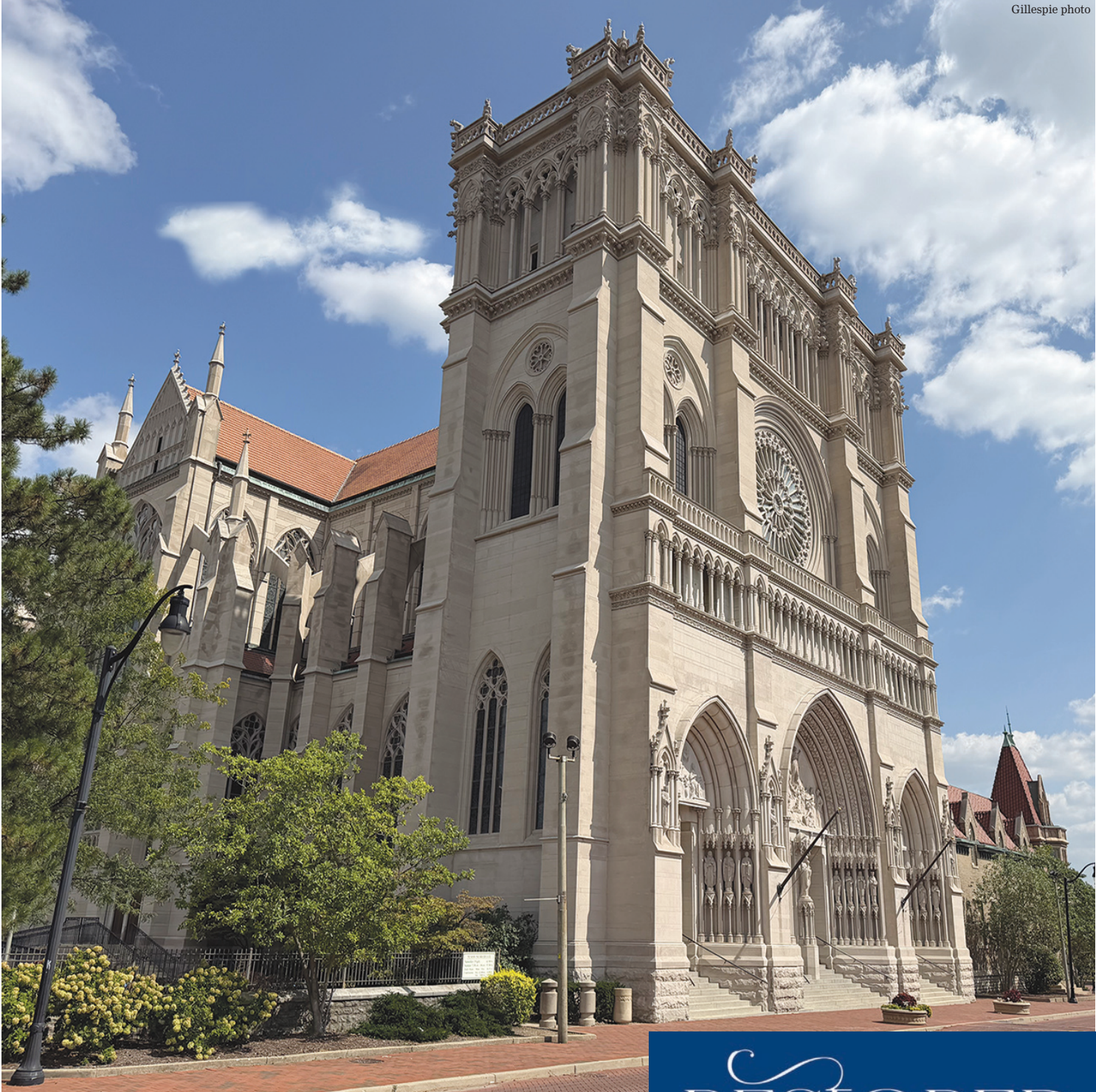


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Restored in Christ**

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Missed an edition? Current and back issues of the *Messenger* are available online at [covidio.org/messenger](http://covidio.org/messenger).



## Restoration Celebration commemorates the official end of the cathedral project on the church’s feast day

**Maura Baker**  
*Staff Writer*

The sun shone over the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, as parishioners, guests and donors came together to celebrate two-fold the cathedral’s feast day and the end of the cathedral restoration project, Restored in Christ, Aug. 15 — the Feast of the Assumption.

Mass began the evening with Bishop John Iffert as the celebrant. Bishop Iffert greeted a full congregation that evening, explaining that he had allowed the feast day to be celebrated at the evening Mass preceding the celebration to follow.

In his homily, Bishop Iffert began by thanking the congregation. “Thank you again for coming out in such good numbers today to celebrate the feast of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and also to celebrate the successful conclusion of the Restored in Christ project here at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption,” he said.

Bishop Iffert shared a story of his arrival as the bishop of Covington, where “there was a report sitting on (his) desk detailing all of what was hap-

*(Continued on page 4)*



Baker photo



Members of the congregation rise at the start of Mass.





August 25, 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

My motto is “In all things give thanks” (1 Thess 5:18). For this special edition of the *Messenger* devoted to the Restored in Christ project, that mandate is especially fitting.

This achievement belongs to far more people than I could ever name individually. More than 1,200 individuals and families contributed financially to the campaign, and countless others shared their professional expertise, labor, leadership, volunteer service and prayers. To everyone who played a part in this effort, thank you. The restoration of our Cathedral Basilica would not have been possible without your generosity, dedication and love for the Church.



Bishop John Iffert

Hundreds attended Mass at the Basilica of Our Lady of the Assumption on August 15 to celebrate and give thanks. We shared a picnic supper, strolled the restored section of the Cathedral gardens, watched kids take part in a treasure hunt, wrote messages to include in the time capsule, watched a short movie about the Basilica, and enjoyed a little ice cream. Thank you for being part of that great day.

I want to offer a special word of gratitude to the parishioners of the Cathedral Basilica. Throughout this project, you have continued to worship, pray and support your parish with patience and dedication. You never lost sight of why this work was being done, not simply to restore a building, but to preserve a sacred place where generations encounter Jesus Christ through the sacraments and the life of the Church.

There are some individuals whose contributions deserve special recognition.

First, I want to express gratitude to Bishop Roger Foys. Bishop Foys commissioned the architectural and engineering survey that identified and enumerated the needed restoration work at the Basilica and laid the groundwork for this project. We are all beneficiaries of that foresight and commitment.

Thank you to Father Ryan Maher, the rector of the Cathedral, for his leadership, support, and dedication throughout this project. Father Ryan has helped guide this effort while continuing to serve the faithful of this parish with generosity and faithfulness. Msgr. Kurt Kemo, the vice rector also provided invaluable support, wisdom and encouragement throughout this undertaking.

I also want to thank the priests of the Diocese who got behind this project and encouraged our parishioners to preserve the Cathedral for future generations. Thank you. Your leadership fosters leadership in our diocese.

The Curia staff deserves special mention in this space. The diocesan staff did everything from sorting mailings to planning and carrying out our celebrations. I would especially like to thank Deacon Jim Fortner (COO), Dale Henson (retired CFO), and his successor (the current CFO) Bob Hagedorn.

Two directors deserve mention and particular gratitude. Jim Hess, director of Stewardship and Mission Services, led the Capital Campaign to make this work possible. Don Knochelmann, the director of Buildings and Properties for the Diocese of Covington demonstrated extraordinary dedication to this project. Thank you all for the countless ways you helped move this work forward.

This restoration was also made possible through the work of outstanding professionals and craftsmen. We are grateful to our partners from KZF Design, Trisco Systems, SHP Design, Imbus Roofing Company, and Boston Valley Terra Cotta. Their talent, commitment to excellence and care for this historic Cathedral helped make this restoration a reality.

We need to remember one individual in a special way. Todd Zapp of Trisco Systems provided tremendous leadership, expertise and dedication to this project. He was deeply committed to the restoration of the Cathedral and gave generously of himself to this work. Sadly, Todd did not live to see the completion of the project. We are profoundly grateful for all that he contributed and so we have placed a stone marker in the Cathedral gardens to remember Todd and his devotion to preserving our Cathedral.

My friends, this has been a tremendous undertaking. Years of planning, countless hours of work and the generosity of so many people have brought this project to completion. It brings me great joy to celebrate with all of you the success of the Restored in Christ Campaign and the restoration of our beloved Cathedral Basilica.

Thank you for your faith. Thank you for your support. Thank you for helping preserve the Mother Church of the Diocese of Covington for future generations.

May God bless each of you and our life together in this local Church.

Sincerely yours in Christ,

+   
+ Bishop John Iffert

# Cathedral rector says restoration restored more than the building; it restored the heart of the faithful

Bella Bailey  
Multimedia Correspondent

The Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption’s, Covington, restoration began in early 2024 and has grown larger in scale and reputation in each passing year. Hundreds of faithful throughout the Diocese have contributed to the Restored in Christ campaign, to ensure the restoration of their Mother Church.

Covington residents and visiting onlookers could often be found with their cameras out, photographing the hoisting of the gargoyles, chimera, columns and tracery as piece by piece the Cathedral was disassembled and put back together. Local and national media like the Associated Press have reported on the restoration, with the Cathedral parish’s own rector, Father Ryan Maher giving comments to journalists and news agencies.



Father Ryan Maher

For Father Maher however, the heart of the project lies deeper than the dollars raised and recognition received, it is about how the Cathedral has stood as a beacon for the faithful of the Diocese, and how it is an honor to take part in Bishop Maes’ historic vision. Noting, even, that the restoration was not a routine maintenance issue but rather a preservation one.

The project, he said, “was taking of a treasure that we’ve been given so that many, many, many more people can come to know the Lord through their experience of the Lord inside and outside of this holy place.”

As Father Maher watched the construction from his office window, as craftsman moved on lifts and operated cranes, what really struck him was “the sense that every inch matters, every millimeter matters,” he said. “That was inspiring to me.” It reminded him that “that’s how the Lord’s love is for us. Every detail matters of my life, of your life. There’s nothing in my heart or in my life that doesn’t matter to him, and there’s no detail that’s not attended to by the Lord and his desire for us. To see that expressed in all of the work, I think, that was one of the main things that stood out,” he said.

The Cathedral was erected by Bishop Camillus Maes, who laid the cornerstone for the church in 1895. Craftsman then worked by horse and buggy, using pulley systems to bring the original chimera to the top of the Cathedral. However, the attention to detail remained the same.

“It’s remarkable,” said Father Maher, “because Bishop Maes was very detailed, and details mattered to Bishop Maes and they mattered to us in our life of faith.”

“As time went on, I really just became more and more grateful, and really honored that we can do this together for not just ourselves, but for the future generations. Just being able to, in a practical way, to share Bishop Maes’ work ... that we took part in his vision,” said Father Maher.

“It’s a hundred-year project,” he said, recognizing that the building has stood the test of time for over one hundred years, “and we’re the people of that hundred year time. It fell to use to be a part of that, and that was really an ongoing source of, for me, gratitude to the Lord for providing this opportunity.”

