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



(above) Archbishop Robert Casey, of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati — wearing a customized jersey — and Bishop John Iffert, of the Diocese of Covington, walk together into the dugout of Great American Ballpark.



(above) Cecilia and Shane Baker, parishioners, St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood, walk in a parade of people from both sides of the river as part of the pre-game ceremonies.
(right) Bishop Iffert is surprised by Reds mascot “Gapper” while taking a photo with fellow mascot “Rosie Red” on the field.



(above, left) Father Michael Willig threw the ceremonial first pitch, while his brother Father Jacob Willig caught. Father Michael is currently the Director of Vocations for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati. Father Jacob is currently a theology instructor at Mount St. Mary's Seminary. Both brothers are priests for the Archdiocese of Cincinnati.
(above, right) Savana Baumgartner, a parishioner of All Saints Parish, Walton, and her family, celebrate after delivering the game ball.
(below) Deacon Brian Cox and Deacon Greg Meier appear on the Reds jumbotron as they are recognized for their military service.



Bailey and Baker photos

Love in action at the old ball game — diocese and archdiocese take to the diamond for the second annual Catholic Family Night

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

The second ever Catholic Family Night brought together both sides of the river — the Diocese of Covington and the Archdiocese of Cincinnati — to celebrate the theme of “Love in Action” at Great American Ballpark, Cincinnati.

It was a hot and sunny evening, Sept. 5, as Catholics of all ages filled the stadium to watch the Cincinnati Reds take on the Milwaukee Brewers. A parade of people marched around the field as festivities began, a wave of home-team red mixed in with crosses and medals.

Joining them was Bishop John Iffert and Archbishop Robert Casey — along with a handful of representatives from Catholic Charities of Northern Kentucky and Catholic organizations across the river who work to live out the theme and mission of love in

action.

Jorja Kremer, a volunteer of Catholic Charities who tends to the Parish Kitchen garden, Sister Nance Hehman, who serves through the mobile food pantry and Chuck Faeth, who helps spearhead Catholic Charities’ prison ministry, were all recognized for their acts of love on the field as excitement for the evening’s game grew.

Also present was Savana Baumgartner, a parishioner of All Saints Parish, Walton, whose “ministry of joy,” as put by Catholic Charities volunteer coordinator Jill Walch, includes a special devotion to the Blessed Virgin. Ms. Baumgartner delivered the evening’s game ball to the pitcher’s mound — smiling all the way.

After the first pitch, the game proceeded through weather delays as a storm overtook the stadium — but after a rough game on wet ground, the Cincinnati Reds still pulled through with 5-3 victory.

(Continued on page 16)

Seminary Ball returns to support seminarian formation costs

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

The Diocese of Covington is once again hosting the Seminary Ball, Oct. 16. The Ball is a kick-off event to promote the Seminary Education Fund collection across the Diocese, Oct. 17-18. With a record breaking 650 people in attendance at the 2025 ball, the event is the largest hosted by the Diocese annually and is the only fundraiser for seminarian formation.

“This event is really to celebrate our priests, to celebrate our seminarians and to announce that this collection will be taken this weekend. And asking people to pray if God’s calling them to be generous to it,” said Jim Hess, director of the Office of Stewardship and Mission Services. “The event itself is really enjoyable,” he said.

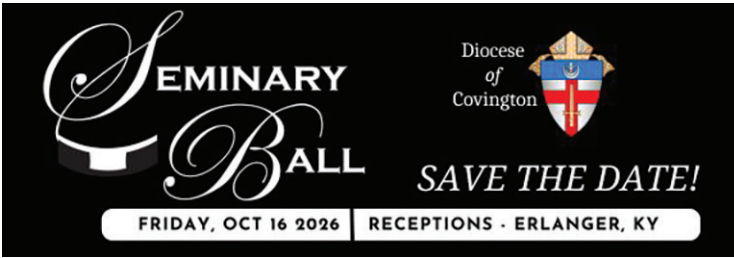
Hosted at Receptions Event Center, Erlanger, the event centers around the seminarians, including a new feature video focused on the seminarians Totus Tuus assignment, as well as a live seminarian Q&A before the dance floor is opened and the late-night snacks are brought out.

In addition to celebrating diocesan seminarians and priests, the Seminary Ball also spreads awareness for the vocation of religious life.

“It’s also the largest vocations awareness event that we have in the Diocese,” said Mr. Hess. “Last year I think we had six different tables of college-campus ministry students that were able to attend the Seminary Ball,” he said. “It’s an educational opportunity for the college students and young adults that are there, for them to consider their own vocation and for them to get to have experience with the seminarians in our Diocese, to see that, for them to

understand that we are all called to discern our vocation.”

“It’s a really fun event; it’s really the best party the Diocese throws all year. I think everybody should go, everybody would enjoy it,” said Mr. Hess.



(above) Bishop John Iffert emcees the seminarian Q&A program, where guests are encouraged to fill out question cards for the seminarians.



(left) The Seminary Ball is an opportunity for fellowship and community in the spirit of support for seminarian education and formation.

All invited to World Day of Prayer for Migrants to discover more on Catholic Social Teaching, migration law’s impact on children

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

People across the diocese are invited to Mother of God Church, Covington, Sept. 27, for an afternoon of prayer and communal gathering, 2-3 p.m. This service is in recognition of World Day of Prayer for Migrants — established in 1914 by Pope Pius X. This year’s chosen theme for the 11th World Day of Prayer for Migrants, as recommended by Pope Leo XIV, is “Even just one of these children,” focusing on the need for pastoral care for migrant and refugee minors.

The event is held on behalf of the Intercommunity Sisters Peace and Justice Committee, and organized by Mother of God’s Catholic Social Teaching and Action Committee — consisting of parishioners Carol Fausz, Dave and Melanie Braukman and Marilyn Schleyer.

The committee agreed to host this year’s service at Mother of God — with Father Michael Comer, pastor, as a speaker alongside Mini Masih, a volunteer specialist with Kentucky Refugee Ministries.

With last year’s World Day of Prayer for Migrants held at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, it was the thought of the Intercommunity Sisters Peace and Justice Committee to “infuse the energy” of the day into the diocese, as opposed to holding it within the three congregations, according to Ms. Schleyer, who is also an Associate of the Congregation of Divine Providence.

The evening’s service will reflect on the “plight of the oppressed and the poor as it affects children,” Ms. Schleyer elaborated on the upcoming service. Speaker Mini Masih will talk about the impact of migration and migration laws on children socially, health-wise and psychologically.



OSV News photo/ Adrees Latif, Reuters

The wall at the U.S.-Mexico border is seen in the background as migrants from South and Central America look to surrender to immigration officials in Ruby, Ariz., June 24, 2024, after crossing into the United States from Mexico.

However, there is a “very clear understanding that everything is staying away from politics,” Ms. Schleyer said. “This is an experience that is embedded in the Beatitudes and in the Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy which is Catholic Social Teaching.

This event is free and open to the public. For further information, contact Marilyn Schleyer, ACDP at (859) 380-6155 or schleyermarilyn@gmail.com.

Save the Date

Vatican II Workshop: Proclaiming the Joy and Hope of Christ to the Modern World

The Office of Catechesis and Evangelization of the Diocese of Covington warmly invites all adults throughout the diocese to attend a special day of formation:

Vatican II: Proclaiming the Joy and Hope of Christ to the Modern World

Saturday, Nov. 14, 8:30 a.m.–4 p.m.
Ziegler Auditorium, Academic Center
Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, Kentucky

This engaging workshop will be presented by Professor Lucas Pollice, chief mission officer for the Diocese of Colorado Springs and a gifted speaker known for making the teachings of the Church both accessible and inspiring. Participants will explore the enduring vision of the Second Vatican Council, discover its profound impact on the life of the Church, and learn how its teachings continue to shape evangelization, catechesis, parish life, and Christian discipleship today.

At a time when many people are searching for hope, purpose, and spiritual direction, Vatican II reminds us that Christ is the answer to the deepest longings of the human heart.

Registration is required by Friday, Oct. 23.
To register, please visit: <https://tinyurl.com/56vtzdx2>

For information, contact: Isaak A. Isaak, iisaak@covdio.org or (859) 392-1529.



Bishop’s Schedule

Sept. 13
Wedding Vespers, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 2 p.m.

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

Sept. 15
St. Vincent Board of Regents meeting, Latrobe, Penn.

Sept. 17
Priest Monthly Holy Hour, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 3 p.m.

Sept. 21–26
Our Lady of Guadalupe pilgrimage

Q&A: Bishop Iffert reflects on five years leading the Diocese of Covington

Laura Keener
Editor

Question: Looking back on your first five years as bishop, what has surprised you most about the role and about the community you serve?

Bishop Iffert: One of the most surprising things is just how warmly I have been welcomed by people. The welcome here has been very warm, and I continue to be surprised by how eager people are to have me engaged in their activities. The office of bishop somehow makes the whole Church present, and it communicates that what a person is engaged in is meaningful for the life of the Church. I was familiar with that as a pastor, because the pastor does the same thing in a parish, but as a bishop it is magnified. I am amazed at what ordination and consecration as a bishop can do, and how the bishop can embody the Church and Christ in people's lives.

Question: What about the Diocese of Covington itself? Was there anything that surprised you?

