly things that aren’t getting taken care of.”

To Mr. Zumdick, it was important that people visiting a cemetery can “come and remember their dead and honor them and not feel like the cemetery’s not taken care of.”

In light of his retirement, Mr. Zumdick expressed gratitude to his family. As superintendent, the Zumdick family lived on the cemetery property — where he and his wife raised four children.

He is also thankful for the “multitude of individuals” who worked with him at the cemetery over the years,

including the cemetery’s Board of Directors — whom Mr. Zumdick will be joining in retirement, continuing to serve

the cemetery even as he moves on from his role as superintendent.

As the role changes hands, Mr. Zumdick wished Mr. Norris “many blessing and good luck in his endeavor,” as the mantle is passed to a new generation of caring for many families’ dead.



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- Be patient with the hard days, mood changes, or canceled plans.
- Help them preserve memories - make a photo book, frame a picture, or plant something in honor of their loved one.
- Understand that grief doesn’t have a timeline.
- Make a quick phone call to ask, “How are you doing, really?”
- Help care for children, pets, or household responsibilities for a day.





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## Through ministry of prayer and presence Arimatheans witness to grieving families

Laura Keener  
Editor

Joseph of Arimathea is mentioned in all four Gospels as the man who asks Pilate for Jesus' body and arranges the burial. He is described as "a rich man" "a respected member of the council" "good and righteous," and that he "went boldly to Pilate." After taking possession of Jesus' body, Joseph of Arimathea "wrapped it ... and laid it in his own new tomb."

Joseph of Arimathea shapes pastoral care by showing that genuine comfort is both reverent and practical, rooted in faith in the Paschal mystery and expressed through the Church's ministry of consolation.

Pastorally, this becomes a model for funeral ministry serving the bereaved by not passing by when grief is at its most intense but by moving toward families with steadiness rather than avoidance. The Church explicitly calls the whole community to a ministry of consolation that includes "to care for the dying, to pray for the dead, to comfort those who mourn." (Order of Christian Funerals)

Every parish has a bereavement committee whose members tend to the practical and physical needs of grieving families. They help plan the funeral Mass and provide food and hospitality at a reception afterward.

Arimathea Ministry is another way that parishes are tending to grieving families through the ministry of presence and prayer. Members of Arimathea Ministry attend the funeral Mass and join the families in praying for their deceased loved one. For grieving families, the presence of the Arimathea ministry can be a quiet but meaningful source of comfort.

At Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington, members of its Arimathea Ministry attend funeral Masses to pray for the dead, welcome visitors and represent the

faith community in moments of loss.

Julie Greene, who has coordinated the ministry for more than a decade, said the work is simple but deeply rooted in faith. "We have no meetings. There are no dues, no meetings. It's just contacting members when we do have a funeral and ask them to attend when they can make it," she said.

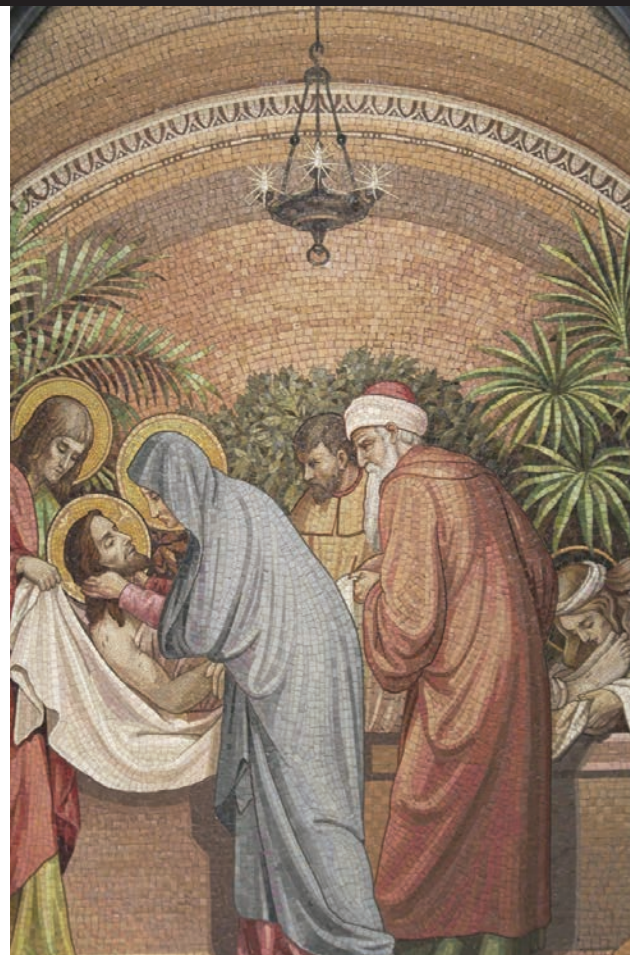
That ministry of presence takes many forms. Mrs. Greene said that members identify themselves by wearing a cross on a black cord, hand out worship aids and help visitors who may be unfamiliar with the church. Their role, she said, is to offer a welcoming presence while accompanying families in prayer.