With the restoration project officially concluded with the August 15 celebration held on the Feast of Our Lady of the Assumption, the patronal feast day of the Cathedral, Father Maher has taken a moment to reflect and recognized that “there was something more going on than just the restoration of Christ in the Cathedral, but for us — for the local Church, the Diocese, for all those who donated, for all those who come — that there is a restoration of the heart that the Lord is always wanting to make new.”



# Managing the scope and funding of the Diocese's largest restoration project

Laura Keener  
Editor

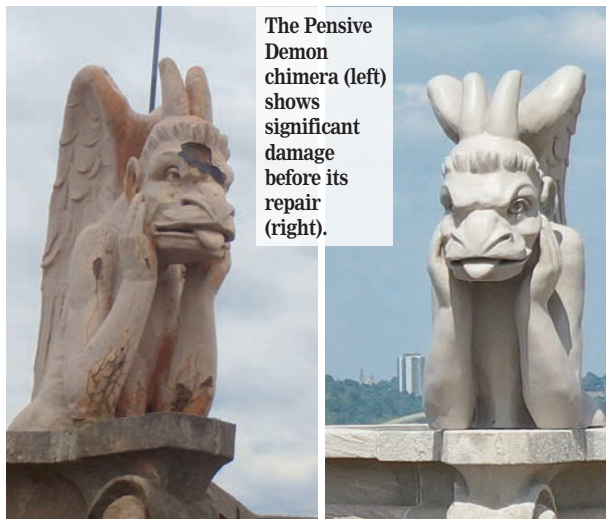
Covington's Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption has long been one of the Diocese of Covington's greatest treasures. But after more than 100 years of wind, rain, freezing and thawing, parts of the stone and terra cotta exterior needed serious repair. Through the Restored in Christ project, the diocese has completed a large restoration meant to keep visitors safe and preserve the beloved landmark for future generations.

Don Knochelmann, diocesan director of Buildings and Properties who helped oversee the work, said the problems began to stand out around 2019 and early 2020.

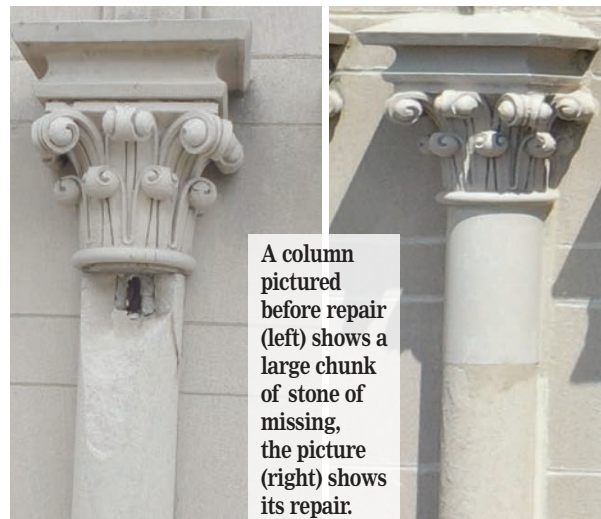
"We really started to see more pieces of stone fall off," Mr. Knochelmann said. "We'd find pieces on the ground, or things would have to be strapped together." That led to a close study of the building. SHP Architects used a 3D scan of the cathedral, then inspected the exterior up close from a crane basket over several days.

What they found showed the project would be much larger than first expected. Mr. Knochelmann said the team found "severe cracks in the gargoyles and chimera," along with "spalled stone, cracked stone pieces of the terracotta capitals," and limestone that was "falling apart due to the freeze and thaw conditions in this part of the country." He said he did not know of any exterior restoration this extensive in the cathedral's history.

The work was wide in scope. All 26 chimera and all 32 gargoyles were replaced with exact replicas. The old pieces were scanned and sent to Boston Valley Terra Cotta in New York so new hollow terra cotta pieces could be made with vents and weep holes for drainage. Dozens of limestone



The Pensive Demon chimera (left) shows significant damage before its repair (right).



A column pictured before repair (left) shows a large chunk of stone of missing, the picture (right) shows its repair.

columns were replaced, along with colonnade pieces, copper flashing and much of the tracery.

Mr. Knochelmann said the team first thought about 10 percent of the tracery would need replacement, but once workers got started, they found rusted steel pins and deeper damage. "Once we started cutting into it, we had to replace more and more," he said.

Trisco Systems performed the masonry restoration, while Imbus Roofing handled copper work, flashing and detailed copper repairs. Mr. Knochelmann praised Trisco's field and office teams, saying they were "extraordinarily helpful" as unexpected problems appeared. "They were really part of the team," he said. "They wanted to be here. They wanted to have their name on such a highly visible, just a very well-known building."

The project also grew in cost. Jim Hess, director of Stewardship and Mission for the Diocese of Covington, said the restoration began as a \$6 million project and ended up around \$8 million.

"Anybody who owns an old building knows once you begin work and you start taking out bricks or you start taking down tiles, inevitably there's more damage than you initially thought," Mr. Hess said.

He said the original plan included about a half million dollars for expected overages, but "the true overage far exceeded that" by about \$2 million.

Mr. Hess said some stones that were first marked for repair had to be replaced by the time workers reached them. And

once a stone marked for replacement was removed, it was discovered that adjacent stones would also need replacing.

"Sometimes you thought you were replacing one stone, and you're actually repairing or replacing three," he said. The same was true for some of the terra cotta figures. "Some of the chimera initially, we thought we could repair," Mr. Hess said. "But it became evident that we had to replace all of them."

Funding came from three main sources. Mr. Hess said those were "a diocesan-wide public campaign," "the Cathedral Parish's parish campaign," and tax credits through the Kentucky Heritage Council. Because the cathedral is a national historic landmark, the diocese could apply for historic tax credits and then sell them to a local bank. Mr. Hess said that resulted in "a little over a million dollars for the campaign."

The Cathedral Parish campaign raised about \$1.3 million, according to Mr. Hess, who said the parish effort was

(Continued on page 7)

## Hands that touched the Cathedral — Trisco craftsmen reflect on restoring the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption for another century

Laura Keener and Maura Baker  
Editor and Staff Writer

High above the streets of Covington, in the hidden upper spaces of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, the building keeps a quiet record of the people who built it. Brian Walter has seen it there: initials and dates carved or written by workers who climbed into the attic-like spaces generations ago, men whose names are otherwise lost but whose hands helped shape the cathedral.

"What's interesting up in the top, up in the attic space, way up in the top, is you see a lot of initials and dates of guys that have been there, either worked on it or were there for some reason," Mr. Walter said. "You see like, you know, JLV were his initials, and then the date. That guy was up there almost 100 years ago. He's been dead for years and years and years. Nobody knows who that guy was or anything, but his fingers touched that building and did something there."

That thought stayed with Mr. Walter as Trisco Systems worked through the most recent restoration of the cathedral. For Mr. Walter, Trisco's owner, and Rob Davis, one of the company's veteran craftsmen, the project was never simply a construction job. It was a continuation of a century-old chain of labor, skill and responsibility. The original builders left behind a sacred landmark. The Trisco team's task was to make sure it could stand for another century.

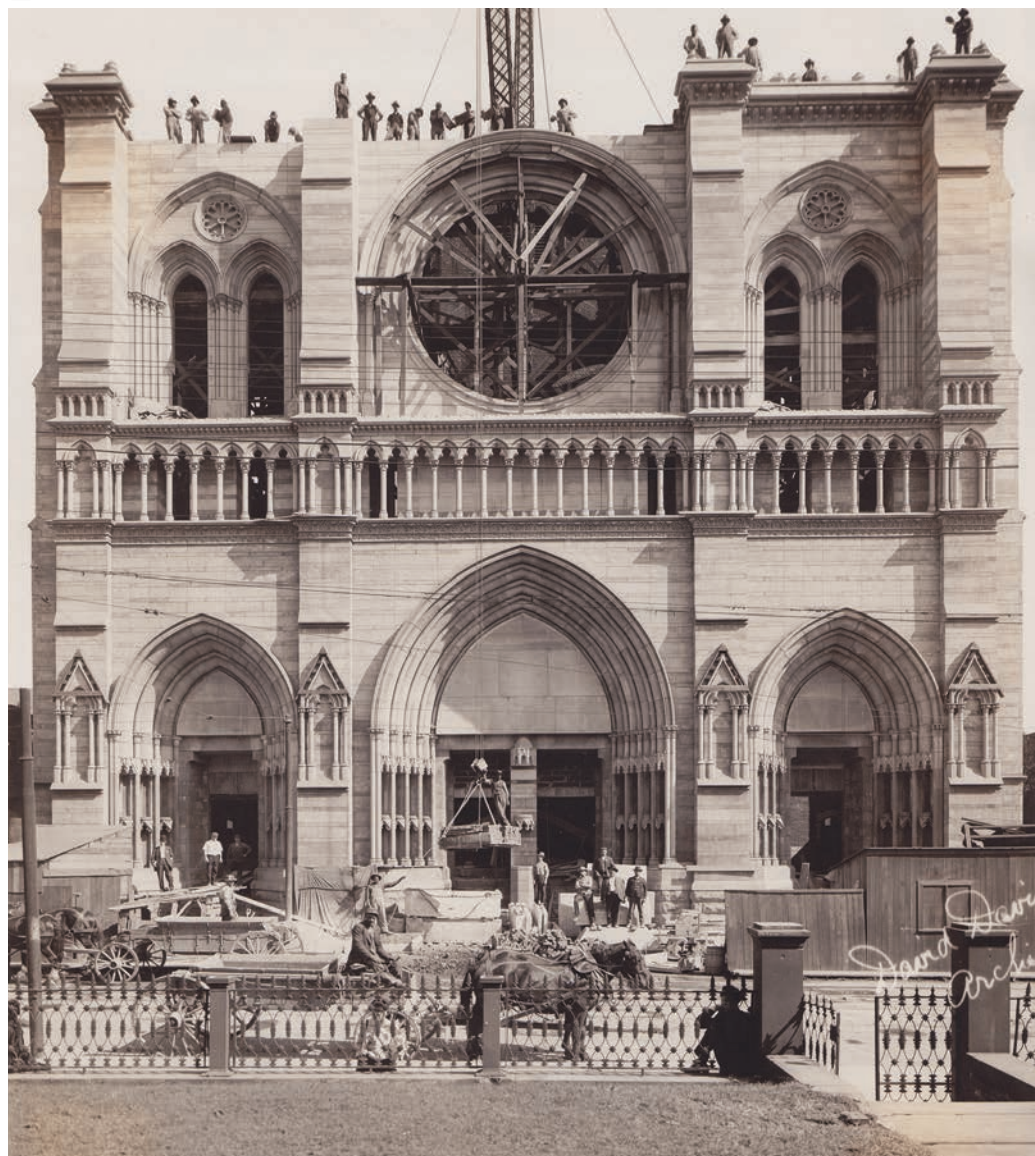
"Just like we're going to be faceless, nameless people

someday, too, that touched that building as well," Mr. Walter said. "But the building will still stand long after us. And I guess it's our duty to pay respect to those guys that built that building and that have worked on that building, that we do our best so it's here 100 years from now."