Bishop Iffert: One surprise is how much it feels like home. I come from the very southern part of Illinois, where Midwestern and Southern culture mix, and I feel the same thing here in Covington. It is also the same Catholic German settler culture, with similar settlement patterns. The other surprise is the strength of the Church here. We have a very strong and dynamic Church in Covington, especially the strength of the school system. To have the num-

ber of students we do, and such a strong school system, has been amazing.

Question: Has the office of bishop itself been fundamentally different than what you thought it would be?

Bishop Iffert: Not really. I had always worked closely with bishops, so I had seen what bishops do. The one thing that has surprised me is how much there is to contribute

beyond the diocese — to the life of the Church in the region, the national Church and even the universal Church. I am engaged with a couple of committees for the conference, and there is also the work of maintaining fraternity among the bishops in the province and region. I have been a little surprised by how often that takes me outside the diocese, but it is good. Every bishop has a responsibility not only to his diocese, but to the larger Church as well.

Question: You mentioned before how well the bishops respect and work together. Has that been refreshing?

Bishop Iffert: Yes, refreshing. Sometimes if you read media, even Catholic media, you get the idea that bishops are at one another's throats, or that clergy are marked by careerism. I have never found that to be true. Five years in, the fraternity among the bishops is overwhelming. Even bishops who disagree, maybe even publicly, can still be very supportive of one another. There are bishops who would do things differently than I would do them, or decide things differently than I would decide them, but I have always felt sup-

ported by my brother bishops, I've never seen a lack of caring. Terms like liberal and conservative get thrown around, but there is a fraternity among the bishops that bridges all of that.

Question: In your first five years, you have seen quite a bit of change — the death of two popes, the election of the first American pope and the Synod on Synodality. What are your thoughts on that change?

(Continued on page 8)



Bishop John C. Iffert
Invites everyone to celebrate his
5th Anniversary in the Diocese of Covington

Bishop Iffert will celebrate a Mass with the people in each of the 5 deaneries

All Masses will be at 7:00 PM
followed by a reception and fellowship

Campbell County Deanery Monday, September 28, 2026 St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring	Southwest Deanery Tuesday, September 29, 2026 All Saints Parish, Walton
Southeast Deanery Thursday, October 1, 2026 St. Patrick, Maysville	Covington Deanery Tuesday, October 20, 2026 Holy Spirit, Newport
Northern Kenton County Wednesday, October 21, 2026 St. Pius X, Edgewood	

Diocesan students rally behind suicide prevention and awareness program

Bella Bailey

Multimedia Correspondent

Newport Central Catholic High School, Newport, is opening its doors to the community for the first Real Talk Real Hope, Aug. 21, 6-8:30 p.m., a suicide prevention and awareness program hosted by the Blessings List Ministry and Cincinnati Children's Zero Suicide team. The two-and-a-half-hour program will include community building activities, a keynote speaker, separate student and adult programming with small group discussion and guidance by mental health professionals from throughout the Diocese and the Cincinnati Children's team.

The goal is to create an event which will inspire, and instill hope in the community, that when everything seems dark, there is still light.

"We really want to focus on creating a sense of community, building awareness and education, but most importantly, empowering people with a feeling of hope," said Christine Whelan, member of the Blessing List Ministry, Cincinnati Children's Zero Suicide team and a former Newport Central Catholic parent.

Students from across the Diocese have been involved in the planning and fundraising of the event, with seven students from Newport Central Catholic stepping up in a big way.

"The students have been fantastic," said Mrs. Whelan. "They are taking all of this very seriously and really putting their hearts and souls into it."

A senior NCC student has designed all of the event flyers, while others have helped spread the word on social media and throughout the community. In addition, the students have helped organize fundraising opportunities.

"We're selling wristbands for the event for an out of uniform day, they are the ones who have come up with this idea of the wristbands, they designed the wristbands," said Mrs. Whelan.

In addition to wristbands, encouraging notecards have been designed from students across the Diocese at Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria, and St. Therese School, Southgate, as well as public elementary schools. Mrs. Whelan said the most popular packs are those designed by Diocesan students.

"The format of the event was student driven and student led. We let them tell us, 'What do you think kids want to hear about,'" said Mrs. Whelan.

To begin the program, students and their parents, or other adults, will participate in a community building activity "where the kids and the adults will see that many of the hard experiences that they've had in life, they are not the only ones who have experienced it," she said.

The keynote speaker of the event will be a young man and his mother, speaking from firsthand experience with suicide. Mrs. Whelan said, "they're story is really powerful."

The students will then have the chance to ask a panel including the keynote speaker and other mental health professionals ques-



tions before breaking into small groups. During this, the professionals of the Cincinnati Children's team will be discussing with the adults ways to minimize the risk of suicide.

"You don't have to be in crisis to come," said Mrs. Whelan. "The more of us who are aware and can start talking about this and having these hard conversations, the better off our entire community is going to be as a result."

REAL TALK & REAL HOPE

2026

AN EVENING ABOUT SUICIDE PREVENTION AND HOPE.

SEPTEMBER 21st
Monday, 6:00 - 8:30

@ NEWPORT CENTRAL CATHOLIC

QUESTIONS: CHRISTINE WHELAN
(christinewhelan72@gmail.com)



THE BLESSING LIST MINISTRY



Cincinnati Children's
changing the outcome together

988

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(left) Suicide prevention wristbands featuring the name of the program, along with the suicide crisis hotline number, were designed by students at Newport Central Catholic to help raise funds for the event.

(far left) Notecards meant to encourage those in dark times were sold to fundraise for the work of the Cincinnati Children's Zero Suicide team, with the most popular designs having been penned by Diocesan students at Bishop Brossart High School and St. Therese School.

St. Therese Parish begins year of reflection with novena ahead of centennial year

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

St. Therese Parish, Southgate, was founded Aug. 15, 1927, and was placed under the care and patronage of St. Therese of Lisieux, who had been newly canonized in 1925. In Oct. of 1927, the parish was designated as a shrine to its patroness and now boasts a small reliquary with five first-class relics of St. Therese, as well as many second-class relics that were donated to the parish by St. Therese’s biological sisters.

In honor of their upcoming centennial, the parish community has begun celebrating its anniversary in small ways, including a year of reflection leading up to the official centennial year. As part of this year of reflection, Father Michael Grady, pastor, will be celebrating a novena to St. Therese, with daily reflections of the devotions of St. Therese.

“There’s a lot of things that we don’t understand about her. I think this would be enlightening for everybody,” said Father Grady. Beginning on Sept. 23, and concluding on St. Therese’s feast day, Oct. 1, the novena will be prayed nightly at 7 p.m. at the parish.

“It brings the history of who she is,” said parish secretary, Kathy Mayer. “This is to bring to the forefront what a wonderful saint she is. She’s the saint of our time, and what it can do to help revive faith in anybody.”



Bailey photos

St. Therese Parish is a dedicated shrine to St. Therese of Lisieux, with multiple first-class relics and second-class relics, which were donated to the parish by the saint’s family. Included is a rosary which was gifted to a pastor of the parish by a biological sister of St. Therese.

Parishioner and volunteer Rebecca Hugg said, “I am looking forward to learning more about St. Therese because I didn’t go to school here, I came here as an adult, so I am looking forward to learning more about her through his [Father Grady’s] talks.”

“We’re trying to re-energize the parish in general,” said Ms. Mayer.

Father Grady encourages people to attend the novena, even if they are not a member of St. Therese Parish.

“It’s a great source of blessings and graces,” he said, “If people come to this novena, they can expect a lot of graces and blessings from St. Therese because she is such a great intercessor, she’s such a great prayer for us.”

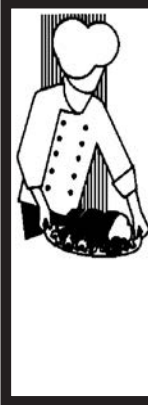


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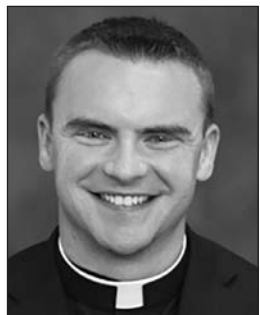
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We gain when we forgive

The readings for the Twenty-fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle A — are: Sirach 27:30–28:7, Romans 14:7–9 and Matthew 18:21–35.

One of the most difficult things to do for one another is to forgive one another. There can be a desire to hold onto that grudge, because the person has done something so horribly to us and is not deserving of our mercy and forgiveness. They have caused a wound within us that may never fully heal, or at the very least will leave a nasty scar. While it is true that some wounds take so long to heal (if they ever fully heal at all), nevertheless, we are still called

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Michael Elmlinger

to forgive all who have wronged us, because God has chosen to forgive us of all the wrongs that we have done, as well as the fact that when we choose to forgive, our hearts are set free from the imprisonment that wrath and resentment causes.

This is the essential teaching in our readings this weekend, particularly in our Gospel reading from Matthew 18:21-35. In this passage, Peter asks Jesus how often we must forgive those who wrong us. “As

many as seven times?” he asks (18:21). Now, we have to keep in mind that in Peter’s eyes, as well as the eyes of the Jewish audience to whom Jesus is speaking and Matthew is writing, forgiving someone seven times is already seen as extremely generous. At this time, many rabbis considered forgiving someone three times to be sufficient. However, Jesus goes even further. He tells Peter, “not seven times, but seventy-seven times” (18:22; also translated as “seventy times seven”). By using this extremely high number, Jesus is not intending to put a hard limit on the number seventy-seven or four hundred ninety. Instead, it seems more likely that he is using hyperbole that would have been even more emphatic at his time to emphasize the need for a limitless mercy for those who have wronged us.

