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With this issue the *Messenger* begins its summer biweekly publication schedule. The next *Messenger* will be dated June 12, followed by issues June 26, July 10, July 24 and Aug. 7. With that issue the *Messenger* will resume its weekly schedule through Dec. 18.

May you and your family have a safe, enjoyable and blessed summer!
— The *Messenger* staff

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



Keener photo

A man is confirmed by Bishop John Iffert, May 24, alongside 80 other adults to receive the sacrament from across the diocese that day. The figure of 81 is increased by 22 from last year's class of adult confirmandi and shows an increase of 46 above the five-year average.

Eighty-one adults confirmed, reflecting growing faith across the Diocese

Laura Keener
Editor

The Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption was filled to near capacity on Pentecost Sunday, May 24, as 81 adults received the sacrament of Confirmation. These confirmandi came from 23 parishes throughout the Diocese. Due to the large number — 22 more than last year and 46 more than the five-year average — Bishop John Iffert, Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys and Father Ryan Maher, rector, administered the sacrament.

Pentecost is considered the birthday of the Catholic Church. It

was at Pentecost that the Holy Spirit descended upon the apostles, lifting their fears and empowering them with the gifts of the Holy Spirit — wisdom, understanding, counsel, fortitude, knowledge, piety and fear of God — sending them out to preach the Good News of Christ.

“When the Holy Spirit filled their (the apostles’) lives, they were given a communion with God’s divine gift,” said Bishop Iffert in his homily. “They were given more than just a purpose or a reason. God gave them a future and sent them out into the world to establish a

(Continued on page 2)

‘Magnifica Humanitas’: Pope Leo’s AI encyclical warns of temptation to build future excluding God

Courtney Mares
OSV News

Pope Leo XIV published his landmark encyclical on artificial intelligence “Magnifica Humanitas” May 25, comparing the attempt to build an AI future that excludes God to the “Tower of Babel” and underlining the need to safeguard human dignity as it is “threatened by new forms of dehumanization.”

“The risk of dehumanization — of building a future that excludes God and reduces the other to a means — is an ancient and ever-new temptation that today takes on a technical guise,” Pope Leo wrote in his first encyclical, “Magnifica Humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence.”

“In the era of artificial intelligence, when human dignity is threatened by new forms of dehumanization, ours is the pressing duty to remain profoundly human. We must lovingly safeguard the grandeur of humanity bestowed upon us and revealed in its fullness in Christ, the splendor of which no machine can ever replace,” he said.

Pope Leo opens the first encyclical of his pontificate by saying that humanity today faces a pivotal choice — “either to construct a new Tower of Babel or to build the city in which God and humanity dwell together.” Using the Biblical Genesis narrative, the pope warns against the “‘Babel syndrome,’ namely the idolatry of profit that sacrifices the weak” and the pretense that everything, “including the

(Continued on page 4)



OSV News photo/Simone Risoluti, Vatican Media

Pope Leo XIV signs “Magnifica Humanitas” at the Vatican’s Synod Hall May 15, 2026, the first encyclical of his papacy, which focuses on the rise of artificial intelligence.

Eighty-one adults confirmed

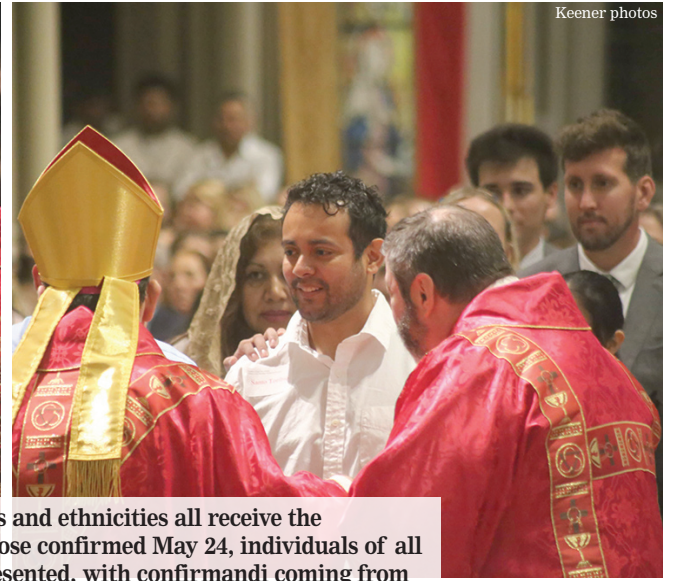
(Continued from page 1)

Christian era. In their future, God would work in them deeds that they had never expected possible.”

During the conferring of the sacrament of confirmation, Bishop Iffert said, the confirmandi present today would receive that same Holy Spirit, that same grace, and through them that same hope for the world.

That Holy Spirit, he said, “was seminal seed for grace in the world,” overcoming “a culture of brutality and darkness. Today you received that same gift. God gives you not only a few numerable gifts, but God gives you the grace of himself dwelling within you, so that you might become under Christ. God gives to you today, and through you to all of us, a future in which we can place our hope.”

Hope, Bishop Iffert said, is not vague or wishy-washy. “Hope is the knowledge and confidence that God is working for our salvation ... where we are gathered together in his wisdom and his love ... Embrace that gift and share with us hope in Jesus Christ.”



People from various parishes, age groups and ethnicities all receive the Sacrament of Confirmation. Of all of those confirmed May 24, individuals of all ages from teenagers to seniors was represented, with confirmandi coming from 12 different states and 8 different countries, including the United States.



Keener photos

Fun facts about this year's adult confirmandi

The Candidates range in age from 13 years to 65 years old.

- < 18 years old: 15
- 18 to 21 years old: 15
- 22 to 29 years old: 25
- In their 30s: 10
- In their 40s: 8
- In their 50s: 5
- In their 60s: 3

The Candidates were born across 12 different states and 8 other countries.

USA birth country:

- Kentucky 21
- Ohio 12
- Texas 5
- Georgia 4
- Indiana 3
- Louisiana 2
- Connecticut 1
- Minnesota 1
- Mississippi 1
- North Carolina 1
- Virginia 1
- Wisconsin 1

Other birth countries:

- Guatemala 15
- Mexico 4
- Honduras 2
- Philippines 2
- Venezuela 2
- Brazil 1
- Poland 1
- Togo 1

Letter to the Editor

Dear fellow members of our local Church, the Diocese of Covington:

I have been serving on the Priests Retirement Fund Committee since 2005. I have also been chairperson of the committee all those years. It is a great privilege to serve the priests of our diocese in this capacity. It is also a great privilege to serve the priests of our diocese in your name, as we work to provide for them in their retirement.

Until 1981, there was no retirement fund for the priests of our diocese that guaranteed some sort of income in retirement. Priests generally worked as long and to the degree their health allowed. We have been playing “catch-up” since the retirement fund was established by Bishop Hughes in 1981.

A big help in this “catching up” has been the allocation from the Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal (DPAA) each year. In recent years this allocation has been over \$250,000. I hasten to add that the total benefits paid to retired priests reached over \$1,000,000 per year a few years ago, but with the deaths of a number of priests in recent years, this has been reduced significantly over the same years. The allocation from our DPAA in those years was a big help in meeting those obligations.

As a diocese we are in the process of conducting our 2026 DPAA. I take this opportunity to thank everyone who over the years has contributed to the DPAA and therefore helped to provide a retirement income for our retired priests.

I also add that there is a second allocation in the DPAA for priests who need care in assisted living or skilled nursing facilities. This sort of care has become very expensive, and the DPAA helps us as a diocese care for the priests who need this level of care. Thank you very much for this as well!

Please keep our retired priests — and all of our priests in your prayers.

Cordially,

Father Mark Keene, V.G.

For information about or to make a donation to the Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal (DPAA) visit covdio.org.

Diocese moves forward with four commissions rooted in With One Heart

Laura Keener
Editor

As the Diocese of Covington ends its contractual business relationship with the Catholic Leadership Institute, the diocesan priorities identified in the With One Heart pastoral plan continue. This time, guided by consultants of L'Etoile Development Services, and through the establishment of four planning commissions.

Four years ago, as Bishop Iffert celebrated his one-year anniversary as shepherd of the Diocese of Covington, he announced the With One Heart pastoral planning initiative. The process was led by the Catholic Leadership Institute and funded by generous anonymous benefactors.

The multi-year WOH planning process began with a Disciple Maker Index survey, where every parishioner in the Diocese was asked to complete a 72-question survey reflecting “on their journey of discipleship and their parish’s effectiveness in supporting that journey.” Additionally, listening sessions were held in parishes throughout the Diocese.

Hosting the listening sessions, gathering and analyzing data into an identifiable and workable pastoral plan became the work of the Pastoral Planning Commission, a group of 11 people including clergy, religious and laity. From the data, the Planning Commission identified three diocesan priorities — Faith Formation, Evangelization and Leadership Development.

Over the course of the last four years, Bishop John Iffert, Deacon Jim Fortner, Jamie Schroeder, chancellor, and CLI consultant, Carla Molina, worked with a group 10 people — the WOH Core Team — who provided feedback and helped keep the implementation of the strategic plan on track.

During Lent 2026, a second DMI survey was conducted. Parishes throughout the diocese will use the data from this second survey to determine how well parish pastoral plans were implemented and what opportunities remain as they develop a new pastoral plan for their parish.