Trisco had history with the cathedral before this restoration began. Mr. Walter served as project manager on an earlier phase in 2001, when exterior work accompanied a larger interior renovation. At that time, he said, Trisco cleaned the building, performed tuckpointing, addressed window caulking and focused on urgent exterior problems, including chimeras that had been damaged, deteriorated or even knocked loose.

"The focus was keeping the water out, life safety issues," Mr. Walter said of the earlier work. "We didn't want stones falling on the street, falling on the sidewalks or over the public areas. We were just trying to buy you some more time before a bigger project could

(Continued on page 10)



This historical photo, taken Sept. 9, 1909, shows craftsmen building the façade of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption using the tools of the day — ropes, pulleys and horses. The craftworkers of Trisco Systems acknowledge that much has changed by way of tools but the dedication and commitment of workers to their craft remains 100 years later.



**Bishop's  
Schedule**

**Sept. 2**  
St. Pius X Men's Group,  
St. Pius Parish, 6 p.m.

**Sept. 3-5**  
St. Meinrad Seminary visit

**Sept. 5**  
Catholic Family Night at  
the Cincinnati Reds, Great  
American Ball Park,  
game time 6:40 p.m.

**Sept. 6**  
Mass, Cathedral Basilica  
of the Assumption,  
5:30 p.m.

**Sept. 7**  
Diocesan Curia offices  
closed in observance of  
the Labor Day holiday



# Restoration Celebration

(Continued from page 1)

pening at the Cathedral Basilica,” Bishop Iffert said, “how pieces were falling off and stones were pitted and broken.”

Surprised by this, as the building seemed beautiful — Bishop Iffert noticed the need after being pointed to the damage in the cathedral’s stonework. And thus, the diocese took on the project of restoring the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption.

“Whenever you take up a project of restoring a monument like this, there is a huge learning curve to be tackled,” he said. Bishop Iffert said that one of the very first things he learned were the differences between grotesques, chimera and gargoyles.

“We began to learn these kinds of things,” said Bishop Iffert, “to study the issues that we would face, to talk about what kind of expertise we need in a contractor that might work with us on a project like this ... and so, with the help of some of you who are here today, we set out on that journey.”

After a successful campaign, raising over \$7 million dollars towards the cathedral’s restoration, Bishop Iffert said that the diocese undertook the project for a simple reason: “To be able to guard the legacy left to us by Bishop Maes and the predecessors who came before us, who wanted this place to be a testimony to the merciful love of God for



(above) While processing out, Bishop John Iffert blesses members of the congregation at the end of the August 15 Mass, which celebrated the Feast of the Assumption and the feast day of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.



(above) A statue of the Blessed Virgin located in the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, is draped in blue and decorated with a crown to commemorate the Feast of the Assumption, celebrated this year on August 15.



(above) Bishop John Iffert preaches the homily at Mass preceding the Restoration Celebration. Behind him is a stained-glass window depicting the coronation of the Blessed Virgin (above) and the Council of Ephesus (below), which officially declared Mary as *Theotokos*, Mother of God.



(above) A woman fills out a paper slip which will be placed inside of the cathedral’s time capsule. The capsule will be stored in the base of the statue of the Blessed Virgin within the Marian garden.

(left, bottom) Jim Hess, director of Stewardship and Mission, talks to a family while the children follow a scavenger hunt devised for the “restoration celebration.”

Covington in Northern Kentucky.”

“We undertake projects like this because here, in this place, just behind me and to my left, dwells the tabernacle of the Lord Jesus Christ,” he said. “And so, we build and we rebuild and we restore and we protect these monuments built of stone and wood and brick and glass and plaster. We do this because it is a place of dwelling for Jesus Christ, our Lord, and his holy people.”

“If you and I, with all our evil thoughts,” Bishop Iffert continued, “take such care in preparing and protecting a place for the sacramental presence of the Lord — how much more power, goodness, care, love, devotion, attention to detail, generosity does God the Father pour out to prepare a tabernacle for the incarnate Son, Jesus Christ, the one who comes to lay himself down for love of us?”

Bishop Iffert used this bridge to connect the restoration project to the Blessed Virgin and the Feast of the Assumption, saying that throughout all of the Scripture’s labors, “the Lord was working to prepare and protect a woman ... who would be prepared to say yes and to become the tabernacle of the incarnate Lord of Heaven and Earth.”

That same Lord “is now dwelling in this heavenly tem-

(Continued on page 5)

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No. 28

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ple,” Bishop Iffert said, referring to the cathedral he spoke in. “All of that becomes a sign for us that God’s grace is still at work in us, still at work in humanity, still at work in the Church, still at work in those who love and respect the Lord



Baker photos

... our buildings are a sign to us of God’s mercy working in Northern Kentucky and in the world.”  
“They remind us,” he said, “of the woman the Lord gave to us as a mother, to include and embody and foreshadow



the salvation of all God’s holy people. This mystery secures the promise that, as the Lord has done for the first to say yes to him, so his grace is at work, building us as living stones into a temple where he dwells.”

After the Mass’s conclusion, guests were invited to join Bishop Iffert and the rest of the diocese in celebrating both the restoration project’s completion and this mystery in an event that spanned much of Cathedral Square.

Donors and parishioners came together for dinner in the adjacent Covington Latin School and ice cream in St. Mary’s Park, and were welcome to walk the Cathedral’s grounds — which included participation in a scavenger hunt, and the ability to contribute their thoughts to a time capsule that will be stored in a statue within the cathedral’s Marian garden.

(far left) Father Ryan Maher (left), rector of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, enjoys ice cream with parishioners and donors during the Restoration Celebration, while one gestures at the cathedral across

the street from St. Mary’s Park, Covington.

(above, right) A couple stops to observe a banner in the cathedral’s gardens commemorating the sponsors of the Restored in Christ campaign.



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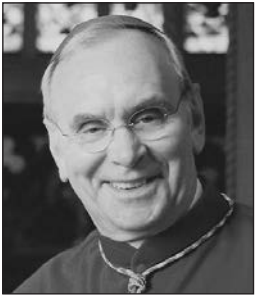


# Possible, though difficult

The readings for the Twenty-second Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle A — are: **Jeremiah 20:7-9, Romans 12:1-2 and Matthew 16:21-27.**

Jesus has asked His disciples what people were saying about Him. Who do they say that He is. They answer that some think He is John the Baptist come back from the dead or one of the great prophets or Elijah come back to

## GO AND GLORIFY



**Bishop Roger J. Foys, D.D.**

earth. But YOU, Jesus says — who do YOU say that I am. Silence, broken by Peter, who proclaims that Jesus is the Messiah, the one who is to come, the Savior of the world! Jesus commends Peter which must have made Peter feel honored indeed. He's riding high!

Then, Jesus tells His disciples that they are on the way to Jerusalem where Jesus will suffer and die. Well, Peter was having none of that.

Absolutely not! He had just been singled out as the rock upon which Jesus was going to build His Church and Peter was to play an important role in that. Jesus suffer and die? Preposterous, It didn't fit Peter's narrative. After all, this was a glorious moment. Jesus was going to lead the disciples to a great victory over those oppressing them.

And what was the response of Jesus to Peter's outburst that "no such thing will ever happen to You?" (Matt 16:22) "Get behind me, Satan! You are an obstacle to me. You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do." (Matt 16:23) Wow! Talk about a quick fall from favor. One minute Peter is going to be the leader of (in Peter's mind) a great revolution and in the next minute he is told to get behind the master because he doesn't grasp the reality of who Jesus really is.

Jesus then goes on to tell His disciples that those who want to follow him must deny themselves, take up their cross and follow Him. (Matt 16:24) Jesus was very clear that following Him would entail sacrifice. The love that Jesus has for His Father in heaven and that Jesus has for us is a sacrificial love. Jesus gave his life up — literally and figurately — for the love of His Father and for love of us. Can we do any less?

Peter was not a bad person and was certainly dedicated to Jesus and to His mission. But, as Jesus told him, he was thinking as human beings do and not as God does. Jesus' words and the prediction of His suffering and death did not fit Peter's narrative, did not fit his image of who Jesus is and what Jesus ought to do.

Do we sometimes do the same regarding the Lord and other people? We pray, thinking that God needs to answer our prayers in the way we think He should. And should God not answer them in that way we become discouraged, disheartened, and maybe, just maybe, angry. We think like human beings and not like God Who always has our best interests at heart.

And what about our perception and expectation of other people? What expectations do we have of them. Do they measure up to the person we think they should be? Do they fit our narrative? And if they don't, how do we respond? Do we try to change them? Do we write them off because they are not who we think they ought to be? And how would we feel if someone did that to us?

Jesus tells us that if we want to come after Him we need to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. That cross will take many forms. At times it will seem too much for us to bear. At times it will mean accepting people and loving them and caring for them where they are. It will mean accepting the Lord without reservation and making Him our first and only priority. It will mean denying ourself and becoming selfless instead of selfish. It will mean thinking as God does and not as human beings.

Possible? Certainly. For all things are possible with God. Difficult? Sometimes. Worth it? Without a doubt!

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

# Will millions die due to USAID cuts?

How does the world view the U.S. right now? How do we deserve to be viewed? Are we working to create "the beloved community" which Dr. Martin Luther King envisioned, which is another way of saying "the kingdom of God?"

Not long ago, I heard an interview on the New Yorker Radio Hour with Atul Gawande, a writer, surgeon and public health researcher. Gawande served in the Biden Administration as the assistant administrator for global health, working with the agency USAID.

Remember USAID? It's hard to keep track of all that's happened, but USAID was gutted early in the second Trump administration. This agency was the lead international humanitarian and development arm of the U.S. government, founded in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy.

According to Gawande, the results of its destruction are staggering.

Scientists around the world are predicting millions of deaths will result from USAID's hasty and ill-conceived elimination.

Gawande reports that The Lancet, an independent, international British medical journal, predicts the cuts could lead to as many as 14 million deaths by 2030. Hundreds of thousands have already died since USAID's shutdown.

Remember "DOGE?" It was the short-lived entity known as the "Department of Government Efficiency." DOGE hadn't been commissioned by Congress. Nevertheless, Elon Musk held terrifying powers to arbitrarily slash federal programs.

Since its tenure was so brief, DOGE didn't conduct detailed studies of whether programs were actually efficient. Most Americans would agree we should periodically review the work of "alphabet" agencies, including USAID, to make sure they aren't wasteful.

But DOGE, wielding a chainsaw, depending on that day's visual, simply dismantled things. Signs down, people

fired, doors locked. The State Department absorbed bits of USAID's work.

As Americans, and as Catholics, we should be deeply concerned about USAID's landing on the chopping block.

This overseas aid constituted less than 1 percent of the federal budget. As Americans, we believe in working for the common good, and as Catholics we profess a preferential option for the poor. USAID did both.

It also projected a wonderful image of the U.S. onto the world stage, making friends for us globally and partnering us with agencies worldwide. When first established, USAID immediately accounted for 9 million children being vaccinated against smallpox, helping to eradicate the disease worldwide.

Gawande cites maternal health programs being shuttered, vaccinations cut. Tuberculosis, what Gawande termed "the biggest killer in the world," is seeing a resurgence.

