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Bailey photos

(above) Bishop John Iffert commissioned the teachers and principals of the Diocese of Covington's schools at the conclusion of Mass. He reminded them that they are his co-workers in the largest ministry of the Diocese, the education and formation of young children in the faith.

(right) Kendra McGuire, superintendent of schools, spoke to the school faculty and staff gathered at the start of Mass.

‘We all want to make a difference in the world,’ Bishop Iffert tells educators at Mass celebrating the school year’s beginning

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

As the summer season draws to a close and the school year is on the horizon, faculty, staff and administrators of Catholic schools in the Diocese of Covington gathered for a Mass, Aug. 5, celebrating the opening of the 2026-2027 school year.

Team members from every school filled the pews of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, joined by the staff of the Office of Catholic Schools, priests and deacons of the diocese and Bishop John Iffert, who celebrated the Mass.

As the Mass began, Kendra McGuire, superintendent of schools, addressed those gathered. “You know that your task is to teach,” she said, “but to do so means you will need to get to know each and every child that enters through your door. You will have to trust that God has placed each of those children in your classroom for a reason ... you should strive to be a model of faith.”

Bishop Iffert, in his homily, began with a story regarding a bookmark he received in seminary, one with the message “Remember; all any of them wants to do is make a difference,” printed upon it.

He said that this was the way Sister Judy Connolly, a sister of Notre Dame who had visited his class in seminary, was “encouraging us not to get distracted by the little conflicts ... but to remember that all of us are devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ and want to make a difference in the world we live in.”

Having returned just a day prior from Africa, Bishop Iffert continued by speaking of an experience there, where he had met with bishops from the churches of East Africa, as well as the young people there. He said that the young people shared the issues they sensed in their world — such as a lack of access of economic opportunity and education, mental health challenges, violence, especially against women and a perceived lack of support from the older generation or care from them of these struggles.

Bishop Iffert then referenced the day’s gospel reading, from the

book of Matthew, about a Canaanite woman calling out for Jesus to heal her daughter, who was being tormented by a demon. Although Jesus first ignores, then discourages the woman, her faith in his mercy kept her persistent, saying that “even the pets eat the scraps that fall off the table.”

“Let’s notice the stance of the Canaanite woman,” Bishop Iffert said, “We who want so desperately to make a difference in the life of our community, in the life of our diocese, in the life of the young people we serve.”

The Canaanite woman “comes to Jesus with faith,” he continued, “She never questions if Jesus can free her daughter, but she trusts in his divine authority ... This is the first and fundamental criteria for any of us who would teach in the name of the Church. That we approach with faith in the divine providence and mercy of God.”

The woman also showed “faith and humility,” Bishop Iffert said. “She acknowledges that she has no right or claim on the God of Israel or the concern of the Messiah, but she submits herself nonetheless.”

“This is exactly who we are,” he said, “We have no right or claim to the graces God has shown us. We have no right or privilege just because we’re members of the Church.”

The Canaanite woman “wants community with the Lord and with those who serve him. For her life to have meaning, she needs to belong to the people of God.”

Tying into his anecdote regarding the bookmark, Bishop Iffert echoed, “We all want to make a difference in the world, in our schools, in the lives of young people ... None of us will be able to

(Continued on page 16)



Annual St. Ann Novena ends, a lesson in trusting the faith prevails

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

St. Ann Mission, Covington, celebrated the end of their 139th annual St. Ann Novena with Mass, celebrated by Father Gerald Rinersman, a retired priest of the Diocese of Covington, and veneration of the relics of St. Ann. Many participated with a kiss or touch of the relic, an emotional moment venerating the saint to which they have prayed for the past nine days.

On each of the nine days, a Mass was celebrated following the novena prayer at St. Ann Mission. This year, each Mass was dedicated to an apparition of the Blessed Mother. Some known, such as the Our Lady of Fatima and Our Lady of Guadalupe apparitions, while others were lesser known, including Our Lady of Siluva which was the apparition for the final night of the Novena.

The story of our Lady of Siluva begins many years before Our Lady's apparition in 1608, rather the seeds were sown for her appearance amidst the rise of the protestant reformation. When the town officials of Siluva, Lithuania, turned to Calvinism they sought to destroy the small

Catholic Church of Lithuania and reappropriate the land to protestant worship. The priest of the Siluvan Catholic Church heard of this and took the deeds to the land, liturgical vestments and a painting of the Blessed Virgin Mary and placed them in a box which he buried on the Church property. Soon after, the land and the Church were seized, and Catholic worship in Lithuania was replaced with Protestantism.

"The Church was destroyed, and the land was used for farmland, and the faith was buried," said Father Rinersman in his homily on the apparition. Then, nearly 80 years later, a group of children were playing in a field when the Blessed Virgin appeared to them weeping, holding a small child. Though she did not say anything to the children, word spread throughout the village and the next day a large crowd had formed near the site of the apparition. She appeared again and said to them, "once my beloved son was worshiped here, but now it was given over to the plowman and to the sower," Father Rinersman said, paraphrasing.

As word of the apparition spread, a blind man in the outskirts of the town remembered the buried box. "He led people to this spot, and when he reached this spot, he regained his sight," said Father Rinersman, "He was able to see what was precious, and he found this place where the church once stood, and to a spot where an iron box was buried in this field."

"For eighty years it stayed buried, silent and unused. The treasures in that box were the chalices that had been used at Mass, the missal books, the vestments, an image of the Blessed Mother and the documents that showed the Church owned the land," said Father Rinersman.

"So, even when faith is buried, it is never gone. When the world forgets, Heaven remembers. And, when the sacred is erased, the Blessed Mother comes to restore it," he said, "the Blessed Mother leads up back to find what is sacred, to find what is holy, to find what is precious. The gift of faith and an active spiritual life develops an instinct, and an appreciation and a wisdom that helps us to see the hand of God in our world."



(above) Novena participants kneel while praying the final part of the St. Ann Novena, set against the backdrop of St. Ann, a child Mary and a relic of St. Ann.

(above, right, center) Deacon Joe Wiedeman, Holy Spirit Parish, Newport, holds the relic of St. Ann for veneration at the end of Mass as people approach to touch or kiss the relic.



A young girl approaches Father Rinersman, who donned a special vestment with an image of St. Ann which read Sancta Anna in curved text above the image, to venerate a relic of St. Ann.

(left) Another young girl prays reverently following her veneration of the relic of St. Ann.

'Restoration celebration' to conclude Cathedral restoration project three years in the making

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Since its launch in March of 2023, the Restored in Christ project brought together the efforts of more than 2,000 donors with the mission of preserving Covington's Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption. Now, more than three years later, the project has reached its conclusion — with repairs made to the Cathedral's stonework and windows and new chimera and gargoyles proudly perched on the perimeter, ensuring the longevity of the historic Covington landmark and beloved church.

To tie together the project's closing and celebrate its successes, a "restoration celebration" is planned to follow the Cathedral's 4:30 Mass, August 15. Invited to the celebration were all 2,000 donors to the project, along with parishioners of the Cathedral.

Coming together, guests to the celebration will enjoy a catered dinner at the adjacent Covington Latin School, tours of the newly planted Marian Garden and restored Cathedral grounds and a showing of a 20-minute short film highlighting the Cathedral titled "The Salvation of Souls."

"It's going to be a beautiful video," commented Jim Hess, director of Stewardship and Mission for the Diocese of Covington, who took on this project as one of his first after becoming director. "It's a video that the Cathedral can use forever," he said, as the video divulges the Cathedral's history and mission. Following the celebration, the film will be available on the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption's website (<https://covcathedral.com>) as well for public viewing.

In addition to this, donors and parishioners alike are being welcomed to contribute to another celebratory aspect of the project's conclusion. Inside the new statue of the Cathedral's Marian courtyard, a time capsule will be placed, with notes from contributors to be stored inside for future generations.



"I love the symbolism of that as well," said Mr. Hess. "Mary is protecting the watching over and taking care of these people that contributed to this work."

While Mr. Hess has experience with many capital campaigns, he commented that campaigns that are not directly 'building something new' can be hard to raise funds for.

"This project was unique," he said, with more than \$8 million of purely restoration work to be raised.

"This was truly a brick and mortar campaign," Mr. Hess said, "which sometimes is difficult to raise money for because people like supporting new initiatives, new ideas. But this was more focused on taking care of the Cathedral for future generations, and I was amazed by how generous people were." Even people who did not belong to the Cathedral parish or had ties to it contributed, seeing as they "realized the importance of this work for generations to come."



Bishop's
Schedule

Aug. 8
Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 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.