At the Diocesan level, four commissions have been established — Schools Commission, Catholic Charities Commission, Foundation Commission and Diocesan Governance Commission — to work on the development of its new strategic plan.

These commissions and their subcommittees did not emerge in isolation, said Deacon Fortner. Rather, they are the latest expression of the With One Heart pastoral plan-



Deacon Jim Fortner, diocesan chief operating officer, addresses attendees of the Catholic Schools Commission during its general assembly April 14. As Deacon Fortner wraps up the With One Heart pastoral planning process and begins leading the current strategic planning process, he sees the latter as a fruit of the original pastoral plan.

ning process, which identified three perennial priorities for the local Church: faith formation, evangelization and leadership development.

In a recent interview, Deacon Fortner reflected on how the work underway today grows directly from that earlier discernment. What may appear to be a new set of initiatives, he said, is actually “building on what we’ve got in place,” as the Church continues to respond to the foundational priorities first named through *With One Heart*.

Those priorities provided a framework for recognizing where sustained attention and broader participation are needed. Faith formation remains visible in the continuing work of schools, catechetical efforts and parish formation. Evangelization has shaped outreach through service and ministries that invite people into deeper relationship with the Church. Leadership development has underscored the need to cultivate structures, resources and people capable of carrying ministries forward.

“We come back to the lay faithful and ask, based on these strategies, what’s our priority here now going forward?” Deacon Fortner said.

Deacon Fortner pointed to several examples. The ministries of Catholic Charities, he noted, are not only a work of mercy but also a pathway to evangelization, especially when younger people encounter the Church through service and volunteerism. Schools continue to play a central role in faith formation. Efforts tied to foundations and governance, meanwhile, highlight the importance of leadership development and stewardship for the future.

The current commissions and their subcommittees can

therefore be understood as an extension of that pastoral vision. In areas where earlier priorities were only partially realized, these bodies now provide the structure to carry the work further. Rather than abandoning the original plan, the diocesan process is deepening it — bringing more people into discernment, sharpening strategy and translating pastoral priorities into ongoing action.

“This process, with all these people involved, that is a step change difference,” Deacon Fortner said pointing to the 373 planners involved with the commissions. “I think it is going to help really take us to a whole other level; this is breakthrough thinking,” he said.

That continuity also offers an important message for the lay faithful. As new strategies are introduced, the Church is not starting over. Instead, it is returning to the core priorities that have guided the pastoral plan from the beginning and asking how they can be lived more fully now. The commissions are one way of answering that question — creating focused avenues for collaboration, accountability and long-term mission.

“I’m pretty excited about that,” said Deacon Fortner as he realizes how the Holy Spirit has been guiding the pastoral planning, and now the strategic planning, process.

Seen in that light, the commissions are not separate from With One Heart; they are one of its clearest fruits. Their work, and the work of their subcommittees, represents the ongoing effort to realize the pastoral priorities of faith formation, evangelization and leadership development in practical, sustainable ways across the life of the Diocese.



Feast of Corpus Christi

June 7
Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption,
Covington

Adoration follows 10 a.m.
Mass until 2 p.m.

Benediction and procession around
Cathedral square, 2 p.m.–3 p.m.

Official Assignment

Effective July 14, 2026

Rev. John Paul, V.C.

To: Parochial Administrator, St. Charles Borromeo Parish, Flemingsburg and St. Rose of Lima Parish, Mays Lick; Part-time Instructor, St. Patrick High School, Maysville
From: Parochial Vicar, St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood

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

Jamie N. Schroeder
Jamie N. Schroeder
Chancellor



Bishop's Schedule

June 2
Vespers and Priests' Jubilee,
Cathedral Basilica of the
Assumption, Covington,
4:30 p.m.

June 3
Thomas More University
Board of Trustees dinner,
6 p.m.

June 4
Thomas More University
Board of Trustees meeting,
9 a.m.

Rose Garden Home Mission
“Partners in Hope” dinner,
Receptions, Erlanger, 6 p.m.

June 6
Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica
of the Assumption, 4:30 p.m.

June 7
Corpus Christi procession,
Cathedral Basilica of the
Assumption, 2 p.m.

June 8–12
USCCB Plenary Assembly for
Bishops

'Magnifica Humanitas': Pope Leo's AI encyclical

(Continued from page 1)

mystery of the person," can be translated into "data and performance."

"Calling for prudence, rigorous evaluation and even, at times, a slower pace in adopting AI does not mean opposing progress; instead, it is an exercise of responsible care for the human family," Pope Leo wrote.

The lengthy papal document is divided into five chapters and touches on wide ranging issues related to AI, including the prospect of massive unemployment, the future of education, the protection of human freedom, excessive screen time for young people, cryptocurrencies, economic disparities, transhumanism, cyberattacks and the application of Catholic social teaching principles.

Pope Leo dedicated the final chapter of the encyclical to AI in warfare and the need for "rigorous ethical constraints" and proactive peacebuilding "to curb the technological arms race."

The American pope points to Martin Luther King Jr., St. Teresa of Kolkata, Dorothy Day, St. Maximilian Kolbe and others as examples that "history can also change when individuals truly take the dignity of everyone seriously."

In "Magnifica Humanitas," Latin for "Magnificent Humanity," the pope calls on Christians not to be "passive spectators" or "mere commentators on what is crumbling," but to take a proactive role in building the future by cultivating community and in-person relationships, educating young people to love wisdom, spending time with the poor and the lonely, being a voice for justice, defending objective truth, and treating the digital world as "a new continent to be evangelized."

"It is not our part to master all the tides of the world, but to do what is in us for the succour of those years wherein we are set, uprooting the evil in the fields that we know, so that those who live after may have clean earth to till," the pope wrote, quoting J.R.R. Tolkien's "Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King." He added that it is "small and steadfast acts of fidelity that serve as a bulwark against dehumanization."

In the encyclical, Pope Leo says that the idea of a "more moral AI" is not enough if that morality is only determined by a few.

"What is needed is a more active political involvement that is capable of slowing things down when everything is accelerating, and of protecting the opportunities for communities still to be able to participate and ask questions," he said.

The pope argues that "we cannot consider AI to be morally neutral" and underlines that ethical discernment cannot be limited to "asking whether we are using a system for good or bad purposes," but must also "examine how that system is designed and what vision of the human person and society is embedded in the data and models that guide it."

Pope Leo added that data cannot be left solely in private hands and "should not be treated as something to be sold off or entrusted to a select few," calling for appropriate regulation and creative thinking to "manage data as a common or shared good."

Pope Leo addresses the looming specter of mass unemployment due to the adoption of AI, saying this would be "a true social calamity that especially requires the State to exercise responsibility." He cites St. John Paul II's 1981 encyclical on human work "Laborem Exercens," noting that his predecessor recognized that unemployment is "a grave evil," with Pope Leo adding that "exposing many to forced inactivity, a lack of responsibility and the absence of daily tasks and stimuli" could lead to "human and cultural impoverishment."

"The pursuit of greater profits cannot justify choices that systematically sacrifice jobs, because the human person is an end, not a means, and the economic order must

remain subordinate to human dignity and the common good," Pope Leo said.

"Without bold decisions, the prospect of greater poverty and inequality looms large, which would leave many individuals marginalized, stranded and surrounded by the machines and automated systems that have replaced them," he added.

Pope Leo writes that AI promises efficiency but the "new ways" of working are not necessarily better, describing how "contrary to the advertised benefits of AI, current approaches to technology can paradoxically de-skill workers, subject them to automated surveillance and relegate them to rigid and repetitive tasks."

"When efficiency becomes the ultimate measure of value, human beings are tempted to see themselves as a project to be optimized rather than as persons called to relationship and communion," Pope Leo said.

Truth is a major theme in the encyclical by the Augustinian pope. He said that in the face of incessant flows of information, opinions, images and sophisticated algorithms that can influence decisions, it is imperative to "cultivate hearts that love the truth, prefer what is right despite the most appealing content and pursue wisdom rather than immediate results."

"We must always keep before us the truth about God and humanity, just as Christ has revealed them to us. We must lay aside an individualistic and technical view of humanity," he said.

Quoting Pope Benedict XVI, he added, "Modern man is wrongly convinced that he is the sole author of himself, his life and society. This is a presumption that follows from being selfishly closed in upon himself."

The pope underlined that "the search for truth is an essential element of democracy," and that "indifference to the truth leads, slowly but surely, to a descent into totalitarianism."

He said people must "promote an ecology of communication," in which public policy establishes norms "so that the decision-making behind content selection and its development becomes more transparent and protects personal data." On a cultural level, he called for "a strengthening of intermediary organizations, serious journalism and forums for debate," for families and schools to gain formation in using digital tools, and for universities to strive for the "integration of knowledge."

"Our first task is neither to demonize nor idolize technological tools, but to utilize them on the basis of a fundamental principle, namely that truth is a common good and not the property of those with power or influence," he said.

Pope Leo called for "education in digital sobriety" due to subtle forms of addiction in today's "digital attention



"I welcome Pope Leo XIV's first encyclical Magnifica Humanitas — "Magnificent Humanity" — on safeguarding the human person in this age of AI. It is yet another way that Pope Leo extends his prophetic call for peace and unity through grace-filled and determined efforts for the development of peoples.

"Along with you, I'm only getting my first look at the document, but my initial impression is that Pope Leo proclaims that the high vision of the human person revealed by Christ through the Incarnation is essential for negotiating the hazards and reaping the benefits that powerful new technologies can entail.