About 20 parishioners are on the ministry's contact list, Mrs. Greene said, though usually four or five can attend a given funeral. Even so, that steady participation ensures that no family grieves alone and that deceased parishioners are remembered with dignity and prayer as valued members of the faith community.

The group has existed for roughly 15 years. Mrs. Greene said that she took on leadership of it after other parishioners were no longer able to continue. A lifelong member of the parish, Mrs. Greene said she felt called to serve in a practical way during her retirement. "I'm retired and I felt like I could do something," she said. "And I thought, well, I could help out with the Arimathea group."

For Mrs. Greene, now 96, the ministry remains a living expression of the Church's spiritual and corporal works of mercy to pray for and bury the dead. "These are members of the parish that are now deceased and we should be praying for them," she said.

Though the ministry operates without fanfare, its quiet witness leaves a lasting impression. In small acts of prayer and faithful presence, the Arimatheans remind bereaved



In this *Messenger* file photo of the 14th Station of the Cross, "Jesus is laid in the tomb" Joseph of Arimathea is depicted alongside Jesus' mother, Mary, tending to his body.

families that their parish stands beside them, just like Joseph, in sorrow and in hope of the resurrection to come.

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# Cemetery visitations provide a way to pray for the deceased in an intimate way

**Bella Bailey**  
*Multimedia Correspondent*

In an annual prayer service to honor the recently deceased, Bishop John Iffert invites the faithful of the Diocese of Covington to join him during his cemetery visitations. During cemetery visitations, Bishop Iffert visits three of the four diocesan cemeteries and offers prayers for those deceased in the last year, proclaiming each name aloud.

Praying for the dead is a hallmark of the Catholic faith, rooted in the doctrinal belief of purgatory and the need for purification in life after death.

Cemetery visitations provide family of the deceased an opportunity to offer prayers for their dearly departed with the shepherd of the diocese, Bishop Iffert. While prayer for the deceased can happen anywhere, praying in the descendant's eternal resting place is akin to visiting instead of calling, said Father Harry Settle, pastor, St. Cecilia Parish, Independence.

"It would be comparable to how we interact with our family that's alive. It's one thing to call grandma on a Sunday, it's another thing to visit her: It adds a little bit more proximity and closeness, and it's an act of intimacy to do that," he said.

St. Cecilia has a parish cemetery on parish property, which Father Settle says, families visit and pray "all the time."

The act of praying for the dead is rooted in the Church doctrine of purgatory, a kind of "doorway of Heaven," he said. "We believe that those who die in a state of grace but are not completely freed from venial sin and vice, have to go through states of purification in order to enter [Heaven]."

To enter Heaven from purgatory, the deceased must be "purged, purified of all of their vice, of venial sin, and thus to be made perfect, because nothing imperfect will stand before God," said Father Settle.

This purging comes through prayer of the Church militant still on earth, "the dead can't pray for themselves," he said. "It is the faithful that must pray for them, so their purification, in a sense, is bound to the Church militants continued desire to pray for their souls."

Participating in prayer for the dead reveals a great mystery and truth of the Church, said Father Settle, the inter-

connectedness of the living and the deceased.

"The Church exists on earth and in Heaven and in purgatory, and as we are bound to help each other and to perform good works and charity, and acts of charity on earth, so that continues for the deceased. God has demonstrated, through his want, his desire for us to do this, that we're all brothers and sisters in Christ."



**Bishop John Iffert will continue the tradition of cemetery visitations, Saturday, October 18.**

The visitations offer an opportunity for the faithful of the Diocese to join Bishop Iffert in prayer for the recently deceased at their final resting place.