That is when he goes into one of the most beautiful parables of Matthew’s Gospel: the parable of the Unforgiving Servant, where we hear about this servant who owed his master “a huge amount” (18:24), but was forgiven of his debt by his master. In the original Greek for this passage, it actually says the amount that the servant owed and is translated in other versions of this passage: “a myriad of talents.” A myriad was the equivalent of the number 10,000, while a talent was a unit of measurement for denarii. The denarius was the equivalent of a day’s wages. Now, a talent was worth 6,000 denarii, so that meant that this servant owed his master 10,000 talents, which equates to 60,000 denarii. That is the equivalent of over 160,000 years of wages that he owed! He was never going to pay that back, and yet the master chooses to completely forgive him of the debt when the servant begs him to give him more time. That is an incredible act of mercy on the part of the master!

However, when this servant met another servant who owed him “a much smaller amount” (only 100 denarii), rather than showing that same mercy he received, instead, he forces the servant to pay him what he owes. The master is not happy when he hears this news and tells the servant, “I forgave you your entire debt because you begged me to. Should you not have had pity on your fellow servant, as I had pity on you?” (18:32-33). He then throws him in prison until he is able to pay back the full debt, which is ultimately never.

When we choose not to forgive those who have wronged us, the truth is that we are very much like this unforgiving servant. In reality, while our neighbor can certainly do some horrible things to us, the debt that they owe us pales in comparison to the debt that we owe God when we sin against him, who is an infinite God. Our sins against that infinite God thus bear infinite value, and yet, God still chooses to forgive us. That is the same mercy we are to show to one another.

That said, there is another thing that choosing to forgive our neighbor does for us: it frees our hearts from the prison of resentment and wrath. Ultimately, what do we gain when we choose to hold a grudge against someone and refuse to forgive them? We do not gain anything. In

Yes in God’s backyard: Kentucky responds to the need for affordable housing

During the 2026-27 Regular Session of the Kentucky Legislature, House Bill 333 was passed and signed into law by Governor Beshear. This legislation which went into

VIEWPOINT



Karen Zengel

Catholic Conference, stated, “addressing the lack of affordable housing has been a consistent priority for our Bishops. This is a small but important first step in addressing the housing needs throughout the Commonwealth”, he continued.

The measure, widely referred to as “Yes in God’s Backyard,” is a valuable tool to allow properties owned by faith communities to be used to combat homelessness and provide reasonably priced rental housing for the poor and economically disadvantaged across Kentucky. The Bill outlines that housing developed by religious developers shall be considered permitted use and shall not be subject to permitting, review or other regulations, except for ministerial review by a local planning unit. This will expedite the process of constructing new affordable housing units.

Similar “Yes In God’s Back Yard” initiatives are underway in the State’s of California and Washington and in Gainesville, Florida, St. Paul, Minnesota and in our neighboring municipality, Columbus, Ohio. Mr. Hall noted, “religious institutions with vacant and underutilized

buildings will be looking to HB 333 to address these structures while meeting the housing needs of their neighbors.”

A 2024 analysis by the Kentucky Housing Corporation (KHC), a quasi-governmental agency that works with partners to invest in and create affordable housing opportunities for low-and moderate-income Kentuckians, determined that the “housing supply shortage is Kentucky’s most pressing housing issue with a gap of 206,207 affordable housing units.” The passage of HB 333 allows KHC to provide technical and advisory resources to religious developers regarding affordable housing developments.

KHC’s analysis mirrors the 2023 Housing Data Analysis conducted by the Northern Kentucky Area Development Corporation which notes, “the region has a 5-year housing production need of 6,650 units, which equates to 1,300 units per year. About half of the new housing demand (3,260) is low-income residents earning up to 60% of the area median household income of \$103,600. Current housing in Boone, Kenton, and Campbell is positioned for middle to upper middle professional incomes, but affordability for warehouse, service, and low wage healthcare workers is currently lacking.”

Jason Hall, the Executive Director of the

Catholic Conference, stated, “addressing the lack of affordable housing has been a consistent priority for our Bishops. This is a small but important first step in addressing the housing needs throughout the Commonwealth”, he continued.

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That we might behold

When we read the Gospel, it is tempting to think of ourselves as gathering information. We want to know what happened, what Jesus said, what it means.

That is good and necessary, but it is not the whole of what the Word asks of us. To contemplate the Gospel is to be drawn in with more than the intellect. It asks for our attention and our will, and for something we are often shy to bring to Scripture: our imagination. We are meant to stand in the crowd, to smell the bread, to feel the weight of the water jars at Cana.

I have been thinking about this because of a piece of music. My colleague at the McGrath Institute for Church Life,

Carolyn Pirtle, has written a musical called “Behold God’s Love,” composed in service to the National Eucharistic Revival. What interests me is what it reveals about how we come to the Word, and through the word to the one who is the Word.

The musical moves in three acts, and the movement is itself a Eucharistic image. Root takes us into the Exodus and the gift of manna, the Old Testament prefigurings of the Eucharist. Vine sets us at the Last Supper and lets the apostles step out of the scene to remember other meals with Jesus, at Cana, at Martha and Mary’s table, at the multiplication of the loaves. Branches brings us to a

fact, we lose something: the peace that is meant to reign within our hearts. We allow that person’s sin against us to have power over us. However, when we choose to forgive someone of the debt that they owe us, we reject that power and instead choose to live in the freedom of the children of the Father. We choose to look past the evil the person has done and ask God to intervene in their lives to trans-

form them into the person that he wants them to be. We gain nothing in refusing to forgive one another. We gain everything when we choose to forgive as the Lord himself has chosen to forgive us.

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.

house church in Corinth, where the first Christians grapple with what it means to eat his body and drink his blood. What strikes me most is the mode of remembering the work relies upon. The liturgy has a name for it, anamnesis: a remembering in which a past event, recalled, becomes present. At Mass we do not merely think back to the Passion and Resurrection; through the grace of the Spirit, that event is made present here and now. In the musical a memory is not narrated at a distance but summoned onto the stage, where it happens again before us. This is what contemplation of the Gospel is meant to do in the theater of the praying heart.

A performed art teaches this in a way a page cannot, for you cannot receive music all at once. It exists only as it unfolds. To let a scene play at its own speed, rather than the speed of our hurry, is to be schooled again in what we have nearly forgotten: to wait, to attend, to let the Word work on us rather than rush to extract its point.

There is a discipline of reading Scripture well that this kind of work quietly enforces. Coming to the Old Testament, we are anxious to leap ahead to the Gospel and move on. But you cannot see the fullness of a prefigurement unless you first let the image stand on its own terms. The manna has to be manna before it can be the Bread of Life. In the musical, the actor who plays Moses returns as Jesus, so the typology is felt before it is explained, the older image keeping its weight even as it opens toward its fulfillment.

I want to be careful about the claim. A musical, however beautiful, does not replace the Gospel text, and is not meant to. Scripture finds its fullest home when proclaimed in the liturgy, and no work of art stands in for

(Continued on page 14)

Pope calls for promoting, protecting human dignity



Pope Leo XIV greets a newlywed couple in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican after his weekly general audience Sept. 9, 2026.

Carol Glatz
Catholic News Service

Christians can help overcome the many distortions and lies about the true dignity of every human person and, in doing so, promote and defend human life, Pope Leo XIV said.

“Created in God’s image, through Christ and for His sake, we have received a unique and indelible dignity. Let us commit ourselves to promoting and defending it always, with the light and strength of the Gospel,” he said during his weekly general audience talk in St. Peter’s Square Sept. 9.

“This dignity is entrusted to the responsibility of each person: at the same time, it also demands solidarity and mutual care, overcoming the many falsifications and manipulations that still disfigure our perception of it and hinder its realization,” he said, continuing his series of talks on documents from the Second Vatican Council.

The first chapter of the conciliar constitution, “Gaudium et Spes,” underlined that the foundation and condition for the world’s most cherished values are rooted in the inherent and indelible dignity of the human person, Pope Leo said.

However, throughout history, choices have been made “that have run counter to this dignity” and “all of human life, whether individual or collective, shows itself to be a dramatic struggle between good and evil.”

“It is sin, above all, that disfigures God’s image in the human being,” the pope said in his summary to Portuguese speakers.

For example, when the body is reduced to being “an object” that can be “disposed of arbitrarily,” that is “always a denial of the dignity of the person,” he said in his main catechesis.

Only by recognizing that the human being is both body and soul together and that human dignity has a divine source can humanity “avoid possible distortions” and “address the contradictions, both old and new,” he said.

The Catholic Church teaches that human dignity never depends on “a person’s abilities, wealth or position in life, nor on the right or wrong choices made; instead, it is a gift that precedes and transcends each person, endowed by God as an expression of His unfailing love,” he said, quoting from his recent encyclical, “Magnifica Humanitas.”

The infinite dignity of the human being flows from being a child of God, created in His image and likeness, Pope Leo added.

The human person is made for relationship, communion and participation, the pope said, not isolation. Humanity is called to cultivate a “filial relationship with God the Father and a fraternal relationship with Christ and with all humankind.”

