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(right) Justic Bockrath plays guitar; and (above) Erik Schutzman and Calb Sucierto play the bongos with residents of the Mustard Seed Community. Music was a big part of the experience for residents and the mission group. "We sang lots of songs, like lots of songs, and dancing, they loved that a lot," said Ms. McGillivray.

Mission trip to Jamaica teaches members to surrender to God's plan and the power of his love

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

Eighteen members of the Divine Mercy/St. Bernard (DMSB) Young Adult Ministry group went international, June 6-13, to the Blessed Assurance Mustard Seed Community, St. James, Jamaica. There they served children and adults with physical and mental disabilities. The experience taught the 18 to trust in God's providence, to seek his love in service of others, and an abandonment of personal desires — a total trust in God's own plan.

"We just had this insane level of surrender; and we kind of said surrender was like the motto of the week," said Caitlin McGillivray, young adult minister for Divine Mercy Parish, Bellevue, and St. Bernard Parish, Dayton. "There were a lot of moments where we could have been totally defeated," she said.

"Everything that could go wrong did go wrong," said Ms. McGillivray, recalling that the day after their arrival, all the residents of the Community got sick. "We couldn't be around them for three days," said another member of the youth ministry group, Megan Syck.

In the meantime, the group set out to paint the rocks surrounding the Marian garden; however, "it rained every time we would paint. We would watch all the paint just go down with the water; you would see pink water just flooding down," said Ms. Syck.

Despite all the setbacks, the group surrendered. "Even if we have plans, the plans aren't going to go exactly how we want, but the Lord's plans are better; and he has things and better ways to reveal certain things to us," said Ms. McGillivray.

And through his plan, the 18 found love from those they served and an abandonment of their own personal desires.

"Every morning you'd wake up, they'd [the residents] be waiting



outside of the mission house ... waiting for us to come out, and then they'd give these huge hugs every morning ... they were just so delighted to be with you," said Ms. McGillivray. "It made me see the way that God loves us; it was very profound."

"When we were there, you're 24/7 in servitude to others," said Caleb Sucierto, one of the 18.

The bulk of the group's service was feeding and spending time with the residents, since many were unable to feed themselves due to the nature of their disability.

"It was definitely a challenge," said Mr. Sucierto. "There was definitely a mental block there, fear of the unknown; you don't know what to expect. As soon as you get into it, you understand that this person is made in the image and likeness of God, so you want to do

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From garden to green: Parish Kitchen volunteer to be honored at Great American Ball Park

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

When the Diocese of Covington and Archdiocese of Cincinnati head out to Great American Ball Park, Sept. 5, to watch the Reds take on the Milwaukee Brewers for this year's Catholic Family Night, joining them will be Catholic Charities volunteers from both sides of the river to be honored for their ministry and service on the big screen.

One of these volunteers is Jorja Kremer — a parishioner of St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood, and a retired medical technologist turned science teacher.

After retiring, Ms. Kremer attended a "master garden-er" program that required volunteer hours to graduate and

Photo courtesy of Catholic Charities/Emily Hudepohl



Jorja Kremer (left) proudly shows vegetables harvested from the garden of Parish Kitchen, Covington. These vegetables are given to guests of the Parish Kitchen, furthering their mission of feeding the hungry.

fatefully followed an ad seeking gardeners for the Parish Kitchen, Covington, a ministry of Catholic Charities that serves meals and respite to neighbors everyday — the rest is history.

"The lot next to them was just a vacant, hard clay, rock and brick field. It was totally barren, and you could hardly dig in it," Ms. Kremer recalls of her beginnings of the garden. "It was so hard to dig in, but there were four raised beds — and so I started."

Ms. Kremer, alongside the hard work of other volunteers, raised the Parish Kitchen garden that first year. They received soil from the Cincinnati Zoo, built three more raised beds and established a berry bed, as well. During this time, Ms. Kremer also began helping to cook Parish Kitchen's daily meals ever Friday while tending to the budding garden throughout the week.

"My reasoning for that is giving back," Ms. Kremer simply said. "I just love seeing the look on people's faces when they come in and they see flowers in the middle of all that concrete. They see these trees and flowers and a place to sit, and the vegetables growing, and they take it all in."

The vegetables grown in the Parish Kitchen garden are given away to guests, as well. "Whatever we grow, we give to them," she said. "It became a total work of love."

Jill Walch, director, Volunteer Engagement for Catholic Charities, said that "Jorja's faith is at the heart of her commitment to serving others. Through the guidance of the Holy Spirit, she has devoted herself

Catholic Family Night Sept. 5 at Great American Ballpark

Watch the Reds take on the Brewers as the Diocese of Covington and Archdiocese of Cincinnati celebrate "Love in Action"

With Bishop Iffert!

Calling all Reds fans — join Bishop John Iffert and Archbishop Robert Casey in cheering on the Cincinnati Reds at Catholic Family Night, Sept. 5. Grab your discounted tickets early to participate in the pre-game field parade. To buy tickets scan the QR code.

to caring for the Parish Kitchen garden, creating a space that brings both nourishment and comfort to our guests.

"The garden is more than a source of fresh produce. It is a peaceful and welcoming place where our guests can enjoy a moment of beauty and calm. We are grateful for Jorja's dedication and for the many ways she helps make our community stronger."

Ms. Kremer shares that same gratitude for the workers at Parish Kitchen.

"I think that Parish Kitchen is a major worthwhile thing to have," said Ms. Kremer. "It's the people that work there — everybody is there because they love it, they love the work and they love helping people. That's really important to me."

Bailey photo

Academic Excellence Committee prepares to set goals in final committee meeting

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

As the spring portion of the Diocese of Covington's strategic planning process draws to a close, each commission and their respective committees will meet once more to draft their goals for the future. Since May, each commission has been involved in a deep process of education and discernment with members of the Diocesan community who have volunteered their time and effort as members of commission committees.

Over the course of three months, each committee has met to learn, grow and develop specific interest areas of the Diocese of Covington's strategic plan. Together, they worked toward a common goal of improving the lives of all those who live and worship in the Diocese of Covington. For some commissions it was planned giving, for others it was ministry work, for the Schools Commission their goal was simple: promoting student success.

Chair of the Academic Excellence Committee and Chair of the School of Education for Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, Christy Petroze, said "my thought is always 'how does this impact my students,' and if it doesn't really impact my students then I'd rather be doing something else."

The Schools Commission consists of four committees: mission and Catholic identity, academic excellence, governance and leadership and operational vitality. "Those have to exist to support our work," said Dr. Petroze, "but I would imagine at the heart of it is about student success in our

Catholic Schools, to promote the Catholic faith in education."

Dr. Petroze outlined that the Academic Excellence Committee has identified two primary areas focus areas of standardizing curriculum and increasing inclusive education. In August of 2025, the Diocese of Covington hired Emily Urlage, director of curriculum and instruction for the Diocese of Covington's school office. Since being hired, Mrs. Urlage has worked to create a standardized curriculum for Diocesan schools.

Once completed, these new curricula will serve as "guidelines," said Dr. Petroze, "they are not telling teachers how or what to teach." But rather, the curriculum will continue to move Diocesan schools into a "more rigorous academic setting ... that's the expectation across the Diocese," said Dr. Petroze.

In addition to standardized curricula, the committee is also focused on inclusive education, citing the support of the Fire Foundation of Northern Kentucky. Dr. Petroze explained that the question is "how can our Catholic schools be more inclusive to students with special needs?"

As the committee continued to meet throughout the summer months, members comprising of parents, grandparents, teachers and alumni have all come away with a deeper understanding "of the structure of the schools and the expectations of teachers, parents and students," said Dr. Petroze. "It has been a nice community space to have



Dr. Christy Petroze and superintendent of schools Kendra McGuire talk before a meeting with the chairs of the School Commission committees where they presented their recommendations to Bishop Iffert based on their months of meetings and planning.

these open conversations and people are just feeling free to ask the questions."

As the committee meetings come to an end, Dr. Petroze reflected on the opportunity to meet and discern with members of the community who are spiritually invested in the state of Catholic education in the Diocese of Covington.

"It has been a really wonderful experience to see all of those community stakeholders who really do want to see Catholic education continue. They all have a stake in it, they want to see it grow and they are committed in positive ways to listening and solving ... it's been awesome to have that many people in the room who care about Catholic education," she said.

Catholic Charities to host free mental health first aid training in Covington Curia

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

It is estimated that approximately one in five adults in the United States live with mental illness, as reported by the National Institute of Mental Health. With most people struggling themselves or knowing someone struggling with their mental health, many find themselves as "first

responders" on the front line of preventing suicide.

A former first responder herself, Autumn Ruehl, CSW, now works as a mental health counselor with Catholic Charities in Northern Kentucky. Ms. Ruehl, with Catholic Charities and in collaboration with Mental Health America of Northern Kentucky and Southwest Ohio, is offering a

free "mental health first aid" training, Aug. 25, 9 a.m.-3 p.m., at the diocesan Curia, Covington.