This year, Bishop Iffert will visit:

**St. John Cemetery, Fort Mitchell, 10:00 a.m.**

**St. Mary Cemetery, Fort Mitchell, 11:00 a.m.**

**St. Stephen Cemetery, Fort Thomas, 12:30 p.m.**

## Whom to call

Kelly Linkugel, Cemetery Manager, Diocesan Cemeteries, (859) 392-1585

St. Mary Cemetery, (859) 414-2204

St. John Cemetery, (859) 414-2380

St. Stephen Cemetery, (859) 414-2567

St. Joseph Cemetery, Cold Spring, (859) 414-2567

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### Pre-planning in the Diocese of Covington

Pre-planning for burial occurs before you or a loved one has passed away, and oftentimes is necessary so that the deceased can be buried in the most suitable area. Some people like to pick a spot near family or friends, while others may prioritize a "nice" or "scenic" part of the cemetery of their choosing — and others may prefer a niche or an urn or placement in a mausoleum as opposed to a standard casket burial. All of these decisions come as a part of pre-planning.

In the Diocese of Covington, pre-planning begins by reaching out to the specific cemetery yourself or a loved one is interested in, or by calling the Curia Buildings & Properties office. From there, arrangements can be made based on individual needs and availability within the cemetery of choice.

## Understanding and planning Catholic funerals

**Michael Heinlein**  
*OSV News*

Catholic funerals express the Christian hope in eternal life and the resurrection of the body on the last day. Every component of Catholic funeral rites should express these fundamental beliefs and hopes. Instead of what sometimes is called "a celebration of life," a funeral is really a privileged opportunity to return to God the gift of the deceased, hoping to usher them into paradise with the aid of our prayers. Our love for the departed is expressed after death, above all else, in our prayer for them.

Whenever possible, the church recommends that the family should be involved in planning the funeral rites — from choices of texts and readings to music and liturgical ministers. Parish staff should guide family members through the process.

Death is a new beginning for Christians. "In the face of death, the Church confidently proclaims that God has created each person for eternal life and that Jesus, the Son of God, by his death and resurrection, had broken the chains of sin and death that bound humanity" (Order of Christian Funerals (OCF), 1). This maxim guides the Christian approach to funerals.

There needs to be direct communication with the parish and funeral home. Usually, funeral homes are fully aware of each parish's expectations and regulations. But it is important to be in communication with the parish directly.

One of the first decisions to be made is whether the deceased will be buried or cremated. The church's tradition prefers burial over cremation. However, cremation is allowed, so long as this option is not chosen to express anything contrary to the hope in the resurrection of the body. More and more families are opting for cremation today with hopes to decrease funeral expenses.

In either case, a place of burial needs to be chosen. Bodies are to be disposed of in a fitting and dignified way, consonant with the human dignity that should be afforded everyone, as we are made in the image of God.

Cremated remains must be buried — not placed in the home, spread on land or at sea, etc. This need not be only in a cemetery grave, but perhaps a parish columbarium — or niches, akin to mausoleums. Burial at sea is also permitted, so long as the body or cremated remains are in a sealed container (not spread openly).

In cases of burial, choices regarding attire should recall the respect to be shown toward the body.

*(Continued on page 16)*

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## Catholic funerals

(Continued from page 15)

Consideration should be given to display some Christian symbols in or near the casket at the time of a wake or to be buried with the deceased, such as a crucifix, rosary or Bible.

The church advises that, where possible, friends and family should be included in taking part in the preparation of the body.

It is preferable that a funeral Mass be celebrated in the presence of the body of the deceased, but not required. As the Order of Christian Funerals states, "The Mass, the memorial of Christ's death and resurrection, is the principal celebration of the Christian funeral."

There are times, however, that a funeral Mass might not be preferable or might not be permitted. This should be discussed with parish staff during the planning stages. If a funeral Mass is not chosen, it is desirable that a memorial Mass should be scheduled for the deceased's intention at a later date.

If Mass is not chosen, a funeral Liturgy of the Word and final commendation of the deceased is celebrated. These may be conducted at the church, the funeral home, in a chapel at the cemetery or even at the graveside.

Wakes, or viewings, are opportunities for family and friends to come together, console one another, and recall the impact the deceased had on them. Though typically in a funeral home, this is sometimes conducted in a church facility — a matter that would need to be discussed or negotiated with parish staff.