Aug. 11-13
Seminararian Retreat
Aug. 14
Blessing and ribbon cutting Chase and Cole Fischer STEM Wing, Villa Madonna Academy, Villa Hills, 11 a.m.

Aug. 15
Mass of First Vows, St. Joseph the Worker Sister Philomena Marie, All Saints Parish, Walton, 10:30 a.m.

Aug. 15 (continued)
Vigil Mass for the Solemnity of the Feast of the Assumption, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 4:30 p.m.

Aug. 16
Installation Mass, Father James Schaeper, St. Joseph Parish, Warsaw, 10 a.m.

Catholic Charities volunteer to be recognized at Great American Ballpark

Bella Bailey

Multimedia Correspondent

Catholic Family Night at Great American Ballpark, Cincinnati, will bring together the faithful of the Diocese of Covington and Archdiocese of Cincinnati, along with Bishop John Iffert and Archbishop Robert Casey, to celebrate the theme 'Love in Action.' This evening will highlight the mission and ministries of Catholic Charities on both sides of the river, and the people who make them possible, embodying Love in Action. One of the volunteers who will be recognized is Notre Dame Sister Nance Hehman, who lives in residence at the St. Augustine Convent, Augusta, and is an integral member of the Mobile Food Pantry team in Bracken, Mason and Pendelton County.

Sister Nance began her involvement with the Mobile Food Pantry in 2020 at its inception, when John Hehman, director of the Mobile Food Pantry and Sister Nance's nephew, called her for assistance. "She was a big part of getting it started," said Mr. Hehman, "she was one of the first people that said she would be there to help."

Since the beginning, Sister Nance has been responsible for helping members of the community register and sign in to the mobile food pantry, understanding first-hand the food insecurity in Bracken County. "I was on the parish phone line, they would call and ask for help...so I knew the need for food down here was pretty drastic," she said. "Being

able to help to serve and help fill that need, that's why you keep coming back. The people who come are very, very grateful," she said.

Sister Nance's time at the registration table has allowed her to form relationships with the community members who take advantage of the ministry. "It's very moving. I would get to know them, and they would get to know me," she said.

"She makes a really positive impact on the guests coming in for food," said Mr. Hehman, "You watch her do the registration. People come in and, if for whatever reason she isn't able to make it, they ask for her."

During her six years of work with the Mobile Food Pantry, Sister Nance has found that the most rewarding is "seeing how happy the little kids were when you brought food, or they shop," she said. Moments like watching children and families realize they will have food in the coming week, "makes you very appreciative of what you've been given and what you are able to share," she said.



For Sister Nance, her experience over the last six years is more than volunteer work, it is a reflection of the community's willingness to serve each other. "It's wonderful what these people do," she said, "all the ones that I've ever gone to, the parish community goes all out to make this work, for the whole community, for the whole county."

Volunteering her own time and resources to the Mobile Food Pantry ministry is the true embodiment of Love in Action, "Everybody needs help sometimes, and if you've got the time, and you got the resources. I think it's an obligation to share."

Notre Dame Sister Nance Hehman has volunteered at the registration table with the Mobile Food Pantry since its inception in 2020. Over the last six years she has formed bonds and friendships with those she sees on a regular basis and feels she has an obligation of service to others.

Catholic Charities Commission Subcommittee focuses on the role of Catholic Charities in the community

Bella Bailey

Multimedia Correspondent

Over the summer months, the Diocese of Covington has participated in a new strategic planning process, focusing on key areas of growth for the Diocese in Catholic Charities, a foundation and Diocesan schools, with commissions being formed to focus on each. Each of these commissions consists of subcommittees which help inform the commissions overall recommendations to Bishop Iffert at the conclusion of the information gathering process. For many involved, these subcommittees served as a space for conversation, education and involvement in the overall direction of the Diocese. Mary Paula Schuh, Catholic Charities board member and co-chair of the Catholic Charities Commission's Parish and Community Partnerships subcommittee, said that her experience on the subcommittee has been an exciting opportunity.

"We had lots of good discussion, we had lots of great ideas as a result of the meeting," said Mrs. Schuh. Primarily, she said, the discussion revolved around volunteer engagement, brand identity and serving those in rural as well as urban areas. Mrs. Schuh said her co-chair role was an "opportunity to envision more broadly a role for



Catholic Charities in our community through partnership with other organizations."

"We've also talked about expanding services in the rural counties. The Diocese consists of 14 counties, and we want to have a Catholic Charities presence in all those counties," she said. Her hope is that the work of the Catholic Charities Commission and Parish and Community Partnerships Subcommittee builds a "better understanding across the Diocese of what Catholic Charities does, and I hope that as a result of that, that people are more willing to support, both volunteer their time and financially support Catholic

(Continued on page 10)

Dawn Groneck, co-chair of the Parish and Community Partnerships sub-committee, along with the rest of the committee, listened to Nickolas Borchers, finance director of Columbus Catholic Social.

Despite funding pressures, International Catholic Partners reaffirm long-term commitment to Eastern Africa's Church

Sabrina Amboka

ACI Africa

International Catholic partners have reaffirmed their long-term commitment to accompanying the Church in Eastern Africa despite shifting global funding priorities and mounting pressures on development assistance, assuring the region's Catholic Bishops that their partnerships are rooted in shared mission rather than financial support alone.

Speaking during the 21st Plenary Assembly of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA), representatives of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), Catholic Relief Services (CRS) for Eastern and Southern Africa, and Missio Aachen, emphasized that, while global circumstances are changing, their solidarity with the people of God in Eastern Africa remains steadfast.

Delivering a message on behalf of the USCCB, Bishop John Curtis Iffert acknowledged that recent reductions in U.S. international development assistance have increased the burden on local Churches but said the Catholic Bishops in the United States of America remain committed to defending human dig-

(Continued on page 10)



ACI Africa/AMECEA

On behalf of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, Bishop John Iffert of Covington spoke to the 21st Plenary Assembly of the Association of Member Episcopal Conferences in Eastern Africa (AMECEA), July 23.

Correction

In the July 14 edition of the *Messenger*, the 2025 schedule for the Our Lady of Knock novena was incorrectly published. The *Messenger* apologizes for the error. Here is the novena schedule for 2026.

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



New principals prepare for school year

(Pictured left to right: Ellen Beirsdorfer, St. Joseph School, Crescent Springs; Kendra McGuire, superintendent of schools; Terry Bray, Sts. Peter and Paul School, California; Joe Cordonnier, Villa Madonna Academy, Villa Hills; Margaret Klee, St. Patrick School, Maysville; Erin Ludwig, St. Cecilia School, Independence) Every year, before the start of school, the principals gather with the Diocese of Covington’s Schools Office to hear from superintendent Kenra McGuire and other members of Curia staff. Together, they discuss the upcoming year and welcome the new principals (pictured), who each receive a bible with a message from Bishop John Iffert. This year, Bishop Iffert will commission the new principals, as well as the teachers of the Diocese, at the back-to-school Mass, August 5.



Sisters of Divine Providence Jubilarians

The Congregation of the Sisters of Divine Providence, Melbourne, recently celebrated its jubilarians. The 2026 jubilarians are (from left) 60 years: Sister Mary Carol Henggeler, Sister Carolyn Marie Betsch, Sister Grace Ann Schmursal, Sister Elizabeth Wehri, Sister Gladys Macke and 70 years: Sister Claire Osburg. Pictured above is Sister Susan Baumann, 60 year jubilarian.

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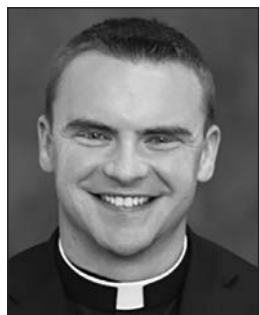
Cathedral parishioner, lector, greeter, and volunteer

Eyes fixed on Christ

The readings for the Nineteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle A — are: 1 Kings 19:9a, 11-13a, Romans 9:1-5 and Matthew 14:22-33.

A temptation that I have faced and I am sure many others have faced as well is, when there are moments in life when it seems like there is a lot going on at once, to begin to sacrifice the time that I would normally give to the Lord in order to focus on whatever major challenge I am

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Michael Elmlinger

dealing with in the moment. However, it almost never fails that when I do so, I find myself overwhelmed by the “storm” and begin to drown in the midst of the suffering, whatever it may be. Each time I am reminded by the Lord that, while it is always important to keep my eyes fixed on him, it is especially important during these storms to keep my eyes fixed on Christ.