With this training and certification normally attached to a cost of more than \$100 per person, this free training is ideal for anyone who wants to better support loved ones, friends, coworkers, parishioners or members of their community. Participants will learn how to recognize the signs of someone experiencing a mental health challenge, respond with confidence and compassion and connect individuals to appropriate resources.

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A conversation with Bishop Iffert on solidarity with the Church in Africa

Laura Keener
Editor

When Bishop John Iffert’s weekly schedule appeared unusually short in the July 10 edition of the *Messenger*, there was a reason: he was preparing to travel to Nairobi, Kenya and Madagascar on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Subcommittee on the Church in Africa. Before leaving, he spoke about the trip, the work of the subcommittee, and why solidarity with the Church in Africa matters to Catholics in Covington and beyond.

Q: Where are you headed?

Bishop Iffert: I am getting on an airplane July 16 and traveling first to Nairobi, Kenya, and then to Madagascar. I will be there on behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Subcommittee on the Church in Africa. In Nairobi, I will attend the AMECEA (the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa) bishops’

conference, which includes countries in northeastern Africa such as Kenya, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Sudan, South Sudan and Uganda. Afterward, I will travel to Madagascar for that bishops’ conference as well.

Q: What will the bishops be discussing in Nairobi?

Bishop Iffert: The bishops are beginning a dialogue in which they are accompanying and listening to young people, especially young men. They want to understand the difficulties young people are experiencing, including a lack of opportunity, and how those struggles can contribute to instability and violence. The hope is to find ways for the Church to help young people make a successful transition into adulthood and to advocate for policies that create more opportunities and reduce violence and sectarianism.

Q: How long have you served on the subcommittee?

Bishop Iffert: This is my second year. I became involved after talking with Archbishop (Thomas) Zinkula, who chairs the committee, about my plans to travel to Ghana to

visit the families of priests serving here. He invited me to serve. The work has been some of the most positive and reaffirming committee work I have done.

Q: What does the subcommittee do?

Bishop Iffert: The subcommittee is part of the Committee on National Collections and focuses on the Church in Africa. Through an optional national collection, it provides small grants, up to \$50,000, for projects submitted through bishops’ conferences. The requests are carefully reviewed by regional bishops, staff and technical experts before the bishops on the subcommittee make the final review.

Q: What kinds of needs have stood out to you?

Bishop Iffert: One grant application from South Sudan has stayed with me. The bishop there has lived in the midst of civil war for 10 years, and every one of his priests has either witnessed or been the subject of traumatic violence. He requested funds to bring counselors to help his priests cope with trauma so they could continue serving the people. Reading an application like that gives you a sense of the Church in the broader world and of our unity in Christ.

Q: Is it dangerous for priests in parts of Africa?

Bishop Iffert: In some places, yes, especially where there is conflict between radicalized Muslim populations and strong Christian communities. Those conflicts can be very dangerous. But I do not want to contribute to the idea that the entire continent of Africa is dangerous or struggling. There are beautiful, developing and thriving nations and societies in Africa. There are also dangerous places where radicalization has taken hold.

Q: Why should Catholics in the United States care about solidarity with the Church in Africa?

Bishop Iffert: Because we are a universal Church. We are not fully the Church we are called to be if we are separate. Charity may begin at home, but I cannot be charitable to my own family if I do not also see how the whole human family is connected as children of God, and how Christians are connected as brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ.

The bishops are concerned about the Church in Eastern Europe, Latin America and Africa because the way those churches grow and form affects the whole Church. The way we respond to the needs of our brothers and sisters also affects the way Christ grows in us.

The vocation of bishop, you know, we serve. This is something we need to get across more. We are not Congregationalists. We are Catholics. Every pastor, while he is entrusted with the care of souls in a certain parish, he has responsibility for the whole diocese as well. He shares with me a responsibility for the evangelization and the sustenance, and the sanctification of the whole diocese. That’s what we mean when we say that priests form a college around the bishop.

The same is true of bishops. We have responsibilities for a particular local Church. My responsibility is for the apostolic ministry in the Diocese of Covington, but I also share with all my other brother bishop’s responsibility for the whole Church. I share that responsibility with my brother bishops and the Holy Father, the Bishop of Rome. If we fail to support one another, then we’re failing Christ. We’re failing the apostolic witness that went out to the corners of the world.

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Official Assignments

Effective July 1, 2026

Very Rev. Raymond N. Enzweiler, V.F.

To: Dean, Campbell County Deanery
Term: Three years
Continues other duties

Rev. Monsignor Dominic K. Fosu, V.F.

To: Dean, Southwest Deanery
Term: Three years
Continues other duties

Very Rev. Britton C. Hennessey, V.F.

To: Dean, Southeast Deanery
Term: Three years
Continues other duties

Very Rev. Niby Kannai, V.F.

To: Dean, Covington Deanery
Term: Three years
Continues other duties

Very Rev. Baiju Kidaagen, V.F.

To: Dean, Northern Kenton County Deanery
Term: Three years
Continues other duties

Effective July 14, 2026

Rev. Jordan M. Hainsey

To: Continuing leave of absence
From: Parochial Vicar, St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood

Rev. Samuel K. Owusu

To: Returning to Archdiocese of Kumasi, Africa
From: Parochial Vicar, Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish, Erlanger

Effective July 15, 2026

Rev. Edward J. Brodnick

To: Chaplain, Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria
Term: One year
Continues retirement

Rev. Michael C. Hennigen

To: Chaplain, Covington Catholic High School, Park Hills
Term: One year
Continues other duties

Rev. Michael A. Black

To: Chaplain, Covington Latin School, Covington
Term: One year
Continues other duties

Rev. Jeffrey D. Von Lehmen

To: Chaplain, Holy Cross District High School, Latonia
Term: One year
Continues other duties

Rev. Alexander J. Gedney

To: Chaplain, Newport Central Catholic High School, Newport
Term: One year
Continues other duties

Deacon Barry J. Henry

To: Assistant Chaplain, Newport Central Catholic High School, Newport
Term: One year
Continues other duties

Rev. A. Conor Kunath

To: Chaplain, Notre Dame Academy, Park Hills
Term: One year
Continues other duties

Rev. Msgr. Dominic K. Fosu, V.F.

To: Pastoral Administrator, St. Henry District High School
Continues other duties

Rev. Matthew A. Cushing

To: Chaplain, St. Henry District High School, Erlanger
Term: One year
Continues other duties

Very Rev. Baiju Kidaagen, V.C., V.F.

To: Chaplain, Villa Madonna Academy, Villa Hills
Term: One year
Continues other duties

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

Jamie N. Schroeder

Jamie N. Schroeder
Chancellor

(Continued from page 2)

“Mental health first aid is best used as a first line of defense,” said Ms. Ruehl. “What it does is empowers us and helps us feel more comfortable to start the conversation with somebody we think is experiencing a mental health challenge.”

Additionally, “mental health first aid helps people recognize when someone they love or come in contact with frequently might be experiencing a mental health challenge,” Ms. Ruehl said. Recognizing these signs is imperative, even to saving lives, with 130 Americans losing their lives to suicide each day.

“We know that,” just like with physical illnesses and injuries, “with early intervention, there are better outcomes,” Ms. Ruehl said.

With a minimum required class size of 25, more participants are needed for the free training and certification to remain available. Registration is available now online at <https://form.jotform.com/MHFACollaborative/catholic-charities-mhfa-8252026>.



Ms. Ruehl mentioned that, statistically, someone struggling with their mental health are more likely to seek out professional support if someone else suggests to them, making us the “first line” that people might come in contact with.



Bishop's Schedule

Aug. 5

Opening school year Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 10 a.m.

Annual clergy dinner, Knights of Columbus Council, Alexandria, 4:30 p.m.

Aug. 6

Mexico pilgrimage group meeting, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington, 7 p.m.

Aug. 8

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

Aug. 9

Vocations BBQ, Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington, 5 p.m.

Aug. 10

DPAA Priest Committee meeting, 1 p.m.

Permanent Deacons rededication Vespers, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 5 p.m.

Faith Community Health Network officially opens Faith Community Clinic, opening new opportunity for mission and service

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Formerly Faith Community Pharmacy, now Faith Community Health Network (FCHN), officially cut the ribbon and opened the doors to its new Faith Community Clinic, July 15. Located in Newport, the clinic, which soft opened in June, offers free primary care, preventive services and lab testing — carrying the torch of FCHN’s commitment to provide “quality, compassionate care for all.”

The ribbon cutting ceremony was well attended, with FCHN executive director Aaron Broomall commenting, “I think the abundance of people that made time on their Wednesday morning to be here just shows you that our organization from the start has been built around a community of people that come together and care about people,” he said. “None of our work would be possible without the generous contributions of time and effort and insights from everybody that is here.”

“I think one of the foundations of our organization is that at the end of the day, our work comes down to people,” Mr. Broomall continued later in the ceremony. “One of the things I am most proud of, and I can’t take credit for it, our staff can, is that we always focus on the person. That there is an individual in front of us who is struggling, who is scared, who doesn’t know where to turn and they walk in our doors. And when they do, they’re greeted with a smile. They’re treated with dignity and respect. We learn their name and we learn their story because advancing somebody to health is more than just diagnosis and medication.”