Wakes find their origins in the Christian celebration of vigils, often associated with major events or feasts. The vigil for the dead is intended to be dedicated to prayer for the deceased. The church supplies a liturgical rite for wakes to be celebrated by a sacred minister of the church;

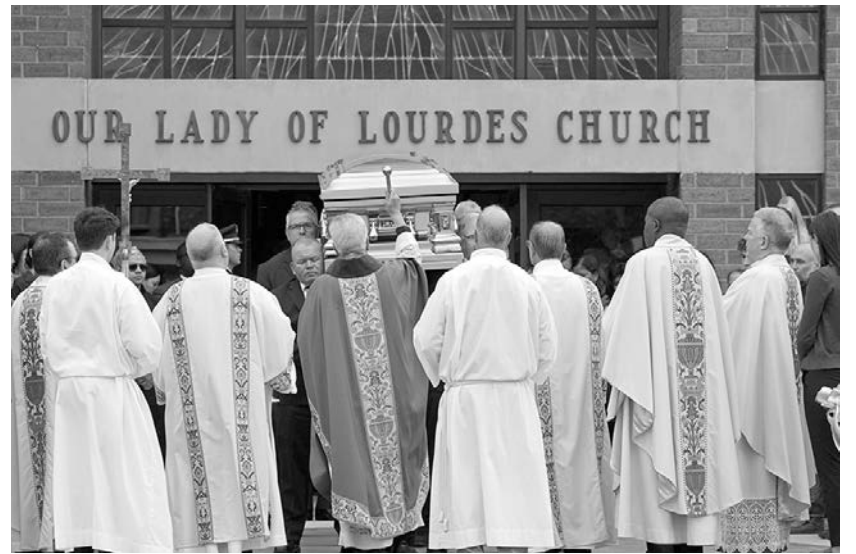
they may be celebrated by a lay minister in some cases. This is a combination of readings, a brief homily or reflection, prayers and possibly music.

The wake also is a time for popular devotions that might have been particularly significant in the faith life of the deceased, such as the rosary or the Divine Mercy chaplet. Another option for the wake is to celebrate the Office of the Dead from the Liturgy of the Hours — the church's daily prayer, composed of psalms, readings and prayers.

During the funeral, the readings from Scripture "provide the family and the community with an opportunity to hear God speak to them in their needs, sorrows, fears and hopes" (OCF, 22).

There are four readings for a Catholic funeral. The parish staff usually provides families with copies of the readings from which they can choose. The readings should be one each from the Old and New Testaments (though during the Easter season both readings come from the New Testament) in addition to a Gospel passage. There also is a psalm, which is usually sung. Be aware that there are a variety of readings, particularly for use in unique or special circumstances.

Special prayers are a key part of the liturgy. The orations of the presiding minister address God on behalf of the entire church in their prayer for the deceased. In addition to general orations (either inside or outside the Easter season), there are a variety of options that may be suited to more specific circumstances — such as for a young person, for one who suffered a long illness or for one who died suddenly, etc. There are many other options (for prefaces



OSV News photo/Gregory A. Shemitz

A file photo shows a priest sprinkling holy water on the casket following a funeral Mass at Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Massapequa Park, N.Y.

and Eucharistic prayers), so discuss that with the parish staff if interested.

The music chosen for a Christian funeral "should express the paschal mystery of the Lord's suffering, death, and triumph over death and should be related to the readings from Scripture" (OCF, 30). As a resource to those planning funerals, many parishes will often have a list of hymns appropriate for use at a funeral from which to select. "The music at funerals should support, console, and uplift the participants" (31).

There are normally three hymns chosen for use: at the entrance, at the preparation of the gifts and at the reception of Communion, in addition to musical settings for the Mass responses. There also is what is called the song of farewell, sung at the end of the funeral Mass during the final commendation.

Moments of silence are important, too, to "permit the assembly to reflect upon the word of God and the meaning of the celebration" (OCF, 34).

Because many roles for volunteers at funerals are liturgical, great care must be taken to ensure that these ministers are well trained and suitable. You may wish to choose readers for the first and second readings, to present the gifts at the offertory or to serve the Mass.

In addition to liturgical ministers, there might be the need for pallbearers (usually six) or representatives of the family or close friends to place the pall and Christian symbols on the casket or near the cremated remains.