This was a lesson that St. Peter had to learn the hard way, and thanks be to God that he does. In doing so, both he and the Lord provide the lesson to us so that we know what to do during those storms that we face in our lives. In our Gospel for this weekend (Matthew 14:22-33), Jesus has the disciples go into a boat to cross the sea while he goes up the mountain by himself to pray to the Father. However, while the disciples are crossing the sea, a major storm begins to oppress them. Already being a few miles offshore (cf. 14:24), they are too far out at sea to be able to simply go back and get out of the water. They are completely stuck and are likely becoming so frightened that they think they will die out at sea. We also have to keep in mind that some of these disciples are fishermen, including Peter, so the fact that this storm was giving them so much trouble tells us that this was not a typical storm that they would face. This was something lethal.

It is during this time that they become even more terrified when they see Jesus himself walking on the water, thinking that he was a ghost (14:26). It is here that Jesus reassures them who he is and gives a simple command: “Take courage, it is I; do not be afraid” (14:27). Peter then tests him to see if it really is Jesus by telling Jesus to command him to walk onto the water. Amazingly, Peter is able to get out of the water and walk towards Jesus. In fact, in another translation of this passage, it seems as if Peter was even able to make it all the way to Jesus when it says that he “came to Jesus” (Revised Standard Version: Catholic Edition, 14:29). However, Peter does something that nearly dooms him; he takes his eyes off Jesus and begins to focus on the storm around him. He sees that this storm is not calming down and begins to think again that he is going to die. It is when he does this that Peter begins to drown and has to cry out to Jesus, “Lord, save me!” (14:30). Jesus calmly grabs him and says to him, “O you of little faith, why did you doubt?” (14:31), and just like that, the wind dies down.

What is amazing about this passage is that had Peter simply kept his eyes fixed on Christ, he would never have begun to sink into the water. He would have been simply there with Jesus while the storm continued to rage. It was only when Peter looked away from Jesus and began instead to focus on the storm around him rather than on Jesus that he began to drown. In doing so, he doubts his faith in Jesus that Jesus is in full control of the situation. While the storm would have continued to rage on, Jesus would have been there, quietly present, but in total control of everything going on around him. Peter could have remembered the message from our first reading from 1 Kings 19, which was that amidst the heavy wind, the earthquake, and the fire, the voice of the Lord was found as a tiny whispering sound, quietly present.

That is how the Lord can be for us in our own lives. While the storms in our lives are raging, Christ will continue to be quietly present in our lives, possessing full power and authority over those storms and being in complete control. Instead of focusing on those storms and trying to handle them ourselves, we are meant to keep our eyes and our attention fixed on Christ, who will see us through to the end.

Father Michael Elmlinger is a priest of the Diocese of Covington, Ky. Father Elmlinger is currently studying Canon Law at the University of St. Paul, Ottawa, Canada.

Love comes first, growth follows

We recently returned from a family vacation with my parents, my sister, and her two sons. The “kids” are getting older, ranging now in age from 15 to 21. It’s been a privilege to watch their relationships deepen as they grow up together. My sister’s eldest son, Sam, loves his cousins deeply and unconditionally. Sam has autism, and like all of us, he has his own ways of showing the people he loves that they matter. He wants to sit close to them. He persist-

VIEWPOINT



Karen Zengel

ently invites them into his imaginary world of policemen and bad guys. In homage to our ancestral roots, he is learning Polish with the help of Siri, and he eagerly shares new words with his cousins. Watching Sam, you see a young man who wants to be close to the people who mean the most to him.

My kids wholeheartedly respond to Sam. On vacation, they joined him in his imaginary world, offering some twists and turns for him to navigate. They learned his Polish words and used them when appropriate. They also did a fair bit of redirecting Sam’s energy, inviting him to engage in their interests. When the policemen and bad guys started to get tired, they introduced him to Boggle, one of our family favorites. When speaking Polish was too much, they taught him sign language, an interest they’ve taken up this summer. They talked to him about personal space, and gradually Sam became more aware. As the trip went on, it was wonderful to watch him learn what his cousins enjoy and use that to connect with them. They met him where he was, and over time he began meeting them where they were. Love flowed both ways, and they all grew because of it.

Recently, I was reading a reflection about the woman at the well. I learned that this seemingly by chance meeting is the longest recorded encounter that Jesus had with another individual. The woman comes to the well for water, alone, in the middle of the day because she isn’t accepted by others in her community. When she meets Jesus, you recognize that she is thirsty for connection. She is not shy. She speaks to Jesus and expresses curiosity, interested in understanding how he can see past their differences. For her, it may be the first time in a long time that someone has really seen her. Jesus treats her with respect. Under no rush, he listens carefully and takes her

spiritual inquiries seriously. Through this encounter, Jesus invites us to see ourselves and each other through eyes of love, not judgment.

One of the hallmarks of St. Vincent de Paul is the home visit. It is a very distinctive and beautiful aspect of our ministry because it is rooted in relationship before assistance.

Like Jesus at the well, our Vincentians go to our neighbors to literally meet them where they are. Not only do we enter their homes in their most difficult moments, but we also meet them where they are in their lives. Before discussing bills or budgets, we seek to understand their story; suspending judgment, listening with compassion and recognizing the dignity of the person before us. Every circumstance is different, and every person deserves to be heard.

The goal of a home visit is never simply to solve an immediate financial problem. While we certainly work to address the need that brought us together, our greater calling is to remind our neighbors they are not alone. Sometimes the best gift we can offer is our presence: a willingness to sit, listen, and acknowledge another person’s struggles without rushing to conclusions.

As I reflected on the relationship between Sam and my kids, I realized they were practicing that same kind of love. My kids met him where he was, entering his world before inviting him into theirs. They accepted him while gently encouraging him to grow. In return, Sam paid closer attention to what mattered to his cousins. He remembered the games they enjoyed, the interests they shared, and he made a genuine effort to connect with them. Entering Sam’s world gradually transformed into a shared experience and lasting memories. Love came first. Growth followed.

Isn’t that what Jesus did for the woman at the well? He saw and loved her completely. The woman also offered a gift to Jesus — an openness to learn about what he had to offer. Only then did her life begin to change.

That is also the spirit of the Vincentian home visit. We do not come as experts with all the answers. Through respectful conversation, compassionate listening, practical help, and shared hope, we walk alongside our neighbors, offering a hand when they need one. When we choose encounter over judgment and presence over efficiency, we discover that the home visit changes everyone involved. Our neighbors receive more than assistance; they experience dignity, hope, and belonging. And we, too, leave transformed by the privilege of witnessing Christ in one another.

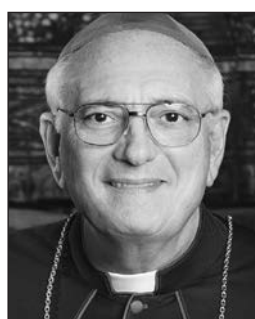
Karen Zengel is executive director, Society of St. Vincent de Paul Northern Kentucky.

We must remember we are still a nation of immigrants

In 1958, at age 14, I learned a personal lesson about patriotism on a Boy Scout pilgrimage to Europe.

Our first stop was the 1958 World’s Fair in Brussels. As we viewed the various pavilions, of course we stopped at the United States pavilion first. There was perhaps a little disappointment because we saw a very honest portrayal of the problems America faced at the time: racial divisions, housing needs, poverty and an economy that barely supported a nation of our size.

GUEST



Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio

In contrast, when we visited the Russian pavilion, all one could see were the glorious achievements of Russia, which had survived the Second World War and taken its place

among the great nations of the world.

From the exhibit and the guidance of the priest-chaplain, I learned that America was a self-correcting nation because she acknowledged her shortcomings and found ways to overcome them.

In the same year as the Brussels World’s Fair of 1958, John F. Kennedy wrote a book titled “A Nation of Immigrants.” It was not a history of immigration, but rather a prelude to his efforts in Congress to find the path

to reform the deficiencies of the discriminatory Immigration Act of 1924, which was still influencing immigration.

As we mark our 250th anniversary as a nation, we are returning to the same playbook that was used in 1924 to shut down most future immigration.

The Founding Fathers followed the unwritten law in the practice of granting citizenship to all who were born here, presuming their desire to become citizens and contribute to the nation of immigrants. Our nation was built on immigrant labor and on the desire of immigrants to achieve the American dream, which was basically to live in freedom and to support their families.

On this 250th anniversary, we celebrate our democracy and our achievements as a nation, but at the same time we can never forget that it was because of immigration that we have achieved so much.

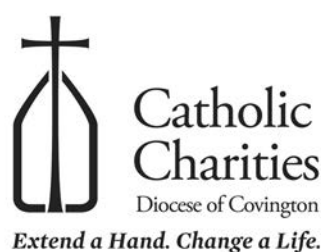
If we wish America to continue being great, we must deal with the problems that still afflict us. Immigration reform is necessary to preserve our moral place among nations. America’s greatness came from our concern for other nations in the world and for welcoming those immigrants needed to enhance our progress in a free and open society.