Stacie Wethington, RN, the clinic’s director, looked to the future of the clinic in a later interview with the *Messenger*. “I’m looking forward to getting more patients from the community and being able to provide medical care for them,” she said. “We’ve talked a lot about how we’re not just physical care — we hope to touch them in lots of ways, whether that be spiritual counseling, if they desire that, but there are a lot of social determinants that we look at.”

Volunteers and staff of Community Health Clinic look beyond just physical health, according to Ms. Wethington, addressing issues such as food and housing insecurity and mental health and grief as well — using patient navigators to help guide patients to resources that they might need.

“The patients that we’ve seen have been amazing and grateful,” she said, “and the care is much, much needed. I think it’s been a blessing not just to the patients, but also to the staff and volunteers.”

To learn more about Faith Community Health Network, as well as to seek help or volunteer opportunities, visit their website online at <https://fchealthnetwork.org/>.



Photo courtesy of Faith Community Health Network/Aaron Broomall

The ribbon is cut in front of Faith Community Health Network’s new Faith Community Clinic, Newport, July 15.



ST. MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION PARISH FESTIVAL

Alexandria, KY

Friday, August 7th Saturday, August 8th
6:00 PM till 11:00PM 5:00 PM till 11:00PM

Mass at 4:00 PM This Saturday Only

DELICIOUS CHICKEN DINNERS

Served Saturday 3:30 to 7:30 PM

Carry Out or Dine In



Live entertainment by *Bunker Boyz* on Friday at 7PM
Live Entertainment by *Mill Creek Band* on Saturday at 7PM



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Bounce Houses ** Nerf Shoot ** Ladder Ball ** Beat the Dealer
Big Six ** Pot of Gold ** Air Mail ** Combination Raffle



**Bourbon Booth — Experience a tasting and
purchase a Bourbon mixed drink**

Come join us for an enjoyable weekend of family, food, and fun!!!



PRAY FOR PRIESTS

The Feast of St. John Vianney, on August 4th, is a great reminder to us to offer up prayers for priests, both in our own communities and across the world.

Please take a moment to pray for our priests:

O Jesus, I pray for Your faithful and fervent priest; for Your unfaithful and tepid priest; for Your priest laboring at home and abroad in distant mission fields; for Your tempted priest; for Your lonely and desolate priest; for Your young priest; for Your dying priest; for the souls of Your priests in purgatory.

But above all, I recommend to You the priest dearest to me; the priest who baptized me; the priest who absolved me for my sins; the priest whose Masses I assisted and who gave me Your Body and Blood in Holy Communion; the priests who taught and instructed me; all the priest whom I am indebted in any other way {especially....}. O Jesus, keep them all close to your Heart, and bless them abundantly in time and in eternity. Amen.

**St. John Vianney, pray for us;
obtain for us many and holy priests.**

The desire for glory

The readings for the Seventeenth Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle A — are: 1 Kings 3:5, 7-12, Romans 8:28-30 and Matthew 13:44-52.

What are we to make of those powerful, yet mysterious words of St. Paul, “those he justified he also glorified?”

The justification of which St. Paul speaks is a true reconciliation with God that occurs the moment one believes

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Phillip DeVous

and receives Baptism. This justification is a dynamic, ongoing event of reconciliation with God, in which the Christian, acting in cooperation with this grace of reconciliation, becomes progressively perfected in divine charity after the pattern of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit. Thus, we understand that one comes to be saved, by which we mean no longer alienated from God, both at the

beginning AND throughout the arc of one’s whole life.

Grace is a reality given at precise moments but is also a yeast that fosters a leavening of holiness throughout life. The dynamism of the grace of justification moves in the direction of glory, which St. Paul understands to be a complete and total sharing in the fullness of the being of the Trinitarian God. This grace of justification leading to glory is given at precise moments — the Holy Sacraments. The dynamic relationship of justification and glory within a person is developed through the agency and action of the Holy Sacraments, received, of course, with faith.

St. Thomas Aquinas in reflecting on this relationship between justification and glory recalls that grace has five primary effects: healing the soul, making it so the soul wills the good, working in such a way that the willed good be effectively carried out, persevering in the good, and finally reaching eternal glory. This is why the Holy Sacraments of the Church are essential to salvation, for it is in and through them we personally receive the Trinitarian life, which is the glory of which St. Paul speaks.

In contemplating these mysteries of the faith, the issue of desire arises. C.S. Lewis was a keen observer of things divine and the longing, or lack thereof, for the spiritual. He passionately believed in the primacy of the spiritual; yet he noted that for modern man, enthralled by materialism, the vision of things divine was dimming and the desire for the spiritual was waning:

“It would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures ... when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

To be too easily pleased by the passing things of the world is a species of what is called *acedia* or sloth in the spiritual life. There are many ways to understand it, but the most fundamental is one loses the sense of the reality of God; one’s “desire” for the holy withers; and one becomes apathetic towards the spiritual. Consequently, we chase after things to consume or to distract. Inevitably this devolves into a destructive boredom which settles over everything. It is one of the great ironies of our day that we are ruled by an empire of desire without limits, yet so very little really excites us.

“No longer a vice afflicting individuals only, *acedia* has become a cultural reality” writes R.J. Snell in “*Acedia and Its Discontents*.” He further notes that “nestled deep in the roots of our ways of acting and living, sloth seeps into our loves and lives in virtually every domain, before finally transforming itself into boredom and nihilism.”

This is deadly for the Christian! We are meant to seek the Kingdom of Heaven with the passion of someone who finds a treasure buried in a field and who then goes out and sells everything he possesses to obtain that field to the exclusion of all others. Further, we are enjoined to have the eye of a merchant seeking the finest pearls, excitedly looking for the finest of them all, because one desires this object of great beauty and perfection. And when found, we give up everything to obtain this impeccable jewel.

Grasping the contemporary struggle with *acedia*, a cause of our cultural affliction and a sickness of our soul, we pray with faith and fervor, “that through the powerful

Over the years, I have volunteered to work various booths at my parish’s summer festival including bingo, pro-life, beer sales, kid’s games, Big Six, etc., and for several years my husband and I chaired the adult ring toss

VIEWPOINT



Jamie Schroeder

booth. This year I did something different. I worked the rubber duck regatta for the first time.

Our new music director took on the responsibility of chairing the booth and invited members of the various choirs to participate. He brought enthusiasm and fresh ideas to the effort, one of which was to have one of the workers wear an inflatable duck costume while selling tickets. Guess who volunteered to wear it on the opening

night of the festival?! You got it! I did!

It was extremely hot, in the high 80s, and we were on black asphalt to boot. I think I lost several pounds in perspiration. It was difficult to walk, I was appropriately forced to waddle, and my feet and legs ached by the end of my shift.

Being a bit of an introvert, I was definitely on the edge of my comfort zone. Nevertheless, I had a great time! I spoke with people I would not have met otherwise, danced to the music of the band, had my picture taken with different groups, and even made it on social media (insert sarcasm)! I especially enjoyed interacting with the children.

The costume was a great conversation starter, and I heard many comments as I walked around the festival grounds ranging from “Wow! That’s amazing!” and “You’re a good sport!” to “How did you get talked into that?” and “Aren’t you hot in that thing?” After the first

Anything for Jesus!

few remarks, my response began to include, “Anything for Jesus!” and everyone would laugh.

In the days following the festival, I found myself reflecting more seriously on my experience. I realized that this can be every person’s experience when called to do things for the Lord. We may be asked, we may say yes, but we may be hesitant and even reluctant to do what has been asked or agreed to. It may be difficult. We may struggle. But in the end, we find that the “yes” is so very rewarding and worthwhile — an opportunity to show love for the Lord and for others.

Are we willing to do anything for Jesus? Are we willing to be uncomfortable to grow in relationship with God and others and to build his kingdom? Discomfort may exist not just in doing the thing itself, but also in changing a mindset, or a routine, or sacrificing other activities to be free to engage in the new behavior.

What actions might be considered? Here are a few ideas: go on a week-long mission trip to serve the poor; carve time out to make a weekly Holy Hour (Adoration); volunteer regularly for a social service agency (Catholic Charities, Rose Garden Home Mission, Mary Rose Mission, Notre Dame Urban Education Center, etc.); visit nursing homes; make an annual retreat (try a silent one!); join a weekly Bible study; participate in a workshop to learn how to share your faith with family, friends, co-workers and even “strangers” (Parish Missionary Disciples and/or Return workshops); learn how to pray with, not just for, others; take an online course on some aspect of the Catholic faith (free through the Franciscan at Home program of the Catechetical Institute, <https://covidio.org/catechetical-institute/>); make a pilgrimage. Or you could even wear a costume at a festival to raise money for your parish!

Whatever you are called to do for Jesus, I pray that it bears fruit and that you grow in faith and in love for the Lord and others. God bless you!

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

Holy space

Cleansing is always painful. An angel approaches with a burning coal and touches his lips. Sinfulness is painfully burned away. Only now can Isaiah announce God’s presence, care, concern and invitation to us to “Go” with the message of God’s love and care.