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of all the faithful departed,  
through the mercy of God,  
rest in peace.  
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# The liturgy sustains the faithful, renewing them in their faith, mission, pope says

Carol Glatz  
Catholic News Service

Christ is present in the liturgy — in the word that is proclaimed, in the sacraments, in the ministers, in the community and most of all in the Eucharist, Pope Leo XIV said.

“Let us allow ourselves to be shaped from within by the rites, symbols, gestures and above all by the living presence of Christ in the liturgy,” he said during his general audience talk in St. Peter’s Square May 20.

Before the pope began his catechesis, he welcomed Armenian Apostolic Catholicos Aram I of Cilicia, who sat next to him during the audience.

The Great House of Cilicia for the Armenian Orthodox Church includes Lebanon, Syria, Cyprus, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, the Gulf region, Iran, Greece and the Americas, so Pope Leo called on everyone to pray for peace in Lebanon and the Middle East, which are “once again torn apart by violence and war.”

Pope Leo expressed his joy in receiving Catholicos Aram and his delegation, calling their visit “an important occasion to strengthen the bonds of unity that already exist between us, as we draw closer to full communion between our Churches.”

In his main talk, Pope Leo continued his series of catechesis on the Second Vatican Council, but introduced the next conciliar document he wanted to focus on: the council’s constitution on the sacred liturgy, “Sacrosanctum Concilium.”

“This document teaches that the liturgy immerses us in the mystery of Christ’s passion, death, resurrection and

*(Continued on page 18)*



CNS photo/Lola Gomez

Pope Leo XIV greets visitors and pilgrims from the popemobile while riding around St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican before his weekly general audience May 20, 2026.

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## The liturgy sustains the faithful

(Continued from page 17)

glorification,” he told English-speakers in his summary. “Indeed, Christ is present in the word that is proclaimed, in the sacraments, in the ministers, in the community, and most of all in the Eucharist,” he said.

In drafting this constitution, he said the “Council Fathers sought not only to undertake a reform of the rites, but to lead the Church to contemplate and deepen that living bond which constitutes and unites her: the mystery of Christ.”

“Indeed, the liturgy touches the very heart of this mystery: it is at once the space, the time and the context in which the Church receives her very life from Christ,” he said in his main talk in Italian.

“The Christian mystery: the Paschal event, that is to say, the passion, death, resurrection and glorification of Christ, which is made sacramentally present to us precisely in the liturgy, so that every time we take part in the assembly gathered ‘in his name’ we are immersed in this mystery,” he said.

The liturgy helps sustain the faithful, encouraging and renewing them “in their commitment to faith and in their mission,” and it helps form “an open community, welcoming to all,” Pope Leo said.

The liturgy that is celebrated must be translated into and lived throughout one’s daily life, “in an ethical and spiritual dynamic,” he said. It demands “a faithful existence, capable of making concrete what has been experienced in the celebration: it is in this way that our life becomes a ‘living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God,’ fulfilling our ‘spiritual worship.’”

## National/World

### America 250 occasion to reflect on equality as a God-given right

WASHINGTON — As the nation prepares to celebrate its 250th birthday, it should reflect on how the American understanding of equality is grounded in the belief that all people are equally children of God, Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, said May 17 at a prayer rally on the National Mall. “As we reflect on our history, from the founding through the trials of the Civil War to the struggle for civil rights, we can see this consistent thread, the conviction that human dignity, equality, rights, freedom, and the rule of law are all grounded in God,” he said. Organizers of the event, “Rededicate 250: A National Jubilee of Prayer, Praise & Thanksgiving,” said they aimed to mark the nation’s upcoming 250th birthday “with Scripture, testimony, prayer, and rededication of our country as One Nation to God.” It was organized by Freedom 250, a public-private partnership with the White House to mark America 250. The event primarily featured Protestant faith leaders, but in addition to Bishop Barron, Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan, retired archbishop of New York, spoke by video, and Rabbi Meir Soloveichik spoke in person. Critics of the event argued that the Trump administration’s level of participation improperly blended church and state.

### Archbishop Broglio highlights faith, service at annual memorial Mass

WASHINGTON — Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, archbishop of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, connected Jesus’ Great Commission to his apostles to “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations” to military orders, since “most people end up with unexpected tasks,” he said at a May 17 Mass to remember Catholic war dead. The duty of the Church is “to be the visible means by which Christ acts in the world,” he said. Meanwhile, he praised the military mission as being to protect, defend and “provide security for the inalienable rights that bind us as a nation.”

