October 23, 2026

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MESSENGER

Serving the Diocese of Covington, Kentucky since 1926







(top) Seminarians Joseph Dierker (left) and Jacob Schuetter (center) laugh amongst themselves during the Seminarian Q&A portion of the Seminary Ball program. With them is Bishop John Iffert (right), who served as the moderator for the questions, which were provided by Seminary Ball attendees.

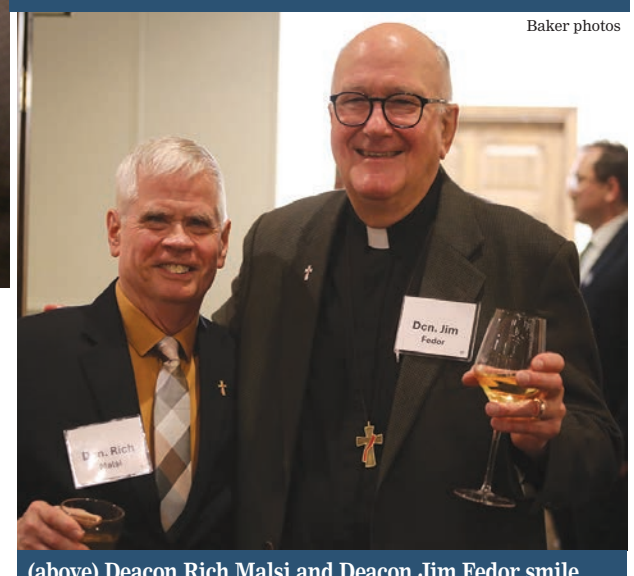
(above) Bishop John Iffert interviews seminarians during a "Q&A" portion of the evening. Interview questions ranged from the seminarians favorite dinosaurs, to inquiries about their vocations.

(above, left, center) Guests of the Seminary Ball talk amongst themselves while enjoying dinner at the ball's venue, Receptions in Erlanger.





Baker photos



(above) Deacon Rich Malsi and Deacon Jim Fedor smile together during the Seminary Ball's "cocktail hour."

(far left, bottom) Jim Hess, director, Stewardship and Mission Services, greets guests at the 2026 Seminary Ball, Oct. 16.

(bottom, center) A guest at the Seminary Ball reads a prayer card exhibiting a "Prayer for Vocations" distributed at the event.

'A cloud of witnesses' gather in support of seminarians at annual Seminary Ball

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

People of the diocese came together in support of vocations and seminarian education, Oct. 16, for the 2026 Seminary Ball. This annual ball serves as the "kickoff" for the Seminarian Education Collection and a major fundraiser for the Seminarian Education Fund, which provides funding for diocesan seminarians as they study for the priesthood.

This year's event was hosted at Receptions in Erlanger, where 73 tables became 75 as Jim Hess, director of Stewardship and Mission Services, who hosts the ball, announced that this year's ball was "record-breaking" in the number of attendees — with more than 740 present.

"This is a unique event because it is not a hard sell," Mr. Hess told guests during his welcome at the ball. And, while the option to donate at the event was given — guests were also invited to participate in the collection the following weekend, Oct. 24 and 25, with funds raised during the event mostly thanks to the event's sponsors.

"We're extremely grateful for your support," Mr. Hess said, "I'm absolutely floored by the level of support tonight," proudly announcing that more than $210,000 was raised for the Seminarian Education Fund thanks to guests and sponsors before the event even began.

As part of the evening's program, the seminarians themselves (currently 6 within the diocese) were invited to participate — both in the mingling with guests, but in a "Q&A" session hosted by Bishop John Iffert following dinner, as well.

(Continued on page 4)

Mother of God opens its doors to BLINK visitors for a nighttime artwork tour

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

Mother of God Parish, Covington, lit the night as their staggering edifice was illuminated by the work of three French artists during BLINK weekend, Oct. 8-11. Artists Jeremie Bellot, Jeremy Oury and Leslie Epsztein worked to transform the exterior of Mother of God Church into the "dream world of newborn, where shapes, colors and sensations emerge before words exist," explained the BLINK website. This year's BLINK weekend drew millions to downtown Cincinnati and Covington, with one Mother of God volunteer estimating that the Church saw 15,000 people stop to marvel at its exterior.

Parishioners of Mother of God know, however, that it is not just the four-day artwork on the outside of the building that is worthy of marveling, it is the year-round artwork on the inside that should draw crowds. That is what parishioner Bob Stevie set out to show those who attended BLINK at Mother of God, inviting everyone who stopped at the installation to a nighttime viewing of the classic Italian Renaissance Revival work of the Church. "Normally, during the daytime, the windows dominate, you overlook the artwork that's in the Church," said Mr. Stevie.

Everyone that ventured inside Mother of God Church during BLINK received a printed guide to the artwork, courtesy of one of the 110 volunteers, and while viewing the art they were able to listen to an organ performance from parish organist Meg Booker. "People would sit in the Church and just listen to the music," said Mr. Stevie. "The main thing was to really greet people and let them know this place existed, so it worked out really well," he said.

Mr. Stevie estimates that nearly 1,500 visitors came in to see the artwork and marvel at the divine. "It's such a wonderful place to take advantage of the aspect that it is so beautiful," he said.

This is not the first time Mother of God has been selected as a BLINK site, nor is it the first time it has invited viewers inside for a nighttime tour. Four years ago, the parish had a similar idea and saw Mass attendance rise because of it. "I think that's important," said Mr. Stevie, "That people that came to the Church, they realized was a functioning Catholic church and they started showing up for Mass or they bring people."

Mr. Stevie does not know if Mother of God Church will be selected as a BLINK site in two years but hopes that the tradition continues and grows outside of BLINK. "I think there's a decent opportunity for a docent program," he said, "It's just a different way to show people the beauty of some of the Catholic churches."

(Additional photos on page 10)

Duesing photo



French artists were inspired by Mother of God's patroness' role as a mother and allowed their artwork to take the viewer into the eyes of infant. Their installation was a journey through "landscapes of early dreams," which invited viewers to "reconnect with the wonder, fragility, and imagination of our inner baby."