We, too, gather in God’s holy house and are surrounded by the hovering spirits reminding us that God is with us. There are many holy places where angels hover, and God’s holiness is declared. We enter places of worship. God’s angels surround us with care as we join a worshipping community.

We may not be aware each time we gather of the angels or the shaking doors, the aroma of the holy smoke. What a wonderful habit it would be to pause and recognize the presence of the angels and of the shaking doors each time we gather for Mass or for any community prayer.

There are many moments when we are surrounded by the fluttering wings of angels — at a family meal, a reunion, on a shopping trip, in a mall, at the bus stop, walking in the rain, cleaning the house, speaking with a neighbor. The occasions are limitless if we listen and expect to be surrounded by God’s love and angels.

The doors of our holy space shake as we wonder at the thunder and lightning during a thunderstorm. The doors of our holy space are shaken at the death of loved ones, at the news of global disasters, at the loss of our inner peace.

Butterflies flutter about the sacred space of nature, pollinating the flowering plants to make our world beautiful and pollinating the growing crops in the fields to fill our tables with nourishment. All of God’s creation is sacred space.

Let us open the doors and allow the angel to cleanse not only our lips but our hearts to be ambassadors of God’s presence and love. Then let us go with the message of God’s love for the earth and all people. May everyday shake all the closed doors of our hearts. May angels cleanse our lips to announce God’s love.

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

Recently we heard at Mass the account of Isaiah’s vision of God seated on a throne in a holy place. (Isaiah 6:1-8) Isaiah had great respect for sacred space, places to meet God, to converse, to pray and consult with God.

MUSINGS



Sister Fidelis Tracy, C.D.P.

In the account of his vision the sacred space became an occasion for encountering awesome and frightening images. There were six-winged angels flying about, the door shook, the whole structure filled with smoke. He surely trembled and was filled with both reverence and fear.

The angels were singing “Holy, Holy, Holy.” Gratitude accompanies the privilege of being in the presence of greatness. But greatness soon reminds us

of our own littleness and unworthiness. Isaiah may first have felt privileged at this visitation of the Holy. He soon was aware of all the failings in his life, his shortcomings, his pride, his unkind words, his lack of trust in God. That awareness uncovered for him his unworthiness to be in the presence of holiness, of God.

God’s self-revelation is a moment of ecstasy accompanied by the awareness of all the impurities that reside within. Recognizing holiness entails a corresponding awareness of unworthiness, an awareness of faults and need for cleansing. Isaiah is acutely aware at this moment of his faults, of his unworthiness to declare God’s goodness and to accept his mission to declare God’s message. “Behold, I am a man of unclean lips.”

The declaration is an honest appraisal of his ability. It is also an invitation to be cleansed. Before he is sent, he must be cleansed.

working of your grace these most sacred mysteries may sanctify our present way of life and lead us to eternal gladness.”

Father Phillip W. DeVous is the pastor of Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in California, Ky.

St. Joseph Parish celebrates Caroline Islands with Chuukese Mass



Father Eric Boelscher, pastor, St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs, consecrates the Eucharist during a Mass celebrated for the anniversary of the Diocese of the Caroline Islands, July 11.



Women dressed in traditional floral dresses sing along to music in the Chuukese language, the indigenous language of the Micronesian island of Chuuk.



A woman adorns an altar server in a traditional Micronesian garland.



Young girls dance in the aisle as the bible is carried down to music prior to the Liturgy of the Word.

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

A special Mass was celebrated, July 11, at St. Joseph Church, Crescent Springs. The Mass — celebrated with readings and song in Chuukese, the indigenous language of the Micronesian island of Chuuk — commemorated the anniversary of the Diocese of the Caroline Islands.

North of New Guinea, in Oceania, the Diocese of the Caroline Islands was officially established in 1993 by Pope John Paul II, when the original apostolic prefecture was split into the diocese and the Apostolic Prefecture of the Marshall Islands.

The Mass itself was coordinated by the Chuukese Catholic Community, bringing together individuals from the Caroline Islands from Northern Kentucky, Louisville and Tennessee together to celebrate this anniversary. The group also calls themselves the “Holy Cross” community — after its home parish on the island of Chuuk. Officers of the community were blessed and commissioned by Father Boelscher as part of the Mass.

The celebration commemorated “welcoming Jesus to our island,” according to parishioner Manisi Kikku, who helped to organize it.

Father Eric Boelscher, pastor, St. Joseph Parish, celebrated the Mass. In his homily, Father Boelscher compared faith to fire.

“It’s supposed to catch other people,” Father Boelscher said. “It’s supposed to spread. It goes heart to heart ... We are the bringers of courage and the fire. We’re the ones who can clarify each other’s minds to show what’s truly important, and we can purify our desires to build up a life that’s fully given to God.”

“We all have to catch it,” he said. “We all have to burn with that incredible passion of Christ.”

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PEOPLE AND EVENTS

Newsworthy



Sister Aileen Bankemper

The Benedictine Sisters of St. Walburg Monastery recently announced that Sister Aileen Bankemper has been elected and has accepted the call to serve a third term as prioress for the next four years. The sisters give thanks for Sister Aileen’s willingness to continue leading the community with faith, wisdom and Benedictine hospitality.

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/>.

Extraordinary 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.

St. Vincent de Paul Northern Kentucky is in urgent need of Call Center volunteers to answer calls for assistance. On average, we receive over 1,700 calls each month. Shifts are available M-F, 10 a.m.–noon and noon–2 p.m. Training and initial shifts at our Erlanger location, with remote volunteering possible after. Must be 18+ years old. Background check (provided) required. Visit www.svdpnky.org/volunteer to register.

Volunteers needed at St. Vincent de Paul NKY’s Erlanger Food Pantry. Volunteers assist neighbors as they shop and keep the shelves stocked. More than 300 families are served each month. Shifts are: Tuesdays, 9 a.m.–noon and 4–6 p.m.; Wednesdays, 9–11 a.m. (stocking only); and Thursdays, 9 a.m.–noon. Visit www.svdpnky.org/volunteer to register.

“The Power of ‘And’” — a webinar for survivors and those who care for them, July 27, 6:30–8 p.m. CDT. “And” is an important word. It allows space for the complexity of human experience. Everyone has both beauty and brokenness. Every family has both goodness and dysfunction. A common symptom for trauma survivors is black-and-white thinking, which tells a distorted story about self or others. “And” tells a more truthful story and embraces more fully the paradox of human existence. Register at <https://www.archspm.org/events/>

Christmas in July celebration to launch the newly published book “The Jack Story,” July 30, 6–9 p.m., Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell, undercroft. The family of Dr. Tom Huller has created this children’s book for the benefit of ALS Ohio. Light refreshments and book will be available for purchase.

The Newport Central Catholic Charlie Fredrick annual Golf Outing will be held Aug. 7, Hickory Sticks Golf Club, California. Morning and afternoon flights available and go fast. The day includes a sit-down lunch, beverages, a light snack at the turn, skins game, on-course games, split the pot, and raffles. Unable to golf? Consider being a hole sponsor. Proceeds benefit NCC athletics and extracurricular activities. Register at: <https://e.givesmart.com/events/Phq/>

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.

Healing, prayer and adoration to conclude the Novena of Our Lady of Knock, Aug. 22, 7 p.m. at St. Patrick Parish and Shrine, Taylor Mill. The evening will include veneration of a relic of St. Faustina.

Catholic Charities of Northern Kentucky will be hosting a Mental Health First Aid certification class Aug.

Parish festivals

July 24 and 26
St. James, Brooksville
Fish Fry and Ice Cream Social

July 25
Sts. Peter and Paul, California
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

August 14–15
St. Bernard, Dayton
Parish festival

Aug. 28–30
St. Augustine, Augusta
Parish festival

Aug. 28–29
Holy Cross District High School,
Latonia
School festival

Sept. 5–6
St. Anthony,
Taylor Mill
Festival Latino

Sept. 5–7
St. Cecilia, Independence
Parish festival

Sept. 11–12
St. Barbara, Erlanger
Rocktoberfest

Sept. 11–13
St. Patrick, Maysville
Parish festival

Sept. 18–20
St. Timothy, Union
Oktoberfest

Sept. 25–27
St. Anges, Ft. Wright
Oktoberfest

Sept. 27
St. Philip Parish, Melbourne
Golf outing

25, 9 a.m.–3:30 p.m., diocesan Curia, Covington. No cost to attend. Upon successful completion, participants will receive a Mental Health First Aid certification. Register via <https://form.jotform.com/MHFACollaborative/catholic-charities-mhfa-8252026>.

Carmel Manor, Ft. Thomas, festival, Aug. 29, 3–10 p.m. The evening will include chicken dinners, raffles, kids’ games and live music by Ben Walz.

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.fire-foundationnky.org/golf>.

Bishop John Iffert will celebrate Vespers at Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, to honor couples celebrating significant wedding anniversaries. Married couples celebrating their 1st, 25th, 50th, or 60+ wedding anniversary in 2026 are invited to Vespers Sunday, Sept. 13, 2 p.m. Anniversary couples RSVP by Aug. 13, 2026, at covdio.org/wedding-vespers/. Phone registrations are available after Aug. 6 through Isaak A. Isaak at 859-392-1529. Congratulatory anniversary certificates will be available upon request.

The FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky will be celebrating their annual Mass of Belonging, Sept. 15, 6 p.m., at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. This special Mass celebrates learning differences and disabilities within our diocese. Family ice cream social to follow.

All former St. Thomas School students who attended for at least one year between 1949 and 1976 are invited to a reunion Oct. 4, 3–7 p.m., in the St. Thomas School Cafeteria. Guests are welcome. Cost is \$50 per person; reservations deadline Sept. 15. For an RSVP form contact Tom Dierig at (859) 781-8743 or tomdierig@gmail.com.

Empowering God’s Children 5th annual facilitators’ training, Sept. 15, Curia, Covington. All facilitators, priests, princi-

pals, DREs and CREs are welcome to attend, as well as anyone interested in learning more about the program. Dinner and networking begin at 3 p.m.; training ends at 5:30 p.m. Registration requested at <https://forms.gle/LmtrSBxFjDmh64L1A>

TEC (Teens Encounter) Christ is coming to the Diocese of Covington. TEC is church movement that evangelizes and accompanies older teens and young adults within an intergenerational community. Participants are invited into this community through a 3-day retreat. If you have attended a TEC weekend in another diocese and would like to serve on a TEC team or support TEC, contact Angie Poat, apoat@covdio.org. High school juniors and seniors, and college students, are invited to attend TECov #1, Nov. 21–23, 2026 or TECov #2, March 6–8, 2027.

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/

Millions of Monicas prayer group, St. Mary of the Assumption Church, Alexandria, the first Monday of each month, 6:30-7:30 p.m. Women are invited to gather for one hour of guided prayer for the intention that our children and youth will return to or remain active in the faith. For information call Carol, (859) 653-5638. Note: no gathering in September due to the Labor Day holiday.



Fourth of July parade

Members of Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell, joined Father Daniel Schomaker, pastor, for the annual Ft. Mitchell Fourth of July parade. This year’s parade was especially celebratory as the United States celebrated 250 years of independence.



Obituary

Sister Mary Francis Dirr, SND

Mary Elizabeth Dirr was born on Jan. 9, 1922, in Cheviot, Ohio, the youngest surviving daughter of Fredrick and Ida (Eilers) Dirr. She grew up in a close-knit, faith-filled family as the second youngest child.

Mary Elizabeth received her early education at St. Martin Elementary School and graduated from Seton High School in Price Hill, Ohio. Following high school, she worked at G & G Manufacturing Company. Although she enjoyed social gatherings, dancing and time with her family, she felt a deeper calling to religious life.

On Sept. 8, 1943, at the age of 21, she entered the Sisters of Notre Dame of Covington, Ky., where her older sister, Sister Mary Lelia, was already a member. Sister Mary Francis professed her vows on Aug. 13, 1946, beginning a lifelong dedication to serving others, especially children with special needs — a ministry she found deeply rewarding.

To support her work, Sister Mary Francis pursued higher education, earning a Bachelor of Arts in Elementary Education from Villa Madonna College (now Thomas More University); certification in Occupational Therapy from the College of St. Catherine in St. Paul, Minnesota; and a master's degree in special education from the University of Kentucky.

Her ministry was marked by a profound commitment to education and care. She served as a teacher and principal in the Dioceses of Covington, and Birmingham, Alabama; and the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, Ohio. She also served as administrator of the former St. Joseph Children's Home in Cold Spring and dedicated 13 years to the Redwood School and Rehabilitation Center, where her compassion and dedication enriched countless lives.

In her later years, Sister Mary Francis



Sister Mary Francis Dirr, SND

embraced a life of quiet reflection and prayer. She cherished the companionship of her fellow sisters and maintained meaningful connections with her family, former students and friends. At her death at 104, she was the oldest Sister of Notre Dame in the United States of America.

Sister was preceded in death by her parents and siblings, Matthew, Amelia, Ellsworth, Laurence, Martha, Angela, Notre Dame Sister Mary Lelia, Father Wilfred, Cecilia, Robert, Richard, Rosalia, and Aloysius. Sister leaves behind many devoted nieces and nephews.

Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated July 3, at St. Agnes Church, Ft. Wright, Ky., with interment in the convent cemetery.

Memorials are suggested to The Sisters of Notre Dame, Covington, Kentucky.

Interest surges in U.S. beatification of Georgia Martyrs who died defending marriage

Katie Yoder
OSV News

The venue for the upcoming beatification of the Georgia Martyrs is expanding to accommodate thousands more people after a surge in interest from Catholics around the U.S. and the world.

"The martyrs stood up for the sanctity of marriage," Bishop Stephen D. Parkes of Savannah, Georgia, told OSV News of the five Franciscan friars from Spain who died in present-day Georgia in the 16th century. "It gives us an opportunity really to ... reinforce the Church's teaching on marriage."

The martyrs' beatification Mass scheduled for Oct. 31 in Savannah, Georgia, is changing spaces within the Savannah Convention Center to welcome roughly 12,000 people instead of the 2,000 originally planned. The move comes as Catholics across the country and from Spain are expressing interest in attending, including some with historical connections to the martyrs. The relatives of one martyr may also travel from Spain.

The Franciscan missionaries' beatification coincides with the Jubilee Year of St. Francis of Assisi that coincides with the 800th anniversary of his death. It will mark the sixth beatification on U.S. soil and the first in Georgia, according to Jill Parks, managing director of communications for

the Diocese of Savannah.

All five Franciscan martyrs traveled from Spain to minister to the native Gule people in present-day Georgia. Venerable Pedro de Corpa, Blas Rodríguez de Cuacos,

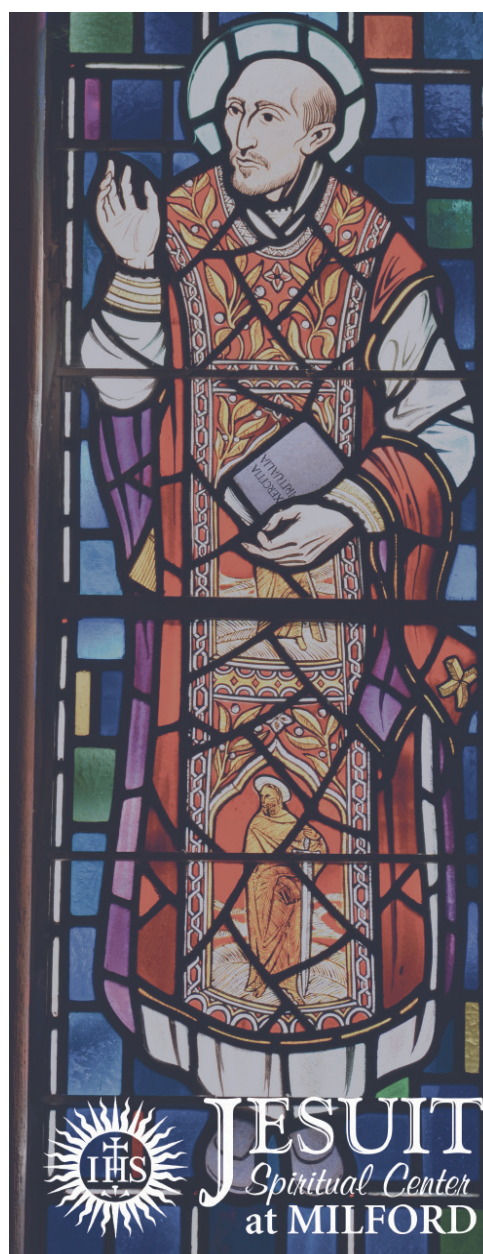


OSV News photo/courtesy Teresa Satola-Coey

This painting titled "The Five Georgia Martyrs" was painted on oil on Belgian Linen by artist Teresa Satola-Coey and is located at St. Luke the Evangelist Church in Lahlonega, Ga. A date for the Franciscan friars' beatification has been set for Oct. 31, 2026, in Savannah.

Miguel de Añon, Antonio de Badajoz and Francisco de Veráscola died for their faith

(Continued on page 9)



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Hello humankindness®



(Continued from page 18)

in 1597. The violent murders began after Friar Pedro de Corpa forbade the heir to a Guale chiefdom and a baptized Christian, Juanillo, from following his culture's custom and taking a second wife.

"Our Franciscans were in those first waves of Catholics coming to what's now the U.S., which is just amazing," Parks told OSV News. "Then on top of this, they were martyred for defending Christian marriage."

She added: "A lot of people have been very inspired by them giving their lives essentially for that and for Christian teaching."

As soon as the date for the beatification was announced, Parks said calls from across the country started pouring in.

"We figured it was really going to be a local Georgia event," Parks said. "We did not expect that it would be sort of a nationwide thing."

Meanwhile, many locals are preparing to attend, including Patrick McMahon from Savannah. He told OSV News that he plans to participate in the beatification as a Fourth Degree member of the Knights of Columbus, the world's largest Catholic fraternal service organization. As a Fourth-Degree member, he belongs to the most prestigious

degree of the Knights, which is dedicated to the principle of patriotism.

The Knights' district marshal for the Diocese of Savannah, McMahon said he looked forward to being a part of history.