And AIDS? In 2003, President George W. Bush launched PEPFAR, the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief, implemented in part through USAID. Working in over 50 countries, and the largest commitment by any nation to address a single disease, PEPFAR is credited with saving 26 million lives and enabling 8 million babies to be born without HIV infection.

PEPFAR is still on the books, but an initial funding freeze/stop work order caused the termination of thousands of staff and a restriction in services.

We should remember that diseases don't hesitate to cross borders. A resurgence of any disease endangers us all. It will be extremely hard to restructure a working program, even when — and if — we find the political will.

Many Catholic relief agencies worked with USAID, and they are still struggling to carry on. One was Catholic Relief Services, the official overseas relief and development agency of the U.S. bishops. We should support them and other worthy charities which have been impacted.

We can also let our representatives know that overseas aid is a priority and the image we want to project to a suffering world.

And like Pope Leo XIV, we can continually take today's issues to prayer, to the God who desires kinship for us all.

*Effie Caldarola is a wife, mom and grandmother who received her master's degree in pastoral studies from Seattle University*

## GUEST



**Effie Caldarola**

## MUSINGS



**Sister Fidelis Tracy, C.D.P.**

Wars and rumors of war. Can anyone alive today remember a time when there was not a conflict in some part of the world? Or at most an uneasy peace with tension about the possibility of conflict?

Praying for peace has been a staple of our Catholic worship for as long as I can remember. Even the Scriptures that give the history of ancient times are filled with conflict. Exile in Egypt, conflict with Babylon, Assyria, struggles between the Northern and Southern kingdoms, the list goes on and on. One of Jesus' most treasured promises was Peace. Peace, I give to you. Peace, I promise you. Peace, I leave with you. Where and when will we fully experience it?

Recently as the readings were proclaimed for the feast of the Transfiguration, I had a wonderful sense of the experience the disciples had when they saw Jesus and the great ancestors of their faith speaking together. Surely, they experienced a kind of peace that the world has never known. No wonder they were eager to build tents and stay there forever.

Jesus did not permit them to escape the struggles of their life, the pain of being dominated by their Roman oppressor, the struggles between their fellow Jews in how to interpret the law. He insisted they return to their daily lives — changed by their experience of Jesus' glory.

Are they to bring peace with them? How can they quell the unrest with their smallness and limited sphere of influence? What can they do in face of Roman oppressors,

# Peace

compromised local rulers, feuding religious leaders? What manner of peace are they mandated to bring?

Today the unrest is all around us — one nation against another, fighting in our city streets, protests against various injustices in both the economic and political spheres. Even within families there are hostilities. What is the peace that Jesus promised? Where can we find this peace that the world cannot give?

Prayers for peace require that we do what we can to understand the situations of our world, to investigate not just the sources with which we agree but to study all sides. That is one aspect of our commitment to support Jesus' promise of peace. Still, Jesus' promise seems unrealistic in our day if it refers to cooperation among all the nations of the world and the political parties.

Peace I give to you, my peace I leave with you. But here is the clincher, it is a peace the world cannot give. It is difficult to extend peace to the person next to us, the one with whom we rub shoulders day in and day out. The one with the annoying habits, and the values that differ from ours. There are all those little things that rub us the wrong way. Can there be peace? How do we embrace and practice the peace Jesus leaves with us?

Seeking peace in our relationships with family, community, and neighbors, those closest to us is essential. These are often the hardest places to give and receive peace, but they are also where peace in the wider world begins. Caring for those neglected in our cities and nation fosters peace. Prayer and contemplation call us beyond concern for our own survival.

Jesus directed his followers to love their enemies, do good to those who harmed them, forgive those who hurt them. In these actions lies the root of peace. Love and forgiveness. These are the source of the peace the world cannot give.

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



# Diocese's largest restoration project

(Continued from page 3)

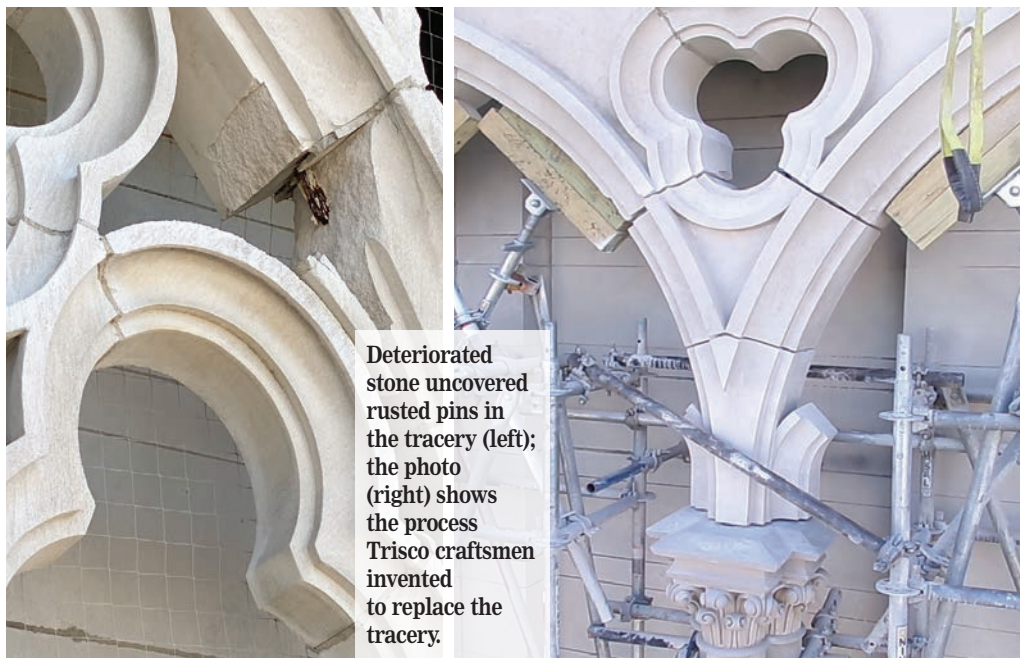
"very successful." A planning committee recruited volunteers who met with donors and asked them to consider gifts. "The cathedral parish itself did all it could as a cathedral parish to contribute to this campaign," Mr. Hess said.

The rest came from the wider public campaign, including generous gifts from nearly 2,000 donors. Mr. Hess said important grants also came from the St. Elizabeth Foundation, the R.C. Durr Foundation and the Butler Foundation. Their support, along with gifts from people across the diocese and beyond, helped make the project possible.

Bishop John Iffert also played an important role by supporting the team as the scope grew. Mr. Knochelmann said, "Bishop was awesome throughout this entire project."

When the team showed new damage and explained the need for added work, Mr. Knochelmann said the bishop's response was clear: "We need to find a way to do it." That cooperation helped the project move forward, even as costs rose.

For Mr. Hess, the campaign renewed interest in the cathedral, not just historically but also theologically. He said it gave Bishop Iffert and the priests of the diocese an opportunity to



Deteriorated stone uncovered rusted pins in the tracery (left); the photo (right) shows the process Trisco craftsmen invented to replace the tracery.

## Cathedral Legacy Society: ongoing preservation of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption

**Maura Baker**  
Staff Writer

As the Restored in Christ restoration project draws to a close, the importance of preserving and protecting the spiritual, historical and cultural landmark of Covington's Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption remains a priority.

Established in 2017, the Cathedral Legacy Society was made to "recognize those who have made planned estate gifts to the Cathedral Endowment Fund," according to Cathedral finance council chair Richard Lehman. "The mission of the endowment fund is to support the preservation of the cathedral by providing a restricted fund for maintenance, repair and restoration."

"Even though we got all of this restoration work done, there's always going to be continued maintenance issues," Mr. Lehman said. "Whenever there's a maintenance issue at the cathedral, the problem is never small — so the repairs are complex and expensive. That's the importance of the Cathedral Legacy Society — to continue the care of the cathedral for generations to come."

Those interested in contributing to the Cathedral Legacy Society or to the Cathedral Endowment Fund directly should reach out to parish office at information online at <https://covcathedral.com/cathedral-endowment-fund/>.

explain that the cathedral is not just one parish, but "the Mother Church of the diocese." He added, "We're all parishioners of the cathedral."

For Mr. Knochelmann, the finished work is a gift to the future.

"The end result is a

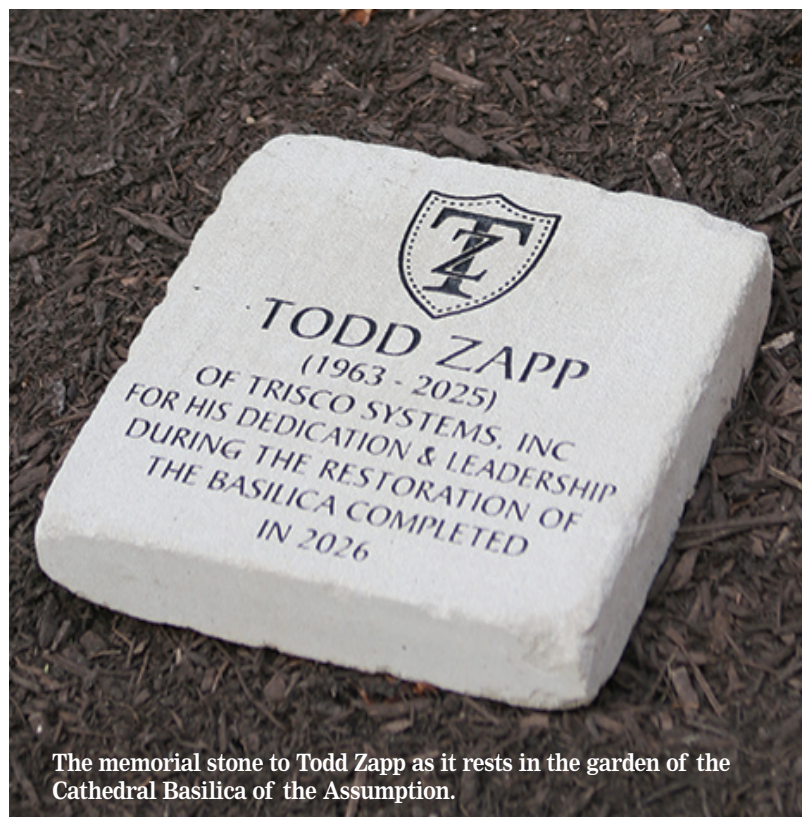
building that should give us another 100 plus years," he said. He also called the cathedral "by far the most beautiful cathedral I've been to." Being part of the team, he said, is something he will "look back on fondly."

As work on the Restored in Christ restoration project ends, there is still time to financially contribute to the project. According to Mr. Hess donations are needed to close a \$300k funding gap. Make a donation and add your name to the already nearly 2,000 donors at [covdio.org/give](http://covdio.org/give) and click on "Make a Gift" to Restored in Christ.

# Trisco project manager instrumental to Cathedral project, remembered for his dedication and friendship

**Laura Keener and Maura Baker**  
Editor and Staff Writer

In the Cathedral garden is a memorial stone bearing the name Todd Zapp. The inscription reads: "Todd Zapp of Trisco Systems Inc., for his dedication and leadership during the restoration of the Basilica completed in 2026."



The memorial stone to Todd Zapp as it rests in the garden of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption.