We cannot deny our heritage as a nation built by immigrants. We cannot watch our democratic institutions erode to the point where no compromises can be found, which enables our society to overcome the polarization that divides our nation.

Of course, there are other related issues on the inter-

(Continued on page 14)

Partners



Our Mission

Inspired by the Gospel call of Jesus Christ to serve, the mission of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington is to promote healing, restore hope and affirm human potential through services that empower, voices that speak for justice and partnerships that strengthen communities.

Volunteer Opportunities

Over 600+ volunteers impact our mission by opening their arms and helping our clients achieve their full potential. We invite you to activate your faith and help carry out Christ's mission to help those in need.

■ Volunteer Receptionist

Welcome visitors and answer calls as a friendly first point of contact.

■ Administrative Support

Help with payments, forms, calls, and other client-service tasks.

■ Business Office Support

Assist with data entry and basic accounting-related office work.

■ Parish Kitchen Team

Prepare and serve meals, share prayer support, and keep the kitchen welcoming.

■ Pickett's Corner

Support monthly bike clinic or repair donated bicycles from home.

■ Mobile Food Pantry

Help distribute supplemental food at host locations across the Diocese.

■ Special Events

Lend a hand with planning, hosting, or supporting Catholic Charities events.

■ Drives and Parish Partners

Organize food, essentials, parish outreach, and volunteer support.

■ Jail Ministry

Lead prayer or Scripture groups and support families of incarcerated loved ones.

For information contact Kim Murphy, volunteer engagement manager, at kmurphy@covingtoncharities.org or (859) 581-8974 Ext. 119.

Catholic Charities celebrates Cassba 2026 a salute to America and 'Love and Action'

Emily Hudepohl

Contributor

This year's theme, "Honoring America at 250 and Catholic Charities at 95 Years of Love and Action," celebrates two historic milestones while raising critical funds to support Catholic Charities' programs and services throughout Northern Kentucky.

In counseling, clients are encouraged to see themselves and others through a lens of understanding rather than judgment. That same perspective can transform everyday interactions. A sharp comment, impatience in traffic or tension in the workplace may reveal a struggle we cannot see. Choosing curiosity instead of judgment and grace instead of reaction creates opportunities for



Attendees at the 2025 Cassba enjoy an afternoon of amusement and community in support of the mission and ministries of Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington. Join the fun at this year's Cassba, Aug. 23, in a salute to "Honoring America at 250 and Catholic Charities at 95 Years of Love and Action."

Whether it's the first step toward safe housing, a courageous turn toward counseling or parenting support, or the steady journey back from addiction or crisis, each milestone reflects the spirit of love and action that has defined Catholic Charities for 95 years. As we honor America's 250th anniversary and celebrate 95 years of service, this year's theme recognizes the hope, resilience and opportunity that help transform the dream of a better life into reality.

Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington, invites the community to be an integral part in fulfilling these dreams with an afternoon of celebration and connection at the 2026 Cassba. This year's gathering takes place Sunday, Aug. 23, 3-7 p.m., at the Drees Pavilion, Covington.

This year's premier sponsor is St. Elizabeth Healthcare. Now in its 39th year, Cassba has become the signature fundraising event for Catholic Charities. Each year, it offers an opportunity to highlight the transformative work being done across Northern Kentucky and the lives that are changed along the way.

One of those ministries is Mental Health Counseling, where Catholic Charities accompanies individuals and families through some of life's most difficult challenges. As we celebrate America's 250th anniversary and Catholic Charities' 95 Years of Love and Action, we recognize that hope and healing often begin with a single courageous step toward support.

At Catholic Charities, we believe that mental health care is an expression of love and faith in action. While each person's journey is unique, no one should walk it alone. Through professional counseling services, individuals receive compassionate care that helps them navigate anxiety, depression, grief, relationship struggles, trauma, life transitions and other emotional challenges. This work reminds us that healing often comes through a combination of prayer, supportive relationships and professional guidance.

Autumn Ruehl, MSW, CSW, clinical counselor, emphasizes the importance of compassion in both counseling and daily life. "Kindness, compassion, and empathy are some of the greatest gifts we can offer," she says. "They are not signs of weakness, but reflections of strength and grace."



2026 Cassba 'Honoring America at 250 and Catholic Charities at 95 Years of Love and Action'

Catholic Charities, Diocese of
Covington

Sunday, Aug. 23, 3-7 p.m.
Drees Pavilion, Covington

Enjoy drinks and small bites,
meet the people behind the
ministry, try your luck in one of
several raffles and bid on items
in the live and silent auctions.

Cost \$100 per person.

Visit www.Cassba.com

connection and healing.

Cassba attendees are a vital part of that mission, too. In addition to a beautiful setting and inspiring mission, Cassba features the popular Cassba Cash Raffle, the exciting Vacation Raffle and a Bourbon Tasting. Guests will also enjoy both a live auction and a silent auction, each offering a variety of appealing items.

Once again, this year's event will offer the convenient option of online bidding. Guests can visit the auction site in advance or during the event to view available items. New packages and experiences will continue to be added leading up to the event. This feature is ideal not only for those who wish to get a sneak peek at the exciting selections but also for those unable to attend in person but who still wish to join the bidding fun and support Catholic Charities from the comfort of their home.

Catholic Charities serves 14 counties across Northern Kentucky and is the social outreach organization of the Diocese of Covington. Through its core areas of Child and Family Services, Counseling, Housing and Community Outreach, the agency walks alongside those in need as they journey toward stability and hope.

From counselors offering compassionate, professional support during life's most difficult moments, providing food through the Mobile Food Pantry to offering a warm meal at Parish Kitchen, to helping a young family avoid foreclosure, to supporting a child through a parent's addiction recovery, Catholic Charities provides services that meet people where they are, always with dignity and compassion.

Help Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington continue its mission to "Extend a hand. Change a life." Come to the 2026 Cassba: "Honoring America at 250 and Catholic Charities at 95 Years of Love and Action." Tickets are \$100 each. For more information, visit Cassba.com or covingtoncharities.org.

Emily Hudepohl is the communications and marketing manager for Catholic Charities, Diocese of Covington, 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: anten-na 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/>

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. 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.



Emmaus Retreatants
Forty-one men from Cristo Rey Parish, Florence, gathered for an Emmaus Retreat, where they spent time renewing their relationship with God. Organizers of the retreat traveled to the Diocese of Covington from Miami, Atlanta and Aruba to help guide the men on a healing, spiritual journey. Throughout the course of the retreat, retreatants gave testimony to the work of the Holy Spirit in their life, and the power of healing prayer.

Parish festivals

Aug. 7 Blessed Sacrament, Ft. Mitchell Athletic Boosters corn roast	Aug. 28–29 Holy Cross District High School, Latonia School festival	Sept. 11–13 St. Patrick, Maysville Parish festival
Aug. 7–8 St. Mary of the Assumption, Alexandria Parish festival	Sept. 5–6 St. Anthony, Taylor Mill Festival Latino	Sept. 18–20 St. Timothy, Union Oktoberfest
August 14–15 St. Bernard, Dayton Parish festival	Sept. 5–7 St. Cecilia, Independence Parish festival	Sept. 25–27 St. Agnes, Ft. Wright Oktoberfest
Aug. 28–30 St. Augustine, Augusta Parish festival	Sept. 11–12 St. Barbara, Erlanger Rocktoberfest	Sept. 27 St. Philip Parish, Melbourne Golf outing

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 pm. 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, principals, 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.

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. Contact Jeff Duell at (859) 801-8213.

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

Pope Leo to youth: Jesus doesn't want you to be couch potatoes

Courtney Mares
OSV News

Pope Leo XIV urged young people not to be “couch potatoes” in a video message on July 25, adding that the Church needs their missionary energy and “holy rebelliousness.”

“Jesus doesn’t want you to be ‘young couch potatoes,’ complacent or content with the comfort of ‘that’s just the way it’s always been done,’” Pope Leo said, quoting the Spanish phrase Pope Francis used during his 2016 World Youth Day speech in Krakow.

In a Spanish-language video message sent to young people in Chota and Cutervo, Peru, for the celebration of their second Diocesan Youth Day, the pope urged young people to “feel the call to be missionaries in your schools, your universities, on your streets and in your fields.”

The Church “needs your holy rebelliousness, your pure energy, and your desire to transform situations of suffering into spaces of hope,” the pope said. “Serve with joy, especially the most forgotten, for that is where the suffering face of Jesus is found.”

It was one of three video messages Pope Leo sent to gatherings of young people around the world over the weekend.