Laura Daniel, a parishioner of Nativity of Our Lady Catholic Church, a pilgrimage site for the martyrs in Darien, Georgia, also plans to attend with her husband. She helps promote the Georgia Martyrs at her parish, which is located by the sites where the friars were martyred. She called the moment exciting for the local Church.

"It's just a great opportunity to pass on the history of the Catholic Church in Georgia, coastal Georgia, and the start of the Catholic Church in the Americas," she told OSV News.

Among those from Spain hoping to attend are Archbishop Joan Enric Vives i Sicilia, bishop emeritus of Urgell, who plans to serve as a representative of Spain, Parks said. Archbishop José Rodríguez Carballo of Mérida-Badajoz, who leads the archdiocese where Friar Antonio de Badajoz was raised, also expressed interest in attending and bringing the pastor of the friar's home parish with

him.

Parks said the diocese has also received a call from Church leaders from Friar Francisco de Veráscola's hometown. The pastor and several other people from the friar's home parish hope to attend. Parks learned from them that the friar also still has relatives in that area.

"We're hoping that some of them might actually come to attend the beatification, which would be amazing," she said.

Both Bishop Parkes and Parks emphasized a desire for a venue that can accommodate and welcome everyone who wishes to attend the beatification. Bishop Parkes called the beatification "a new beginning" to continue to learn more about the history of Catholicism in Georgia, and to ask for the martyrs' intercession for marriage and family life.

He also hoped it encourages every person to seek heaven.

"There's a human interest in, well, how is the Church recognizing particular individuals for their holiness?" Bishop Parkes said of Catholics worldwide. "I think that it can inspire each one of us personally in our own road to holiness."

Can't go to Assisi? Visit a US replica of the tiny church where St. Francis founded order

Kimberley Heatherington
OSV News

In Assisi, one of the main pilgrim draws is a tiny church dwarfed by its expansive surroundings, the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels near Assisi, Italy.

The chapel is just about 18 feet long by 10.5 feet wide, built of tawny colored stones and rustically plain, with the exception of its fresco-decorated upper facade. In the much larger basilica, this unusual church-within-a-church draws multitudes of visitors who jostle for space to spend a few minutes contemplating its austere interior.

Such a small and simple place of worship might be easily overlooked elsewhere, but this one is exceptional — it is the Porziuncola ("little portion" in Italian), and it is considered to be the birthplace of the Franciscan order, founded by St. Francis of Assisi in 1209.

The original Porziuncola — which is also known by its Latin name, "Portiuncula" — takes on particular significance as a pilgrimage destination during the Jubilee Year of St. Francis underway. However, for Americans not traveling to Italy, there are a surprising number of replicas of the famous and holy structure in the United States.

Father Robert "Bobby" Barbato suggests that the Porziuncola at the National Shrine of St. Francis of Assisi in San Francisco, where he is rector, is about as close as a person can get to the real thing. It was dedicated in 2008 by Cardinal William J. Levada, the former archbishop of San Francisco who at the time was prefect of what is now the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith.

Just don't call the shrine chapel a "replica," or you'll answer to the woman Father Barbato both credits with its construction and calls "a force of nature": attorney and politician Angela Alioto, daughter of San Francisco Mayor Joseph Alioto, who served the city from 1968-1976.

"I don't think anybody else could have gotten this built," said Father Barbato, noting Alioto's fierce devotion to St. Francis. "But she doesn't like it to be called a replica," he added, suggesting the word conjures visions of Disneyland.

"It is an exact copy. It's exactly what you would see if you walked into the big shrine in Assisi — except it's slightly smaller; 78% size. The reason is because of the size of our building — you've got to make it fit. If they reproduced it exactly, there would be no room around it."

Just as in Assisi, the chapel in San Francisco is found inside another structure, a parish facilities complex near the shrine church.

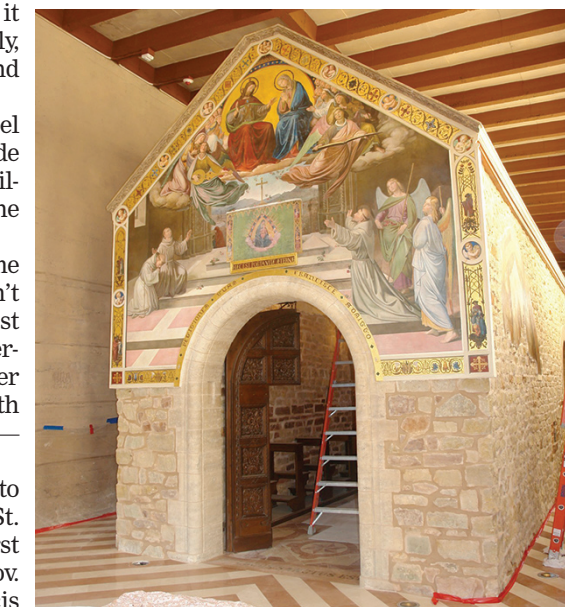
"People come here — some come on pilgrimage; some don't know it's there — but almost everybody is kind of a little overwhelmed, in a good way," Father Barbato said. "People come with all sorts of different things — joys and sorrows."

Special events are planned to mark the Jubilee Year of St. Francis, including for the first time on U.S. soil an Oct. 16-Nov. 28 exhibit of relics of St. Francis at the nearby Cathedral of St. Mary of the Assumption.

"Every year, we do the Transitus," Father Barbato said, referring to ceremonies marking St. Francis' death. "And this year, we're going to try to do a really big one, starting in the shrine's main church and then processing down to the Porziuncola."

An indulgence is also available. "Pope Benedict XVI gave us the Porziuncola privilege, which means — apart from the indulgence of this beautiful year of St. Francis — that any pilgrim, once a year, on the day of their choosing, can make a pilgrimage to our Porziuncola, and fulfill the conditions to receive the plenary indulgence," shared Father Barbato. "So it's a great gift."

St. Francis is said to have experienced a mystical vision of Christ in the original Porziuncola, then a neglected chapel. There the image of Jesus on a Byzantine-style crucifix chapel urged him, "Francis, Francis, go and repair My house which, as you can see, is falling into ruins."



OSV News photo/Dan Morris-Young, Catholic San Francisco

A file photo shows a replica of the famed Porziuncola chapel in Assisi, Italy, inside San Francisco's National Shrine of St. Francis of Assisi.

Taking the divine injunction literally, Francis asked permission of the chapel's Benedictine owners to repair it, which they granted.

After building a small hut nearby, he busily went to work. Francis was soon joined by others — who would become the first Franciscans — and around 1211, the Porziuncola was

given to Francis on the condition that it be the mother-house of the new order.

In the U.S., replicas can be visited at Mayslake Peabody Estate in Oak Brook, Illinois (currently closed); the Franciscan Monastery in Washington; the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary Province of Franciscan Friars in Burlington, Wisconsin; the Regina Center in Sylvania, Ohio; the campus of the Cardinal Cushing Centers in Hanover, Massachusetts; and the Franciscan University of Steubenville in Steubenville, Ohio.

Father Jonathan St. Andre, a Third Order Regular Franciscan and vice president for Franciscan Life at the Franciscan University of Steubenville, said a friar returning from an Assisi journey first proposed the idea to build a replica at the school.

"It was completed in October of 1987, and soon, it just became a very special place on our campus," Father St. Andre told OSV News.

It is a site of perpetual adoration, and even marriage proposals.

"It's just a very simple chapel," Father St. Andre said. "Our Porziuncola probably holds about 15 people at the most. Students will come in and sit on the floor. At all hours of day and night, there's always students there."

It also stands outdoors, which caused Father St. Andre to reflect on the original Porziuncola.

"I sometimes wonder what St. Francis would think if he came back and saw this church of his inside a huge basilica," Father St. Andre said. "But that's OK. It was such a sacred place for him, and it kind of speaks of the poverty of St. Francis."

So just what is it that makes the faithful want to build copies of sacred places?

"It's in human nature to re-create something that we've known from another place," Duncan Stroik, an award-winning architect and professor of architecture at the University of Notre Dame, told OSV News. "And of course, people — and especially modern people — love photographs or images of the places we visit, (and) people that we know and love. I think it's the same impetus to re-create buildings or parts of buildings in other places."

The Assisi Porziuncola, Stroik observed, "becomes a bit of a relic. It's a sacred place. We think of relics being in monstrances, and we value the bodies of the saints — the things that have touched the saints or that they used, their garments. And we value, in this case, the buildings where holy things happened."

Ultimately, the Porziuncola — whether the original or a replica — is a place people feel close to St. Francis and God.

"For Francis, that little church was a thin place," emphasized Father Barbato, referring to locales where the distance between heaven and earth is thought to be narrowed. "He felt our Lord there, and he felt the intercession of Our Lady — and that's why he made it the headquarters of his order."



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Mission trip to Jamaica

(Continued from page 1)

everything and anything to make them comfortable,” he said. “You could see in their eyes they had joy; they were made in the image and likeness of Jesus; you could see Jesus looking back at you,” he said.