“To be a person means to perceive oneself as a gift to be shared, growing and maturing through acceptance, reciprocity and service,” he said.

Each person, he said, is “endowed with the gifts of intelligence, for seeking truth; conscience, for recognizing our ultimate calling; and freedom, for choosing the good.”

“The Holy Spirit, who gives life in Christ, makes us free and constantly assures us of our dignity as children of God, delivering us from fear and guiding us towards the ultimate goal, that life in its fullness beyond death which Christ has promised us,” he said.

“May we therefore help each other to guard and defend our God-given dignity and journey together toward our heavenly homeland,” Pope Leo said in his English summary.

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PEOPLE AND EVENTS

The weekly TV Mass from the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption is broadcast locally on The CW, Sundays, 10 —11 a.m. Viewers can tune-in on the following channels: antenna 12.2; Spectrum 117 or 25; Cincinnati Bell 17 or 517; and DirectTV 25.

Festivals, prayer services, etc. Parishes, schools and Catholic organizations of the Diocese of Covington can now have their event featured on the Diocesan online calendar. Submit your event at <https://covdio.org/calendar/>.

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.

Notre Dame Urban Education Center, Covington, is seeking adult volunteers to tutor children in grades K-8 one day a week in the Homework Plus Program, Monday–Thursday, 3–5 p.m. The program runs Sept. 8, 2026–May 13, 2027. Volunteers must be Virtus trained and compliant. Contact Brandi at (859) 630-9475 or blenihan@nduec.org for information.

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.

“Date Night with Father Nathan Cromly – An Evening Celebrating the Sacrament of Marriage,” Sept. 12, St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring, optional vigil Mass, 5 p.m.; doors open at 6:15 p.m. With his signature blend of humor, honesty, and practical wisdom, Father Cromly speaks directly to the realities of marriage, offering couples a renewed vision for their relationship and simple, meaningful ways to strengthen it. <https://brushfire.com/eagleeyeministries/>

The FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky will be hosting a “FIRE in the Hole” golf outing, Sept. 12, at

Parish festivals			
Sept. 11–12	St. Barbara, Erlanger	Sept. 20	St. Matthew, Morning View
	Rocktoberfest		12–7 p.m. Parish festival
Sept. 11–13	St. Patrick, Maysville	Sept. 25–27	St. Agnes, Ft. Wright
	Parish festival		Oktoberfest
Sept. 18–20	St. Timothy, Union	Sept. 26	St. Therese, Southgate,
	Oktoberfest		Oktoberfest

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

Bishop John Iffert will celebrate Vespers at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption in Covington to honor couples celebrating

significant wedding anniversaries in 2026. Married couples celebrating their 1st, 25th, 50th, 60th, or 60+ wedding anniversary in 2026 are invited to a Vespers celebration on Sep. 13 at 2 p.m. Anniversary couples should RSVP by August 17, 2026, at covdio.org/wedding-vespers/. Phone registrations are available through Isaak Abraham Isaak at (859) 392-1529. Reservations are required only for anniversary couples; family members and guests are welcome to attend. Congratulatory certificates will be available upon request.

Father Ryan Maher will celebrate A Mass of Belonging, Sept 15, 6 p.m., Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. Organized by the FIRE Foundation of Northern Kentucky, the Mass will bring together families, educators, parish communities, Catholic schools, and supporters to celebrate the belief that there is no separate Church for persons with disabilities — we are one flock. Following Mass, families and attendees are invited to an ice cream social.

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>

Newport Central Catholic Alumni Weekend Sept. 18 and 19. The weekend begins with a pregame celebration, Sept. 18, 6 p.m., Ciafardini Family Athletic Complex plaza. On Sept. 19, Mass, NCC St. John Paul II Chapel, 8:30 a.m. followed by the Thoroughbred 5K fun run/walk for all ages, check-in begins at 9 a.m.; run/walk 10 a.m. RSVP today at <https://ncchs.com/alumni/alumniweekend>.

“Understanding Marriage and Baptism in the OCIA Process,” presented by Dr. William Keimig. Sept.19, a workshop exploring the pastoral and canonical issues related to the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults and

Children (OCIA/OCIC). RSVP by Sept. 7, online https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSfAK93XyEMkbAFuqO1JeJH_3qI6GfVQ9AmVagIQPA-4daV1Kg/view-form . Contact Isaak at iisaak@covdio.org or (859) 392-1529.

Newport Central Catholic is partnering with Cincinnati Children’s and The Blessing List Ministry to host “Real Talk and Real Hope About Suicide Prevention,” Sept. 21, 6–8:30 p.m. at NCC. The free event is open to area teens and adults and is an opportunity to learn practical ways we can reduce suicide risk, open the door to difficult conversations, and promote a sense of community.

The Intercommunity of Women Religious Peace and Justice Committee and Mother of God Parish, Covington, will host a prayer service for the 112th World Day of Migrants and Refugees, Sept. 27, 2 p.m. at Mother of God Church, Covington. All are welcome. Pope Leo XIV has chosen the theme, “Even Just One of These Children,” taken from Matthew’s Gospel “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me.” (18:5) It focuses on the need for pastoral care for minors on the move.

St. Joseph Church in Camp Springs will be holding their Annual Oktoberfish Fish Fries on October 2nd and 9th, 2026. Dinners are served from 4:00 p.m.–7:30 p.m. The menu features hand-breaded fried cod and catfish fillets as well as baked cod, shrimp, crab cakes, salmon and a wide variety of homemade desserts. Dine-in or carry-out options available. For more information or to place a carry-out order, please call (859) 635-2491 or visit stjoseph-campsprings.org.

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.

Support group for separated and divorced begins Oct. 8 and runs through Dec. 3. New Beginnings is an eight-week support program designed to help separated and divorced individuals heal and move forward with hope. Led by facilitators who have experienced similar losses, the program will be held at Catholic Charities, Covington, 7-8:30 p.m. Registration is required, visit <https://forms.gle/PRcoSuf3Jttuuz1p7>, or call (859) 392-1529

A Marriage Encounter Experience will be held on October 9–11 at the Our Lady of the Holy Spirit Center in Norwood, Ohio. Come and learn how to enrich your marriage. Contact Jake and Carinna Henry at (513) 807-5605, application@esharing.org or visit esharing.org.

St. Timothy Parish, Union, will host a series of interactive workshops Oct. 14, Oct. 21, and Oct. 28, 7–9 p.m., Brodnick Hall, designed to provide tools to help you share your faith. Parish Missionary Disciples offers a way to deepen your relationship with Jesus Christ, transforming believers into disciples, and empowering disciples to witness to Jesus. Since 2024, over 200 members of the Diocese of Covington have participated in this program. All are welcome! Register at <https://tinyurl.com/sttimothyPMD>.

St. Henry District High School Craft Show Oct. 24, 9 a.m.–3 p.m., St. Henry Athletic Complex, 35 Cavalier Blvd., Florence. Over 100 local craftsmen display unique hand-made items — wooden toys and carvings, home décor, holiday décor, specialty coffees and nuts, homemade spices, pastry items, and more. Free face painting and a fall display photo opp. Adult admission \$5. Overflow parking at Boone County High School. Contact Cathy (859) 341-3135.

“Vatican II Workshop: Proclaiming the Joy and Hope of Christ to the Modern World,” an engaging and informative workshop presented by Prof. Lucas Pollice, chief mission officer, Diocese of Colorado Springs, Nov. 14, 8:30 a.m.–4 p.m., Thomas More University’s Ziegler Auditorium. Register by Oct. 23 online registration form: Register Here. Again, everyone is welcome to attend. Contact Isaak at iisaak@covdio.org or (859) 392-1529.

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.



Knights of Columbus Present \$17,000 Donation
Catholic Charities was honored to welcome members of the Knights of Columbus to our office for a check presentation following their 16th Annual Golf Outing. Through the generosity of golfers, sponsors, volunteers, and supporters, the event raised \$17,000 to support Catholic Charities’ mission of serving individuals and families throughout our community.

Bishop Iffert reflects on five years

(Continued from page 3)

Bishop Iffert: Synodality, this is a movement, a characterization of the Church that I welcome. I think it has been present from the beginning in the life of the Church. At the Council of Jerusalem, Peter led not by domineering, but by inviting people into discussion, giving his witness and letting people respond. I understand synodality not as putting everything up for a vote or simply airing opinions, but as valuing and listening to one another, then turning together to the Holy Spirit to discern the path forward. I think it is one of the essential qualities of the Church. I see Pope Francis, and now Pope Leo, reminding us of that and helping us recover it. It has always been a natural part of the way leadership looks in the Church, so, I embrace that.

Question: You have encouraged councils, deaneries and parish councils to adopt that kind of approach. What do you call it?

Bishop Iffert: Spiritual conversation — conversations in the Spirit. Councils sometimes need business meetings and agendas, but that should never be the main work of councils. We need to recover time spent in prayer together, holding one another in prayer, and a conversational approach attentive to the movement of the Spirit. I think we've forgotten that the reason we call it a "council" is that those people who serve are "counselors," who are intended to give pastors the benefit of their wisdom. When we state an opinion or put an idea on the table, we give up ownership of it. Then we work together to discern which ideas seem to have the life of the Holy Spirit within them and what God's will is in that moment ... It's reminding us that we, the Church, we are a living organism. We are the body of Christ, and we are the temple of the Holy Spirit. And it's reminding us to take seriously the vocation of being attentive to the way the Holy Spirit moves in the whole temple, in the whole body.