Contributions towards federal tax credits to be available in January thanks to partner SGO

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Starting January 2027, benefactors of Catholic Education in the Diocese of Covington will be able to begin contributing to the diocese's partnered Scholarship Granting Organization, American GOAL, to benefit from the federal scholarship tax credit program. Contributions up to $1,700 (or $3,400) for married couplies can be submitted as tax credits via the program, and in return, American GOAL will be able to redistribute these funds as scholarships or other academic necessities — such as supplies and tutors — to students in the diocese.

"The way SGOs work is that they partner with organizations or schools to assist them in the fundraising of these federal tax credits," said Kate Saylor, American GOAL's vice president of marketing and communications, "as well as the disbursement of funds to eligible families for tuition assistance."

Ms. Saylor described American GOAL's model as "very school centric," with donors able to dedicate their pledge to the diocese, or to a specific school.

"It's a way we can partner with the schools to help them maximize the opportunity that this program provides, she said, "and we've got almost two decades of experience doing this." American GOAL has been working with other dioceses, such as the Archdiocese of Atlanta and the Diocese of Savannah — with the goal to "morph that model nationally for other dioceses throughout the country."

Pledges will be able to be made efficiently through American GOAL's website (https://americangoal.org), with an online portal to be made available as soon as January 1.

"It's about a 30-second process to submit the pledge, and then we're good to go," Ms. Saylor said. Donors will then receive a confirmation e-mail, along with documentation required for their tax return the following year.

Depending on donor participation within the program's first few months, some schools may be able to benefit from the scholarships granted by American GOAL as early as the 2027-2028 school year, but funding can be anticipated to be most available for scholarship applicants in the 2028-2029 school year. Schools are expected to be able to know by the end of 2027 approximately how much they'll have to award for the next year — making availability entirely dependent on donor generosity.

"It's such an exciting thing," Ms. Saylor said. "We've seen it firsthand in Georgia, the ability to redirect your taxes — which you must pay anyway — to something that you believe in. That is something great for our Catholic schools."

"It's our hope," she said, "that we're able to get this program off the ground in a nationwide capacity, and implement what we've been able to do here in other states. We're so excited about our partnership with the Diocese of Covington, and that you all have put your trust in us."

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:

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.

Cemetery visitations — prayer for the repose of souls and remembrance of loved ones

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

Bishop John Iffert met and prayed with the people of the Diocese, Oct. 17, at three diocesan cemeteries: St. John Cemetery, Ft. Mitchell; St. Mary Cemetery, Ft. Mitchell and St. Stepehen Cemetery, Ft. Thomas. Together, the faithful and Bishop Iffert prayed the Liturgy of the Hours and remembered those who have been interred at each cemetery in the last year from October 2025 to September of 2026.

The names of the deceased were read aloud by Bishop Iffert, offering the loved ones gathered a chance to remember and pray for those they lost.

"This is the purpose of Catholic cemeteries," said Bishop Iffert. "The reason for Catholic cemeteries is so that we remember and pray for those that came before us." Prayer for the repose of the decedents souls prepares the faithful for the celebration of All Souls Day, Nov. 2, and helps those gathered remember the deceased.

"That's the whole purpose why we maintain these places," said Bishop Iffert in the mausoleum of St. Mary Cemetery, "so that we don't forget to pray for the dead. We pray for your loved ones in a special way, but also when we're here, we pray for everybody, the people we don't know."









(top, left) Bishop Iffert takes a moment to speak with those at St. Mary Cemetery before the reading of the Liturgy of the Hours and prayers for the deceased.

(top, right) Bishop Iffert presented the aspergillum to Teri Schaar, one of the faithful who attended the St. John Cemetery Visitation, so she could bless herself with holy water, making for a personal moment.

(bottom, left) Heads bowed in prayer and remembrance at St. Mary Cemetery during the reading of the deceased's names.

(bottom, right) Bishop Iffert blessed those gathered at St. Mary Cemetery at the conclusion of the prayers for the deceased.

Cathedral Concert Series

The Cathedral Concert Series opens its 50th anniversary season Sunday, Oct. 25, 3 p.m., with the return of Musica Sacra Cincinnati. Under the direction of conductor and Music Director Dr. Brett Scott, this acclaimed Cincinnati choral ensemble will perform with orchestra.