"The understanding of human dignity and human rights that flow directly from the Gospel are an extraordinary gift to the world that God has given through the leadership of saints and sacred scholars. Leo adds his teaching voice to this holy chorus. These rights and principles, distilled from the teachings of Jesus, constitute essential wisdom for every age — especially one in which technological advancements come at a furious pace.

"I encourage every Catholic and all curious people of good will to read the Holy Father's encyclical and take up the call to put the magnificent humanity of our brothers and sisters first in every economic and technical choice."

— Bishop John Iffert

To read the entire encyclical visit <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/encyclicals/documents/20260515-magnifica-humanitas.html>

economy," in which digital platforms that are "designed to capture users' time and attention" weaken "their inner freedom."

He warned of the risk of "social control made possible by the massive collection of data and use of algorithmic systems."

"When every action — movements, purchases, relationships and preferences — leaves a trace, a new form of power emerges, namely the power to profile, predict and influence behavior, often without individuals being fully aware of it," he said. "If such kinds of data are used to make decisions affecting concrete opportunities — such as access to credit, employment or essential services — there is a risk of undermining freedom and discriminating against the most vulnerable."

Pope Leo XIV places his writing on the age of artificial intelligence within the context of the magisterial tradition of Catholic social doctrine, also known as Catholic social teaching. The first chapter of the encyclical provides an overview of what each pope has contributed to the Church's social magisterium from Pope Leo XIII to present, highlighting key ideas that are particularly relevant today. The second chapter provides definitions of key principles of Catholic social doctrine from the "common good" to "subsidiarity." Pope Francis and St. John Paul II are both frequently quoted throughout the encyclical.

Pope Leo XIV signed "Magnifica Humanitas" on May 15, the 135th anniversary of "Rerum Novarum," Pope Leo XIII's foundational 1891 social encyclical on labor and capital written during the Industrial Revolution.

"While new economic and technological networks can generate exclusion, isolation and dependencies, the Church — nourished by the Eucharist — is called to make visible a different paradigm, one that preserves human connections, gives a voice to the invisible and ensures that processes are aimed at respecting people's dignity," Pope Leo said.

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 Laura Keener Editor, General Manager
 Laura Gillespie Production Coordinator/Designer
 Maura Baker Staff Writer
 Isabella (Bella) Bailey Multimedia Correspondent
 Tony Zilliox Sales Manager

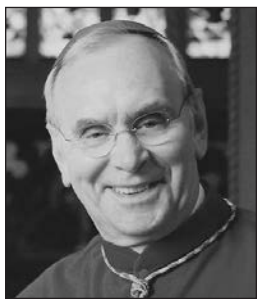
All good things come in threes

The readings for the Solemnity of the Most Holy Trinity — Cycle A — are: Exodus 34:4b-6, 8-9, 2 Corinthians 13:11-13 and John 3:16-18.

When I was studying the Italian language, the textbook (this was before Rosetta Stone) introduced a new proverb at the top of the page of each chapter. One that came to mind as I prepared for the Solemnity of Trinity Sunday is *Ogni trino e Perfetto*. Literally the meaning is “Everything that comes in threes is perfect.” We know the proverb as: “All good things come in threes.”

The doctrine of the Most Trinity is a mystery — One God in three Divine Persons. Yet, there are several references to it in the Scriptures. As Jesus was taking leave of his apostles as he ascended into heaven, he leaves them with a clear instruction: “Go, therefore, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.” (Matt 28:19-20)

GO AND GLORIFY



Bishop Roger J. Foys, D.D.

This was, so to speak, Jesus’ farewell, his last wishes. Note that he doesn’t say to baptize only in his name, or only in the Father’s name but rather in the name of Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This was, of course, before the Father and Son had sent the Holy Spirit upon the disciples as he had promised: “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Advocate to be with you always, the Spirit of truth which the world cannot accept because it neither sees nor knows it. But you know it, because it remains with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans.” (John 14:16-19)

And so, the Father, who is the creator and the Son, who is the redeemer, send the Holy Spirit who is the counselor and comforter and who remains with the Church until the end of time.

Another word to describe the Holy Spirit is *paraclete*, from the Greek *parakletos*. It means one who is sent to help. And this paraclete is with us until the end of time to be comfort and counsel, especially in times of difficulty or doubt. But Father and Son and Holy Spirit are one, bound together in love and unity. And from them we learn to live in that same love and unity.

In the early Church people were attracted to the followers of Jesus because they saw how they loved one another. Christians looked after each other, cared for each other, especially those who needed their help such as the widows, the orphans, the poor, the aged. There was no want in those early Christian communities, no one went hungry.

Their love was genuine, it was honest, it was not exclusive. They took seriously the words of Jesus to his disciples: “A new commandment I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another.” (John 13:34-35)

The early Christians were also known by their unity and community. “They devoted themselves to the teaching of the apostles and to the communal life, to the breaking of the bread and to the prayers. Awe came upon everyone ... and every day the Lord added to their number those who were being saved.” (Acts 2: 42, 43, 46)

So, perhaps it is true that good things come in threes. The Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit continue to be an example to us of how we should live, about how we should profess our faith, about how we should be united as one and love each other as Jesus, who gave his life for us so that we might have new life, eternal life!

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

About a week before writing this column, I tragically lost a good friend of mine to suicide. I remember excusing myself from where I was in a haze when I learned, anxiously calling our mutual friend, Vinny, as I walked home along the roadside in the whipping wind and threatening rain.



Maura Baker

Our friend, Grimm, was Swedish. Vinny and I had known him by now for the better part of our lives, reliable pen pals and “internet friends” for more than 10 years. (A long time for people in their 20s and 30s!) We told stories together, shared cultures, fought dragons and monsters together at a digital tabletop. Though Vinny had met Grimm in person before, I never had, but his presence in my life was constant.

In our Dungeons and Dragons campaign, our characters — his, Fang, a shapeshifting hunter and mine, Soren, a cleric and healer — were the best of friends. When Soren was separated from the party for a while, I remember some of the first words Grimm had Fang say: “It was hard, not knowing where you were — if you were okay. To lose you — I was afraid.” This was about a month ago, now.

Grief is a tricky and perplexing thing. As Christians, thoughts race into our minds when we lose someone to the taboo death that suicide is. We question the fate of our loved ones — wonder if their death itself was a grave sin and, in the anger that accompanies grief, accuse them of selfishness. How could they?

Returning to work the week after learning what happened to Grimm was difficult. The feelings of utter despair, of anger, of disbelief, even, came and went by the hour — they still do, and I imagine will continue to do so for a very long time. It was described to me as a ball rolling around in a box, pressing a button inside that trig-

To lose, to be afraid

gers the emotion. The ball will get smaller over time, but the button will always be present.

My boss and the editor of the *Messenger*, Laura Keener, showed me a set of articles on grief and suicide written by Oblate Father Ron Rolheiser, a theologian, teacher and award-winning author. In one of these articles, he wrote: “We should not worry unduly about the eternal salvation of a suicide victim, believing (as we used to) that suicide is the ultimate act of despair: God’s hands are infinitely more understanding and gentler than our own. We need not worry about the fate of anyone, no matter the cause of death, who leaves this world honest, over-sensitive, over-wrought, too bruised to touch and emotionally-crushed, as is the case with most suicides. God’s understanding and compassion exceeds our own. God isn’t stupid.”

I found consolation in these words — in the thought that this tragic death could be gentle, in ways. Father Ron described what leads to suicide as a “tragic breakdown within the emotional immune system or simply a mortal biochemical illness.”

Looking back on it, like myself and many young people our age, Grimm suffered life-long with his mental health. Chronic depression, anxiety and other emotional disorders are a pandemic plight among my peers worldwide.

Fitting, maybe, or perhaps some divine grace, that we should celebrate the patroness of the mentally afflicted, St. Dymphna, on May 30. My prayers to her since the loss of my friend have been constant. And I’d ask that you, dear reader, too, offer up some prayers to the young Irish saint as we move past her feast and from Mental Health Awareness Month — celebrated also in May.

I don’t just ask prayers for Grimm, either — nor myself, or Vinny, or Grimm’s friends and family in Sweden. Pray for all those who lost their lives violently to suicide, for their families and for everyone in your life — young or old — who may be hurting now, as well, from their own anxious and depressive thoughts. Hold them close to your heart. St. Dymphna, pray for us.

Maura Baker is a staff writer for the *Messenger*, the Catholic newspaper for the Diocese of Covington, Ky.

God saw it was good

The astronauts looked back and there it was — a perfect globe in the vastness of space. One of the first images that was broadcast as the media reported on the astronauts’ trip to the dark side of the moon, was a view from the spaceship that fea-



Sister Fidelis Tracy, C.D.P.

tured the earth from a great distance. What a beautiful sight. No wonder God looked and said, “That’s good.”

The beautiful earth floats there in the vast emptiness. It seems holy. One small planet in the midst of many planets in one solar system that is within many solar systems in a universe of many universes. And God is still breathing this beautiful, unique, holy globe into existence. And God is still declaring it “good.”

In the very beginning, the perfect and good green plants began to lay down roots and vines sprouted. Bushes, vines and trees rose on the surface of the earth. And God said, “Now that is good.”