Question: Pope Francis called you to the episcopacy. What did his death mean to you, and what are your thoughts on Pope Leo?

Bishop Iffert: There will always be a special place in my heart where I mourn Pope Francis. Every bishop has a special relationship with the pope who calls him to the episcopacy; it's more than a brotherly connection, almost like a grandfatherly connection and my time with him was short. On pilgrimage to Rome last year, I was able to visit Francis' tomb at St. Mary Major and pray for him there. That was very meaningful to me. At the same time, the election of Pope Leo is exciting — an Illinoisan, a man born in the United States and a citizen of the world who knows the American context well. I think he has proven adept at advancing much of the agenda Pope Francis brought to us, perhaps even more effectively than Francis himself. I could not be more thrilled with the spiritual richness of the Petrine ministry right now.

Question: You like to travel, and since arriving here you have been on pilgrimages, a mission trip, a pastoral visit to Africa and a trip representing the USCCB. How do those travels inspire you?



(above) At his consecration, Sept. 30, 2021, Bishop Iffert presents to the congregation the Apostolic Letter appointing him the 11th Bishop of Covington. Archbishop Joseph Kurtz of Louisville was the principal consecrator with co-consecrators Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys of Covington and Bishop Michael McGovern of Belleville. Witnessing for the Holy See was Archbishop Christophe Pierre, apostolic nuncio to the United States.

(below) Bishop Iffert greets Pope Francis, Sept. 19, 2022, during his visit to the Vatican for a course for newly appointed bishops. The course is organized by the Dicastery for Bishops, the Dicastery for Evangelization and the Dicastery for Eastern Churches.



(above) Bishop Iffert chats with a family as he blesses the baby Jesus from their home nativity at the first annual Bambinelli blessing, Dec. 10, 2022, at St. Mary Park, Covington.

Bishop Iffert: Encountering the Church is what it is. My first trip to Africa was a kind of pilgrimage. I went to the Archdiocese of Kumasi to thank the archbishop and the families of the men who serve here in our diocese, and to understand the local Church that has been sending priests to us. It is a very different experience of Church — incredibly young. I learned the median age in many of these societies is as low as 17. The median age in Kentucky is 39.7. So, the Church is so much younger, even though the Church there is ancient, going back to the apostles. To witness that Church, to pray with that Church, to dance with that Church in a way that would make our little German hearts just stunned, in a way that for them is absolutely normal, all of that, gives you a broader experience of what the Church is and who Christ is in the midst of that living body. In Madagascar, I visited a parish community that began with one priest and about 40 lay people serving people living on polluted dumps. Now they feed 12,000 people a day and educate about 8,000 young people. To pray with thousands of extraordinarily poor and very young people is like being formed again. Travel is an exercise in formation and education for me; it's like a catechism. Pilgrimage travel also gives me the chance to know people from our diocese and share moments that can be life changing.

Question: You have led the diocese through one major planning process, With One Heart, and are in the middle of another, the Commissions. How are these planning processes informing your episcopacy?

Bishop Iffert: I am grateful to see fruit coming from that work. So, we did the DMI survey as we began that process and we did it again after three years. We saw movement across the diocese on many indicators, and parishes that actively worked their pastoral plans saw even stronger growth in some areas. It reinforces for me that we cannot just keep the lights on. We have to set goals and work to achieve them. That's just my experience of our human nature. What separates the With One Heart process from what we're doing now with the Commissions is the leadership development piece and that has been crucial. Many priests have completed Good Leaders, Good Shepherds and have integrated those skills into their life as a priest, especially around team formation. Then we had 70 or more lay people formed as Missionary Disciples who meet regularly now. They are now sharing that formation with others across the diocese. Planning brings intentionality. It strengthens my conviction that the Holy Spirit is calling us to be Church outside the walls and outside Sunday morning — to let liturgy form us into active agents of compassion and mercy. Planning helps us clarify how we move toward mission.

Question: What would you say about the strategic planning process happening now, especially around the Curia, resources, schools and structures?

Bishop Iffert: I often compare the Church to a Jell-O mold; the Church is very sensitive. You touch a Jell-O mold, and it quivers. It's the same way with the Church. Right now, my hands are on a lot of the life of the Church, so there is a lot of quivering, and it will take time. With the Foundation work, we are asking how we can promote a gracious response to God's goodness and move from a mindset of scarcity toward one that takes God's abundance into account.

In our Schools, Catholic Charities and Diocesan structures, we are asking how we can receive what we have been given and move forward in a way that builds on it. Our schools have been and can continue to be tremendous tools for evangelization. We have inherited a beautifully developed Catholic school system, but our Catholic school system is struggling with enroll-



(above) A picture of Pope Benedict XVI is shown at a memorial Mass celebrated by Bishop Iffert, Jan. 4, 2023, kicking off in the Diocese nine days of prayer and service.

(right) On a mission trip with Mustard Seed Communities, Jamaica, in April 2024, Bishop Iffert visits with a resident of Jacob's Ladder. Jacob's Ladder has 165 residents, all of whom have a physical or developmental disability.

(below) June 7, 2025, with the Laying on of Hands, Bishop John Iffert ordains Father Joshua Heskamp a priest for the Diocese of Covington.



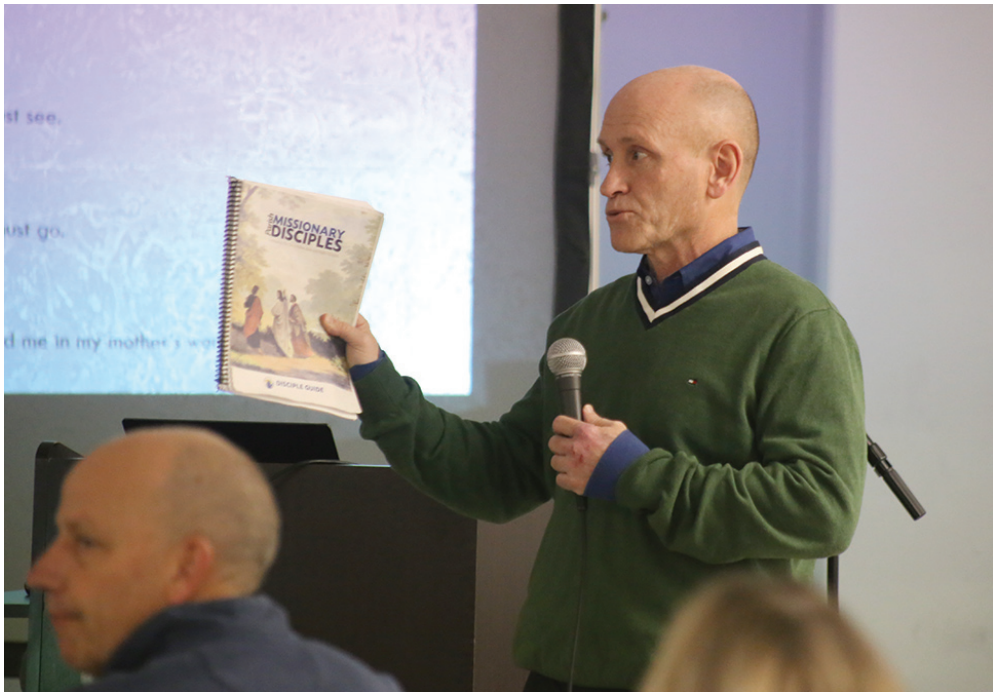
ment, where enrollment has seen decreases over last two decades. We have the crisis of how we replace the free labor of the religious who built these institutions. We're saying, okay, we have to now provide for these institutions in a different way. How do we do that? How do we do that while maintaining the strength and health of our parishes, so that the parishes can be active agents of Christ's love in the world. I know there has been fear that this is a Trojan horse to close parishes or schools, but there is no intention of that. We are hearing recommendations, inviting people to

help shape goals into plans, and bringing a realism test to what we can accomplish. I am very hopeful good can come from this time of consideration.

Question: The Catholic Church is navigating declining Mass attendance, fewer priests and changing attitudes toward religion. How do you see the diocese responding over the next five years?



(below) Jerry Otto speaks to 70 participants at the first Parish Missionary Disciples workshop, Jan. 22, 2026, at St. Mary of the Assumption Parish, Alexandria. Mr. Otto participated in the With One Heart PMD training and developed the mini-PMD that is being hosted in parishes throughout the Diocese. The 2022-2025 With One Heart process saw the development of not only the Diocesan Pastoral Plan but also pastoral plans for every parish in the Diocese.



Bishop Iffert: First, there are good signs that some of those things are changing. Over the last two years, Sunday Mass attendance across the diocese has increased by about 1,300 to 1,500 people. Lay movements and prayer groups are taking hold in people's lives in a way that I think is incredible. You know, I went for lunch the other day at PeeWee's for the first time. People kept coming to me and saying what a very Catholic place it is, that on Saturday morning there's 70

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

men in the back, they call it a chapel, here in this restaurant bar. When Jesus says, “Be the leaven in society,” Pee-wee is being the leaven and God bless him for it. So, yes, we’ve seen a lot of regression over the last couple of decades, but let’s not get so stuck in that past data that we don’t see the signs of hopefulness and change that lie ahead of us.