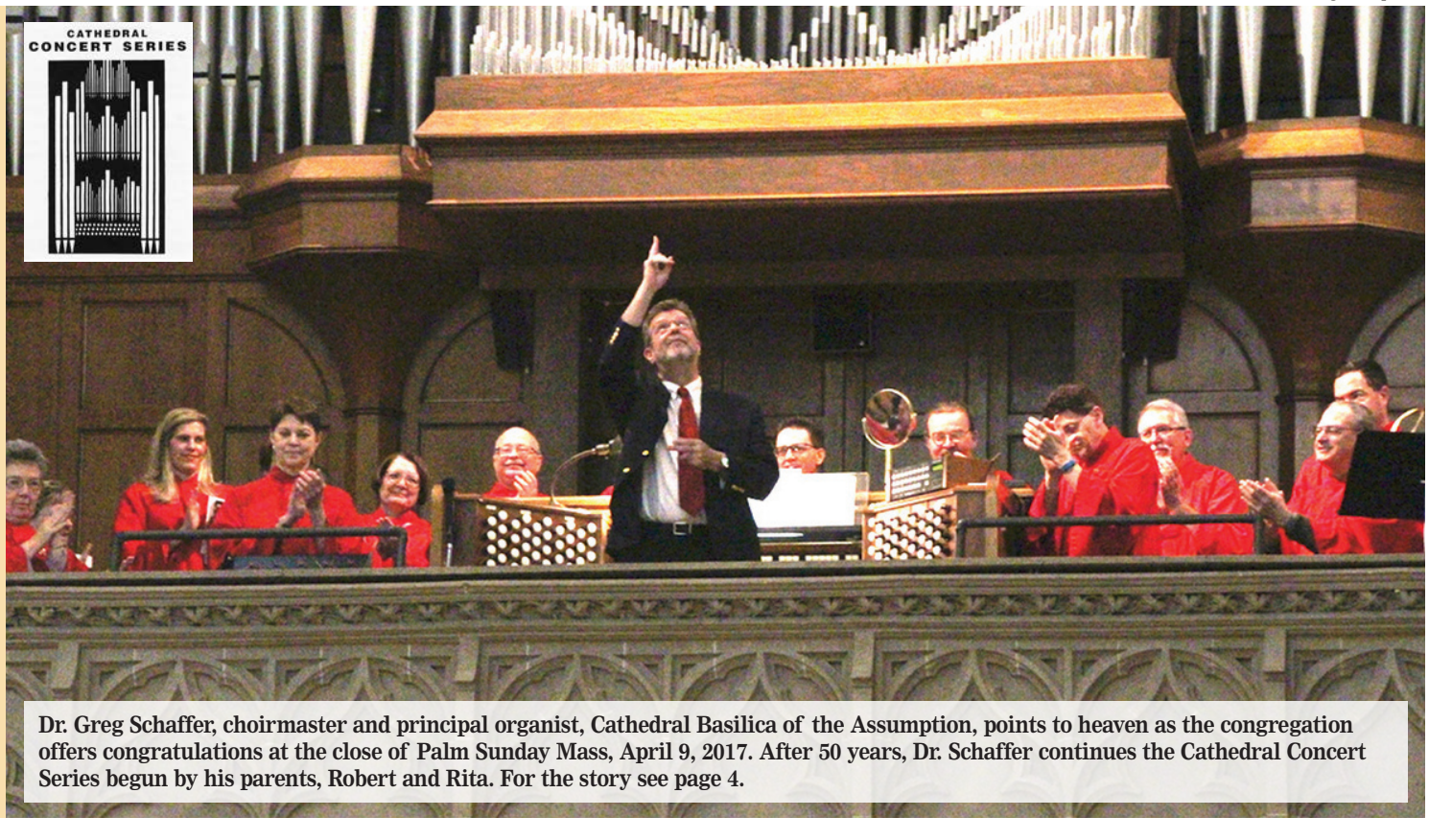
Guests are invited to arrive early for a special Schwab Organ Prelude (c. 15 min), celebrating the series' golden anniversary.

The Cathedral Basilica's pristine acoustics, magnificent Gothic architecture and sacred art offer music lovers a rare opportunity to experience large-scale sacred choral music in the setting for which it was originally intended.

All Cathedral Concert Series performances are open to the public free of admission charge. Freewill offerings are gratefully accepted.

For details and the complete 2026–2027 anniversary season, visit www.cathedralconcertseries.org.

Messenger file photo



Dr. Greg Schaffer, choirmaster and principal organist, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, points to heaven as the congregation offers congratulations at the close of Palm Sunday Mass, April 9, 2017. After 50 years, Dr. Schaffer continues the Cathedral Concert Series begun by his parents, Robert and Rita. For the story see page 4.

Annual Seminary Ball

(Continued from page 1)

Questions were provided by guests during dinner service, with questions ranging from asking seminarians their favorite dinosaurs and Marian titles, to feelings about having an American pope and how they've "encountered" Jesus at seminary.

During the Q&A, Bishop Iffert finished off with one last question. "When you look out at this crowd — 740 people strong — and you see this level of support, what does the Holy Spirit say to you?"

"I just really get a sense of peace with all the love and support that we get," one seminarian, Will Fuller, answered, "and from the people of God."

"I was just looking out at the crowd," answered another seminarian, Evan Ihrig, who said he was reminded of a quote in the book of Hebrews that says, "You are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, so run the race and persevere."

"To know that I have the diocese behind me … many people praying for me and for my brother seminarians, it's so incredible to be surrounded by this great cloud of witnesses as I run this race with my brothers towards the priesthood," Mr. Ihrig said.

Following the Q&A, Bishop Iffert also personally thanked the people gathered, saying that the Seminary Ball was "one of the most lovely evenings in the life of our local Church here in Covington, where so many people gather together to support these men and to support the reality of priesthood and formation for priesthood here in the diocese. I am very grateful to you all for turning out."

"As I look at these men who are studying and discerning their way forward, I am renewed and invigorated," Bishop Iffert said, "and these men, God has been extraordinarily generous in the quality of human beings that God is sending us for that discernment."

"So thank you," he said, addressing the seminarians once more, "I want you to know that even now, just in being open to this discernment, you are feeding the life of faith of your bishop. You are showing me God's constant call to be sanctified and renewed. You are that kind of love in the life of this Church."

"Put that in your little bank of thankful moments," Bishop Iffert said, "and let it be an encouragement to you when you need that encouragement."



Baker photo

Posters decorated with well wishes and prayers for seminarians by school aged students in the diocese are displayed on the walls during the Seminary Ball.

Cathedral Concert Series marks 50 years of sacred music and family legacy

Laura Keener
Editor

Musica Sacra will open the 50th anniversary season of the Cathedral Concert Series, Oct. 25. Musica Sacra has been the lead performer for the series since its inception, making the Cincinnati ensemble a fitting choice to begin a milestone year at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption in Covington.

The bond reaches back to the series' founders, the late Dr. Robert and Rita Schaffer, and Musica Sacra's founding conductor, Dr. Helmut J. Roehrig. Their friendship grew into a partnership rooted in a common belief — sacred music belongs in sacred spaces, where it can serve both artistic excellence and spiritual life.

Dr. L. Brett Scott, Musica Sacra's conductor and professor of ensembles and conducting at the University of Cincinnati College-Conservatory of Music, said the ensemble's connection with the cathedral began very early.

"My understanding is that our founding director, Helmut Roehrig, and the director of music at the Basilica, which was Greg Schaffer's father, were close friends," Dr. Scott said. "As a result of that, Musica Sacra has been involved in the concert series, if not from the very first year, from very, very early on in its history."

"Dr. Helmut Roehrig was actually one of Dad's assistants at the cathedral very early on, and they were very close friends," said Dr. Greg Schaffer, son of Robert and Rita. "The music of Sacra is the quintessential example" of the sacred music the series promotes.

That early relationship was more than a convenient collaboration. Musica Sacra was founded because Roehrig saw a need in Cincinnati for an ensemble devoted to the great sacred choral-orchestral works. Dr. Scott said the group's purpose "was to perform these sacred pieces in the spaces for which they were intended." The cathedral series offered precisely that kind of setting.