Then creepy things found their way to the base of the trees, crawling things began to squirm around and again God looked, saw and said, “That is all good.” Winged creatures flew to the trees and built nests where young began to chirp and open their mouths for nourishment. Bees swarmed among the flowers and carried pollen to other

flowers, so they became prolific. God was very pleased and announced again the goodness of it all.

Waters licked the edges of the land to taste the sweetness of the nourishing ground. Sweet winds caressed the trees and the animals, the creepy, crawly things and the winged, soaring things. All harmony and goodness. So, God said, “That is very good.”

After the creation of the universe, the hills, the seas, the skies, the plants, the animals God was still lonely for a creature who could love as God loves, who could breathe goodness into the universe as God does and so God created the human creatures and declared them “Very good.”

It is God’s very breath that is within these humans, a breath that creates what is good, that can declare all things good. This human creature can breathe goodness into the universe, can declare all creation good, can nourish life and create goodness on the beautiful globe that hangs there in the picture sent to us from space.

The eternal, timeless divine presence is still creating this beautiful earth and breathing life into it as it hangs there in the view of the astronauts. Despite all the war and unrest, the earth is still beautiful posing there for the astronauts to see. As it appears, we can see its beauty and goodness. It is the moment we can declare in unison with God, “Now that is good!”

We can also resolve to support it’s goodness, to support all that is on it and within it. We can still strive to bring love and peace that is very good.

Divine Providence Sister Fidelis Tracy is a retired theology professor at Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, Ky.

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.

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.

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 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.

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 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.

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

Parish festivals

June 5-6

St. Catherine of Siena, Ft. Thomas Summerfest

June 5-7

St. Paul, Florence Summer kickoff

June 13

St. Joseph, Camp Springs Summer festival

June 14

St. Edward Parish, Cynthiana Ice cream social

June 19-20

St. Henry, Elsmere Parish festival

St. Therese, Southgate Summer festival

June 26-27

St. Benedict, Covington Parish festival

June 27-28

Mary, Queen of Heaven, Erlanger FunFest

July 10-12

Immaculate Heart of Mary, Burlington Summerfest

St. Pius X, Edgewood Summer festival

June 12-13

St. Augustine, Covington Summer festival

July 17-18

St. Thomas, Ft. Thomas Block party

July 17-19

St. Cecilia, Independence Parish festival

July 31-Aug. 1

St. Joseph, Cold Spring Parish festival

July 31-Aug. 2

St. Joseph, Crescent Springs Summer celebration

Aug. 7

Blessed Sacrament, Ft. Mitchell Athletic Boosters corn roast

Aug. 7-8

St. Mary of the Assumption, Alexandria Parish festival

Aug. 28-30

St. Augustine, Augusta Parish festival

Sept. 5-6

St. Anthony, Taylor Mill Festival Latino

Sept. 11-12

St. Barbara, Erlanger Rocktoberfest

Sept. 11-13

St. Patrick, Maysville Parish festival

Sept. 18-20

St. Timothy, Union Oktoberfest

Sept. 27

St. Philip Parish, Melbourne Golf outing



Seventh grade students at St. Agnes, Ft. Wright, wrapped up the year with a Civil War-era themed "Base Ball" Championship Game played by authentic 1860s rules — underhand pitching, one-bounce outs and vintage equipment included!

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.

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.

Pope Leo calls for 'openness' to Church reform that respects tradition

Josephine Peterson
Catholic News Service

Amid renewed tensions between the Vatican and traditionalist Catholics over the teachings of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Leo XIV defended Church reform as a legitimate process that adapts to current needs while remaining rooted in authentic tradition.

During his May 27 general audience in St. Peter's Square, the pope said authentic renewal of the liturgy is acceptable and encouraged when the Church first engages in careful theological and pastoral study and then makes sure that "any new forms adopted should in some way grow organically from forms already existing."

"In a particular way, I encourage everyone to respect the texts and norms of the liturgy with openness, humility, trust in God's greatness and with sincere fidelity to ecclesial communion," he said in his address to English speakers.

His remarks came weeks after the traditionalist Society of St. Pius X announced plans to move forward with ordaining new bishops without papal approval, despite warnings from the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith that such an act would be schismatic and carry

automatic excommunication for the members involved in performing and receiving the consecrations.

In a May 13 statement published by the dicastery's prefect, Cardinal Víctor Manuel Fernández warned that "this action will constitute 'a schismatic act'" and that "formal adherence to the schism constitutes a grave offense against God and entails the excommunication established by the law of the Church."

Founded in 1970 by Archbishop Marcel Lefebvre, the Society of St. Pius X has long opposed several teachings and reforms associated with Vatican II, particularly regarding the liturgy, ecumenism and religious liberty. Earlier this year, the group announced plans to consecrate bishops without papal authorization July 1, a move that

would deepen its rupture with Rome.

In February, SSPX Superior General Father Davide Pagliarani, who resides at the society's headquarters in Switzerland, met with Cardinal Fernández, but the society later reaffirmed its intention to proceed with the consecrations.

Addressing French-speaking visitors during the general audience, the pope prayed that "a liturgical renewal, faithful to the authentic tradition, may consolidate ecclesial communion and the full participation of the faithful."

Throughout his general audience catechesis, Pope Leo repeatedly framed liturgical reform as part of the Church's living tradition rather than a break from the

(Continued on page 14)



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GRADUATION 2026



(top) Among similarly dressed peers, a graduating student wears a cap decorated in rhinestones resembling the logo of Thomas More University.

(far right) Dr. Joseph Chillo, president, Thomas More University, joins with fellow administrators and faculties in prayer at the start of the 2026 Baccalaureate Mass.



Baker photos



(center) Bishop John Iffert smiles as he addresses Thomas More University's Class of 2026 during a Mass at Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel, May 15.

'Do not be afraid,' Bishop Iffert tells graduates at TMU baccalaureate Mass

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Graduations among students in the Diocese of Covington began, May 15, with a Mass celebrating Thomas More University's Class of 2026.

Many of the university's graduating seniors — dressed in caps, gowns and tassels — were there to celebrate their achievements alongside the faculty, staff and administrators that guided them along the way to the weekend of their graduation, with commencement to be held the following day.

Bishop John Iffert was also present to celebrate the Mass at the university's Mary, Seat of Wisdom Chapel. In his homily, he began by emphasizing words from the day's Gospel: "Do not be afraid."

"These words addressed to Jesus's own disciples speak directly to us and directly to you, the class of 2026," Bishop Iffert told graduates.

He compared them to St. Thomas More, the university's patron, describing him as someone who loved "learning" and "his family," who "served the common good with his whole living."

"In that sense," said Bishop Iffert, "his life looks a great deal like what you aspire to, like the aspirations celebrated by the degree that you will receive tomorrow. But what makes Thomas More a saint and not simply a successful graduate is this: When the decisive moment of challenge came, he knew who he was before God, and he refused to betray that truth."

St. Thomas More famously sided with the Catholic Church during the protestant

reformation and refused to acknowledge the queenship of Anne Boleyn after King Henry VIII divorced his first wife — and was executed for treason as a result.

"Jesus says," Bishop Iffert quoted, "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, rather be afraid of those who can destroy both soul and body. These are challenging words," he said, "but they are ultimately liberating."

These words "remind us that your identity in mind is not rooted in a resume or salary or status or any yardstick of success," Bishop Iffert said. "Your deepest identity is that you are known, loved and called by God."

Continuing, Bishop Iffert posed another question and challenge to graduates: "Will you have the courage to live the truth?"

Throughout life, graduates will encounter "pressure, pressure to compromise, pressure to remain silent, pressure to redefine truth according to convenience or popular opinion or the conventions of your industry," Bishop Iffert said.

"Do not be afraid," he told them once more. "Do not be afraid to let your conscience be formed by truth, not by pressure. Do not be afraid to promote peace and the dignity of every human person."

Concluding, Bishop Iffert said to graduates, "Today we entrust you to the intercession of St. Thomas More. May he help you to unite intellect and conscience, success and holiness, service and fidelity ... congratulations, graduates. Do not be afraid. And always remember — you are called to be saints."



(left) A graduating student in his cap and gown accompanies the Mass's music on the violin.

(bottom, right) A graduate seated alongside her classmates reviews the Mass's program.



GRADUATION 2026

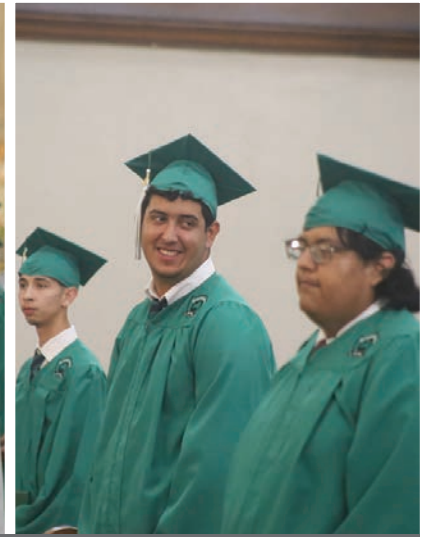
Families, schools, Bishop Iffert honor graduates

By Bailey Baker and Keener photos

Bishop John Iffert and Kendra McGuire, superintendent of schools, attended high school graduations in the diocese May 13 – 23. This is a pictorial salute to the class of 2026. God bless, grads!