I see young people who are on fire for their faith, and Christian initiation numbers have increased in recent years. I went to the SEEK conference with just 1000s of college students gathered there in Columbus, Ohio — young people who want to live for their faith. The first thing I would say is, yes, we’ve had a couple of difficult decades. Our culture has changed tremendously under our feet, but I think there’s good reason to think that people are beginning to realize some of the poverty in that, you know, and so I’m very hopeful about the future.

I think we remain hopeful, that we commit to the mission and to start thinking of ourselves as constantly being in formation, constantly seeking greater conversion, constantly seeking to be greater, more effective disciples of Jesus, and turn ourselves towards the needs of others. If you’re tempted to seek sink into despair, find someone who needs you and respond to their need, and it will save you from despair. Christ will save you from despair through that action.

Question: If you could speak to the person you were on the day you became bishop five years ago, what would you tell him now?

Bishop Iffert: I would say, enjoy the ride and work hard. I have shared the advice I got from a freshman football coach: head up, feet moving. That has been valuable advice. But I do not know if I would lecture the me from five years ago. I came into this role with eyes open. If anything, I would say, stay closer to Christ. Remember to gaze on the Cross. Remember the Jesus prayer: — “Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me, a sinner” — and use it all the time. When I stay focused on Christ and his Spirit, everything is protected. When I fail to do that, I may assert myself more than I want to.

Question: What has been the most difficult challenge you have faced, and what have you learned about dealing with challenges?

Bishop Iffert: There are always going to be challenges. When I am at my best, I keep faith in Christ, listen to others and take a stance of humility. Ordination does not mean I always possess the right answer. When I enter into deliberation both with my coworkers in the vineyard, and accept the guidance that comes in prayer, that’s when I’m at my best. The challenge comes when I let myself get in the way, invest in my own pride or take misunderstanding personally. That is a spiritual journey on my end. Being consultative does not mean ceding decision making to others. Decision making is something we do together; decision taking is something a pastor or bishop must do. At some point, I have to take the risk and responsibility for a decision. The hardest thing about being a bishop is having that responsibility and not always being free, or able, to explain myself in a way others can understand.

Question: Is there anything else you want to say as you celebrate your fifth anniversary as bishop?

Bishop Iffert: Thank you for five beautiful years. I love this Church, I love the people of this Church, and I am very grateful for the way I have been received.

(right) Bishop Iffert celebrated, Aug. 15, 2026, the completion of the \$8 million Restored in Christ exterior restoration project of the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, which included replacement of all chimera and gargoyles.



(above) Bishop Iffert held an evening press conference, May 8, 2025, with four local news stations on the newly elected Pope Leo XIV.

(below) Bishop Iffert smiles as he blesses the construction of Covington’s Pope Leo Village, Nov. 25, 2025, at the groundbreaking. The Village is a part of Habitat for Humanity Greater Cincinnati’s efforts to provide affordable housing to local families.



Catholic faith endures at Pentagon 25 years after 9/11

Ann M. Augherton

Arlington Catholic Herald, OSV News

At 9:37 a.m. on Sept. 11, 2001, American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon in Arlington killing 184 people — 125 people inside the Pentagon and 53 passengers and six crew members aboard the plane.

Twenty-five years later, the repaired facade of the Pentagon still looks a little brighter and the area outside that part of the building is now the National 9/11 Pentagon Memorial. There is no central statue. Instead, there are 184 stainless-steel benches, one for each person who lost their life there.

Each bench has the name and age of the victim with a shallow pool of water underneath. There are trees, gravel and dramatic lighting best seen at night.

Interestingly, each bench was placed according to where the victim was — those representing the Pentagon victims are oriented toward the building, while the plane victims are remembered with benches placed in the direction the plane approached the building.

That plane was one of four hijacked commercial airliners that attacked the U.S. that day, killing 2,977 people and injuring thousands more.

In New York, 2,753 people died in the Twin Towers collapse, brought down by two of the planes. Forty people died in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, when passengers and crew fought back against hijackers on the fourth airliner, forcing it to crash in a field near Shanksville.

Officials believe the fourth plane was headed for the U.S. Capitol or the White House.

Inside the Pentagon, a new chapel, built on the impact site of the attack, has a 9/11 etched glass memorial piece and is adjacent to a memorial area with a list of the Pentagon victims' names etched in stone. Small pieces of paper and pencils are available for visitors to do a rubbing of the names. There is also a reflection room nearby.

Twenty-five years ago, Father Daniel Mode, an Arlington diocesan priest, was a U.S. Navy Reserve lieutenant serving reserve duty at the Pentagon as a staff officer for the chief of chaplains in the Navy Annex.

He would have been in that exact area of the Pentagon on 9/11, having frequent meetings there. Instead, he was at his parish, Queen of Apostles in Alexandria.

He heard about the attacks, and he stayed with the parish children waiting for their parents who worked in the Pentagon to pick them up. He celebrated an impromptu Mass. And then he received a phone call. There was a list of people who could've been in that part of the building and calls were being made to account for everyone.

"It quickly came home to me," he told the Arlington Catholic Herald, the diocesan news outlet.

Much has changed in the past quarter-century — barricades around Washington memorials and government buildings; Transportation Security Administration enforcement at airports; and an underlying sense of "could it happen again" for many.

Steven Jarvis, who retired from the U.S. Air Force and now works in support of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, said the Pentagon "now has a chapel and the Eucharist is present 24/7 — a testament to how God can turn bad to good, in many ways."

He said in the 1990s, Catholic Mass was celebrated in a big auditorium with the altar on a stage.

"After the plane hit, they made an indoor memorial and a chapel with a sacristy and the tabernacle," he said. The Pentagon Memorial Chapel opened on the first anniversary of the 9/11 attacks.

"In the morning, I kneel down outside the door because I know the Lord is in there, and at the end of the day," said Jarvis, a parishioner of St. Michael in Annandale. "The chapel is always open."

Jarvis is volunteer coordinator for the Pentagon Catholic Community, working with "a dedicated and devout team" of Catholic volunteers, both military and civilian.

There are 175 members with an average of 25 to 35 people attending daily Mass. It peaks on first Fridays, and they



OSV News photo/Dave Vergun, courtesy DOD

Father John Davis celebrates Mass assisted by a volunteer at the Pentagon Memorial Chapel in Arlington, Va., during the National Day of Prayer May 5, 2016. The chapel opened on the first anniversary of the 9/11 terrorist attack on the Pentagon, built directly at the impact site where the hijacked plane crashed into the Pentagon.

move back to the auditorium for Ash Wednesday and holy days of obligation, he said.

"The chapel is multi-denomination," Jarvis said, "but we are the big players because we are here every day." Catholic Masses are celebrated at 11:30 a.m. on weekdays and confession is offered before and after Mass.

Two religious orders offer the daily Mass. Dominican priests are responsible for Tuesdays and Thursdays, and the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception celebrate Mass on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays.

Dominican Father Vincent Ferrer Bagan, director of music for both the diocese and the Cathedral of St. Thomas More in Arlington, has been on the rotation for four years.

"It is quite moving," he said. Coming from a rural town in Minnesota and having been in high school on 9/11, he

said he never would have imagined he would be at the Pentagon someday. "It's a privilege to interact with Catholics who serve in that building, many who are in parishes in our diocese," he said.

"We always have each Mass offered with a pointed intention but having the chapel in that location is a good reminder for the priest and lay faithful ... to remember to pray for those who lost their lives that day and all of the military personnel who have lost their lives all these years," he said.

In the outside corridor near the chapel, Father Mode said a spot of black soot is still visible on the wall from the flames on 9/11. Perhaps it is a reminder of what was lost and what remains.



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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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Victim 0001: Friends recall Father Mychal Judge's 9/11 loss and legacy

Kimberley Heatherington
OSV News

The offering placed before the altar on Sept. 11, 2001, was unlike any ever seen at St. Peter's Catholic Church in Manhattan's Financial District: the lifeless body of 68-year-old Franciscan friar and New York City Fire Department Chaplain Father Mychal Judge.

He was killed when the 110 stories of the World Trade Center's south tower collapsed at 9:59 a.m., blasting debris into the adjacent north tower lobby where Father Judge was stationed. At the moment, he reportedly was repeatedly praying, "Jesus, please end this right now! God, please end this!" He was shortly afterward carried from the apocalyptic site.

Some four blocks away, St. Peter's own roof had been struck by landing gear from one of two hijacked jets smashed into both towers that morning. Father Judge's journey there was captured in an instantly iconic photo seen worldwide — dust-covered, slumped in a chair and already shockingly pale as he was carried by five men.

Since he lost his life, Father Judge — a friar for 47 years; a priest for 40 — has been hailed as a hero, suggested for sainthood, and praised as a selfless friend not only to first responders, but also to the poor, sick and forgotten of the Big Apple's sometimes tough streets.

Ahead of the 25th anniversary of the deadliest terrorist attack in recorded history, friends of Father Judge shared memories of his life and loss, and reflected on his legacy.

"People would often say about him, when you talk to him it was like you were the only person before him," said Father Kevin Mullen, a Franciscan friar of the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe and former president of Siena University in Loudonville, New York, where he currently teaches.

"He engaged you fully; he was not looking around for who he could talk to next. He was fully present to you," Father Mullen told OSV News. "And that's what made a difference to a lot of people about Mychal Judge — they could talk to him, bare their souls, share their good news, share their bad news. And he was going to be there for them."