"We really do focus exclusively on sacred music," Dr. Scott said, often presenting larger choral-orchestral works. "The type of repertoire that we do is a perfect fit for the Basilica," he added. "With such a visually stunning place, it's always a wonderful opportunity for us to perform this

(Continued on page 6)

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Maura Baker ..... Staff Writer
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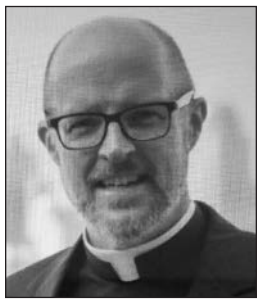
COMMENTARY

Our mess and the revelation of Divine Love

The readings for the Thirtieth Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle A — are: Exodus 22:20–26, 1 Thessalonians 1:5c–10 and Matthew 22:34–40.

The twentieth century philosopher and theologian, Jacques Maritain observed, "nowadays the devil has made such a mess of everything…that the world will presently (soon) become uninhabitable for anybody but Saints. The rest will drag their lives out in despair… Christian heroism will one day become the sole solution to the problems of life."

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Phillip DeVous

The life of heroic Christian holiness to which Maritain is referring always takes the form of close following of Jesus' two greatest commandments. They are the non-negotiable core, as well as the summary of Christ's teaching: "You shall love the Lord, your God, with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." And "You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

There is no more vexed word in our language today than that of love. Silly sentiment abounds, completely bleaching out any real meaning to love. Consequently, if we are going to follow the way of Christ and live it heroically, being witnesses to what the real solution to the problems of life are, it is essential we recover a proper understanding of what the meaning of love is — as it is revealed by Jesus Christ.

The Gospel of Jesus Christ reveals to us that, fundamentally, love is not understood to be a feeling. Love has a definite meaning and content that has been revealed in Christ. So, a Christian must purge his heart, soul and mind of all the bumper sticker slogans, Hallmark card sentiments, and social media memes that propagandize us in false, emotionally vacuous and profoundly superficial understandings of what love is.

To begin to understand love we must always start by paying close attention to the Word of God, gazing at the Cross, contemplating adoring the Eucharistic Christ, and offering ourselves in sacrificial service to others. Failing to do that, we will be drawn into the devil's mess, treating love like a mere feeling, reducing both God and others to objects and making them idols to please us when we feel like it.

Christian love cannot essentially be a feeling because feelings cannot be commanded. I cannot command you to be happy or sad. Christ reveals to us that love is an action in accord with what is true and good. Christ further shows us that love is a sacrificial action in service of the true and the good. If Christ is who he says he is — the Son of God, the Word Made Flesh and the Divine Teacher — then he has the authority to command and create such love.

Considering this, what can be commanded is not feelings, but our choice, our decision, our resolution and our actions in accord with the choice for the love that Jesus Christ reveals and commands. We must note the love that Christ commands is total: "all your heart, all your soul, all your mind. The love being commanded here is total, which also means the sacrifice entailed and called for in such love will be total, both on His part and our own.

So, when Jesus commands us to love with all our heart, soul and mind, what he is commanding is that we love God with the entirety of our person; that we engage our every faculty in loving God; that we offer our whole self to God in love and hold nothing back. God claims our whole being for himself, not in the manner of a tyrant who wishes to exploit or annihilate us, but as a lover who deems us so precious that he will not tolerate the slightest capacity of our person going to waste.

The devil, and our collaboration with the devil through sin, has made a mess out of everything. And the mess that lies at the heart of everything is a totalizing confusion about the true nature of love. We are constantly tempted to us to reduce love's demands; to avoid the radical revelation of Divine Love given by Jesus Christ.

Christian love is radical. It is a complete sacrifice of total gift, given to us right at the heart of the Holy Eucharist: "This is my body, which will be given up for you" and "Take this … the blood of the new and eternal covenant which will be poured out for you." This holy, eternal sacrifice of love is the source of that Christian heroism of the saints which will conquer the despair of the world. Radical love, after the pattern of his own, is what is Jesus commands of us. For the disciple, there is no alternative.

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

Let us share hope

My oldest daughter is a senior in college. There is a lot of pressure at this stage in life, so I try not to bother her too much with the "what's next" conversation as much as I want to know. However, in a recent unprompted phone call, I remember hanging up and being impressed (and relieved) by how much thinking and work she's doing to prepare for her next chapter. She has so many possibilities to explore, and her mindset is refreshingly simple: If one option doesn't work out, here's another path.

VIEWPOINT



Karen Zengel

For this sunshine and rainbows kind of girl, I was delighted to hear the optimism in her voice as she talked about her future. To know she has options, even the unconventional ones, builds more excitement. While I value this "anything is possible" mindset, I am also her mom and with that comes a healthy dose of practicality and concern. Hearing that she had a plan — several plans with timelines — calmed those butterflies.

My daughter has hope, but not with passive anticipation. She sees possibilities and actively pursues them, trusting that something good lies ahead.

Merriam Webster defines hope as a feeling of expectation and desire for a certain thing to happen. As Christians, we sometimes get a bad rap for being hopeful. Secular society often paints the picture of Christianity as naïve optimism. However, hope for us is more than just a feeling. In an audience in December 2024, Pope Francis insisted that hope is not "a passive virtue, which merely waits for things to happen — rather, it is a supremely active virtue that helps make them happen." Hope requires persistence and resilience.

At St. Vincent de Paul, one of the great privileges and duties of a Vincentian is to share hope with those around us, particularly with those we serve. In fact, the international motto of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is "serviens in spe" or serving in hope. We do not just have hope, but we share it through our active service.

Where does this hope come from? We have hope because Jesus Christ himself walked among us. He came to this earth, flesh and blood, to be near us, to know us and to love us. And he made the ultimate sacrifice to express that love by dying on the cross and showing us the impossible feat of overcoming pain and death through his resurrection. This is where we find hope.