Teresa G. Zapp, who preceded him in death on Sept. 13, 2019. The couple had two daughters who blessed them with eight grandchildren.

Brian Walter, owner of Trisco, had known Mr. Zapp for about 45 years. They went to high school together; and Mr.

Zapp later joined Mr. Walter's family business, beginning as a laborer and steadily working his way through the ranks.

"Todd started out as the lowest guy on the totem pole," Mr. Walter said. "He was a laborer and showed a great aptitude for work. He liked to work. He liked to work hard. And he was smarter than most."

Mr. Walter later made Mr. Zapp a foreman and eventually brought him into the office. Mr. Zapp had worked in the warehouse, in the field, in the office and as a foreman, so he understood each part of the company and the people doing the work. He also became Trisco's safety director because of his concern for protecting workers, Mr. Walter said.

"Todd was the first guy in, the last guy out," Mr. Walter said. "Rob would start at 6 in the morning and Todd's truck was there, and we're two and a half hours away from Covington. Todd left the house at 3:30 or 4:00 a.m. to make sure he spent the full day with Rob."

Rob Davis is the foreman of the project who assumed lead of the Cathedral restoration project and the other duties Mr. Zapp tended. Mr. Davis said Mr. Zapp was "more committed and dedicated to every project he was on," and that the long phone calls that they had trying to determine the best way to replace the Cathedral's tracery were typical of the way he worked.

"Todd and I would make phone calls when we found out about the tracteries," Mr. Davis said. "We'd be on the phone two hours at night talking about it, trying to figure out the best and safest way to do it. I give him all the credit in the

world. Most of the ideas that we used and did were his. He was the biggest part of that."

When Mr. Zapp died, Mr. Walter said the project was about one-third complete, with roughly two-thirds still to go. But the hardest planning had been done. "Todd built the plane, he flew the plane, he got it up in the air," Mr. Walter said. "All I had to do was land it."



Todd Zapp photo courtesy of Legacy.com

Mr. Walter was quick to add that the landing depended on Mr. Davis. "We could not have done this without Rob," he said. "I took over the management part of this project, but Rob took over the details. They came up with these ideas together; and Rob was able to implement them."

For Mr. Davis, Mr. Zapp was more than a colleague. "He wasn't just a coworker he was a very good friend, and deeply missed," he said.

In his obituary, his family affirmed that Mr. Zapp was more than a colleague to Trisco workers, he was a beloved father and grandfather who "was extremely giving and generous. In his downtime, he

enjoyed corrupting his grandchildren, playing golf and mowing the lawn."

This exceptional man will always be remembered in gratitude by the people of the Diocese of Covington and the millions of visitors to Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption.

In his closing remarks vigil Mass, Aug. 15, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, celebrating the completion of the restoration project, Bishop John Iffert said, "Todd Zapp ... provided tremendous leadership, expertise and dedication to this project ... He was deeply committed to the restoration of this cathedral and gave generously of himself to this work ... we are profoundly grateful for all that he contributed, and we hold him in memory and in prayer."



# Cathedral garden restoration began with Mary, rest of the grounds to be restored in 2027



**Maura Baker**  
*Staff Writer*

As construction wrapped up on the stonework of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, equipment and machinery that needed to be stored on cathedral grounds left the Marian garden and other green areas of the cathedral grounds in what Cathedral parishioner volunteer gardener Mary Jo Stull described as “great distress.”

Having been affiliated with the gardens previously, Ms. Stull was asked to assist in restoring the gardens alongside vice rector Msgr. Kurt Kemo — and the two of them worked together organizing landscapers and choosing plants to beautify the greenery of the cathedral’s exterior.

The first project within the gardens completed was

Mary’s garden, built around a previously standing statue on the south side of the cathedral. Because of previous issues, the garden surrounding her was never able to be completed — until now, and Msgr. Kemo said that since the cathedral was named for Mary, “it was appropriate that her garden would be done first.”

Oliver Lester, of tree health professionals Gregory Forrest Lester Inc., was instrumental in the design of the garden, according to Ms. Stull and Msgr. Kemo. Mr. Lester ensured that each plant and tree chosen for the garden was intentional with Scripture references and sacred symbolism.

While visitors to the cathedral will not be able to enjoy the gardens in full bloom until next spring, flowers planted in front of the statue of Mary are planted in blankets of carefully chosen colors — blue, her most associated color, into white, symbolizing her purity then red, representing her Immaculate Heart. These colorful flowers serve as the “focal point,” said Msgr. Kemo, “trying to highlight the different shades and colors of her life.”

With Mary’s garden completed as “Phase One” of the gardens’ restoration, Ms. Stull and Msgr. Kemo have begun plans for Phase Two — which includes the currently unfinished area around the cathedral’s fountain, as well as the inner courtyard by the rectory. Work on the rest of these gardens is set to begin next year.



(above) A view of the path through the cathedral gardens as seen from Mary’s garden. Trees planted in the garden are planted intentionally, referencing sacred scripture.

(left) A statue of Mary stands in a section of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption’s gardens dedicated to her. A time capsule storing notes written by cathedral parishioners and donors of the Restored in Christ project will be stored in the statue’s base.



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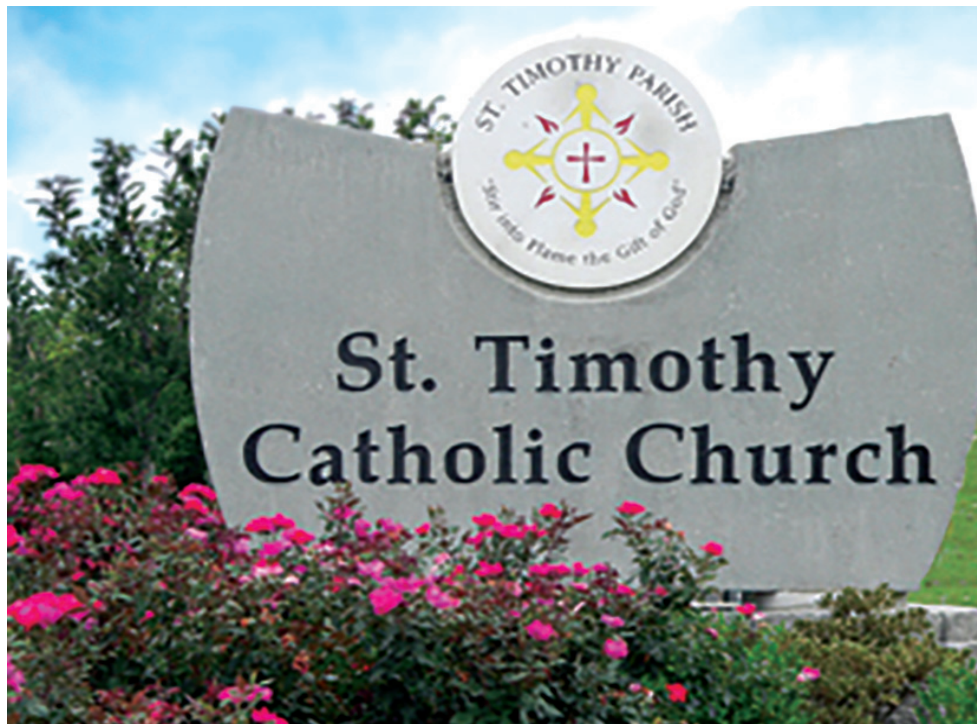
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|             |         |              |
|-------------|---------|--------------|
| OKTOBERFEST | Sept 18 | 6 – 11 pm    |
|             | Sept 19 | 5:30 – 12 am |
|             | Sept 20 | 12:30 – 4 pm |





## Trisco craftsmen reflect

(Continued from page 3)

be done.”

The 2001 work did buy time. The chimeras were patched with terracotta materials, pinned, epoxied, glazed and returned to their places. But Mr. Walter knew even then that some elements eventually would need full replacement. “We got a few more years out of them. And now this project here turned into replacement of all of the chimeras, and that was very, very necessary,” he said.

When the more recent project began, Mr. Walter was not managing its day-to-day work. Todd Zapp, Trisco’s original project manager for the restoration, led that effort with Mr. Davis and Tim Purdy. Mr. Walter had shared what he remembered from the earlier phase, but Mr. Zapp, Mr. Davis and Mr. Purdy carried the new scope from the beginning.

From the ground, Mr. Davis’ first reaction was awe. “When I first pulled up on the job site, first thing I could say is, wow, what a beautiful building,” he said. “First time I’d ever seen it. It became a very interesting project. We knew our regular scope of work, which was a big job, but it wasn’t as big as it ended up being.”

That changed once the team began inspecting the cathedral up close. “Once Todd and I got up there and started inspecting things, we realized that things were in worse shape than what they originally thought,” Mr. Davis said. “At that point, obviously the job grew. And the things that we had to do was a little more involved than we anticipated. So that’s why it took the time and obviously the money.”

Mr. Walter said that kind of discovery is common in restoration work. Drawings, estimates and scopes of work can only reveal so much. “A lot of those things you can’t really blame anybody for,” he said. “It’s what you find when you actually get your nose up on the work.”

Much of the public attention centered on the cathedral’s chimeras and gargoyles, the dramatic figures that can be seen from below. Those were important, but Mr. Walter and Mr. Davis emphasized that some of the most complex and significant work involved the stone tracery: the columns and arching stonework around the upper portions of the building.

“All those arch stones that come together and land on top of the columns, those are the tracery. We replaced all of those stones, all of those columns,” said Mr. Walter. “That’s the really severe deterioration that we noticed when we first started the project. Everybody sees the chimeras and the gargoyles and is happy with those, but everything in between all that got replaced as well.”

For Mr. Davis, the tracery was both the most difficult and most critical part of the project. “That was like putting the puzzle back together,” he said. “When you took that apart, you had to put it back. It had to be precise. A quarter inch off when you first start, you could be an inch off when you’re on the right side when you’re done. So, it had to be exact.”

The work demanded planning long before stones were moved. Mr. Davis recalled “a lot of nights of Todd Zapp and I on the phone, sleepless nights, wondering how we’re going to do this and the best way we could do this and the safest way to do it.”

Some of the deterioration came from the very materials that originally held the cathedral together. Mr. Walter explained that buildings of the cathedral’s era commonly relied on carbon steel pins, fasteners and structural elements. Over time, that steel rusts. As it corrodes, it expands, placing pressure on the surrounding limestone until the stone cracks or breaks.

“Most all of the problems with the stone deterioration were caused by the carbon steel fasteners, hidden fasteners, pins and those types of things that are holding things up,” Mr. Walter said. “They were rusting and corroding and no longer able to do their job. So, when we put new stone in, we put new stainless-steel pins, stainless steel fasteners, stainless steel structural elements that will last indefinitely.”

Mr. Davis said many people asked what was causing the stone to fail. “The old pins that they used, like Brian was

saying, when they rust, they swell,” he said. “At that point, your limestone is your weakest point, and that’s why it’s going to bust. And that’s what caused that. And there was a lot of it.”

Mr. Walter summed up the approach this way: “We put it back not the way it was, but better than the way it was.”

The restoration also highlighted how much construction technology has changed since the cathedral was first built. Historic photographs show horses, wagons, ropes and wooden derricks used to lift stone into place. Mr. Davis

really proud of that. I’m really proud of the work we did.”