On the morning of 9/11, Father Mullen, stationed in a parish approximately 15 miles from midtown Manhattan, was responsible for a funeral liturgy.

"I was aware before I started the funeral that the first tower had collapsed," he recalled. "And when I finished the funeral, I was told the second tower had collapsed. So I

knew things were getting worse."

That afternoon, he heard a radio announcement reporting an injured fire chaplain at the World Trade Center.

"And my gut said, 'That's Mychal Judge,'" Father Mullen said. "He was right across the street from a fire station that responded immediately." The church where Father Judge ministered and the friary where he lived, St. Francis of Assisi on West 31st Street, neighbored New York City Fire Department Engine 1/Ladder 24.

"And I had no doubt he was down there," Father Mullen said, referring to the disaster area.

To confirm his suspicion, he called the regional head of his order.

"As soon as he answered the phone — he didn't even say, 'Hello, Kevin' — he just said, 'It was Mychal.' And I said, 'I thought so.' That's how I learned."

Father Mullen said the already crushingly tragic day immediately became painfully personal. But nonetheless, he still found himself certain of one thing.

"I felt that if Mychal was given his choice of how he would go out of this world, that would have been his choice: to be with the firefighters, literally going with his boots on. He was there. He was present."

The first introduction Michael Daly — journalist and author of "The Book of Mychal: The Surprising Life and Heroic Death of Father Mychal Judge" from St. Martin's Griffin — had to the priest was the sound of his and others' laughter.

And it was coming from, of all places, a hospital burn unit.

Accompanying Patrick "Paddy" Brown — an FDNY captain who later died on 9/11 — Daly was there in 1994 to visit FDNY Captain John Drennan, who had been critically burned battling an apartment fire.

"So I go in," Daly recalled, "and there's all these guys laughing because of something this priest said — and I'm thinking, 'Who is this guy?'"

On 9/11, Daly, a Catholic, was at the scene of the attack for the New York Daily News when the north tower collapsed. He remembers running for his life as a massive cloud of debris — chokingly dense with pulverized concrete, glass, metal and the contents of countless offices — rolled like a tsunami through the surrounding streets.

He admits he was afterward "hazy about timing and hours and all that."

But he does know the air had finally cleared when FDNY Deputy Fire Chief Peter Hayden told him Father Judge was dead.

"And my knees just went," recalled Daly, overwhelmed with shock. "I didn't expect that; I didn't know Mychal had been down there. Someone had called over the radio for the fire chaplain earlier. But I didn't hear any response. And then — he's gone, you know?"

"I think he just ..." Daly paused, searching for the right description. "He resided deeper in you than you understood."

Daly described Father Judge walking the streets of New York City in his brown Franciscan habit, greeting homeless people by their first names, praying with them and distributing neatly folded cash.

Daly also recalled Father Judge often worked 16-hour days ministering at blazes and rescues — counseling firemen, their families and victims — and that he gently tended AIDS patients in an era when medical staff would not make physical contact.



OSV News photo/Reuters

A priest blesses the casket of New York Fire Department chaplain Franciscan Father Mychal Judge as firefighters mourn his death during a funeral Mass at St. Francis of Assisi Church in New York City Sept. 15, 2001. Father Judge died while giving last rites to a firefighter in the collapse of the World Trade Center towers on 9/11 and was the first publicly identified casualty of the terrorist attacks.

After Father Judge's death, close friends and associates revealed he was gay — but by all accounts, maintained his vow of celibacy. The response of Kevin Shea, a firefighter at FDNY Engine 40/Ladder 35 in Manhattan's Lincoln Square, apparently typified the reaction of other first responders. "He said," Daly recalled, "Well, if you tell me Michael Judge was gay, I'll tell you I just had my first gay friend."

While not "out" in the fire department, Daly said Father Judge told Fire Commissioner Thomas Von Essen, who was struggling with his son's gay identity.

"You know, he was a genius priest," said Daly. "He just was."

Father Christopher Keenan, a friar of the Province of Our Lady of Guadalupe, entered the Franciscans more than 60 years ago at Father Judge's urging and became a FDNY chaplain after his friend's death. On 9/11, he was helping in the emergency room at St. Vincent's Hospital.

About 2 miles from ground zero, St. Vincent's staff were caring for the dust-caked and dazed people who had outrun the collapse of the towers.

"I was connecting with their families to come pick them up. And about 2 o'clock in the afternoon, it kind of stopped. I left at 5:30 to walk home from 12th to 31st Street," Father Keenan recalled. "I had a shift of confessions at 6:00. I came out of the hospital, and there's doctors and nurses and staff with stretchers — still waiting for all the people that never came."

Father Keenan had been looking for Father Judge. "So when I arrived at the firehouse across the street from St. Francis of Assisi Church, I asked the guys, had they heard from Mychal? And they said, 'He died — and his body is in the back of the firehouse here.' They had set up sheets and cordoned off a section, where his body was in a black bag. And so I sat with his body for about an hour."

Father Judge had been moved to Engine 1/Ladder 24 after temporarily lying in front of St. Peter's altar.

"Then the friars came from across the street. And the firefighters gathered that were there ... and we friars sang the Blessing of St. Francis ... and then an ambulance took him to the morgue."

Father Keenan noted that six from the firehouse had also died.

Father Judge was later numbered victim DM (Disaster Manhattan) 0001-01 of 2,753 souls eventually tallied in New York City after the World Trade Towers crumpled into an infernal landscape of fiery and smoking rubble. Father Keenan himself would spend seven months assisting in that rubble with recovery efforts, afterward contracting several forms of cancer.

In Washington that day, 184 were killed when hijacked American Airlines Flight 77 crashed into the Pentagon. Another 40 aboard United Airlines Flight 93 died when a fourth hijacked plane crashed into a Pennsylvania field.

"The 25th anniversary is going to be a very solemn time," Father Mullen said. "And I hope we have that consciousness still alive in our country — that this is very, very painful, especially for the families," he shared.

"Because a lot of people have just taken this event for granted: 'Well, that's history — it happened, it's over,' he said. "But it's never over for those families. Never, ever, over."

CURIA ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

The Diocese of Covington invites qualified, actively practicing Roman Catholics to apply for the position of Curia Administrative Assistant. This full-time position will support both the Chancery office as well as the Benefits function in the Finance office, fulfilling vital logistical and operational functions in an active environment and requiring a motivated self-starter with a love for the Church, an interest in service, and a demonstrable history of maintaining confidentiality. Other requirements include experience and comfort with using Microsoft 365 software, familiarity with or willingness to learn benefits software and Camino Church Management software, strong communications skills regardless of the medium, and exceptional organizational ability and attention to detail. Interested candidates may send a letter of interest along with a comprehensive resume, including compensation history and at least five appropriate references with email contact information, by email or fax to Stephen Koplyay, SPHR, skoplyay@covdio.org, fax 859/392-1589.

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ST. JUDE PRAYER AND THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS. May the Sacred Heart of Jesus be adored, glorified, loved, and preserved throughout the world, now and forever. Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us. St. Jude, worker of miracles, pray for us. St. Jude, help for the hopeless, pray for us. Amen. L.A.D.

That we might behold

(Continued from page 5)

that. What a work like this offers is a way in, a means of entering the story more deeply so that we return to the text and the altar with our imaginations awakened and our attention retrained. It is a door, not a destination.

That entering happens in two ways. First, simply by listening, we are invited to imagine, to stand inside the scenes and let them become present to us. Second, for a community, there is the deeper labor of studying a work by preparing it for performance. Carolyn's cast were volunteers, 27 of them, from children to people in their 60s, and the hope is eventually to license the musical so that

parishes, schools and universities can mount it themselves. To learn a role is to live for a while inside a scene of the Gospel, reckoning with a person's words until they become nearly your own, a form of study the intellect alone could never accomplish.

In the end, what any of this serves is encounter: The point is not the music, nor even the story, but the One the story is about.

Carolyn hopes that someone, the next time they go to Mass, might remember a scene from the third act, Paul consecrating the elements while Jesus stands unseen

behind him, and think: I cannot see him, but I know that Christ is here. That is the whole of it. We bring our intellect and attention, our will and imagination, to the Word not to master a text but to be met by the One present in it, who waits, still, for us to behold him.

Leonard J. DeLorenzo is a professor of the practice in the McGrath Institute for Church Life and concurrent professor in the department of theology at the University of Notre Dame.

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.

Step 1: Contact parish/school institution leader to review the Policies and Procedures and fill out the Application and Acceptance Forms.

Step 2: Go to www.virtus.org and click on Registration. Follow the prompts to create an account and to request a background check. Selection.com is a secure site; the background check is posted on your account and you receive a copy if you request it during the registration process. You will sign up for a VIRTUS training class during the registration.

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:

- September bulletin: posted Sunday, Sept. 7; due Tuesday, Oct. 6.