We also know that he did not leave us behind. Thanks to the everlasting presence of the Holy Spirit, we are inspired and guided to share Christ's legacy through our words and action. We experience nudges or recognize opportunities placed in our paths that are signals of Christ's love for us. It is a comfort to have the confidence that we are not on our own in any trial or tribulation. We are each valued. We are each loved. And every person deserves to know this.

When a Vincentian team makes a visit, they can encounter challenging situations in our neighbors' lives. Sickness, unexpected job loss, abandonment by a family member, car troubles, or a home falling apart at the seams — it can seem as if one thing after another happens, making it very difficult to keep their heads above water. Yet our neighbors find the strength to persevere. They find the courage to ask for help. And there we see Jesus. While it may be tempting to be discouraged in the face of this suffering, we are not. We know the end of the story. So, we have hope. We share that hope by offering our time, a listening ear and the assistance needed to ease their burden. We can remind our neighbors that they are not alone and that their circumstances do not diminish their worth.

Then, what? Our neighbors take the next step forward. They try the next plan. They keep going. Their persistence and resilience are hope in action. We may not know what comes next for them, just as I don't know exactly what lies ahead for my daughter. But there is a path and with that, a reason to hope.

Merriam Webster also indicates that the archaic meaning of the word hope is trust. From a Christian perspective, this is not archaic at all. It is timeless. Hope for us is a deep trust in God's work in our world, even today. St. Vincent de Paul is an example of a ministry that allows us to illustrate this hope through our hands and hearts.

So let us have hope. Let us share hope.

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

God declared It good

The advertisements on the television during this campaigning time are extremely depressing. Most ads feature all the faults of each candidate's opponents and attacks on their character. Could every opponent be so evil? Negative thoughts are so prevalent that it is difficult not to get swept up in the rush to find fault with everyone in one's life — community members, co-workers, neighbors, family.

MUSINGS



Sister Fidelis Tracy, C.D.P.

Some of the most inspiring words from God in the Book of Genesis are, "And God saw that it was good." Then, at the creation of the first human creature God looked and saw that it was very good. How did we come to this time when we view every bit of the world and humanity as full of corruption? Surely, there is a way to reveal one's own strengths without condemning another person.

The first humans did sin, but there was still much to celebrate about creation and human life. God did not condemn the world. Instead, there was a long succession of offers to find redemption. Most of all, God called humans to be helpers of each other, to offer forgiveness and redemption just as God offered. Love one another. That is the greatest command of God in face of failure and sin.

Imagine a campaign season where two opponents would appear together, introduce themselves and inform the electorate about how they would fulfill their duties if elected. They would also honestly admit in what areas they were weak and then point out how they would get help in addressing those areas. Each would list the strengths of the other candidate and the weaknesses that the other would need to deal with. Finally, they would affirm each other's strengths.

Returning to the real world after this imaginary journey into my fantasies, I realize how little my own daily life does not promote the world I hope to help create. I am often mentally critical of those around me. My criticism of the campaign season atmosphere could also be brought to bear on my own critical attitudes. What would it take to make me more compassionate, more helpful as opposed to critical? What am I doing to create the world I hope for?

So often I pray for God's forgiveness, God's help in difficult situations, God's strength in the face of hardship, God's mercy, God's love. The call of every human creature is to be the image of God, the giver of life, forgiveness and mercy. Let us begin to create the world we were meant to bring about and support!

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

50 years of sacred music and family legacy

(Continued from page 4)

music in such a wonderful location."

The Schaffers approached the concert series with a similar sense of mission. Dr. Greg Schaffer, now director of the series as well as principal organist and choir director at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, said his parents were accomplished concert performers with strong ties throughout the organ community. They wanted to present music from the Western liturgical tradition in what their mission statement called "a suitable environment."

That phrase, Greg said, almost understates the experience. "Attending a concert at our basilica is really — I can't think of anything to compare it to on a local or regional level, visually or acoustically," he said.

Robert and Rita also insisted that the music remain accessible. "They felt quite motivated to make this available to the community, but without any financial concern," Dr. Schaffer said. "No matter what your disposition is, you're able to come and witness these programs free of charge." The series has continued through basket donations and occasional larger gifts rather than ticket sales.



The late Dr. Robert and Rita Schaffer.

Dr. Schaffer sees that openness as part of the cathedral's ministry. "I see it as community outreach, opening the doors to the general public," he said. People are welcome regardless of denomination or spirituality.

Dr. Scott sees that loyalty when Musica Sacra opens the season. "The place is always packed," he said. "I think it shows that people still have a desire and a thirst to hear this music — to hear this sacred music."

The longevity of both organizations — 50 years for the concert series and more than 60 years for Musica Sacra — also reflects enduring regional support.

Behind the public success is a family story. Dr. Schaffer remembers dinner-table conversations in which the concert series was being quietly "hatched." the late Dr. Robert and Rita Schaffer,In the early years, Robert and Rita led the work while their children watched; later, the children were enlisted to perform or help. "It was definitely a family effort spearheaded by Bob and Rita," Dr. Schaffer said.

Dr. Schaffer said that his older brother Mark, who is now deceased, was especially talented and joined the performances at a very early age. "Mark was just a natural fit because he had been studying organ and was much more motivated as an adolescent, 15 and 16 years old, spending his summer doing scales in the basement," he said. "He was just capable of doing that at an early age."

Continuing that legacy is joyful, but not light work. "It's scary in a good way," Dr. Schaffer said. "It's big shoes to fill because I'm filling essentially four pairs of shoes at the same time." With help from his sister, Rebecca Schaffer Wells, he manages the artists, promotional materials, accounting and business details. "My goodness, what a labor of love," he said. "To be able to present this program of concerts year after year — I can't express in words the joy it gives me."

Still, Dr. Schaffer said the greatest reward comes after the final chord. "The real payoff to me is seeing the people's faces at these concerts," he said. He notices first-time visitors immediately: they enter through the north door, look upward and drop their jaws.

After five decades, that sense of wonder remains the series' most convincing measure of success. "If we've made a difference in one person's day or their life and uplifted their soul in some way, then that has fulfilled our ministry and mission," said Dr. Schaffer.

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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/.

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.