Both Mr. Walter and Mr. Davis said the cathedral project felt different because it was deeply collaborative. Mr. Walter said some projects are driven by architects or engineers who tell contractors what to do without drawing on their experience. This restoration, he said, was not like that. It was a team effort among the architect, cathedral staff, Father Ryan Maher, Don Knochelmann and others working for the good of the building and the community.

“What I don’t always get, and I got definitely on this one, is the pride of the congregation, the pride of the people of not only the Catholic community, but also the city of Covington,” Mr. Walter said. “They’re so proud of that church. Every time I was there, I would get a thank you from somebody, some guy just walking by. The staff is just so grateful and so appreciative of the work that we were doing. And that motivates you to want to do better.”

Mr. Davis agreed. “Just knowing how much that cathedral means to so many people, it grabs us too,” he said. After returning for the celebration of the completed work, Mr. Davis said he felt “pretty proud” of the whole Trisco team.

The cathedral also reached them personally. Mr. Walter, who grew up Catholic, said time in the cathedral — especially returning with his wife for Mass — reminded him of the power of sacred space. “People say that it’s a special place and people say that it’s a

spiritual place and that it moves you when you see the light coming through those stained-glass windows,” he said. “And you’re like, yeah, yeah, yeah. But when you’re there, it’s absolutely true. That place is beautiful. It’s special. It puts you in a completely different frame of mind for that hour that you’re at Mass.”

Mr. Davis said the people at the cathedral made him feel welcome from the beginning. “Everybody’s there for a purpose, and it’s a good purpose,” he said. “Everybody’s there for each other. Trisco worked with them, as well as them working with us, and it worked out for everybody. So, in more ways than one, it really touched me deep.”

The project also drew unusual media attention. Mr. Walter said Trisco’s work often receives local notice in communities where the company works, but the cathedral restoration traveled much farther after being picked up by the Associated Press.

“When the AP picked it up, I can’t think of the time that’s ever happened to us before,” Mr. Walter said. “I have a friend that lives in Las Vegas that it was in front of the Las Vegas newspaper. I had a buddy in Chicago that recorded it on Fox News Headline News. He was like, ‘Oh my God, is this you?’ It was all over the country. It was international, not even just the country, when the AP picked it up.”

Mr. Walter admitted the interviews pushed him out of his comfort zone. “Way out of my comfort zone,” he said. He tried to persuade Mr. Davis to do more of the interviews, but Mr. Davis had a simple answer: “I was busy.” In the end, Mr. Walter said, “Somebody had to. I’m glad it ended up happening.”

Throughout the restoration, Mr. Davis said the team had a phrase for what they hoped to achieve: “the 100-year fix.” It was not only about repairing broken stone. It was about honoring the original craftsmen, safeguarding the cathedral for those who worship there now and handing it forward to people who will never know the names of the workers who made it safe and beautiful again.

“That was our saying during the whole project,” Mr. Davis said. “Another 100 years is what everybody wanted. That was the goal.”

In the hidden upper reaches of the cathedral, the initials from 100 years ago remain as a reminder that every generation receives the building from someone else. Now Mr. Walter, Mr. Davis, Mr. Zapp and the Trisco team have added their DNA, even if most of their work is meant to disappear into the whole. Their names may not be visible from the pews or the sidewalk, but their labor is part of the cathedral’s ongoing story — more sets of hands that touched the building so it can continue lifting the eyes and hearts of Covington to God — the Master Creator — for years to come.



These two photos show a column being lifted to its home on the Cathedral’s façade. At left, Rob Davis, foreman, mans a rope keeping the column from crashing into the Cathedral as colleagues in a boom lift receive it. In an interview Mr. Davis quipped, “I felt like I was the horse sometimes.”

joked he was glad the modern crew did not have to rely on horse and buggy. “I felt like I was the horse sometimes,” he said.

Mr. Walter describes the contrast plainly. “If you see those old photographs, that’s how they got the stone up there,” he said. “They had these derricks made out of wood with pulleys on the top and used ropes to pull the stone up. And the horses were pulling on the ropes to pull the stone up to the top. And the way we do it now is we call the crane guy. In 10 minutes, he lifts those heavy stones right to the top.”

The team relied on cranes, boom lifts, scaffolding and a monorail system that helped raise and position stones around the building. Mr. Davis describes the monorail as “an electric motor with a cable that you hook the stone to, to take them out and put them back in.” Mr. Walter said it was essentially an I-beam system running horizontally near the top of the building, assembled and moved by the scaffolding contractor as work progressed.

Even with modern equipment, the work could be tense. Mr. Davis often worked from the ground manning a rope tied to heavy stone being lifted, keeping it away from the building so it would not scuff the masonry as it rose. Asked if he wore two hard hats for that work, he answered, “Probably should have, but I didn’t.”

Still, the heart of the work remained the human eye and hand. “That’s where you rely on Rob and his guys,” Mr. Walter said. “They are master craftsmen. You can say all you want, you can show him a drawing, but it takes the guy and his eye to get it on the wall.”

For Mr. Davis, successful restoration is measured partly by whether anyone can tell where the new work begins.

“Once we left there, the best way to say it is, you can’t tell we’ve even been there,” he said. “That’s key to me, that none of our work stood out. You want everything to look like you haven’t been there. And that’s even the new stone, everything blended in as well with washing everything down. So nothing really stood out. And that’s the key to restoration, making everything look like you haven’t been there, make the whole building look beautiful again.”

Mr. Walter said some of the finest work on the project is nearly invisible to most visitors. On the roof are inner areas and courtyards few people will ever see. There, hidden from the street, are more traceries, stone columns sitting on the roof and copper flashing and caps worked carefully into place.

“You’ll never, nobody will ever see that stuff,” Mr. Walter said. “And it’s the most beautiful work. It should be on the front down low so people can see it, but nobody will. And what you get with us and what you get with master craftsmen like Rob and his guys is you get perfection 150 feet in the air, the same perfection as you get 10 feet in the air. I’m





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# Meet the grotesques of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption

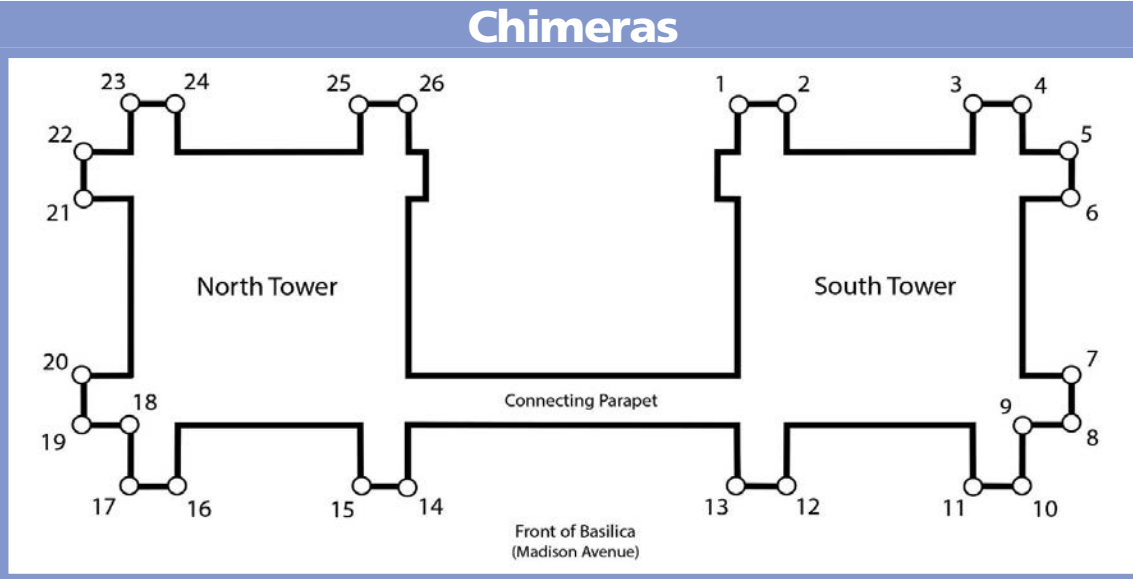
Snarling and frightening, mysterious and adorable, the outside of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption features 58 terracotta figures known collectively as grotesques.

The 26 most prominent creatures — known as chimera — sit atop the Cathedral, looking down and over the people of Covington. The remaining 32 are gargoyles, which jut from the sides of the Cathedral. While the Covington gargoyles are strictly ornamental, in medieval Gothic architecture, gargoyles serve a practical function as downspouts, directing rain-water away from the church building.

Each of the grotesques is a unique creature. The chimeras are designed and named after their cousins located on Notre Dame Cathedral, Paris, France; the gargoyles were designed by Newport artist and monu-

ment designer Edward Johnson, with the originals manufactured by Carl Brothers, Covington. Boston Valley Terra Cotta recreated and manufactured all the current

Enzweiler, Cathedral archivist and historian, for his work in documenting the grotesques.



grotesques that have returned to their posts. The newly crafted creatures feature weep holes and have been affixed to the Cathedral with stainless steel rods (as opposed to carbon steel) to mitigate the damage water and freeze cycles had on the originals.

Featured here are photos and names — in English and (French) — of the chimera along with a map identifying their location on Covington’s cathedral. And while the gargoyles are nameless (the Cathedral historian has been on 10-year hunt but, so far, their names remain a mystery), photos and a map to their location can be found on page 14.

Information about the names of the chimera is from Camille, Michael. “The Gargoyles of Notre Dame: Medievalism and the Monsters of Modernity,” Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009. The *Messenger* thanks Stephen