“The first thing you notice are their disabilities,” said Joe Herring, another member of the mission group. “That’s what kind of sticks out to you. It only took a week to be able to see their personalities and see them as individuals. It was an experience of going from seeing their disabilities to seeing their abilities,” he said.

By the end of the eight days, the team “felt like we’d been there the entire time, and we’ve been with these kids,” said Ms. Syck. “It’s just the grace of understanding and knowing and seeing their love and how they’re completely united with Christ. You truly got to see the ability of the kids instead of focusing on their disability,” she said.

Mr. Sucietto said, “It really puts your life into perspective, because over there some of the kids can’t walk, some of them are blind, they’re deaf, they all have these disabilities, but they’re so happy. You can literally see Jesus in them, the amount of joy they have in their life. They know completely who Jesus is.”

“They would see a crucifix, and they would make the sign of the cross, they know exactly who Jesus is, and seeing Jesus in them was so profound,” said Mr. Sucietto.

“I watched people crawl to the Eucharist,” said Ms. Syck.

Ms. McGillivary shared the story of one resident, who upon the group’s arrival walked up to them and said words or phrases that were difficult to understand with the thick Jamaican accent.

“He kept saying these phrases that nobody could figure out,” she said. “It was the second-to-last day I finally realized what he was saying. He was saying ‘give yourself away, and open the eyes of your heart.’ I realized they were two different worship songs,” she said. “So, we started playing these worship songs and seeing him just transform, like he would raise his hands and worship, it was actually beautiful,” she said.

“We thought we were going there to pour out our gifts and our ability and our help and our love on them, but it was kind of the opposite,” said Ms. McGillivary. “It was them pouring out so much love on us that we all kind of left different.”

“The trip was profound,” said Mr. Sucietto. “I would say it altered my life. I am a different person ... I think maybe God was trying to put my life into perspective and show me how grateful I am to live where I live, to have running water, to have air conditioning. It definitely is a blessing.”

“You need to be intentional, stepping out and serving others when you’re not on a mission trip. I think sometimes we get so wrapped up in, ‘I need to fulfill my desires in some way,’ ... God shows us who we are, and we need to take the focus off ourselves and onto serving others,” said Mr. Herring.

After the many troubles, setbacks and anxieties subsided, what was left for the 18 members of the DMSB Young Adult Ministry group was an outpouring of love. Love from the residents, love found in service and the love of God throughout.

“We don’t have to know what God’s plan is for anything, especially with everything that went wrong on our trip,” said Ms. Syck. “God still used it for his good and for his glory. You don’t have to know what God’s plan is; you don’t need to know why God is doing what he’s doing, because we don’t need to. We just need to trust.”



The Blessed Assurance Mustard Seed Community is where residents live and the Divine Mercy/St. Bernard mission group served. Caleb Sucietto said, “we drove quite a while to get out of the city ... it did give you an Appalachian type of feel.”



Caitlin McGillivary and Becky Ubelhor play bingo with the residents of Blessed Assurance Mustard Seed Community. “On the bingo cards were certain pictures, so we tried to help them find things from the description and also work on their motor skills by placing the bingo chips down,” said Ms. McGillivary.



Joe Herring and Nick Thorvaldsen paint rocks as part of their service



Hannah Sucietto paints indoors, an alternative act of service to painting rocks, while rain plagued the early days of the trip.

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Backy Ubelhor, Andrew Waugh, and Madeline Brass paint the rocks surrounding the Marian Garden.



(above) Colleen Grimm and Joe Herring spend time with one of the residents of the Mustard Seed Community.
(right) Joe Herring smiles and laughs with a Roshane, a resident of Blessed Assurance Mustard Seed Community.



Erik Schutzman holds hands with one of the residents while visiting Jacob's Ladder, another Jamaican Mustard Seed Community, which provides care for adults with disabilities.



(above) Madeline Brass and Enrique share a smile and embrace.



(left) Caleb and (below) Hannah Sucietto, brother and sister, pose for photos with residents of the community.



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Prospective candidates may send a cover letter and comprehen-
sive resume, including compensation history and references
with email contacts, to Very Reverend Ryan Maher, V.F. by email
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Obituary

Sister Mary Tereze Deye, SND

Marcia Deye was born Feb. 24, 1942, the second of four children of Lawrence and Marcella Deye. She grew up in Ft. Wright, where her family belonged to St. Agnes Parish. After completing grade school, Marcia attended Notre Dame Academy.

When she began to feel called to religious life, it was only natural that she would choose the community she had come to know and love over 12 years of education. She entered the Sisters of Notre Dame in 1960 and was professed in 1963.

Sister Tereze attended Thomas More College (now Thomas More University), earning a degree in secondary education with a major in history. She later pursued further studies, receiving a master's degree in religious studies from Providence College and School Counseling Certification from Xavier University.

Her early teaching ministry included junior high assignments at Sacred Heart in Bellevue; St. Mary in Alexandria; St. Augustine in Covington; and St. John in Carrollton. She later taught at Notre Dame Academy and served in the Sisters' mission in Harlan, Ky.

In 1977, Sister Tereze began what would become a defining chapter of her ministry when she was assigned as both a teacher and a guidance counselor to Bishop Brossart High School in Alexandria, Ky. Bishop Brossart High School became her home for more than 40 years. There, she had a special gift for bringing encouragement to her students, supporting them both emotionally and academically.



Sister Mary Tereze Deye, SND

After Sister Mary Tereze retired in 2021, she remained deeply grateful for the many friendships she formed throughout her years in ministry, especially at St. Charles Community in Covington, Ky., where she resided for many years. She shared a special bond with the residents there, ministering Holy Communion and faithfully delivering meals to the Village residents.

After over 62 years of religious life, Sister Mary Tereze passed away peacefully on June 24, 2026. She was preceded in death by her parents. She leaves behind her beloved brothers, Anthony and James, her sister, Marlene, and dear nieces and nephews.

We give thanks to God for Sister Mary Tereze's life of serv-

ice, her bold and confident spirit, and her dedication to education and all those that she served. May she now rest in the arms of our good and loving God.

Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated July 25, at St. Mary of the Assumption Church, Alexandria, Ky., with interment in the convent cemetery following.

Memorials are suggested to The Sisters of Notre Dame, Covington, Ky., or to Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria, Ky.

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Bishop Iffert on solidarity with the Church in Africa

(Continued from page 3)

Q: How does that connection show up here in Covington?

Bishop Iffert: There is a fundamental unity and a fundamental missionary impulse that is essential to the life of the Church, and right now we're seeing it work in both directions. We see it in priests from Africa who serve here. Priests from Ghana and Uganda have come to serve our communities because their dioceses know that we do not have the number of priests we have been used to. They come to us as missionaries. At the same time, we say to the Church in Africa, "Here are the resources we have. How

can we help you?" There is more than an economic exchange. If we do not serve one another, we fail to be the Body of Christ we are intended to be.

Q: Do you have an agenda for the trip?

Bishop Iffert: Yes. The AMECEA group has a detailed agenda for us. The meeting itself runs during the first part of the trip, and afterward we will have meetings, guided tours and time with Church leaders in Nairobi. There is also an agenda in Madagascar, though I do not yet know all it will include. I know the day I am arriving, the day I am leaving and the people I am trusting myself to. We will see

where it goes from there. I hope to visit with the Sisters of Divine Providence who have a provincial house in Madagascar.

Q: Anything else you hope to see?

Bishop Iffert: I told them I definitely want to see the lemurs in Madagascar.

Q: What has serving on the subcommittee meant to you personally?

Bishop Iffert: I love being part of this committee. It has been very fruitful — fruitful for me and for my own spirituality.

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Bulletins:

■ July bulletin: posted Sunday, July 5; due Tuesday, Aug. 4.

The monthly e-mail reminder of a new bulletin posted will come from system@pub.virtus.org.

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VIRTUS Training:

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■ Tuesday, July 28, 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Tuesday, Aug. 4 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Tuesday, Aug. 4 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Saturday, Aug. 8 9–11:30 a.m., St. Patrick Church, Parish Hall, Taylor Mill

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

■ Tuesday, Aug. 11 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Tuesday, Aug. 18 9–11:30 a.m. Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Tuesday, Aug. 18 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

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

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

Note: If your Training Tab is missing or you cannot access your account, contact your parish, school or institution.

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National/World

Pope Leo XIV makes surprise visit to pray for peace at the tomb of St. Benedict

MONTECASSINO, ITALY (OSV News) – Pope Leo XIV made a surprise visit to the Benedictine Abbey of Montecassino on July 20, spending nearly four hours with the monastery’s Benedictine monks. The Benedictine community learned of the visit only that morning and was asked to keep it confidential until after the pope’s departure. Inside the abbey basilica, the pope prayed at the tombs of St. Benedict of Nursia, patron saint of Europe, and St. Scholastica. According to the Holy See Press Office, the pope “paused to pray at the tomb of St. Benedict, entrusting to him his plea for peace in those regions of the world marked by bloodshed and conflict.” He also joined the monks for midday prayer and lunch, toured the abbey’s archive, library and museum, and stopped at the exhibit recalling the monastery’s destruction during World War II. Before leaving, Pope Leo greeted and blessed surprised pilgrims visiting the historic abbey, founded by St. Benedict in A.D. 529.