Mercedarian Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament discernment retreats for women 18–35 years old interested in learning more about religious life. Retreats are free and meals are provided. Housing accommodations are limited. Day retreats: Oct. 17, Baton Rouge, La. and Feb. 27, Gainesville, Fla. Weekend retreats: Jan. 15–17, Cleveland, Ohio and March 5–7, Baton Rouge, La. Contact sisterjeanette@mercedariansisters.org to attend.

Our Savior Parish, Covington, will host its annual homecoming and Mass with celebrant and pastor Father Michael Comer, Oct. 18, 9:30 a.m. Everyone is welcome.

St. Barbara Parish, Erlanger, hosts a presentation "Pope Leo and the Challenge of Artificial Intelligence" with Msgr. William Cleves, who will explore what the pope's encyclical means for us as AI can be a great benefit to us as well as a real threat. The event will be Oct. 21, 7 p.m. at St. Barbara's Sterling Event Center, Erlanger. No RSVP needed.

Join St. Paul School PTO at The Blue and Gold Bash on Oct. 24 from 7–11:00 p.m. at Braxton Brewing, 25 W 7th Street, Covington, KY 41011. The evening will include an online silent auction, Blue & Gold Game, live music, appetizers, beverages for purchase and a Split the Pot Grand Raffle! It is an adult only event and is $20 per ticket. For more information and to purchase tickets, go to https://stpaulnky.org/school/

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 handmade 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.

Holy Guardian Angels Cemetery, Sandfordtown (Edgewood), will hold its annual visitation day, Oct. 25, 2 p.m. Deacon Thomas Kissell will lead the prayer service.

"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.

St. Joseph, Crescent Springs, will host a Women's Advent Day of Recollection, Nov. 7, 9 a.m.–2 p.m. This free event features keynote speaker Sister Marla Monahan, SND, inspiring women how to deepen their relationship with God day by day. Includes Mass, speaker, group discussion, confession and other activities. Lunch is provided. To register email dkittyallen@gmail.com or text (859) 957-7595.

St. Joseph, Cold Spring is hosting a free showing of the full-length feature film "Cabrini", Nov. 13, 7 p.m. in the parish's Memorial Hall. Free popcorn and soft drinks also included, open to all. Film is appropriate for middle school age and up; under 16 must be accompanied by a parent or responsible adult. Questions? Contact Vicki Klocke at vklocke@stjoeparish.net or (859) 927-2291.

Thomas More University welcomes all to an astronomy public lecture and night sky viewing at Ziegler Auditorium, Nov. 14, 6–8 p.m. with speaker Austin Hinkel, Ph. D. — observations in the observatory to follow, weather permitting. The lecture will explore some clues of extraterrestrial life and examine what current research tells us about the possibility of life beyond Earth.

The St. Augustine Church, Augusta, bingo social, Nov. 15, 1–5 p.m., St. Augustine Saner Hall, must be over 18 to participate. Bingo, pull tabs, split the pot raffle, drinks and snacks provided. Entry fee $10; additional bingo cards optional. Weather permitting. Proceeds benefit St. Augustine Parish benevolence fund. After bingo, meal provided for players.

6-8th grade students are invited to attend the fall edition of CONNECT26 on Nov. 20, from 4–9 p.m. at Thomas More University. CONNECT is a dynamic evening filled with games, food, small groups, worship and opportunities to grow in faith and friendship with other Catholic students from across the diocese. Cost: $30 (early-bird $20 if registered before 11/9). Register at https://covdio.org/youth/.

Join Father Timothy Schehr, of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati, for an inspiring seven-session Scripture study series. Each session will be held at the Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, 10 a.m. and includes a 90-minute presentation and a 30-minute group discussion. The Book of Psalms, Nov. 21, 28 and Dec. 5; The Gospel of John, March 13, 20 and May 8, 15. Registration required, visit https://forms.gle/XsrspfqFVAWHWnzRA or call Isaak A. Isaak at (859) 392-1529 and leave your name and phone number. Hosted by the Diocese of Covington, Office of Catechesis and Evangelization.

TEC (Teens Encounter Christ) 3-day overnight retreat for high school juniors/seniors and all college-age students, Nov. 21-23. Attend the very first TEC retreat in the Diocese of Covington. Bishop Iffert invites all students to discover TEC, an important part of his own discipleship journey. Applications are now open. Space is limited — sign up early at https://covdio.org/youth/.

World Youth Day 2027, Seoul, South Korea, July 30 to August 10, 2027. The Diocese of Covington is coordinating a pilgrimage to World Youth Day 2027 for young adults ages 18 to 35. Experience the universality of the Catholic Church in the presence of our Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV, alongside millions of young adult Catholics from around the world. Bishop John Iffert hopes to join the pilgrims along with a few priests and deacons from the diocese. Estimated cost is $5,500 per person and includes round-trip airfare, transportation, lodging, meals (from WYD) and tours. To reserve your spot, the initial payment of $800 is now due. The full amount must be paid by Monday, March 15, 2027. For more information, go to covdio.org/register/

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 center is also seeking volunteers to assist in the Early Learning Program, Monday–Thursday, 8:30-11:30 a.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.

Medical volunteers are needed at the Rose Garden Center for Hope & Healing. They are looking for medical professionals to volunteer at their free medical clinic. Needed are Doctors, Nurses and Nurse Practitioners to volunteer once or twice per week or once or twice per month. Interested parties can reach out at tfrosegarden@gmail.com.

Millions of Monicas prayer group, St. Mary of the Assumption Church, Alexandria, the first Monday of each month, 6:30-7:30 p.m. Women are invited to gather for one hour of guided prayer for the intention that our children and youth will return to or remain active in the faith. For information call Carol, (859) 653-5638.

Bishop Iffert and the priests of the Diocese of Covington will pray a Holy Hour for survivors of sexual violence and for the sanctification of priests, 3 p.m., every third Thursday monthly, at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington. All are welcome.

The Holy Face of Jesus devotion, every Tuesday 6 p.m., St. Cecilia Church, Independence, with Benediction 7 p.m., for reparation of sins against the first three commandments: denial of God, blasphemy and the profanation of Sundays and Holy Days; includes praying the Litany of the Holy Face of Jesus, the Holy Face Chaplet, prayers of petition and silent devotion, all during Exposition.