1. The Owl (La Chouette)



2. Shrouded Bird (Osieau enrubanne')



3. Howling Demon (Demon hurlant)



4. Cat (Chat)



5. Taurus (Taureau)



6. Horned Demon (Démon cornu)



7. The Elephant (L'éléphant)



8. Dragon with Bent Arms (Dragon aux bras pliés)



9. Bird Devouring Grapes (Oiseau dévorant des raisins)



10. Horned Goat Demon (Démon bouc cornu)



11. The Devouring Beast (Bête dévorante)



12. The Pensive Demon (Le Démon pensif)





13. Cerberus (Cerbère)



14. The Boar (Le Sanglier)



15. The Wandering Jew (Le Juif errant)



16. Demon Squashing A Toad (Démon écrasant un crapaud)



17. Unicorn Demon (Démon licorne)



18. Pelican in Her Piety (Le Pélican)



19. The Griffin (Le Griffon)



20. Bird-Headed Beast (Bête à tête d'oiseau)



21. Fanged Reptilian Beast (Bête reptilienne à crocs)



22. Monkey Satyr (Le Singe Satyre)



23. Dog-Headed Woman (Femme à tête de chien)



24. Bird with Open Wings (Oiseau aux ailes déployées)



25. The Goat (La Houc)



26. Bird with Open Beak (Oiseau le bec ouvert)

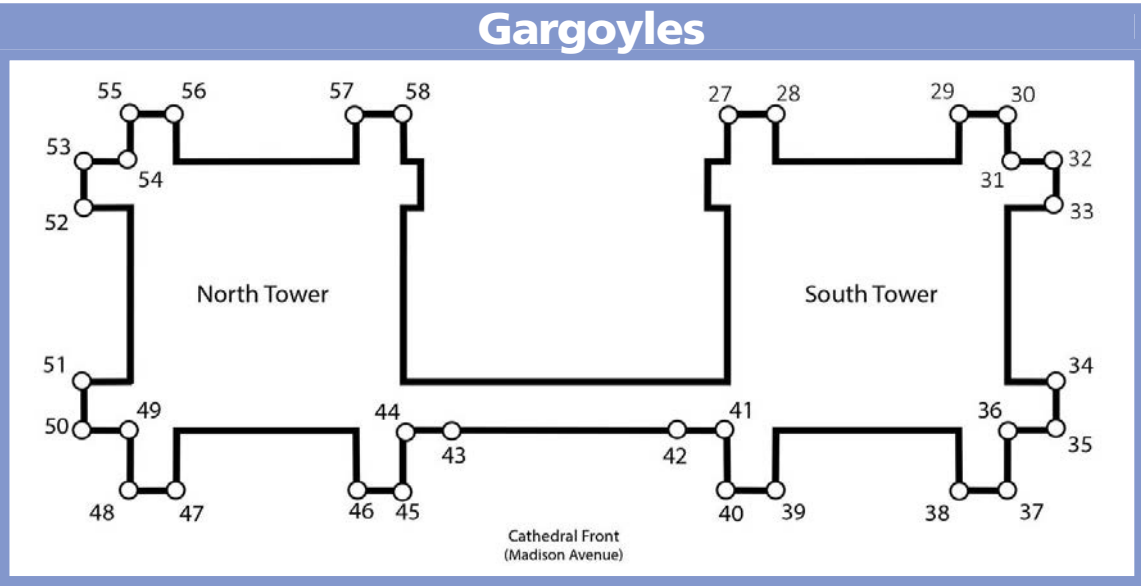


Rob Davis of Trisco Systems prepares the final gargoyle for hoisting.



As work on the Restored in Christ restoration project ends, there is still time to financially contribute to the project. Donations are needed to close a \$300k funding gap. Make a donation and add your name to the already nearly 2,000 donors at [covidio.org/give](https://covidio.org/give) and click on "Make a Gift" to Restored in Christ.





When Don Knochelman, Father Ryan Maher, and Brian Walters opened the cases of the newly arrived gargoyles, what greeted them were the familiar faces they've seen before. This time however, their condition was pristine and the gargoyles were ready to be returned to their home on the sides of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption.



Gargoyle 27



Gargoyle 28



Gargoyle 29



Gargoyle 30



Gargoyle 31



Gargoyle 32



Gargoyle 33



Gargoyle 34



Gargoyle 35



Gargoyle 36



Gargoyle 37



Gargoyle 38





Gargoyle 39



Gargoyle 40



Gargoyle 41



Gargoyle 42



Gargoyle 43



Gargoyle 44



Gargoyle 45



Gargoyle 46



Gargoyle 47



Gargoyle 48



Gargoyle 49



Gargoyle 50



Gargoyle 51



Gargoyle 52



Gargoyle 53



Gargoyle 54



Gargoyle 55



Gargoyle 56



Gargoyle 57



Gargoyle 58



# The Bishops of Covington and their contributions to the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption

Bella Bailey  
Multimedia Correspondent

When Bishop Maes built the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, many projects were left unfinished, like the façade and stained-glass windows. Over the last 100 years the Bishops of the Diocese of Covington have each added to the interior of the Cathedral, contributing to the vision and hope of Bishop Maes to have a Cathedral worthy to be the house of God.

**Bishop Camillus Maes, the third Bishop of the Diocese of Covington**

- Erected the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption including the original chimera and gargoyles, as well as most of the façade.
- Installed many of the large stained-glass windows in the Cathedral, with few being left unfinished due to the first world war.

- Bishop Maes left instructions to his Vicar General (and future Bishop) Father Ferdinand Brossart to install mosaic stations of the cross.

**Bishop Ferdinand Brossart, the fourth Bishop of the Diocese of Covington**

- Coordinated the logistics and managed the money for the Cathedral under Bishop Maes.
- Installed the mosaic stations of the cross as directed by Bishop Maes.
- Completed the installation of the stained glass windows.

**Bishop Francis Howard, the fifth Bishop of the Diocese of Covington**

- Added a baptistry to the side of the Cathedral, making the baptistry the only structure of the Cathedral not present during Bishop Maes' lifetime.

- Installed the Wicks pipe organ which is still in use today.

**Bishop William Mulloy, the sixth Bishop of the Diocese of Covington**

- Attempted to repair the damaged chimera with concrete and rebar.
- Installed much of the wood detailing seen in the Cathedral today, including the large crucifix, baldacchino, choir stalls, pulpit, cathedra and decorative wood screens around the Mary and St. Joseph altars.
- Restored the Duveneck artwork in the Blessed Sacrament chapel.
- Enlarged the sanctuary to fit the choir and organ, with a new altar being situated just in front of the baldacchino.
- Installed new communion railing.
- Cleaned and repaired the entire interior of the Cathedral, including the ceiling, windows and walls.
- Replaced original electrical wiring and installed the light fixtures seen today.

**Bishop Richard Ackerman, the seventh Bishop of the Diocese of Covington**

- Created the Sacred Heart altar.
- Brought the Schwab Organ, which resides under the rose window, to the Cathedral.

**Bishop Robert Muench, the ninth Bishop of the Diocese of Covington**

- Completed major renovations to the interior of the Cathedral including the addition of the baptismal pool, the reconciliation chapel, air conditioning and ramps up to the altar.
- The renovations included moving the altar forward to be in the architectural center of the Church, a new altar which was fashioned from Bishop Mulloy's altar and communion rails, reconfiguring the pews, cleaning of the interior and exterior of the building and upgrading the sound system.

**Bishop Roger Foys, the tenth Bishop of the Diocese of Covington**

- Completed the façade which Bishop Maes was unable to complete with the addition of 24 saint statues representing the parishes of the Dioceses, and the tympana over the north and south portal doors.
- Fashioned the reliquary altar using the same type of wood Bishop Mulloy used for the baldacchino.
- Commissioned the stencil work which is seen behind the Mary, St. Joseph and Sacred Heart altars, as well as behind the tabernacle in the Blessed Sacrament chapel.
- Recommissioned the old baptistry to be the final resting place of Bishop Maes, and returned Bishop Maes' remains to the Cathedral.

(Continued on page 17)





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**Bishop John Iffert, the eleventh Bishop of the Diocese of Covington**

- With the completion of the Restored in Christ restoration, Bishop Iffert will have many notable contributions to the Cathedral attributed to his episcopacy.
- These include the restoration of the chimera and gargoyles, the cleaning of the entire edifice and façade, the restoration of buttresses, piers, belt courses, balustrades, colonnades, stained glass, tracery and delicate decorative elements.



(above, left) This photo features contributions from three different Bishops, with the delicate woodworking of Bishop Mulloy, the stenciling behind the Marian altar and the reliquary of Bishop Foys, and the restructured sanctuary of Bishop Muench.

(above, right) The new altar, a contribution of Bishop Muench, is constructed of the altar railings from Bishop Mulloy, with the decorative tiles being repurposed from the railing. The altar is set to the backdrop of the Wicks pipe organ, a contribution of Bishop Howard.

(below) On the façade of the Cathedral, Bishop Foys contributed the saint statues and artwork above the north and south portal doors.



(below) The rounded woodwork, now often used as a viewing gallery for the reliquary, was a contribution of Bishop Mulloy when the altar of the time was moved to the front of the baldacchino. The woodwork was used as seating for members of the choir who were situated behind and around the altar.



**CONGRATULATIONS**

to the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption  
on the completion of its historic restoration.

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Stephen Koplyay, SPHR, 1125 Madison Avenue, Covington, KY 41011-3115; fax 859/392-1589; SKoplyay@CovDio.org.

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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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## 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.

## ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

The Diocese of Covington is accepting applications for the full-time Curia position of Administrative Assistant. The Office of Catechesis and Evangelization facilitates ministries such as adult formation, catechist and religion teacher certification, marriage preparation, wedding anniversary vespers, divorced or separated ministry, family ministry, young adult ministry, and Catholic scouting. The Administrative Assistant provides a range of support to the program staff including data collection and management across a wide area; project logistics, coordination, and timelines; maintenance of the office master calendar; regularly updating the office web page; religion teacher certification status updates; etc. The position requires a detail-oriented practicing Roman Catholic with exceptional interpersonal and general office skills, including MS Office experience. Interested individuals are asked to send a cover letter, resume with compensation history, and at least five references with contact email addresses to Stephen Koplyay, SPHR at skoplyay@covdio.org





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# A Cathedral’s enduring legacy

Stephen Enzweiler  
Cathedral Historian

On a warm, cloudless June morning, a father and son stood together on the sidewalk on Madison Avenue gazing up at the imposing façade of the Cathedral Basilica. As they stood there, they admired the statues of the saints, pondered the tympana reliefs above the portals, and marveled at the architectural accomplishment of the recently restored limestone. Just then, they were surprised by an old man dressed in tattered clothes and wrap-around sunglasses who approached them with the lively greeting, “Hi kids! Have you been inside?”

The father and son said they had. With an almost child-like enthusiasm, the old man began to describe his many experiences of visiting the Cathedral Basilica, expressing a distinct sense of the awe and wonder he found there. “You got to go inside and experience it,” he went on to say, his voice growing increasingly emotional. “Go inside and sit in the last pew for a while and just look around at everything,” he said. “Then, get up and go sit in the front pew for a while and look around. It’s... *amazing!*”

As he continued to tell his story, it quickly became apparent to the father and son that the old man wasn’t simply describing the things he saw. Rather, his words seemed to

know he could always go to find peace and hope. Then he turned to continue on his way down the street. The father and son thanked him for stopping to talk. He turned around and smiled. “No,” he said. “Thank *you* for taking the time to talk with *me*.”

For anyone who spends any time hanging around the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption in Covington, this kind of encounter isn’t uncommon. At any hour of the day, people can be seen pausing in front of the façade or lingering in the parking lot, milling about in groups or by themselves, looking up at the limestone edifice towering over them, pointing to it, talking about it, snapping photos of it or just standing in its shadow trying to take it all in.

Tens of thousands travel to Covington each year to see it. They come on tours, in groups large and small, as individuals and families, young and old, and from a wide variety of faiths. They come from places with far-away names ... from France, Germany, Poland and Japan, from small towns and great cities across America, and from people’s homes just around the corner. But to think such attention is a modern phenomenon would be to forget how much excitement it generated and the attention that was paid to it even before it was built more than 125 years ago.

The old St. Mary’s Cathedral on Eighth Street, built in

1853 when the Diocese was established, had for decades been suffering from the effects of overuse, age and environmental decline without any effective means of rescue. Accounts of its condition frequently appeared in the local papers, with one newspaper describing it as being one of the “least impressive” buildings in the city. Everyone knew a new cathedral was needed, and by early 1894, the nearly 600 Catholic families served by the old cathedral hinged their hopes on the new house of worship planned for the corner of Twelfth Street and Madison Avenue. Once the plans were made public and its details revealed, the newspapers quickly understood the scale of the undertaking and seized on the excitement it generated.