French bishops decry vote legalizing ‘assisted dying’

PARIS — France’s bishops are strongly criticizing a “radical choice” made by French lawmakers to legalize “assisted dying.” A watershed vote by the National Assembly July 15 legalized assisted dying, including euthanasia and assisted suicide in certain cases. Lawmakers approved the measure by a vote of 291 to 241, allowing doctors or nurses, under specific conditions, to administer a lethal substance. French President Emmanuel Macron welcomed the result, saying he had fulfilled a campaign commitment. Cardinal Jean-Marc Aveline, president of the French bishops’ conference, called the vote a “serious turning point,” arguing it abandons France’s tradition of caring for people until natural death. The bishops warned the law could pressure vulnerable people and eventually expand eligibility for assisted dying while weakening palliative care. They also expressed concern that Catholic hospitals and nursing homes could face legal challenges if they refuse to allow assisted dying on their premises. The legislation now faces review by France’s Constitutional Council before it can take effect. The bishops reiterated their call to the nation’s Catholics to “bear witness that another path is possible — one of faithful presence and attentive care that alleviates physical or psychological suffering, without ever abandoning anyone.”

USCCB’s NFP Awareness Week highlights timeless truth

WASHINGTON — When the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops first considered holding an annual educational campaign on natural family planning, there was some debate over the best timing for it. Ultimately, the bishops settled on July 25, the anniversary of the 1968 encyclical Humanae Vitae, in which St. Paul VI articulated Catholic teaching on artificial contraception, human sexuality, marital love and parenthood. Now, 24 years after the USCCB’s first Natural Family Planning Awareness Week in 2002, Theresa Notare, assistant director for the NFP program in the USCCB’s Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, said that while the weeklong effort has developed over the years, it remains important. The 2026 National NFP Awareness Week is July 19-25. Notare said NFP methods offer “an ethical means to live out the Gospel.” Natural family planning encompasses several methods that use biomarkers in the woman’s fertility cycle to help couples achieve or postpone pregnancy. She said people do not realize that NFP is reliable, “very doable” and even easier today with apps such as FEMM that make it simpler for a woman to track her fertility cycle. Notare called National NFP Awareness Week the “tip of the iceberg” of deep reflection and teaching from the Church on how “the goods of marriage are the conjugal union and having children.” Her prayer is that people will learn more about these teachings and embrace them.



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CRS receives State Department funds to ‘significantly expand’ aid to Cuba

BALTIMORE — Catholic Relief Services is welcoming a \$60 million State Department award that will help “significantly expand” humanitarian aid to Cuba, as the Caribbean nation battles multiple crises. CRS, the humanitarian and development agency of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, announced the funding July 21. The agency said the award will enable it to partner with Caritas Cuba — which, like CRS, is part of Caritas Internationalis, the Catholic Church’s global humanitarian network — to provide “emergency food and hygiene supplies to nearly 200,000 households, or more than half a million people,” across Cuba. The award will also allow the two agencies to distribute “essential household items — including mattresses and blankets — to another 7,000 people who need them,” said CRS in its news release. The same day, the State Department said two of its officials had joined CRS staff in Miami July 21 “to send off the first flight of humanitarian relief” under Secretary of State Marco Rubio’s \$100 million commitment in aid to the Cuban people. The Caribbean island is reeling from several ongoing challenges, including rising rates of disease and mortality, even as food, water, healthcare, electricity and fuel resources have plunged. A 2026 U.S. blockade on oil imports to Cuba has intensified the crisis.

New Pope Leo XIV medal from Villanova honors care for the poor, creation

VILLANOVA, Pa. — Villanova University, Pope Leo XIV’s alma mater, has announced a new award recognizing those who integrate care for the poor and the care of creation — and the pope himself will confer the inaugural honor in October just outside of Rome. The biennial Pope Leo XIV Sustainability Medal was announced July 20 by Villanova and its Office for Sustainability, which oversees a whole-of-university effort to foster care for creation and the common good through academic research and overall university life. The pope will present the medal at Borgo Laudato Si’, in Castel Gandolfo, amid the Oct. 12-15 Villanova International Sustainability Conference in Rome. The recipient will be announced in September, with the university noting that nominees had been assessed in a “rigorous” process by members of Villanova’s Sustainability Leadership Council. The university stressed that the medal is “distinct from secular awards,” since it prioritizes “the ethical mandate of caring for the marginalized,” while “bridging the gap between rigorous science and moral conviction.” Medal recipients, who “may come from any field or discipline,” will be chosen for their “demonstrated impact in advancing a more sustainable and equitable world,” Villanova said.

Swiss churches deplore ‘arbitrary’ scrapping of military service exemption

ZURICH, Switzerland — Catholic Church leaders in Switzerland have protested the “arbitrary” abolition of traditional military service exemptions for clergy, in a move which could encourage similar changes in other European countries. The change, approved by the Federal Council through an amendment to the Military Law, removes a historic exemption that the government says no longer reflects modern society or the changing demand for pastoral care. Catholic, evangelical, Free Church and Old Catholic leaders have jointly challenged that reasoning, arguing that clergy continue to provide vital spiritual support, especially during national emergencies. Church representatives also say the measure was introduced without meaningful parliamentary debate or input from affected faith communities. The dispute comes as several European countries strengthen military preparedness in response to Russia’s aggression, with some expanding or restoring conscription. Church leaders warn Switzerland’s decision could signal a broader shift away from recognizing pastoral care as a public good.



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St. Patrick Parish celebrates shrine patroness, Our Lady of Knock, with novena, spiritual prayer and adoration

Bella Bailey

Multimedia Correspondent

On a rainy night in Ireland, the villagers of Knock witnessed what is now known as the apparition of Our Lady of Knock. The Blessed Virgin Mary, joined by St. Joseph and St. John the Evangelist, who donned a bishop's miter, standing near a sacrificial lamb on an altar of sacrifice surrounded by a host of angels, appeared to 15 villagers who had gathered to pray. During the two-hour apparition, Our Lady did not speak; however, the meaning of her appearance is understood to be one of hope, that God had not forsaken or forgotten his people during the famine.

"Our Lady of Knock had not forgotten the children after that potato famine, and just the brutal conditions in which the Irish were living at that time. That God had not forgotten his people," said Father Jeff VonLehmen, pastor of St. Patrick Parish and Shrine, Taylor Mill. Since St. Patrick Parish's designation as a shrine to Our Lady of Knock in 2007, parishioners gather once a year, from Aug. 14-22, to pray a novena to its patroness.

"It's a prayer for inner peace and peace in the world," said Father VonLehmen.

Throughout the nine days of prayer, participants have the opportunity to write their petitions and put them in a basket. At the conclusion of the novena, the prayers are stowed beneath the altar so that they are remembered at every celebrated Mass in the coming year. At the end of the year, the petitions are burned and placed in the parish's grotto.

"People feel like their burdens are seen and heard, and heaven hasn't forgotten them, just like Our Lady of Knock had not forgotten the brutal conditions in which the Irish people were living at that time. God had not forgotten his people," said Father VonLehman.

At the conclusion of the Novena, Aug. 22, the prayerful are invited to an adoration and benediction to celebrate the conclusion of the novena. During adoration, the final rosary of the novena will be prayed, with special prayers, music and accounts from witnesses

of the Our Lady of Knock apparition.

"It's a beautiful, meditative service that lasts about an hour," said John Schaefer, parishioner and musician for the event. "It's quite moving."

"There's something about it that just lifts your spirits and makes you feel closer to the Lord," said Sharon Drees, parishioner and organizer of the event. "You have the actual presence of the Blessed Sacrament there with you, and Mary just taking you by the hand and helping you be present to that ... She wants you to be with her son."

For those unable to attend in person, the novena can be prayed at home.

"The ultimate goal is to develop a hunger to be with Christ," said Mrs. Drees, "for that service, during that time, it just becomes timeless. You truly do get a sense of the eternal."

"Come, soak up Heaven, soak up a miracle, and just contemplate what something truly meaningful is in a world that is lacking so much meaning... when heaven comes in and interrupts, it's a powerful, beautiful thing to meditate on," said Mr. Schaefer.



Bailey photos

The Our Lady of Knock grotto on the campus of St. Patrick Parish, Taylor Mill, is a place of spiritual renewal, and the home of the ashes of the petitions given during the Our Lady of Knock novena.

Our Lady of Knock Novena

St. Patrick Parish,
Taylor Mill

Mass, novena prayers, candles
Aug. 14, 7 p.m., including Adoration

Aug. 15, 4:30 p.m.

Aug. 16, 8:30 a.m. and 11 a.m. with Ancient
Order of Hibernians

Aug. 17, 7:35 a.m.

Aug. 18, 7:35 a.m.

Aug. 19, 7:35 a.m. and 7 p.m.

Aug. 21, 7:35 a.m.

Adoration, novena prayers, candles
Aug. 17, 7 p.m.
Aug. 18, 7 p.m.

Aug. 20, 7 p.m.

Aug. 22, 7 p.m. with healing prayer,
scriptural rosary and relic of St. Faustina

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