Covington Catholic High School



St. Patrick High School



St. Henry District High School



Covington Latin School



Villa Madonna Academy



Notre Dame Academy



Newport Central Catholic High School



Holy Cross District High School



Bishop Brossart High School

GRADUATION 2026



*“Graduates, the world needs what
God has placed within you.
Trust that your life
has meaning, your choices matter,
and your future
is held in God’s hands.”*

– Bishop John Iffert



May 2026

Dear Graduates,

Congratulations on your achievement! You have worked hard, grown in wisdom and taken real steps toward maturity. But this moment is not just about what you have completed — it is about who you are becoming.

As you graduate, I would like you to remember one simple truth — your life is a calling.

When we hear the word “calling,” many people think first of a career or a particular job. Those matter — but God’s calling is bigger than that. Your vocation is not just about what you will do; it is about how you will live and whom you will serve.

God did not create you by accident. Your gifts, your questions, even your struggles are part of the way He calls you to serve the world. Wherever you go next — to high school, college, work, military service or something not yet clear — God is not waiting at the finish line. He is walking with you now, inviting you to listen and respond.

This means you do not need to have everything figured out. Many of the most faithful people in Scripture discovered their calling gradually — often through uncertainty, failure or unexpected turns. What mattered was not having a perfect plan but having a listening heart and the courage to say “yes” when the call became clear.

Your calling will always include loving others: treating people with dignity, seeking justice, forgiving generously, learning from the poor, and using your talents for more than yourself. If you live that way, you will be faithful — no matter what title you hold or path you take.

And remember this: God’s call is never withdrawn. Even if you stumble, even if you wander, God does not stop calling you by name. The Church will always be here to help you hear that voice again — in the Eucharist, in prayer and in the community of believers.

Graduates, the world needs what God has placed within you. Trust that your life has meaning, your choices matter, and your future is held in God’s hands. May you listen carefully, respond generously and live your calling with courage.

Congratulations, and may God bless you always.

Bishop John Iffert
Diocese of Covington



2026 Graduates

“Let us not be afraid to get our hands dirty on the ‘construction site’ of our time. Like Nehemiah, let us pray, plan wisely and work perseveringly, placing God at the forefront of our actions and the human person at the center of our choices.”

— Pope Leo XIV, Magnifica Humanitas, 16



Bishop Brossart High School

Isaac Amin ***
 Emma Begley ***
 Savannah Begley ***
 Madeline Besse ***
 Gabrielle Blair ***
 Logan Blau ***
 Carter Boruske *
 Cole Bricking **
 Madeline Broering ***
 Samantha Broering ***
 Ava Burton *
 Emma Callahan ***
 Lilly Carr **
 Samuel Chirumbolo *
 Nicholas Cozzi ***
 Luke D'Alessandro ***
 Eli Davis *
 Benjamin Doyle ***
 Owen Doyle *
 Madison Dozier ***
 Corryn Dunlevy ***
 Will Dunn
 Kylie Ebert ***
 Jade Gardner ***
 Sophia Geyer **
 Matthew Goering *
 Emily Grosser ***
 Luciana Guidugli
 Eian Hadden *
 Drake Herget **
 Carson Hesse ***
 Logan Hesse **
 Olivia Hildebrand ***
 Joshua Hull
 Michael Keitz
 Nolan Kruse *
 Beckett Kuntz *
 Carter Kuper
 Connor Lachenman
 Preston Lauer ***
 Zoe Leibel ***
 Lauren Leicht ***
 Kathleen Lonneman ***
 Audrey Losure **
 Payton Marshall ***
 Mason McKinzie
 Karter Morgan **
 Mackenzie Noble
 Campbell Ochsner ***
 Emma Orth ***
 Piper Patterson **
 Kyle Piscitello ***
 Riley Pitts **
 Kyleigh Pleiman ***
 John Prather **
 Roy (Matthew) Riegler
 Max Runge **
 Landon Ruth
 Lincoln Schabell **
 Elijah Schalk ***
 Anthony Schuck
 Rachel Shewmaker ***
 Kylie Smith **
 Jorge Somoza Del Castillo
 Jackson Steffen
 Colleen Sucher ***

Peyton Trauth **
 Carter Vogel *
 Ava Walters ***
 William Webster
 William Wyrick **



Covington Catholic High School

Grant Joseph Ahlers **
 Henry Harris Atkins
 Henry William Barlage **
 Nathan Rockwell Becker
 Garrett Richard Berkemeier *
 Keegan Alexius Bishop **
 Nicholas Michael Bishop ***
 Jacob Tobias Blanchet ***
 Everett Willis Blettner **
 Anthony James Bollin **
 Mason Joseph Bowman
 Donovan Jacoby Bradshaw
 Gavin Thomas Brake *
 Blake Robert Brauch
 Benjamin Stephen Brewer
 Zachary James Brooks
 Ryan James Burke ***
 Charles Edward Fosson
 Caldwell
 Jordan David Campoamor
 Tyler Wilson Carnes
 Brady Christopher Clifton ***
 Waylon James Earl Coats ***
 Tison Christopher Collins
 William Russell Couch
 Jack Burk Cruse **
 Kingston Mitchell Dailey **
 Dylan Edward Davis
 Jonas Teisl Deye
 Austin Matthew Dickman
 Hayden Robert Dirheimer *
 Martin Thomas Disibio, III **
 William Thomas Dusing ***
 Anthony Joseph Epplen ***
 Patrick Matthew Ernst *
 Thomas William Ernst, Jr. **
 Theodore Tucker Evans ***
 Jack Scott Fender **
 Eli Ronald Fesmire ***
 Elliott Stephen Fieler
 Anthony Nikolai Foote
 John Dylan Gaiser
 Nicholas Alan Galasso
 Garrett Michael Gallagher
 Jackson Howard Germann ***
 Jonathan Elijah Grooms *
 Brady Earl Guard **
 Ryan William Haas
 Carter Michael Halpin ***
 Maximus Richard Hardin ***
 Samson Tyler Hardin **
 Joseph Cash Harney
 Vincent John Hatter
 Tyler Raymond Heck**
 Jacob Thomas Huff
 Charles Thomas Ink
 Mitchell Brian Jansen ***

William Richard Jennings ***
 Connor Alan Jesinoski *
 Braxton Michael Jones **
 Quentin Augustine Jones
 Andrew Mark Kaufman *
 Jacob Anthony Keller **
 Jake William King *
 Brayden Patrick Kinsley ***
 Owen Matthew Knapke ***
 Peyton Riley Knollman
 Chase Michael Kokocinski ***
 Cole William Krumpelman *
 Ayden Christopher Laake ***
 Luke Alexander Lampe **
 Finn Michael Maddox **
 Maddox Paul Malton
 Ethan Christopher Massie
 Joseph Daniel Mayer ***
 Wyatt James McCarthy
 William Patrick McEvoy **
 Athens Joseph Michael
 McGillis
 Brian Camilo Mendez Quino
 **
 David Benjamin Meyer
 Miles Jacob Monson ***
 Bennett Charles Ober
 Luke Thomas O'Hara ***
 Brady Matthew Pagnotto ***
 Jack Ryan Pfeiffer ***
 Brayden Selby Scott Proud ***
 Brandon Michael Rash **
 Charles Matthew Reeves **
 Maxwell Sebastian Robbins **
 Tanner J Robertson *
 Maxx Arthur Ruth ***
 Jack Louis Salyers ***
 Logan James Sanning **
 Jackson Derrick Schmid ***
 Eli Hunter Scroggins
 Collin Michael Smith
 Andrew Kirtley Steffen
 Grant Michael Stieglmeyer
 Nathan Marek Stvol
 Ryan Andrew Tenhundfeld **
 Luke Anthony Thamann **
 Samuel Augustine
 Thamann **
 Nicholas Robert Wagner *
 William Seymour Ward
 Dylan Matthew Warner ***
 Zack Nicholas Webb **
 Gabriel Thomas Weis **
 Augustus Patrick White
 Mark Wayne Deeley Wilhite
 Marcus Wayne Willenbrink
 Landon Christopher
 Windeler *
 Maxwell David Wischer ***
 Stephen Nicholas
 Wiseman ***
 Matthew Bret Witte ***
 Matthew Wallace Woolf **
 Mitchell Allen Woolf **
 Braden Bae Young
 Andrew Mark Zimmerman



Covington Latin School

Jacob Brody Atlick**
 Natalie Nicole Bradshaw**
 Jamison Daniel Bullock***
 Ethan Neel Desai***
 Meredith Ann Fennell**
 Henry Allen Frank
 Brenna Noelle Fredrick***
 Becker Nicholas Gregory
 Miranda Marie Howell***
 Carter Mason Johnson***
 Jeremy Stephen Juelg***
 Talula Margaret Lane***
 Ethan Nicholas Luckhardt***
 Chelsea Martinez***
 Liam Jean Rowland***
 Quinn Alan Schulte***
 Ava Maureen Sikorski***
 Sophia Ruth Stock***
 Bridget Anastasia Swaney*
 Mary Rachel Swaney**
 Haley Nicole Voet*
 Joseph Michael Walsh***
 Hope Christabell Marie
 Warning***
 Braxton Li Young***
 Sophia Voncile Zerhusen***