“The building will be an ornament to Covington,” the *Cincinnati Enquirer* predicted, “in fact, (it) would be to a city of 10 times its size! Even

uneducated eyes can at a glance perceive the manifold beauties of architectural skill and ability combined in the construction of the edifice.” But while Bishop Maes laid no claims to it being as superb and grand as the cathedrals that graced England and the continent of Europe, he was con-

(Continued on page 20)



Cathedral Basilica Archives  
The nearly completed St. Mary’s Cathedral towering above the Covington skyline, c. early 1900.

take on the tone of a testimonial of how his encounter with the Cathedral had caused a change in him somehow. He said he often liked to go in and just sit. Nothing more. He also made the point of how “very grateful” he was that the Cathedral was there, because he said it was a place where he



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*The Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption has stood as a beacon of the beauty of our Catholic faith for the Diocese of Covington. The people of St. Mary of the Assumption Parish in Alexandria send congratulations on the completion of the Restored in Christ project.*

St. Mary of the Assumption Parish  
Alexandria



(Continued from page 19)

vinced it would become the “finest temple of purely gothic architecture in America.”

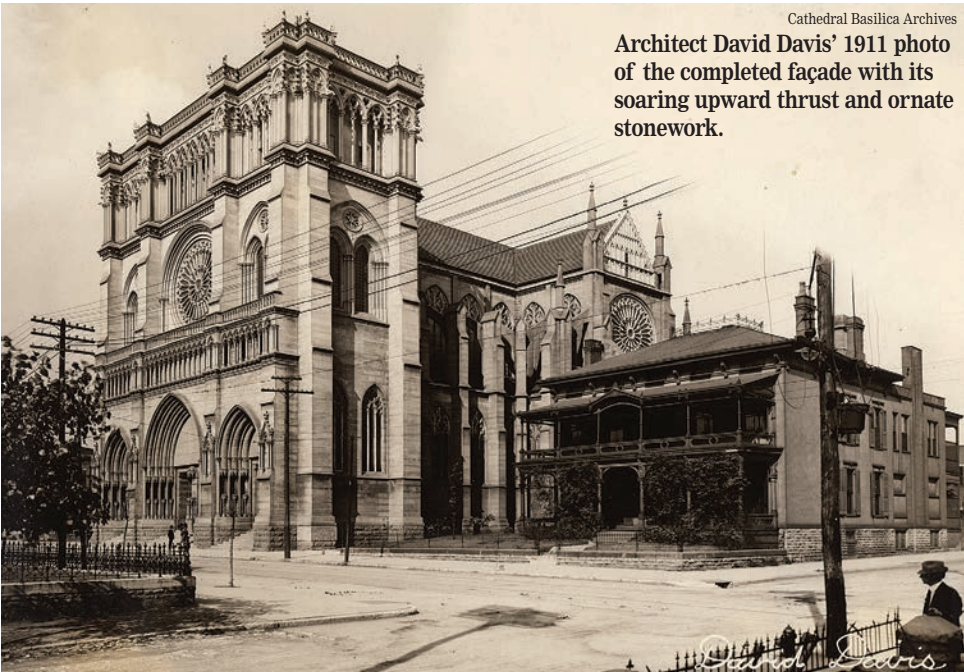
His architect, Leon Coquard, in a paper written in 1917, declared that St. Mary’s Cathedral “was designed with the idea in mind that it should stand for centuries as a monument symbolical of the strength and purity of the Catholic faith.”

On Sunday, Sept. 8, 1895, Bishop Camillus Paul Maes, the third Bishop of Covington, placed the cornerstone to the new Cathedral, still under construction. In his remarks that day, he told the more than 3,000 in attendance:

“The building of a church is a great act of religion. Of all the works performed by man, there is none greater — it is at once an act of mercy, of charity and devotion. Consider what cheering prospects this day opens to our view, and how intimately connected with the good of man — of yourselves, your children, nay unborn generations, is the building we have undertaken. We are here assembled to raise a temple to the honor of the Supreme Being, in which the voice of Religion will be heard, teaching us the Science of Salvation — introducing us to objects divine and immortal — elevating our thoughts above this earth to an Eternal future, and showing us how to attain the end of our creation.”

For six more years, the difficult work continued at the corner of Twelfth and Madison while the people of Covington watched in studied fascination as the vision of this new creation gradually took shape. Then on a cold January day in 1901, the people of Covington at last looked out their windows and saw their finished cathedral as it towered above the rest of the city. Soaring walls of stone and glass were surrounded by a web of flying buttresses and crowned by snarling gargoyles, mythical beasts and monsters.

No one had ever seen anything like it before.



Cathedral Basilica Archives

Architect David Davis’ 1911 photo of the completed façade with its soaring upward thrust and ornate stonework.

Suddenly, people who had never known anything of the old world now found it in their midst. It was as if a great cathedral from the Medieval era had traveled through time and was somehow planted in their city. The new St. Mary’s Cathedral was so magnificent to the people of the day, it put Covington on the map as a destination, and it forever changed the lives of the people who lived there.

Even before the façade was added in 1910, artists and architects were streaming into Covington “from all parts of the nation,” one paper reported, “to see Covington’s famous Cathedral and to go away full of praise for the artistic triumph gained by Kentucky’s second city.” In 1914, the *Kentucky Post* added that the city suddenly found it “had risen high in the architectural annals of America by possessing the perfect Gothic edifice.”

It’s important to point out that Bishop Maes’ vision had

never been to imitate or recreate what could already be found in Europe, but to bring into existence something *new* for his people, something that would give them a deeper and more profound spiritual encounter as well as a new art and architectural aesthetic for the city and the culture. In the end, he chose to build in the High Gothic style of 13th century France, not because he had any particular attachment to it, but because he knew that the splendor of the Gothic cathedral leads one invariably to the <<via pulchritudinis>>, the way of beauty — that enigmatic blend of art and religion that leads man on the privileged path by which he may approach the mystery of God.

“Centered within the cathedral are all the spiritual means which Jesus Christ places within His church for men’s salvation,” Bishop Maes wrote in his 1910 Jubilee message to the people of Covington. “Enter it freely, seek the Corpus Christi chapel, where the quiet and mysterious light shed around you will enable you to enter it yourself, realize God’s presence and help you on your weary way to see God’s will and lead a Christian life.”

For more than 125 years, the Catholics of the Diocese, the people of Covington, and throngs of visitors from around the world have been coming here to see the Cathedral Basilica. And they continue to come, seeking that spiritual encounter Bishop Maes always hoped they would find. It is a legacy that is still enduring well into the second century of its life, and it promises to endure for centuries to come. All of this because of a saintly Bishop who poured out 30 years of his life to give the people “this holy temple, that the soul, wearied with the things of earth, will come and commune with her God.”

The enduring legacy of the Cathedral Basilica is that it belongs to everyone and has always belonged to everyone, even to old men in tattered clothes and wrap-around sunglasses.

# SHOPPER’S GUIDE

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# The Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption restoration in the news: both local and national

Bella Bailey

Multimedia Correspondent

The Restored in Christ, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption restoration project, kicked off in 2023, when the chimera were removed to make way for their restored counterparts. Since then, the restoration of the awe-inspiring building has garnered local and national news coverage. Most notably, the Associate Press (AP) visited the Cathedral, referring to it in their finished story as “America’s Notre Dame.”

The AP published two articles on the restoration of the Cathedral, one entitled “A Kentucky cathedral called ‘America’s Notre Dame’ gets a rehab, gargoyles and all” and the second entitled “Final gargoyle returned to its perch atop rehabbed Kentucky cathedral modeled after Notre Dame.” Their reporting featured video interviews with Father Ryan Maher, rector of the Cathedral; Stephen Enzweiler, cathedral historian; and Brian Walter, chief executive officer of Trisco Systems. In

addition to the video interviews, the AP’s reporting features original photos of the gargoyles.

Along with the AP’s strong coverage of the restoration project, local media channels contributed pieces, including LinkNKy, which released a piece called, “Chimera return to the top of the Cathedral Basilica in Covington,” and WLWT5 which published an article titled, “Diocese close to completing restoration of Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption.” Kentucky Educational Television (KET), the

Kentucky network of the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) visited the Cathedral for its original reporting in April of 2026, preparations are being made for their piece to air on the KET network in October of 2026.

To catch up on the Associated Press’, LinkNKY’s and WLWT5’s coverage of the Cathedral restoration project, scan the QR code or go to [covdio.org/messenger](http://covdio.org/messenger), where there is also the *Messenger*’s own original reporting and video coverage.



Scan the QR code to go to the Messenger website for original *Messenger* reporting, videography and photos, as well as the local and national news coverage of the Cathedral restoration.

# Cathedral docents give more than tours, but insight into the cathedral as ‘more than just a building’

Maura Baker

Staff Writer

Every week, people come to the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption from around the globe for a multitude of reasons. Parishioners visit to celebrate Mass, locals stop on the street to marvel at the architecture and tourists step inside to take in the artwork and peace the historic Gothic cathedral brings.

Every stained-glass window, mosaic and painting is there with a purpose, and inquisitive minds often come to the cathedral seeking to learn more. This education is the role of cathedral docents — volunteers eager to share the beauty of the cathedral with anyone who visits for a tour.

John Peavler, a parishioner of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, is one of these docents. “My role is to provide enlightenment and information to people who come into the cathedral,” Mr. Peavler said about his ministry, “and to help them to realize it’s so much more than just a building — that it is a place for inspiration and enlightenment and meditation and growth.”

Mr. Peavler enjoys telling people about all the “little details” in the cathedral. “It’s so much more than just construction and wood and stone and glass. There’s a story, everything in there.”

Having officially joined the parish in 1991, Mr. Peavler was initially exposed to the cathedral while a student at Thomas More University. Although not a member of the Catholic Church at the time, Mr. Peavler sung with TMU’s chorus, who did a combined concert at the cathedral with the Bishop’s Choir in 1977. Through meeting his wife in the chorus, and over time, Mr. Peavler eventually went through OCIA (then RCIA) and became both a member of the Catholic Church and a parishioner. It’s from there that he took interest in becoming a docent.

“I learned from the other tour guides,” he said, “the past generation.” At first, the docents were an “unorganized group,” according to Mr. Peavler, with the volunteers taking it upon themselves to learn all they could about the cathedral — some of them even well into their 80s and having experienced “much of their life” in the church.

That’s when Steve Enzweiler, the cathedral’s historian, came onto the scene, said Mr. Peavler, and helped organize the docents.

“We had classes for a while,” he said, “talking about a lot of interesting things that we never knew, and that just gave us more direction as to how we handled the tours.”

When guiding tour groups, Mr. Peavler says that, regardless of his audience — from school children to the elderly — “I want them to walk away from there feeling they learned something that they’ll remember,” he said. “I want them to come back and visit again, and I want to make it a very welcoming event that’s enjoyable.”

To learn more about touring the cathedral, or to schedule a guided tour with a docent, visit <https://covcathedral.com/visiting-tours/>.



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