Parents of Addicted Loved Ones, (PAL) is a support group that meets on the 2nd and 4th Wednesdays, 6:30–8 p.m. at Catholic Charities, Latonia. It provides continuing education and support, at no charge, for parents with a son, daughter or spouse suffering from addiction to alcohol or drugs. No cost. Just come — 3629 Church Street, Latonia. For more information contact Client Care at (859) 581-8974.

A Survivors of Suicide Loss Support Group begins at Mother of God Parish, Covington, for family members and friends of persons who have ended their own lives. Group meetings will be held on the first Wednesday of each month at the parish office in the St. Aloysius Conference Room. Contact Jeff Duell at (859) 801-8213.

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



A St. Augustine welcome

On August 19, Father Niby Kannai welcomed new students to St. Augustine School, Covington. The smiles and confidence of the new Kindergarten class of 2026-27 prove it was a successful first day.

Protecting marriage more urgent than ever, pope says after surgery

Josephine Peterson
Catholic News Service

Marriage requires more than physical attraction, Pope Leo XIV said in his first weekly general audience since undergoing lung cancer surgery, emphasizing that authentic love involves mutual self-giving, fidelity and a lifelong commitment between spouses.

The pope, who returned to the Vatican Oct. 17 after four days in Rome's Gemelli hospital, said the responsibility to protect and promote marriage and family life is "more urgent than ever before."

Pope Leo opened his Oct. 21 general audience in St. Peter's Square by thanking God and the faithful for their prayers following surgery to remove a cancerous tumor from his right lung.

Reflecting on the Second Vatican Council's pastoral constitution "Gaudium et Spes," Pope Leo said the council presented marriage as an "intimate partnership of married life and love," rooted in the mutual self-giving of spouses.

He said the council recognized that the well-being of individuals and society is closely linked to the health of marriage and family life.

Rather than understanding marriage solely as a legal contract, the council emphasized the marital covenant, through which spouses mutually give themselves to and accept one another, the pope said.

Such a union requires "total fidelity" and the "unbreakable oneness" of spouses, he said, and finds expression in the procreation and upbringing of children.

Pope Leo said marital love, understood through Christ's love, is not limited to physical attraction but "involves the entire will of the spouses, enlivening the affections of their hearts and expressing itself through sentiments and gestures of tenderness."

He emphasized that men and women are equal in dignity and that marital intimacy should deepen the mutual self-giving and shared joy of spouses.

The "supreme gift of marriage" is children, he said, through whom spouses become "cooperators with the love of God the Creator."

Pope Leo said married couples must carefully consider their own circumstances and the well-being of their children when making decisions about having children, while ensuring those decisions are guided by conscience and conform to Church teaching.



CNS photo/Lola Gomez

Pope Leo XIV greets a child from the popemobile while riding around St. Peter's Square at the Vatican before his weekly general audience Oct. 21, 2026.

"Called to this human and Christian responsibility, they are bound to allow themselves to be guided by a sound judgement regarding their own good and that of their children, whether already born or yet to be born," he said.

The pope also reaffirmed the Church's teaching on protecting human life from conception, citing the council's condemnation of abortion and infanticide, while emphasizing the dignity of marital intimacy.

The address followed a recent weeklong Vatican meeting of presidents of bishops' conferences and heads of Eastern Catholic Churches on the implementation of Pope Francis' 2016 apostolic exhortation, "Amoris Laetitia," which addresses marriage and family life.

Pope Leo opened that meeting Oct. 7 but was hospitalized before its conclusion. The meeting's synthesis report will not be released until Pope Leo XIV has reviewed it, but some bishops spoke about their discussions with the media, saying they have a renewed commitment to listen to the realities of modern families as well as to reach young people and address their hesitancy to marry.

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Covington Deanery celebrates with Bishop Iffert on his five years as Covington's shepherd

Laura Keener
Editor

The priests and people of the Covington Deanery held its Mass and reception celebrating Bishop John Iffert's five-year anniversary as shepherd of the Diocese of Covington. The celebration of one of five in the Diocese of Covington — one at each deanery — recognizing the milestone anniversary.

The Covington Deanery serves the parishes of Bellevue, Covington, Dayton, Latonia, Ludlow, Newport and Taylor Mill. The Covington Deanery Mass and celebration were held at Holy Spirit Parish, Newport. Pastors from the Covington Deanery parishes concelebrated: Msgr. William Cleves, Father Michael Comer, Father Ivan Kalamuzi, Father Niby Kani, Father Ryan Maher, Father Martin Pitstick and Father Lawrence Schaeper, with Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys in choir. Father Conor Kunath joined the reception.

During his homily, Bishop Iffert shared the story that he said most people request hearing and that all bishops enjoy telling — "the call" from the Vatican nuncio informing him that the pope has selected him to be a bishop.

"The reason I think that story is so popular, we want to talk about it again and again, is because that phone call completely changes your life. It changes everything about you, your personal life, your ministerial life — everything," Bishop Iffert said.

As Bishop Iffert went on to describe where he was when he received the nuncio's call and his initial doubt, "Is someone playing a trick on me?" he said, the congregation listened intently, often smiling in admiration of their bishop.

Recounting the conversation, Bishop Iffert said that Archbishop Christophe Pierre asked what he knew about Covington, to which he replied, "practically nothing." "He laughed, and he said, 'You will have many years to learn,'" said Bishop Iffert.

Within a few minutes after hanging up with Archbishop Pierre, Bishop Iffert received a call from Bishop Foys congratulating him and welcoming him to the diocese. Shortly after, his own bishop, Bishop McGovern, then of Belleville, Illinois, called with a list of things he will need to do during the next few weeks before leaving for Covington.

Later that evening, as he sat in the chapel, Bishop Iffert said, "I burst into sustained laughter, because I know how these things go. People are curious and wondering, and I thought no one in Kentucky has ever heard of Father John Iffert."

Relating to the Gospel reading of the Great Commission, where Jesus instructs his disciples to go and make disciples of all men, Bishop Iffert said that same commission is ours.