In a July 26 video message to the Halleluya Festival in Fortaleza, Brazil, Pope Leo pointed to the example of St. Carlo Acutis, encouraging young people never to lose the “missionary zeal that is indispensable for transforming this world, which so desperately needs the Gospel.”

“In our day, there are still many people who need to know that it is Jesus who answers their deepest longings, revealing to human beings the truth about themselves,” he said in Portuguese. “Therefore, proclaim with courage that a life without Christ is a life without grace! He is the way, the truth and the life; it is he who gives meaning to existence and to all things.”

“Let us draw inspiration from the example of St. Carlo Acutis: He shows us how to keep Christ always at the center, even in our use of technology,” Pope Leo told the Brazilian youth, urging them to use social media and artificial intelligence “in a moderate and disciplined way,” and warning that such tools can pull people into “an unreal world where the ephemeral, mere appearances, and deception end up taking the place of true values and what really matters.”



OSV News photo/Simone Risoluti, Vatican Media

Pope Leo XIV poses for a selfie as he meets May 16, 2026, with young Catholics from the Italian Archdiocese of Genoa at the Vatican who are preparing to receive the sacrament of confirmation.

The pope acknowledged that the enthusiasm felt at a festival like Halleluya can fade over time, and he said sustaining it requires remaining in God’s presence through prayer, with “constancy, perseverance and the firm certainty that the Father in heaven never abandons us.”

Quoting Pope Benedict XVI, he added, “Do not be afraid of Christ! He takes nothing away, and he gives you everything.”

In a third video message, sent to young people gathered in Lamego, Portugal, for the second “Rejoice” National Youth Day, Pope Leo reflected on his own recent encounters with young Catholics, from the Jubilee of Youth in Rome to a youth vigil during his apostolic trip to Spain, and said he is looking forward to World Youth Day in Seoul, South

Korea, in August 2027.

“It is always special to be with young people, because the enthusiasm of your faith is infectious!” the pope said.

Pope Leo encouraged young people to “harness your restlessness so that, in moments of prayer and silence, in dialogue with God, you may ask him: ‘Lord, what do you want me to do in the Church and in the world? What is my vocation? Are you calling me to start a family through marriage? Or are you calling me instead to the priestly life? Or to the religious life?’”

“Do not be afraid of the restlessness within you! Make the most of its drive to draw even closer to Christ and to bear witness to the values of the Gospel,” the pope said.

Hidden for centuries: How newly identified St. Augustine sermons were found

Katarzyna Szalajko
OSV News

Two previously unknown sermons by St. Augustine have been identified in a 12th-century manuscript preserved in Poland, giving scholars a rare new window into the mind of one of Christianity’s greatest theologians more than 1,600 years after he preached them.

The discovery was made in a 12th-century manuscript preserved at the diocesan library in Pelplin in northern Poland after nearly two years of research by scholars from Germany and Austria. The sermons, to be published in a critical edition by the end of 2026, address Saul’s encounter with the Medium of Endor in the Book of Samuel.

The manuscript had long been catalogued in the library’s collection, but no one had studied it in depth before the recent collaboration with scholars from Germany and Austria, Father Jan Walkusz, director of the diocesan library in Pelplin, told OSV News.

“Only the recent research by scholars from Bad Doberan, Würzburg and Vienna showed that the manuscript contains two previously unknown sermons by the Bishop of Hippo,” the priest said.

The story began with a phone call.

“In 2024 I was approached by Paul Nebauer from Bad Doberan ... who had found a medieval manuscript with sermons attributed to Augustine in the diocesan library of Pelplin,” Christian Tornau, a Latin scholar and professor at Julius-Maximilians-Universität Würzburg, told OSV News.

“He asked me for help with the identification and translation of the texts,” the professor said.

Nebauer, a member of the Bad Doberan Monastery Association, has spent years tracing medieval manuscripts from the former Cistercian abbey. Its library was destroyed during the Thirty Years’ War in the 17th century.

During research visits to Pelplin in 2024 and 2025, Nebauer identified six manuscripts that clearly originated from Bad Doberan. One volume immediately drew his attention.

“At first, the brief table of contents offered little insight into the content,” Nebauer told OSV News. “It was only the keywords ‘Pythonissa’ and ‘Resuscitatio Samuelis’ that drew my attention to the biblical story of the Witch (Medium) of Endor.”

In the first Book of Samuel, chapter 28, King Saul consults a medium who summons the prophet Samuel before

his final battle with the Philistines. The episode has long challenged Christian interpreters because it appears to show a medium exercising power over one of God’s prophets.

Nebauer “found the text very unusual — words like that from St. Augustine?” he recalled. Recognizing that the manuscript required expert analysis, he contacted Tornau. The 12th-century manuscript was copied at Bad Doberan, possibly from a now-lost manuscript at Amelungsborn Abbey.

Father Walkusz said the manuscript reached Pelplin through the Cistercian monks. When monks from Bad Doberan established a daughter abbey in Pelplin in the 13th century, “it was customary for Cistercians to equip the new community with the necessary liturgical and theological books,” he told OSV News. “That is how this volume containing St. Augustine’s sermons, together with other manuscripts from Bad Doberan, came to Pelplin.”

Of the six sermons preserved in the manuscript, four were already known to scholars, while two had never been identified.

“We were fascinated, of course, by the idea of having found new sermons of Augustine,” Tornau told OSV News, “but soon turned skeptical because at some places the sermons did not seem to read like Augustine.” The team, joined by scholars Dorothea Weber and Clemens Weidmann of Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum — Corpus of Latin Ecclesiastical Writings in



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This is a 17th-century painting of St. Augustine by artist Philippe de Champaigne. The saint lived in the years A.D. 354-430 and is considered a Church father and doctor of the Church.

English, or CSEL, in Vienna — spent nearly two years transcribing and analyzing the texts, including during a 2025 summer school with about 20 specialists.

“Our final verdict that they are indeed authentic is the result of continuous philological work over almost two years,” Tornau said.

The scholars based their conclusion on liturgical, linguistic and theological evidence pointing consistently to St. Augustine’s authorship. Clemens Weidmann of CSEL, who also worked on the edition, said the manuscript’s attribution to St. Augustine was only the starting point. “This alone, however, is not enough to prove Augustine’s authorship because many inauthentic sermons are attributed in manuscripts to him falsely,” he told OSV News.

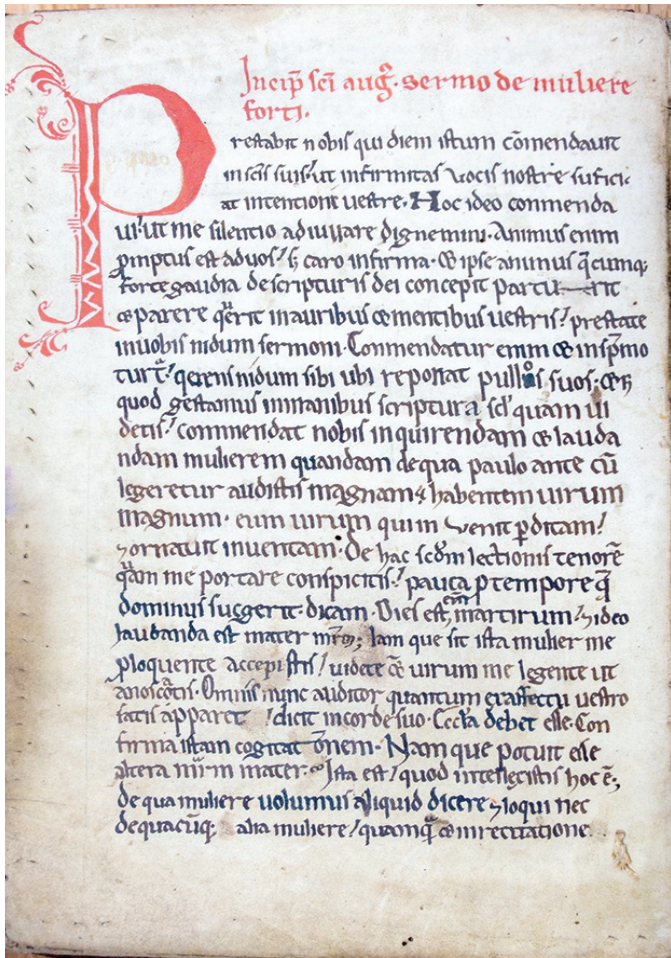
“As the preacher is thus indistinguishable from Augustine, we found it methodically safe to accept Augustine’s authorship rather than to invent an any-

mous ‘pupil’ or ‘follower,’” Tornau told OSV News. “No disciple, no author of later times would have been so familiar with Augustine’s style and thinking to compile an ‘Augustinian sermon’ by putting together so many stylistic features found across his writings,” Weidmann told OSV News.