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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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

■ Tuesday, Oct. 20
9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Tuesday, Oct. 20
6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

■ Wednesday, Nov. 4
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■ Wednesday, Nov. 4
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■ Wednesday, Dec. 9
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■ Wednesday, Dec. 9
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National/World

Pope Leo XIV says ‘giving witness to unity’ is close to his heart

VATICAN CITY — Pope Leo XIV urged Church leaders linked to the Focolare movement to make “giving witness to unity” a priority in a world increasingly marked by polarization and fragmentation. Meeting Sept. 9 with bishops associated with the movement, the pope said the answer to today’s divisions is not “forming more committees or launching more projects,” but returning to the source of unity found in the Holy Trinity. The pope said traditional networks of family, friendship and community in the West are weakening as freedom is often defined as absolute autonomy, detached from moral or human limits. Yet, he noted, many people feel less able to be their authentic selves because of fear of judgment or exclusion. Pope Leo said humanity is created in the image of the Triune God and finds true happiness in communion with God and others. He described the Church as a “mystery of communion” and a “sign and leaven of unity” in the world. He also highlighted the legacy of Focolare founder Servant of God Chiara Lubich, whose spirituality of unity continues to inspire more than 2 million people in 183 countries. The pope encouraged the bishops to deepen their prayer life so they can become credible witnesses of the unity that builds lasting peace.

German archbishop says US-Mexico border wall recalls Berlin Wall, warns against loss of humanity

HAMBURG, Germany — A German archbishop touring the U.S.–Mexico border said the massive fortifications dividing El Paso, Texas, and Ciudad Juárez, Mexico, remind him of the Berlin Wall. Archbishop Stefan Hesse of Hamburg, who chairs the German bishops’ migration commission, described the razor wire and towering barriers as disturbing during an interview with OSV News following a weeklong solidarity visit. He warned that when nations treat migration purely as a security threat, basic human dignity is lost. Drawing a parallel between the migration crisis in the U.S. and growing tensions in Europe, Archbishop Hesse expressed concern that, in most circumstances, “the rule of law and the respect for human rights are declining.” Archbishop Hesse met with local church leaders, including El Paso Bishop Mark J. Seitz, as well as aid workers and migrants facing deportation. Archbishop Hesse credited the Catholic Church with sustaining the humanitarian response on the ground, noting that Catholic groups operate roughly 80% of the region’s migrant shelters. Archbishop Hesse emphasized that in the Catholic Church, there are no borders. Bishop Seitz hosted the archbishop’s delegation along with the Hope Border Institute, a migrant advocacy agency based in El Paso.

Climate change’s toll on Nepal’s people is a ‘profound injustice’

KATHMANDU, Nepal — Caritas Nepal’s leader is urging global action on climate justice after catastrophic flooding in Nepal claimed more than 1,100 lives and left thousands missing. Speaking to OSV News Sept. 3, Sister Cecilia Durga Shrestha, executive director of Caritas Nepal, said many survivors are receiving medical treatment, while countless families have lost homes, land, livelihoods and loved ones. Nepal’s National Disaster Risk Management Authority reported 1,114 deaths, about 4,500 people missing and roughly 12,000 people rescued following the Aug. 26 flood and mudslide near the Chinese border. Sister Cecilia said the government’s immediate priority is protecting displaced families and supporting recovery efforts, but stressed authorities “cannot do this alone.” She called for coordinated support from national and international organizations to help communities rebuild with greater resilience. The disaster followed warnings from researchers that Himalayan glaciers are melting at an accelerating rate. A 5.2-magnitude glacial collapse triggered the deadly flooding. Noting Nepal produces less than 0.1% of global greenhouse gas emissions, Sister Cecilia called the country’s suffering “a profound injustice” and

urged “concrete action” through climate finance, adaptation support and international solidarity. Caritas Nepal is providing emergency aid while planning long-term recovery and reconstruction efforts.

Hong Kong court upholds Cardinal Zen’s 2022 conviction over protesters’ support fund

HONG KONG — A Hong Kong court has rejected an appeal by 94-year-old Cardinal Joseph Zen and four fellow activists, upholding their convictions for failing to properly register a protest relief fund. The defendants were convicted in 2022 and fined about \$512 each under the city’s Societies Ordinance. Authorities targeted the now-defunct 612 Humanitarian Relief Fund, which provided financial aid to participants in the 2019 anti-government protests. Presiding judges ruled the fund operated as an organization subject to mandatory police registration. All five defendants plan to take their case to Hong Kong’s Court of Final Appeal. Cardinal Zen, the retired bishop of Hong Kong, remains a fierce critic of Beijing and the Vatican’s contentious agreement with China over the appointment of bishops, which he argues harms the underground Catholic Church. In a 2018 Facebook post, Cardinal Zen declared his opposition to the deal, saying he believed the Vatican was “selling out the Catholic Church in China.” Pope Leo XIV met Cardinal Zen on Jan. 7 when the cardinal was granted permission from the judicial authorities in Hong Kong to attend the first extraordinary consistory under Pope Leo’s pontificate.

Haitian youth’s apparent suicide ‘a death of despair’ after TPS Haiti ends, says archbishop

SPRINGFIELD, Ohio — Miami Archbishop Thomas G. Wenski described the apparent suicide of a Haitian student in Ohio as “a death of despair,” coming amid the loss of deportation protections for hundreds of thousands of Haitians in the United States. Pierre Damas Bel, 20, a scholarship student in his first semester at Wright State University, died Aug. 31 after walking into traffic on Interstate 70 in Springfield, Ohio. Authorities pronounced him dead at the scene. Bel, who had been active in the Marine Corps Junior ROTC and the National Honor Society, left no suicide note. However, his father said his son’s emotional state changed dramatically after U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement fitted him with an ankle monitor. The action followed a Supreme Court decision permitting the Trump administration to end Temporary Protected Status, or TPS, for Haiti. TPS shields nationals of countries facing severe crises, including conflict and natural disasters. More than 330,000 Haitians in the United States were covered by the designation as of 2025. According to Bel’s father, feelings of shame and despair over his immigration status contributed to his son’s death. Bel himself had expressed distress on social media. Archbishop Wenski said that while life in the United States had offered Bel hope and opportunity, the prospect of deportation to Haiti appeared to rob him of that future.

Jerusalem Christian schools suspended after teachers entry permits denied

JERUSALEM — Christian schools in Jerusalem have halted the start of the academic year after Israeli authorities denied entry permits to dozens of teachers and support staff. The General Secretariat for Christian Educational Institutions in Jerusalem announced Sept. 1 that classes are suspended until officials reissue permits for more than 70 West Bank educators and employees. School leaders said the sudden decision leaves them without critical educational, health and security personnel, making a safe opening impossible, the secretariat said. The move follows mounting Israeli restrictions on Palestinian edu-

cators, including legislation passed earlier this year barring teachers with degrees from Palestinian Authority universities. Church leaders warn that locking out West Bank staff threatens the centuries-old Christian presence in the Holy City. The schools, which serve both Christian and Muslim students, have called for a swift resolution to protect students’ right to education. OSV News reached out to Catholic Church officials in Jerusalem and is awaiting a response.

State challenge to policy permitting mifepristone by mail paused until after midterms

WASHINGTON — A federal judge paused a lawsuit by Texas and Florida seeking to revoke the Food and Drug Administration’s approval of mifepristone, likely until after November’s midterm elections. The Aug. 30 ruling by U.S. Chief District Judge Reed O’Connor paused the states’ lawsuit until Dec. 1 or upon the conclusion of an ongoing FDA safety review of mifepristone, whichever comes first. Both states agreed to the pause. The 2025 lawsuit by Florida and Texas is among state challenges seeking to roll back Biden administration-era eased restrictions on mifepristone, sometimes called the abortion pill, but which is also used in some miscarriage care protocols. The Trump administration has thus far left that regulation in effect while seeking to block challenges to it pending a promised FDA safety review, prompting frustration from pro-life advocates. The state lawsuits, notably one filed by Louisiana, seek to end the policy permitting mifepristone to be distributed by mail. The states have argued the policy undermines their own state laws, among other objections. Several lawsuits seek to revoke the drug’s approval outright, including the one by Texas and Louisiana.

Supreme Court declines bid for religious exception to school vaccine policy

WASHINGTON — The U.S. Supreme Court on Sept. 8 declined a case from a New York Catholic woman seeking to send her son to kindergarten without receiving the vaccines the state requires to attend public school. In its rejection of the case, the high court did not offer an explanation for the decision, which is typical for rulings on the court’s emergency docket. All states require children to be vaccinated against certain diseases in order to attend public schools, although policies for religious or medical exemptions vary. Four states only allow medical exemptions, according to KFF. In court filings, Jane Doe identified as a “lifelong practicing Roman Catholic” and argued her religious beliefs prevent her from undergoing vaccination herself or allowing her son to be vaccinated, citing “the remains of aborted human beings.” However, vaccines do not contain fetal cells. Some vaccines involve growing viruses in cell lines believed to be derived originally from unborn children aborted in the mid-20th century, such as the HEK-293 fetal cell line. A host of common medications, such as over-the-counter pain relievers and antacids, have also been tested against this cell line. The Catholic Church has consistently stated that Catholics may undergo vaccination despite remote degrees of connection to such cell lines where alternatives are not available.



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Catholic Charities volunteers exemplifying the evening's theme of "Love in Action" stand together on the Cincinnati Reds home field. Volunteers were honored at the ballpark the evening of Sept. 5 as part of Catholic Family Night.



Bishop Iffert shakes hands with MLB officials before the start of the Reds vs. Brewers game.



(left) Bishop Iffert and Archbishop Casey laugh together during the game's pre-game festivities.
(right) A young Reds fan greets Bishop Iffert with a handshake through the netting surrounding the field.



Bailey and Baker photos

A HAND UP STARTS WITH A SET OF KEYS.

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