Holy Cross District High School

Essex Rowan Adams ***
 Luke Raymond Arlinghaus **
 Rachel Elizabeth Beane ***
 Kilee Victoria Benson
 Cole Moss Berg
 Caitlyn Nicole Bethell ***
 Leonard William Bezold ***
 Bradley Patton Bornhorn
 Landon Nevel Bosley
 Ryan Christopher Bottom ***
 Anthony Joseph Broering
 Mason James Bunch ***
 Jonathan Daniel Bunton ***
 Zilphia Rose Clarke ***
 Josephine Claire Crail *
 Nora Therese Deavy ***
 Preston David Detzel *
 Barrett Michael Dirst *
 Marissa Nicole Elsbernd
 Lily Ann Fabre
 Georgia Ann Fisk ***
 Trevin Zayne Figs ***
 Clarissa Sue Fraley
 Brady Arnold Gabbard **
 Zachary Urban Galbaugh **
 Joel Henry Gausepohl **
 Jerome Charles Gearding
 Grant Christian Heidenreich
 Abraham Daniel Highfield *
 Alli Lauren Holakowski ***
 Jackson Lamar Houston
 Grady Lee Houston
 Hevin Marray Jackson
 Chloe Isabelle Dalynn James

Anna Catherine Kahmann ***
 Steven Carver King
 Leah Kathryn Kramer ***
 Taylor Mckenzie Kramer
 Aidan Roman Landers ***
 James William Lay, Jr
 Thomas Lee Maddox
 Jaqueline Marroquin
 Ramirez ***
 Jillian DeAnna Matherne **
 Aya Jewel McClendon
 Brody Lee James McDonald *
 Olivia Michelle McHenry **
 Samuel Matthew Meiman
 Preston Todd Moore
 Callee Noel Mounce
 Wyatt James Owens
 Malcom Issac Perrin
 Lily Ann-Marie Poulsen
 Megan Melissa Quandt **
 Jase Elijah Raven
 Abigail Grace Reed ***
 Leo Joseph Resing ***
 A'millian Se'ni Rhodes ***
 Nathan Daniel Rominger ***
 Andrew James Russell H
 Conner Ryan Saalfeld ***
 Gavin Matthew Saalfeld **
 Harper Mae Saalfeld ***
 Bradley Grant Schmidt **
 James Briar Schoettle *
 Daphne Nicole Strunk **
 James Vincent Titmus *
 Anakin Jobe Rocky Townsend
 **
 Chase Michael Tully *
 Aidan Michael Urlage ***
 Elizabeth Mary Wermeling

 Kaylee Grace Whitacre ***
 Jacob Woodrow Wulfreck



GRADUATION 2026



Newport Central Catholic High School

Alexander Alarcon ***
 Preston Alford
 Liam Allen
 Noelle Baxter
 Edward Bivens Jr.
 Benjamin Colwell ***
 Aidan Dance
 McKenna Desmond ***
 Lucas Duty
 Jack Gearding ***
 Khloe Griffith
 Greta Hansbauer ***
 Jackson Hoffstedder
 Genevieve Howard ***
 Noah Jacob
 Thomas Kerans *
 Grant Kevill **
 Preston Koeninger ***
 Piperlyn Kramer
 Alannah Kues ***
 Mario League
 John Luhn ***
 Kara Matthews
 Max Meadows *
 Thomas Messmer
 Isabella Middendorf ***
 Emmanuel Miles
 Eva Paxton
 Addison Powell
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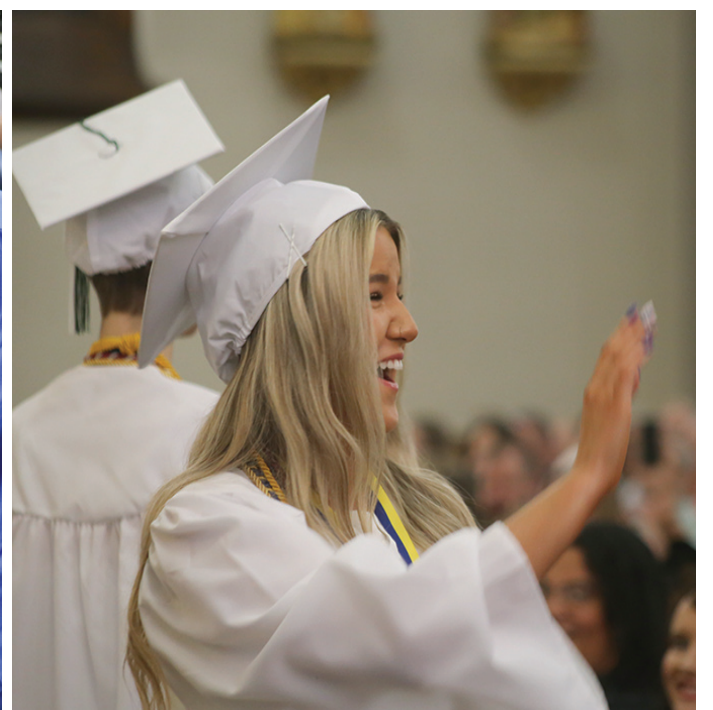
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Pope Leo calls for ‘openness’ to Church reform

(Continued from page 7)



CNS photo/Vatican Media

Pope Leo XIV greets visitors and pilgrims from the pope-mobile while riding around St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican before his weekly general audience May 27, 2026.

Paschal mystery and to allow the Church’s worship to become embodied within different cultures throughout history

“Today, this energy must be renewed in continuity with the authentic and living Catholic tradition, that is, in accordance with a dynamic aimed at introducing believers to the fullness of the truth,” he said.

Citing Pope Benedict XVI, Pope Leo said tradition and progress should not be viewed as opposites, recalling Benedict’s image of tradition as “a river” that carries its source within itself while continuing to flow forward.

At the same time, the pope stressed that any reform within the Church must be approached carefully and with ecclesial authority. Referencing “Sacrosanctum Concilium,” he said reforms should only occur when “the good of the Church genuinely and certainly requires them” and after “careful theological, historical and pastoral” study.

“I therefore urge all those called to prepare the celebration of the divine mysteries, in particular priests who exercise the ministry of liturgical presidency, to always uphold that respect for the texts and regulations of the liturgy which springs from an inner attitude of openness and trust in God, manifesting humility before His greatness and sincere fidelity to ecclesial communion,” he said.

past.

Quoting Pope Pius XII and the Second Vatican Council’s Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy, “Sacrosanctum Concilium,” the pope said the Church “grows, matures, develops” while safeguarding the integrity of doctrine. He also reiterated the council’s call to preserve “sound tradition” while remaining open to “legitimate progress.”

The pope said changes within the liturgy had taken place throughout the Church’s history in order to help the faithful participate more fully in the

Pope Leo calls for ‘educational alliance’ on AI: Here are takeaways for parents, teachers



OSV News photo/Simone Risoluti, Vatican Media

Pope Leo XIV applauds as he attends the presentation of “Magnifica Humanitas” at the Vatican’s Synod Hall May 25, 2026, the first encyclical of his papacy, which focuses on the rise of artificial intelligence.

Paulina Guzik

OSV News

Amid the rapid expansion of artificial intelligence and digital media, Pope Leo XIV is calling on families, schools and policymakers to forge an “educational alliance for the digital age” to protect the dignity and intellectual development of young people.

“In an era when truth is often distorted in order to serve particular interests and communication strategies, the field of education assumes decisive importance,” Pope Leo wrote.

In the newly released encyclical “Magnifica Humanitas,” Pope Leo is urging teachers, caregivers and university lecturers to not give up on a generation that could otherwise be lost to technology. And he’s starting with a quite blunt fact clearly derived from his pastoral, on the ground approach of a missionary: “Rapid technological transformations reveal just how unprepared we are on the educational level.”

“The pervasiveness of digital media” fosters “a culture of immediacy and hyper-stimulation,” Pope Leo said, giving “rise to fatigue, boredom and apathy concerning the effort required for seeking the truth.” But education stands on the other side of the barricade, the pontiff stressed, and is “a long journey requiring patience” and needing “time for development and for engagement with reality beyond appearances.”

Luke Rowe, lecturer and researcher at the Australian Catholic University, was not only happy when he read those passages — he was deeply “moved,” he said.

“I think I didn’t realize how much I was longing to hear this guidance,” he told OSV News of the encyclical. “And I think the world needs it right now.”

“There was almost a hunger for this guidance,” he said, pointing out that what struck him most reading the encyclical was that the Holy Father underlined the “the frailty of humanity and our imperfections provide the necessary backdrop for us to appreciate and call out for God’s love,” Rowe said.

The pope wrote in his encyclical that in offering reflections on the digital continent, he hoped to “help the lay faithful and people of goodwill rediscover their duty of implementing” the principles of Catholic social doctrine principles “in their daily lives, family relationships, work and involvement in society. Thus, they will let themselves be inspired by the aim of embodying God’s love in the concrete events of life.”

The pope emphasized the danger of relying too heavily on automated systems for learning, noting that “the speed and ease with which answers or summaries can be obtained risk extinguishing the desire to ask questions.” Consequently, he urged society to “protect our young peo-

(Continued on page 15)



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(Continued from page 14)

ple from the promise of the perfect machine, from that subtle temptation which renders human thought seemingly superfluous precisely when it is most needed.”

“With an increasingly synthetic AI driven world, we’re expected to have the answers straight away,” said Rowe, whose main areas of teaching focus on the science of learning, evidence-based teaching and health education at ACU’s Melbourne campus.