Father Walkusz said that the discovery also highlights the significance of the Pelplin collection itself. “The discovery of these sermons proves beyond doubt that the carefully preserved collections in Pelplin conceal enormous cultural and religious riches, accessible to researchers from around the world,” he told OSV News.

“New discoveries of works from Late Antiquity are always a sensation,” Weber, a retired professor and long-time Augustine scholar with CSEL, told OSV News. The newly identified sermons also offer an unusually personal glimpse of St. Augustine as a preacher, she emphasized.

“It is extremely fascinating to see how Augustine



OSV News photo/courtesy Paul Nebauer

The first page of a 12th-century manuscript preserved at the diocesan library in Pelplin, Poland, containing St. Augustine’s sermon “Sermo de muliere forti” (“A Sermon on a Strong Woman”) is seen in an undated photo. Scholars recently identified two previously unknown sermons by the patron saint of theologians in the manuscript.

explained to the congregation why he did not have a chance to prepare for the Bible passage he was supposed to preach on,” Weber told OSV News. “He initially tried to buy some time to organize his thoughts, and yet, despite improvising, he achieved his typical stylistic brilliance and a clear structure in his complex argumentation,” she said.

The sermons focus on one of the most debated episodes in the Old Testament. According to Tornau, ancient Christian interpreters generally proposed two explanations for Saul’s encounter with Samuel. Either God permitted the prophet to appear despite the medium’s actions, or Saul was deceived by an evil spirit impersonating Samuel. Rather than insisting that only one interpretation is correct, St. Augustine carefully considers both.

“In the new sermons, Augustine discusses both options with pros and cons and concludes that they are both acceptable because neither is against Christian faith,” Tornau told OSV News.

“This openness for divergent interpretations of scripture is characteristic of Augustine in general.”

Weber said that approach distinguishes St. Augustine from many other early Christian writers.

“Augustine aims not at prescribing a single ‘correct’ interpretation, but rather at exploring the range of possible interpretations that remain within the framework of the doctrine of the Church,” she said. “There are not many of Augustine’s sermons that take such a systematic approach to an exegetical problem and thus demand a high level of intellectual engagement from the audience.”

Nebauer believes that openness is precisely what makes the newly discovered sermons relevant today. “The subject of the ‘Witch of Endor’ poses a challenge for belief in God,” he told OSV News. “However, St. Augustine resolves the issue very elegantly.”

“He presents several possible interpretations, refrains from making a final judgment, and allows his listeners to draw their own conclusions.” The researchers say the most surprising theological insight appears near the end of the newly identified texts. “The most remarkable element of the new sermons is the idea that Saul after hearing Samuel’s prophecy may have repented and been redeemed,” Tornau told OSV News.

“It is indicative of Augustine’s independence of mind and his willingness to think of everyone, even those who appear most evil, as capable of salvation through the grace of God,” Tornau told OSV News. “This combines intellectual honesty and episcopal humility in a remarkable and very Augustinian way.”

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Subcommittee focuses on the role of Catholic Charities in the community

(Continued from page 3)

Keener photo

Charitie’s efforts to lift up our community.”

Throughout the process, she said, the members of her sub-committee have been engaged and excited about the possibilities that lie ahead. “My biggest takeaway, personally, has just been the passion that people bring to the discussion and the commitment that people have to helping others. It’s heartwarming to see,” she said.

The work has been “gratifying,” she said. “I didn’t expect for as many people to be involved as we’ve had. I mean we had a room full of people, many people, come out and be willing to spend their time on multiple occasions to engage and listen and speak up and share ideas, so that’s been gratifying to me.”

As the work of the first three commissions concludes, the work of the fourth is just beginning. To register for the Diocese of Covington’s Governance Commission and for the opportunity to inform the future of the Diocese, got to covdiopanning.org.

(right) The Community Partnerships sub-committee also heard from the Columbus Catholic Social Services executive director, Kelly Henderson, while touring their facilities and learning about their structure.



International Catholic Partners reaffirm long-term commitment

(Continued from page 3)

nity through both advocacy and ecclesial solidarity.

“The Bishops of the United States remain committed to advocating for U.S. policies that protect human dignity, provide development opportunities, and respect the dignity of migrants and refugees,” said the Bishop of the Catholic Diocese of Covington in Kentucky.

Bishop Iffert highlighted the longstanding relationship between the USCCB and the Church in Africa through the Solidarity Fund for the Church in Africa, established following the U.S. Bishops’ 2001 pastoral letter, A Call to Solidarity with Africa.

“As many of you know, the USCCB has had a long relationship with Africa and AMECEA. One fruit of that commitment is the Solidarity Fund for the Church in Africa, supported by the contributions of American Catholics,” he said.

Bishop Iffert added that “the fund assists pastoral projects, especially projects that build capacity for Bishops’ conferences and local churches – projects that are requested by Bishops’ conferences and regional associations such as AMECEA.”

He noted that the fund has distributed more than US\$42 million in support of the mission of the Church across Africa.

“Although this funding cannot replace the large-scale development assistance that has recently been withdrawn, it remains a concrete sign of our partnership,” the USCCB representative said.

Speaking on behalf of CRS President Sean L. Callahan,

the organization’s Regional Director for Eastern and Southern Africa, Matthew Davis, described the relationship between CRS and AMECEA as one forged through decades of trust, solidarity, and friendship.

“We accompany you, responding robustly to the needs of your people, especially the youth,” Davis said, and added, “CRS values the continued support and guidance from the AMECEA National Episcopal Conferences. We feel it is a genuine partnership built on decades of trust, solidarity, and friendship. In good times and in difficult moments, but always together as one family.”

He also commended AMECEA’s leadership over the years and expressed confidence that the collaboration would continue to bear fruit for the Church and the people of Eastern Africa.

Representing Missio Aachen, Simon Kuhl described AMECEA as one of the German mission organization’s “premium partners” and reaffirmed its commitment to accompanying the Church in Eastern Africa despite financial challenges affecting the Church in Germany.

“For decades, we have walked together in a spirit of mutual trust, listening to one another, learning from one another, and working side by side in strengthening the local Church,” Kuhl said.

He explained that Missio Aachen’s decision to establish a regional office in Nairobi reflects its commitment to subsidiarity by enabling decisions to be made closer to local Churches and strengthening collaboration with partners across the region.

While acknowledging declining Church membership and reduced financial resources in Germany, Kuhl stressed that these realities would not weaken Missio Aachen’s com-

mitment to Eastern Africa.

“Dear brothers and sisters, please know that Missio Aachen remains committed to walking this journey together, not merely as a funding partner, but as a faithful companion in our shared mission,” he said.

He also praised AMECEA’s decision to place young people at the heart of its Synodal journey.

“I find immense hope in seeing how intentionally this assembly has embraced the younger generation,” Kuhl said, congratulating the region’s Bishops for enabling young people “to contribute, to be heard, and to participate in recommendations and even decision-making.”

“This is precisely the kind of synodal Church that Pope Francis encouraged us to become: a Church that listens, accompanies, and walks together across generations. The future of our Church will not simply belong to young people; it will be shaped with young people,” he said.

Concluding his remarks, Kuhl said, “Thank you for your friendship, your witness, and your trust. May God bless the work of this assembly. Bless the AMECEA. Bless the Church in Africa.”

The July 19–26 Plenary Assembly has brought together more than 100 Catholic Bishops from the eight AMECEA’s member Episcopal Conferences, affiliated institutions, and partner organizations under the theme, “AMECEA’s Synodal Journey with Young People: Walking Together in Hope Towards a Resilient Church and a Peaceful Society.”

AMECEA comprises the Catholic Bishops’ Conferences of Eritrea, Ethiopia, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, and Zambia, as well as the single joint Episcopal Conference of Sudan and South Sudan. Djibouti and Somalia participate as affiliate members.

Sabrine Amboka is a Kenyan journalist with a passion for Catholic church communication. She holds a bachelor’s degree in mass communication from St. Paul’s University in Kenya. ACI Africa is a service of EWTN News Inc.



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.



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Pope encourages Catholics to deepen prayer through Liturgy of the Hours



Josephine Peterson
Catholic News Service

Returning to his weekly general audiences after a monthlong summer break, Pope Leo XIV urged Catholics to embrace the Liturgy of the Hours more fully in their daily lives, saying the church's public prayer is an antidote to a world shaped by technology, consumerism and an efficiency-driven mindset.

"Every week and every day, the Eucharist and the Liturgy of the Hours are the breath of the life of the Church, which makes the Holy Spirit circulate through her Body," he said Aug. 5.