The memorial Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, held this year on Ascension Sunday, is distinctly nonpartisan and echoed the quiet dignity of smaller Memorial Day services held nationwide, including the singing of the national anthem and the playing of taps. There was a color guard from the Military District of Washington, and the congregation was dotted with uniformed men and women of all service branches. Knights of Columbus and some Knights of Malta attended in full regalia. Archbishop Broglio was the principal celebrant and homilist, assisted by military chaplains and priests.

### Pope approves creation of interdicasterial commission on AI

VATICAN — Pope Leo XIV has approved the creation of an Interdicasterial Commission on Artificial Intelligence, according to a rescript dated May 12 and released by the Vatican on May 16. The document was signed by Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development. The pope approved the new body in response to the rapid growth of artificial intelligence and concerns about its impact on humanity. The rescript said he considered “the development in recent decades of the phenomenon of Artificial Intelligence and the most recent accelerations in its widespread use” along with “the Church’s concern for the dignity of every human person.” The commission will include representatives from seven Vatican institutions, including the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, the Dicastery for Culture and Education and the Pontifical Academy for Life. During its first year, the Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development will coordinate the group’s work, which will help oversee collaboration, policies and projects related to artificial intelligence within the Holy See while promoting “dialogue, communion, and participation.” Artificial intelligence has remained a recurring theme in Pope Leo XIV’s pontificate. Days after his election, he said the Church seeks to respond “to another industrial revolution and to developments in the field of artificial intelligence that pose new challenges for the defence of human dignity, justice and labor.”

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NEWS BRIEFS

**Lawsuit continues to challenge regulation adding abortion protections**

WASHINGTON — A group of Catholic ministries asked the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit May 18 to block a federal agency from enforcing an abortion provision in regulations meant to add workplace protections for pregnant workers. In 2024, religious groups filed suit in United States Conference of Catholic Bishops v. EEOC, to challenge final regulations for the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act, issued by the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, that granted workers protections for time off and other job accommodations for pregnancy-related medical conditions such as miscarriage, stillbirth and lactation. However, those regulations also included abortion, which some of the bill's supporters, including the USCCB, argued was not

Congress's intent in passing the law. Becket, a Washington-based religious liberty law firm, filed that lawsuit on behalf of the USCCB, as well as The Catholic University of America and the dioceses of Lake Charles and Lafayette in Louisiana. Laura Wolk Slavis, counsel at Becket, said in a May 19 statement, "Bureaucrats tried to twist a bipartisan law protecting pregnant women and their unborn babies into a mandate that churches facilitate abortion within their own ministries." The EEOC did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

**Archbishop Broglio highlights faith, service at annual memorial Mass**

WASHINGTON — Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, archbishop of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, connected Jesus' Great Commission to his apostles to "Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations" to military orders, since "most people end up with unexpected tasks," he said at a May 17 Mass to remember Catholic war dead. The duty of the Church is "to be the visible means by which Christ acts in the world," he said. Meanwhile, he praised the military mission as being to protect, defend and "provide security for the inalienable rights that bind us as a nation." The memorial Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception, held this year on Ascension Sunday, is distinctly nonpartisan and echoed the quiet dignity of smaller Memorial Day services held nationwide, including the singing of the national anthem and the playing of taps. There was a color guard from the Military District of Washington, and the congregation was dotted with uniformed men and women of all service branches. Knights of Columbus and some Knights of Malta attended in full regalia. Archbishop Broglio was the principal celebrant and homilist, assisted by mili-

tary chaplains and priests.

**Global executions surge to highest recorded figure in 44 years, report says**

WASHINGTON — The number of executions around the globe in 2025 surged to the highest recorded figure in 44 years, a new Amnesty International report said. The May 17 report, titled "Death Sentences and Executions 2025," comes soon after a recent video message from Pope Leo XIV marking 15 years since the abolition of the death penalty in his home state of Illinois. Amnesty International recorded executions last year of 2,707 people across 17 countries including the U.S., which carried out 47. The international total, which includes at least 2,159 executions in Iran, is the highest number recorded by the group since 1981. However, the group cautioned that its tally does not include what it believes to be thousands of executions carried out in China, adding that the country therefore remained the world's top executioner. "This alarming spike in the use of the death penalty is due to a small, isolated group of countries willing to carry out executions at all costs, despite the continued global trend towards abolition," said Agnès Callamard, Amnesty International's secretary general. In his April video message, Pope Leo said, "The Catholic Church has consistently taught that each human life, from the moment of conception until natural death, is sacred and deserves to be protected."