“Everything’s now neat and polished. We all have perfect grammar because we’re writing with AI on our emails,” he said. “We have perfect structured documents and perfect images.” This “synthetic world is starting to erase human imperfections, at least on the surface. And I

think for me, a thriving education ecosystem requires us to see our imperfections. And hearing this — that resonated with my heart deeply,” he said after reading the encyclical.

“I felt like that was being spoken to directly,” Rowe stressed. “And I wanted to share that with my students. I want to share that with our trained educators ... and I want them to know that it’s OK to be flawed, vulnerable, imperfect human beings and that there is a lot of hope for us.”

“For an algorithm, an error is a flaw to be corrected; for a person, however, an error can be a catalyst for profound change,” the pope said in his encyclical, among a number of pointed reflections on stark difference between technology and humanism.

Addressing the specific challenges posed by the rise of artificial intelligence, the encyclical cautions that “every technology shapes those who use it.” Rather than simply adapting to new tools, the encyclical outlines that “educating people about the use of AI ... involves teaching them to decide when and for what purpose it ought not to be used.”

Education “is to amplify and celebrate the diversity of everyone’s uniqueness and to give everyone a voice. And that’s a challenge in a world where AI is homogenizing people and giving them a script, taking away their voice ... blending it into some kind of, I suppose, homogenized sludge,” Rowe told OSV News.

He said that a clear call to action in educational terms

(Continued on page 16)

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Educational alliance' on AI

(Continued from page 15)

from the encyclical “is to be more careful about how we use this technology to build upon and augment the individuality of people. And what makes them unique and special is something that should be celebrated, not homogenized,” Rowe said.

The Australian professor underlined that the risk in academia is a frantic search for answers in technology, while the pope provides a genuinely human answer to big concerns.

“I have seen this technology swallow itself up every three to six months with something new. And so for me, it points to the fact that we need to have a set of first principles as guideposts to pivot from. And that, to me, is what I believe was missing,” he said of the encyclical’s take-aways, which he said are “very powerful call to action.”

The encyclical also outlines the severe psychological and social harms of early and unsupervised digital exposure, which can negatively impact sleep, attention spans and emotional control, while opening the door to online exploitation, cyberbullying and manipulation by AI tools.

Acknowledging the immense pressure on the modern family, the pope conceded that “it is difficult for parents by themselves to resist the influence of business models that monetize attention and time.”

Because of that, he called for an “alliance among policy-makers, educational institutions and families that is capable of concretely supporting adults in this task.”

What he said is needed are “far-sighted public policies ... to oppose the immediate interests of platforms — concentrated in a few hands — when they conflict with the

wellbeing of minors.”

Kathy Ann Mills, a professor at Australian Catholic University who researches — among other fields — digital and media practices, said that the education world can play “a role in teaching children and young people how to use technology in responsible ways, and as Pope Leo XIV reminds us, “to use AI as a valuable tool, but in a way that requires vigilance,” Mills underlined.

“Importantly, he points to some of the dangers of AI that can be misleading, such as creating illusions of friendship with a personal subject, which research shows is a danger when humans develop emotional bonds with machines,” she said in a written message to OSV News.

“Children also have developing understandings of AI, with different or immature ways of thinking about human-like machines than older children and adults,” she wrote. “For example, the tendency to anthropomorphize artificial agents, particularly when AI has a human-like persona, face, backstory or physical form, like robots, changes over time. So this is an example of how teachers and parents play a vital role in guiding children’s developing understandings of AI,” she emphasized.

Pope Leo also talks in his encyclical about legislators intervening to set appropriate age limits, holding service providers accountable “rather than shifting the whole burden of control onto families,” and providing specific protections “against all forms of online sexual exploitation and violence.”

He calls children and adolescents “a precious treasure” in need of such protection, but also urges that they are taught “how to recognize manipulation, defend their dignity and respect that of others in digital environments.”

“Research shows that AI systems contain biases that

need to be challenged,” Mills said, pointing to Pope Leo’s words: “Ethical discernment cannot be limited to asking whether we are using a system for good or bad purposes; it must also examine how that system is designed and what vision of the human person and society is embedded in the data and models that guide it.”

School, Pope Leo said, “is the place where new generations can learn to seek and love the truth, to reflect on the meaning of life and to recognize the dignity of every person” — but that same school, faced with the digital age, seems weak.

“Even young children can begin to develop a sense of social justice, learning to identify when the output undermines social justice and the common good,” Mills pointed out. “They can see which voices are missing, whose views and values dominate, and whose views are silenced. They can also learn to think about ‘who’ benefits from the technologies,” she said.

For families and schools, the pope said, “there is a growing need for new educational awareness and for formation concerning the proper and critical use of digital tools, AI and online commercial and financial platforms.” In universities, on the other hand, “the principal challenge lies in the integration of knowledge, so as to cultivate the capacity to connect and synthesize knowledge in order to grasp complexity, while also forming the skills necessary for verifying facts.”

Pope Leo said technology “has the power to heal, connect, educate and protect our common home; but it can also divide, exclude and generate new forms of injustice.”

Within that frame “the organization of schools, physical spaces, evaluation methods and the role of teachers

(Continued on page 18)

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Obituary

Sister Mary Ruth Riehle

Ruth Margaret Riehle was born on April 19, 1930, in Milford, Ohio, to Emma and Leo Riehle. She was the third of five children, growing up during the challenging years of the Great Depression.

Although times were difficult, her family found stability with the support of relatives and eventually moved to her uncle's farm in Loveland, Ohio. Her father later purchased his own farm. He was also a master carpenter, later building the convent for the Sisters of Notre Dame at St. Columban Parish, where Ruth had attended school. Ruth cherished her childhood on the farm, spending countless hours exploring the woods and creeks. Reflecting her adventurous spirit, she fondly described herself as a "tomboy."

Inspired by her SND teachers and her older sister, Sister Mary Adrienne, who had previously entered the Sisters of Notre Dame, Ruth felt a deep calling to dedicate her life to God. She attended Notre Dame Academy, where her faith continued to grow. During her senior year, she became an Aspirant and soon afterward entered the Sisters of Notre Dame. Ruth faithfully pursued her vocation and professed her first vows on Aug. 10, 1950.

After a year of classroom teaching, Sister Mary Rose Emma, as she was then known, felt called to serve in a new way and began her studies at St. Francis School of Practical Nursing, where she earned her LPN certification. In 1967, she began her nursing ministry at St. Charles Care Center and later served at St. Claire Regional Medical Center (now UK St. Claire) in Morehead, Kentucky.

While working, she continued her education at the University of Kentucky, where she earned her RN degree in 1981. Sister was also a proud member of the American Red Cross, reflecting her commitment to caring for others.

From St. Claire she ministered as head nurse at the Provincial House Infirmery, Lourdes Hall. After more years of nursing in various local settings, she eventually retired from active nursing ministry.

Sister changed her name from Rose Emma back to her baptismal name, Ruth, to deepen her baptismal commitment. In her retirement, Sister Mary Ruth remained active and generous with her time. A skilled gardener, she helped care for the grounds at St. Joseph Heights, keeping her assigned flower beds in tiptop condition. She also assisted at St. Augustine School in Augusta, Ky. As she grew older, she embraced a quieter life in the apostolate of prayer.

At Lourdes Hall, Sister Mary Ruth enjoyed the companionship of her fellow sisters, including her biological sister, Sister Mary Helen Joseph Riehle. Together, they shared moments of joy, community and spiritual renewal.

After over 75 years of religious life and service to God, Sister Mary Ruth passed away peacefully on May 19, 2026. She was preceded in death by her parents, her sister, Sister Mary Adrienne, SND and brothers Elmer and Leo. She leaves behind her beloved younger sister, Sister Mary Helen Joseph, SND.

Sister Mary Ruth loved her nursing ministry. She shared, "You can help people when they are down. You help them not only physically, but also spiritually and emotionally." She firmly believed that God brings good out of every hardship. Reflecting on her own life, she recognized that her family's loss during the Great Depression led them to her uncle's farm, an experience that brought her to the Sisters of Notre Dame. Her life stands as a testament to faith, service, and trust in God's provident care.

Mass of Christian Burial was held May 23 at St. Agnes Church, Ft. Wright, with interment in the convent cemetery.



Sister Mary Ruth Riehle, SND

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Educational alliance' on AI

(Continued from page 16)

themselves must be rethought in order to promote an authentically integral education that addresses every dimension of the person," the encyclical outlined.

In a rather unbalanced race between education and technology, teachers also need to be supported, the pope said, stressing it is "necessary to support the ongoing formation of teachers throughout their professional lives, so that they can engage positively with new technologies, helping students to use them responsibly, critically and creatively, rather than passively succumbing to their influence."

Many educators, Pope Leo said, "already report signs of dehumanization, where people may 'know many things' but struggle to find direction in their lives, partly due to an inability to connect information with deeper knowledge or maintain a sense of purpose."

As an answer to that, "a genuinely healthy attitude is needed, requiring rhythms that incorporate silence, in-depth study, reading and judicious analysis, for without these elements inner freedom may be compromised."

For Rowe, the pope pointing out critical thinking is key.

"Students need to be able to think for themselves before they start to defer to technology to do the thinking for them," he told OSV News.