Because of Rome's summer heat, the pope held the audience inside instead of St. Peter's Square; however, this time it was held in St. Peter's Basilica rather than in the Paul VI Hall. As he processed to the altar, he stopped to shake hands with attendees and bless babies and rosaries.

Continuing his series on the documents of the Second Vatican Council, Pope Leo reflected on 'Sacrosanctum Concilium,' the Constitution on the liturgy. He said "it is the Holy Spirit who teaches us to pray," and that Christians unite themselves with Christ in offering praise and thanksgiving to God through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Bound to the Eucharist, the Liturgy of the Hours sanctifies the rhythm of the day, the pope said, beginning with morning prayer; continuing at mid-day and evening, and ending with night prayer as the faithful entrust themselves to God's peace.

"Each hour is an act of hope," he said.

The Liturgy of the Hours is the church's official daily prayer, consisting of psalms, Scripture readings, hymns and prayers recited at designated times throughout the day. Pope Leo said the tradition of prayer is "no longer passed on" even in many Christian families, even though

prayer is a "fundamental dimension of our humanity."

In societies "dominated by an efficiency-driven and consumerist mindset," prayer can seem "pointless and trivial," the pope said. In a world "where science and technology claim to provide all the answers," he added, prayer may appear to be a form of escapism.

"Brothers and sisters, may we find the spiritual nourishment necessary on our earthly pilgrimage by joining with the whole Church in her liturgical prayer as we await the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ," the pope said in his greeting to English-speaking pilgrims.

"Far from avoiding the world and its needs, all prayer, especially in the entire liturgy, is the essential dimension of our humanity," he added.

The pope's encouragement comes after the Vatican approved a new English-language edition of the Liturgy of the Hours in November 2025. After 13 years, the U.S. bishops produced a translation that more closely reflects the original Latin texts. The first volume is expected to be released ahead of Lent 2027.

In his greeting to French-speaking pilgrims, Pope Leo encouraged those on summer vacation to deepen their interior life by spending more time with the Lord in prayer. Even leisure and rest, he said, "belong to him" and "can be sanctified by his presence."

CNS photo/Vatican Media

As the summer heat continues, Pope Leo XIV greets pilgrims before his weekly general audience inside St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican Aug. 5, 2026.



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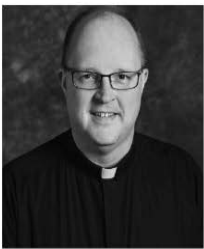
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This position reports to the Parish Business Manager. Estimated hours per week are 10, plus ad hoc field trips or coverage for another driver.

Submit a cover letter, resume, salary history, and five references with email addresses to Ken Oleynik via email at koleynik@saintagnes.com.

BUILDING AND PROPERTY CUSTODIAN

The Diocese of Covington, KY is accepting applications for the full-time position of Building and Property Custodian at the Offices of the Diocesan Curia. Our building and the surrounding property requires the attention of an individual who will develop a sense of personal responsibility for its appearance and well-being. The position will involve a regular daily, weekly, and monthly schedule of routine cleaning and upkeep duties within the building and the chapel; setup of conference rooms; regular as well as seasonal upkeep of walkways and other exterior features; and other duties as needed. The successful candidate will be a personable self-starter who is dependable, trustworthy, and capable of prioritizing duties as circumstances require. Please contact Stephen Koplyay, SPHR to begin the application process: skoplyay@covdio.org, or call 859-392-1500.

FULL-TIME MAINTENANCE TECHNICIAN

St. Timothy Parish in Union, Kentucky, is seeking a full-time Maintenance Technician responsible for the care and maintenance of all parish buildings including the church, school and parish center. The ideal candidate is a motivated, dependable, and personable self-starter with experience in facility maintenance. This position requires occasional weekend work and availability during inclement weather or facility emergencies. Interested parties should email their resume, cover letter and salary requirements to Julie Aylor at jaylor@saint-timothy.org.

PASTORAL ASSOCIATE

St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption Parish invites qualified individuals to apply for the position of Pastoral Associate.

The Pastoral Associate fulfills a role integral to the life and effective functioning of the Parish and its ministries, partnering with the Rector of the Cathedral to provide direction for faith formation. Areas of responsibility and/or involvement will include direct pastoral care of parishioners; adult faith formation; Order of Christian Initiation of Adults; children's religious education; pastoral planning; and diocesan Safe Environment requirements. Preference will be given to candidates at least an undergraduate degree in pastoral ministry, religious education, theology, or a closely related field.

Other requirements include spiritual maturity, defined in part as an actively practicing Roman Catholic who is in good standing with the Church, regularly receives the sacraments, and is faithful to the magisterium and Church teaching; good facilitating, consulting, and leadership skills; and previous experience in paid or volunteer parish ministry.

Prospective candidates may send a cover letter and comprehensive resume, including compensation history and references with email contacts, to Very Reverend Ryan Maher, V.F. by email to rmaher@covdio.org, or by mail to 1101 Madison Avenue, Covington, KY 41011.

DIOCESE OF COVINGTON FINANCE OFFICE – PAYROLL MANAGER

The Finance Office of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Covington invites qualified, actively practicing Catholics to apply for the full time position of Payroll Coordinator. This important Curia role requires a personable, self-starting individual who likes numbers and detail, and who is good with both. This position calls for someone who will thrive in a fast-paced work environment. Requirements include a general working knowledge of payroll operations and basic bookkeeping, and some prior experience with payroll software. Applicants should submit a resume with cover letter and compensation history, along with references including contact email addresses, by mail, fax or e-mail to:

Stephen Koplyay, SPHR, 1125 Madison Avenue,
Covington, KY 41011-3115; fax 859/392-1589;
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DIOCESE OF COVINGTON INTERNAL AUDITOR

The Diocese of Covington invites individuals with a degree and background in Accounting to apply for the position of Internal Auditor. This position reports directly to the Chief Financial Officer. This position updates/maintains the existing Parish and High School audit programs, schedules and performs parish/high school audits, writes audit reports, as well as other duties in the Finance Office. Minimal requirements include a degree in Accounting with at least two years of experience, including auditing. CPA licensure is preferred.

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The Church of Saint Agnes invites qualified individuals to apply for the full-time Maintenance Supervisor position. We are seeking a motivated, dependable, personable self-starter with strong maintenance and mechanical skills, including HVAC. The successful candidate should possess working knowledge & experience and plumbing, electrical, carpentry, painting and general building maintenance & safety procedures.

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Interested candidates should contact Ken Oleynik via email @koleynik@saintagnes.com.

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Obituary

Sister Mary Rabe, OSB

Sister Mary Rabe was born on Nov. 5, 1940, to Henry and Louise (Harper) Rabe and given the name Mary Louise. Mary was the oldest of eight children, five sisters and two brothers.

The Rabe family were members of Blessed Sacrament Parish, where Mary attended elementary school. Mary entered St. Walburg Monastery after her graduation from Villa Madonna Academy in 1958. She became a novice in 1959, receiving the name Sister Jerome. First profession followed in 1960, perpetual in 1963, silver jubilee in 1985, golden in 2010, and diamond in 2020.

Mary taught elementary grades for three years, moving into math and science teaching at St. Henry High School for the next five years. She earned a BA in chemistry from Thomas More College in 1970 and then joined the faculty at Villa Madonna Academy as math and science teacher (and dorm mother).

She kept on learning. Mary earned an MEd in Secondary Education from Xavier University in 1976. Her teaching certificate certified her for Chemistry, Math, Biology and Physics. For many years she continued to search out courses and workshops in the summer in order to “be the best teacher I could be.”

She accumulated 35 graduate credits in the above fields besides courses in electronics, astronomy, physiology and gifted and talented youth. Students’ affection for her showed itself in a Jubilee party for her 50th. One alum, now



Sister Mary Rabe, OSB

an MD, commented: “I will never forget how tough she was when teaching science, and I am glad she was.” Mary could make learning fun; she never lost the sparkle in her eye.

Mary retired from teaching in 2013 after 43 years at Villa. Among her honors were Kentucky Physics Teacher of the Year in 1997 and the Sister Joseph Marie Award in 2013.

Mary then served as house coordinator at St. Walburg Monastery for close to 10 years, assuring that the daily tasks

around the house were assigned or volunteered for, and the sisters’ needs attended to. She spoke of the Benedictine way of life:

“We are all listened to because each person has a piece of the wisdom. Even if you sing off tune you can still sing; some even call it harmony.”

Mary died June 14, 2026, after several months of ill health. She is preceded in death by her parents, her sisters Margaret, Frances, Paula and her brother John. She is survived by her brother Hank, her sisters Ann and Alice Rabe, and her Benedictine community.

All services were held at St. Walburg Monastery.



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Anation of immigrants

(Continued from page 5)

national scene, especially those regarding basic human rights.