**Police recover beloved saint's relic taken in brazen theft that shocked Czech Catholics**

JABLONNE, Czech Republic — Police in the Czech Republic announced May 15 they recovered the stolen skull of St. Zdislava of Lemberk, one of the country's most beloved saints, just days after it was taken from a Dominican basilica 70 miles north of the country's capital, Prague. Authorities say a thief slipped into the Basilica of St. Lawrence and St. Zdislava in Jablonné v Podještědí before evening Mass May 12, smashed a glass reliquary and fled with the 13th-century saint's remains. Jablonné is a small Czech town and home to one of the country's most important pilgrimage sites. Investigators later found the skull encased in concrete. Police said the 35-year-old suspect believed the relic "would not find peace" while displayed in the church and allegedly planned to throw it into a river before burying it privately. Officials stressed the motive was not financial. Experts are now working to safely remove the relic from the concrete and assess any damage. St. Zdislava's contemporaries called her the Mother of the Poor. After her death in 1252, devotion to her spread as believers attributed miraculous healings to her intercession. St. John Paul II canonized her in Olomouc on May 21, 1995. Her feast day is May 30.

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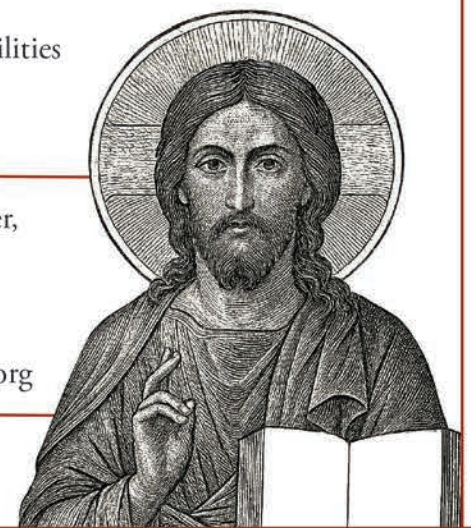
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- Scripture: The Heart of Catechesis
- Sacred Scripture: The Big Picture
- Scripture: The Driving Force of Doctrine
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- Trinity
- Preventive System of St. John Bosco
- Introduction to the New Testament
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- Faith and Moral Development: Ages 6–12
- Faith and Moral Development: Ages 12–18
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- Unlocking the Rich Treasure of the Catholic Church
- The Sacrament of the Eucharist
- First Penance and First Eucharist Preparation
- The Sacrament of Confirmation
- Confirmation Preparation
- Introducing Liturgy to Children
- Liturgy and Catechetical Methodology
- The Sacramental Economy
- Praying Scripture: Lectio Divina
- Evangelización en la Parroquia – Hispanic Ministry
- The Father: Origin and Desire of All Souls
- Holy Spirit: Converter of Hearts
- The Church: Dispenser of the Mysteries and Guardian of the Deposit of Faith
- Magisterial, Conciliar, and Catechetical Documents I
- Magisterial, Conciliar, and Catechetical Documents II
- Unlocking the Rich Treasure of the Catechism
- The Catechumenal Process: A Modern Restoration (OCIA/OCIC)
- Entrance into Christ & Participation in God's Life (OCIA/OCIC)
- The Educational Leader in a Catholic Setting
- The Evangelizing Classroom
- Dilexit Nos: Formation of Heart Linking Evangelization & Catechesis
- Child Catechetical Methodologies & Learning Styles
- Adult Catechetical Methodologies & Learning Styles
- A Foundational Vision: Theology of the Body (JPII)
- Pedagogy and the Response of Faith
- Prayer: Introduction to the Spiritual Life of the Catechist
- The Human Person in God's Loving Plan
- The Family as the Context of Catechesis
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For more information and to register, visit <https://covdio.org/register>.

For questions, please contact Isaak Abraham Isaak at 859-392-1529 or [iisaak@covdio.org](mailto:iisaak@covdio.org)



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