In an AI era, "you can fall asleep on a keyboard and wake up to a Shakespearean sonnet and impress yourself, and make yourself think that you're a great writer, even though you may not know how to do anything but put in a little sloppy text prompt," Rowe underlined.

The big challenge therefore is to meet that aspect of human dignity "so that we still value knowledge and people who bear knowledge," he said.

"There's something sacred in that and how teachers and students interact when they build knowledge together, and I think there's a big challenge moving forward in what that means for education."

The Church's social doctrine, Pope Leo said, "invites families, schools, Christian communities and public institutions to form a renewed educational alliance," which he proposes in his encyclical.

In this alliance students should be taught "a sense of moderation and limits; the recognition of the right of others, as well as of future generations, to enjoy the goods that are either provided for us or made available by human ingenuity; freedom and responsibility; and a sense of transcendence and the common good."

Schools therefore, Pope Leo wrote, "are not called to follow the pace of the digital world," but to "offer that which the digital sphere by itself cannot provide, namely a shared time for learning and developing trustworthy relationships."

Local

St. Elizabeth earns CMS 5-star rating at three hospitals

St. Elizabeth Healthcare announced, May 19, that its Dearborn, Edgewood and Ft. Thomas hospitals received 2026 5-Star Overall Hospital Quality Ratings from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services, placing the Northern Kentucky-based system among a small group of health systems nationwide with three or more facilities earning the designation. CMS awarded the top rating to 384 hospitals across the country, or about 12% of those reviewed. St. Elizabeth said the three recognized campuses rank in the top tier nationally, and that only 10 health systems have three or more hospitals with 5-star status. "Patients and families are paying close attention to quality—and they should," said Vera Hall, Chief Operating Officer for St. Elizabeth Healthcare. "This 5-star rating reflects the consistency of our care and the dedication of our teams to deliver the best possible outcomes." The CMS ratings are used by consumers to compare hospitals and are based on measures including patient experience, length of stay, readmissions, safety events and outcomes.

National/World

New US Eucharistic pilgrimage sets out on Pentecost

ST. AUGUSTINE, Fla. — A softening of hearts toward the Eucharist, a greater sense of unity in the Church, and a "fresh outpouring of the Holy Spirit" — these were the intentions held in the hearts of perpetual pilgrims as they set out on the third National Eucharistic Pilgrimage from St. Augustine May 24. Under the bright Florida sun, on the grounds of the Mission Nombre de Dios and the National Shrine of Our Lady of La Leche, Bishop Erik T. Pohlmeier of St. Augustine cele-

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brated Mass to kick off the 2026 pilgrimage on the feast of Pentecost — nearly 500 years after the first Mass of Thanksgiving there in 1565 in what is now “the oldest site of continuous Catholic presence in the United States.” In attendance were the nine “perpetual pilgrims” of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage who will be traveling with the Eucharist — which Catholics believe to be Jesus Christ truly present in his body, blood, soul and divinity — for six weeks on the “St. Frances Xavier Cabrini Route” up the East Coast, ending in Philadelphia over the July 4 holiday weekend. Also present were officials connected to the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage and the Diocese of Augustine, and as many as 1,500 pilgrims gathered for the first leg of the 2026 pilgrimage. Following Mass, Bishop Pohlmeier processed throughout the grounds of the shrine with the Eucharist to the “Rustic Altar,” a memorial of where Father Francisco López de Mendoza Grajales celebrated St. Augustine’s first Mass Sept. 8, 1565. The pilgrimage eventually proceeded to the Cathedral Basilica of St. Augustine for a planned period of overnight Eucharistic adoration.

Pope Leo meets Italian families who lost children to toxic waste dumping

ACERRA, Italy — Pope Leo XIV traveled May 23 to the southern Italian town of Acerra to meet families who have lost loved ones to cancers linked to decades of illegal toxic waste dumping by the Camorra mafia. Inside Acerra’s cathedral, mothers held photos of relatives who had died or were battling cancer in the area known as the “Land of Fires” and the “Triangle of Death.” “I have come first and foremost to gather the tears of those who have lost loved ones, killed by environmental pollution caused by unscrupulous individuals and organizations, who for too long have been able to act with impunity,” the pope said. He also praised “a Church that has dared to speak out and be prophetic.” Acerra’s Bishop Antonio Di Donna said toxic waste dumped since the 1980s caused “illness and premature death,” especially among children. Pope Leo’s visit occurred on the eve of the 11th anniversary of Pope Francis signing his landmark ecological encyclical “Laudato Si’.”

Somalia is nearing the brink of humanitarian catastrophe, aid organizations warn

NAIROBI, Kenya — Somalia is nearing catastrophe again, as aid agencies warn that millions are facing severe hunger, displacement and collapsing access to basic services. A coalition of humanitarian groups says nearly 6.5 million people are experiencing acute food insecurity, while 1.8 million children are suffering from acute malnutrition, including hundreds of thousands in urgent need of treatment. Bishop Jamal Boulos Sleiman Daibes of Djibouti told OSV News the crisis is being driven by drought, conflict, climate shocks and economic strain, while international funding falls far short of what’s needed. Caritas Somalia reports that only a fraction of donor support has arrived, leaving women, children and the elderly especially vulnerable. The situation has worsened as fuel and food prices surge following disruptions in the Strait of Hormuz. Somalia’s prolonged instability further complicates relief efforts; it continues to face an insurgency by al-Shabab, an al-Qaida-affiliated group in East Africa. Despite insecurity and the small Christian presence in overwhelmingly Muslim Somalia, the Catholic Church continues humanitarian out-

reach through Caritas and local partnerships, while calling for sustained international solidarity and long-term investment in peace and recovery.

Regular pastoral visits resume at ICE facility near Chicago after judge’s order

CHICAGO — Clergy and religious have begun ministering regularly to those being held at an Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility in suburban Chicago — for now — after almost a year of trying to have regular visits. The Chicago-based Coalition for Spiritual and Public Leadership called the pastoral visits “unprecedented” in its May 19 announcement about a court-ordered agreement being carried out. Groups

from CSPL, a Catholic social justice organization, started going daily to the ICE processing facility in Broadview May 15, following a federal judge’s preliminary injunction in April. Prior to the May 14 agreement, the regular pastoral visits had only occurred weekly. The daily visits by clergy and religious to detainees at the Broadview facility have resumed — for now — after almost a year of trying to have regular visits. The temporary order prohibited the Department of Homeland Security from imposing a total ban on pastoral visits at the facility 12.5 miles west of downtown Chicago, while CSPL’s lawsuit seeking permanent regular pastoral visits is pending. The order also compelled DHS and ICE to permit the visits and work out with CSPL the terms. Michael Okinczyk-Cruz, CSPL executive director, said that since May 15 at least three and sometimes as many as five ministers have entered the facility.



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Youth Ministry focuses efforts on community building and leadership development in summer months

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

The Diocese of Covington Youth Ministry Office has a summer of development and growth ahead. Currently, applications are still being taken for the summer intern program, and the newest Youth Commission Evangelization Team (YCET) cohort both of which develop leadership and evangelization skills in teens and young adults.

The summer intern program welcomes college students to the Diocese of Covington Curia, Covington, where they will help lead the June 27 middle school CONNECT retreat. These retreats are designed for middle school students to connect in the spirit of the Eucharist with their peers. For the college interns, the retreats are a masterclass in learning to “plan, develop and deliver,” retreats, said Angie Poat, diocesan youth minister.

In addition to the hands-on development of leadership and event planning skills, the interns will participate in the first Youth Ministry Leadership Training retreat. The weekend retreat is for interns, members of the high school YCET team and all adult volunteer and leaders involved in youth ministry. This year, the focus is on building more than just skills, but a community.

“The retreat is bringing together team members from parishes to help grow, learn how to grow their parish youth ministry, so we can encourage intergenerational teams, future volunteers,” said Mrs. Poat. “We decided to stop separating the high school students, the interns and the adults, and combine them into collective training where they could support each other.”

To further encourage the development of community and camaraderie among youth ministry leaders and volunteers, the retreat will be followed by “monthly leadership training nights that will focus on a particular topic, so

it’s not a one and done event. It’s an ongoing collaborative professional learning community that can grow together and have support and network and share ideas,” said Mrs. Poat.

The ongoing leadership development is part of an ongoing effort in the Youth Ministry Office to support the development of intergenerational teams. New this year to the Youth Commission Evangelization Team structure is a two-tract system, for adults and students.

“The Youth Commission Evangelization Team group is going to expand this year,” said Mrs. Poat. “We’re not cutting it off, so anybody who wants to come and learn how to be a leader will be welcome. We’re encouraging parishes to send an adult mentor to participate in YCET with them [student] so that they can go back to their parishes and serve together.”

In the past, the YCET program has encouraged high-school-aged students in parishes to identify a personal faith evangelization mission, or apostolate, and explore how to live that mission. “Having young people be accompanied by somebody in their own parish or their own school in which they serve, so that they can go back and



Students at the 2025 winter CONNECT retreat worship together in praise and thanksgiving for the Lord. To register for the 2026 summer CONNECT retreat go to covdio.org/youth.

have the support they need to serve,” said Mrs. Poat. “No one is alone, no one serves alone. Christ is calling us to be community for each other, and so we need each other’s gifts and talents.”

To learn more about the Youth Ministry Leadership training, college internship opportunities, adult mentorship or YCET opportunities, go to covdio.org/youthministry.

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