Unfortunately, our country sometimes falls short of exhibiting commitment to our founding principle of equality among peoples: namely, the heritage of slavery, racial discrimination, high levels of poverty and lack of economic opportunities.

The positive international developments of the post-World War II era are sometimes viewed as because of the Pax Americana (Latin for "American Peace").

However, in this new century, we need to find the

unique contribution that we can make to the nations of the world. Peace is not merely the absence of war, but an era when international cooperation becomes the basis of a lasting peace and prosperity.

The greatness of America not only consists of our achievements, but also our ability to correct our deficiencies. This is true today, more than ever, especially as we look toward the future and recognize our moral position among nations. Especially on the issue of international migration, we as a nation can take the lead to make this constant phenomenon of our time a positive contribution

to the welfare of all nations.

Our nation could lead by the example of our ability to integrate immigrants, as no nation of the world ever has, and which has made us a great nation.

If we wish to maintain that greatness, we must return to one of the causes of our greatness: regulated and generous immigration.

Bishop Nicholas DiMarzio is the retired bishop of the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York.

Protecting God's Children for Adults Safe Environment Trainings

For all employees and volunteers of the Diocese of Covington who in any way provide a safe environment for children.

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

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.

www.virtusonline.org, enter your user id and password. If your account is suspended contact your primary location where you volunteer or are employed. Your

primary location contact information is found under your Contact Tab.

VIRTUS Training:

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■ Tuesday, Aug. 11
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■ 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

■ Wednesday, Sept. 23
9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, Sept. 23 9–11:30 a.m., 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Thursday, Oct. 8
9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Thursday, Oct. 8
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.

For other difficulties, contact Lynn Weisgerber at (859) 392-1565 or lweisgerber@covdio.org

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Urban planning must address homelessness to promote human dignity, Vatican’s UN mission says

UNITED NATIONS — The Holy See’s Permanent Observer Mission to the United Nations called on the international community to make ending homelessness a priority, saying the issue must be addressed to build sustainable cities where every person can flourish and contribute to the common good. In a July 28 message prepared for the U.N.’s 2026 high-level meeting on the New Urban Agenda, the mission said the continued presence of homelessness “should trouble the conscience of the international community. The statement stressed that everyone deserves a place to call home, describing housing as more than a commodity or financial asset. Instead, it said, housing is a cornerstone of society that supports family life, strengthens relationships and enables full participation in the community. The New Urban Agenda, adopted at the U.N. Habitat III conference in Quito, Ecuador, in 2016 and later endorsed by the U.N. General Assembly, serves as a global framework for sustainable, inclusive and resilient urban development through 2036. This year’s high-level meeting marked the plan’s 10th anniversary. The Holy See mission also cited Pope Leo XIV’s encyclical “Magnifica Humanitas,” emphasizing that authentic development places the human person at the center.

Israeli strike damages Christian-run hospital in Gaza

GAZA CITY, Gaza Strip — A Catholic-supported hospital in Gaza City sustained damage after an Israeli airstrike hit a nearby residential apartment late July 29, according to the Catholic Near East Welfare Association’s Pontifical Mission in Lebanon and Syria. The blast shattered windows and doors at Al-Ahli Arab Hospital and damaged an elevator serving its diagnostic center, though the hospital itself was not directly struck. Hospital manager Mousa Ayad said the explosion traumatized patients and staff, underscoring the ongoing strain on Gaza’s health system despite the October 2025 ceasefire. He said hospitals continue to face shortages of medicines, equipment and basic supplies, while thousands of patients remain on surgical waiting lists or need treatment outside Gaza. Local emergency officials also reported an increase in strikes on residential buildings and said evacuation orders often leave families unsure where attacks will occur. Civil Defense crews cited

equipment shortages that delayed their response, while aid workers said the conflict’s psychological and humanitarian toll remains severe. “Even after more than nine months of the ceasefire, the war’s impact is still present in every part of daily life,” said said Mousa Ayad, a manager at the hospital.

Bishops ready nationwide prayer and action effort amid rising abortion rate

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Catholic bishops are getting ready a nationwide call to prayer and action, with an official launch date of Aug. 18, to mobilize Catholics to address the rising abortion rate and the increased availability of an abortion-inducing drug. Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, president of the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, as well as Bishop Daniel E. Thomas of Toledo, chairman of the USCCB Committee on Pro-Life Activities, in joint remarks about the upcoming campaign, which lasts through the end of Respect Life Month in October said, “Every abortion involves the death of a child and harm to the mother. Now with easier access to abortion pills, the abortion rate is tragically climbing, along with increased health risks.” A policy permitting the distribution of mifepristone (sometimes known as “the abortion pill”) by mail, first issued by the Biden administration, has thus far been left in place by the second Trump administration. The Department of Justice, under the current Trump administration, has sought to block state challenges to the policy pending a promised safety review by the Food and Drug Administration. But the status and timeline of the FDA review are unclear. Kat Talalas, assistant director for pro-life communications at the USCCB’s Secretariat of Pro-Life Activities, told OSV News they are setting up an online portal to mobilize efforts and will be also “developing educational resources about the abortion pill, which will help explain distinctions between miscarriage care versus ending the life of a child in an abortion.”

Diocese in Nigeria mourns death of priest killed in machete attack

KOGI STATE, Nigeria — Police in northern Nigeria are investigating the murder of a Catholic priest killed in an apparent roadside ambush in Kogi state. The Diocese of Lokoja announced that Father Samuel Opeyemi Oyetoro died July 29 after sustaining severe machete wounds. Authorities found his body along a local road in Ajaokuta. Kogi state’s Gov. Ahmed Usman Ododo condemned the killing as “barbaric” and vowed

that those responsible will face justice. Father Oyetoro’s death comes amid a sharp rise in targeted violence against clergy and lay Catholics across the country. Just days after the ambush, seven gunmen stormed St. Joseph Church in Enugu state during Sunday Mass, kidnapping a seminarian, a catechist, and a parishioner. According to Aid to the Church in Need, Nigeria leads the world in priest abductions, drawing sharp criticism from international watchdog groups over the government’s handling of militant violence. In March, the U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom, or USCIRF, said the country was facing “a terrifying crisis of religious violence” and expressed concerns in its 2026 annual report. “The Nigerian government has for far too long been negligent in seriously and directly tackling the violence and its complex underlying factors,” said Vicky Hartzler, then USCIRF chair.

Diocese of El Paso ends unaccompanied child ministry as Trump admin withholds almost \$1M owed

EL PASO, Texas — The Diocese of El Paso, Texas, has shut down its long-running legal aid ministry to unaccompanied child migrants, as the Trump administration withholds almost \$1 million in funding for work already performed. Estrella del Paso announced July 31 that it had closed its Unaccompanied Children’s Program and laid off 13 employees, after its federal contract was not extended. That non-renewal comes as the organization is still owed for work it has completed for the federal government, with no payments received since December 2025. In an Aug. 1 video statement posted to the organization’s Instagram account, executive director Melissa Lopez — who in July had warned Estrella’s reserves had been “completely depleted” by the federal government’s non-payment — described the news as a “heartbreaking update.” “Without payment from the federal government, we simply can’t operate this program,” she said. Lopez stressed that “unaccompanied children have a right to legal services and representation under U.S. law,” noting that “the federal government agreed to this contract and is now refusing to pay what they owe.” According to its press release, the nonprofit is currently representing 243 unaccompanied migrant children, whose legal fate remains uncertain. Estrella del Paso and other organizations are fighting the Trump administration in court over the funding owed, which totals some \$65 million for the representation of more than 20,000 unaccompanied migrant children.



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Mass celebrating the school year's beginning

(Continued from page 1)

make a difference if we go it alone. If we take that attitude that we ourselves — our superior education, our superior position, our degrees, our particular abilities — none of us will make a difference if we come to believe that that's all our future depends on.”

“What our young people need,” Bishop Iffert said, “is for

us to respect the magnificent humanity that is their gift from God and that we share with them as brothers and sisters in the world ... All any of us want to do is make a difference. I believe that's true,” he said. “Let's make that difference together with the Lord Jesus Christ as king, as shepherd and as head of household ... As we begin this

school year, let us dedicate ourselves to this holy task together under the leadership of Christ. This is the only way we really make a lasting difference — submitting ourselves to the Lord and for love of him to one another.”

Bailey photos



(above, left) Immaculate Heart of Mary, Burlington, teacher smiles as she shakes hands with her fellow educators during the sign of peace.

(above, right) St. Henry High School, Erlanger; principal kneels and prays reverently during the Eucharistic prayers.

(left) Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria, principal presents Bishop Iffert with the gift of unleavened bread.

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