"In every Catholic diocese around the world, in every Church that claims the name of Jesus Christ, in every place that the tradition of the apostles has spread and that we gather together before Him to keep that great mission alive," Bishop Iffert said.

During the Communion meditation, Matt Spencer, director of the Diocesan Choir, who was the organist that evening, led the Holy Spirit Choir in singing "Wherever I Go From Here, Lord." Mr. Spencer composed the song based on a prayer attributed to St. Isaac Jogues that Bishop Iffert has prayed since his confirmation in seventh grade. The words of the prayer and song are: "Wherever I go from here, Lord, let me be strong in faith and poor in spirit. Make me a man after your own heart." In his closing remarks, Bishop Iffert acknowledged the song and his fondness for it.



"WHEREVER I GO FROM HERE, LORD,
LET ME BE STRONG IN FAITH
AND POOR IN SPIRIT.
MAKE ME A MAN
AFTER YOUR OWN HEART."

Adapted from a prayer attributed to St. Isaac Jogues, S.J., Bishop Iffert's Patron Saint

The celebration continued in the Holy Spirit Parish Center, where speakers all thanked Bishop Iffert for his approachable nature, his commitment to one-on-one conversations and true listening in planning, his ability to make others feel at ease in ordinary and stressful situations and for acting as a shepherd, father and friend to the women religious, priests and lay faithful of the diocese.

As the evening ended, Bishop Iffert thanked everyone for their support, saying that the one message he wants people to take home is "I love you, and God loves you."

See photos on page 11.

VILLA MADONNA ACADEMY

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(Story on on page 2)

Duesing photos





(above, left) A nighttime view of Mother of God's Italian Renaissance inspired artwork and architecture allows visitors to take in the beauty of the art separate from the stained-glass windows.

(above, right) French artists were inspired by Mother of God's patroness' role as a mother and allowed their artwork to take the viewer into the eyes of infant. Their installation was a journey through "landscapes of early dreams," which invited viewers to "reconnect with the wonder, fragility and imagination of our inner baby."

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Covington Deanery celebrates with Bishop Iffert Story on page 9.







(left) Bishop John Iffert prays the collect as Mass begins in recognition of his five-year anniversary as Covington's shepherd.
(above, center) Neil Hensley, parishioner, Holy Spirit Parish, Newport, was lector for the Mass.
(above, right from left) Cathedral parishioners Steve Sahlfeld, Mel Mueller and Marie Tobler







above, from left) Carol Leonhardt and Peter Moore, listen as Bishop Iffert shares the story of "the call" from the nuncio.
(above, right) Notre Dame Sister Michyl Habermehl chats with Bishop Iffert at the reception.



(above) Bishop Iffert holds up artwork of St. Augustine Church, Covington, superimposed with the faces of the St. Augustine students, a gift from the parish.





(left) Bishop Iffert and the pastors of the Covington Deanery celebrate the Eucharistic Prayer.
(above, left)) Glenna Kramer, parishioner, St. Philip Parish, Melbourne, delights in Bishop Iffert's homily.
(above, right) Mother of God parishioners Marilyn Schleyer and Victor Canfield return from presenting the gifts to Bishop Iffert.
(right) Nicholas Osburg, parishioner, St. Bernard Parish, Dayton, speaks with Father Lawrence Schaeper and Father Martin Pitstick at the reception.
(below) Servers and Deacon Joe Wiedeman assist Bishop Iffert at the altar.
(below, right) Marie Tobler chats with Father Ivan Kalamuzi at the reception.







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ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

The Diocese of Covington is accepting applications for the full-time Curia position of Administrative Assistant for the offices of Youth Ministry and Catechesis & Evangelization. Key responsibility areas across both offices will broadly include facilitating ministries by providing data collection and management across a wide area; communication and marketing using email, direct mail, social media, various newsletters, etc.; event coordination and support, including logistics, billing, and basic bookkeeping; updating the diocesan calendar as needed; and managing the websites of each office. 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

BUILDING AND PROPERTY CUSTODIAN

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

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US bishops' president urges Catholics 'to put their faith before politics' in November elections

OSV News staff
OSV News



OSV News photo/Mike Blake, Reuters

A person drops off an election ballot at a drive-through ballot drop box during the California primary election in San Diego June 2, 2026. Ahead of the Nov. 3 midterm elections, Archbishop Paul S. Coakley, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, issued a statement Oct. 14 reminding the faithful that "For citizens in a representative democracy such as our own, participation in public life — including voting — is both a right and a responsibility."

Ahead of the Nov. 3 midterm elections, Archbishop Paul S. Coakley, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, issued a statement Oct. 14 reminding the faithful that "For citizens in a representative democracy such as our own, participation in public life — including voting — is both a right and a responsibility."

"In a time of deep political division, the temptation is to be discouraged and to not participate in the election process. But discouragement is not a Christian virtue," Archbishop Coakley of Oklahoma City said.

The midterm elections will determine the balance of power in Congress, as well as governors' mansions and state legislatures across the country.

Archbishop Coakley said that as Catholics exercise their civic duty, "it is important to ensure that citizens not face unnecessary delays or complications in registering or exercising their right to vote."

"Together, we can contribute to the common good of our nation as faithful citizens by supporting free and fair elections," he said.

He also asked Catholics "to put their faith before politics."

"The Church's contribution to the public life of a nation is not a political or partisan program; rather, it reflects our commitment to the dignity of every person, who is created in the image and likeness of God," he said. "One of the great dangers of our moment is the belief that any criticism of 'our party' somehow strengthens our opponents. A well-formed conscience does not operate on those terms."

"Therefore, I encourage all to judge candidates and elected officials by their actions, not merely their promises, and how those actions promote the common good," he continued. "We must reject rhetoric that appeals to fear, resentment, or division, and listen instead, to the Gospel call to love God and all our neighbors."

"May Our Lady of Guadalupe, Patroness of the Americas, bless our nation as we turn once more to elections, that we might respect the dignity of each person and promote the common good of all," he said.

A recent Pew Research Center survey found that among all Catholics, President Donald Trump's approval rating dropped from 47% at the beginning of his second term to 30% in October 2026. Among Hispanic Catholics, it dropped from 31% to 18%, and among white Catholics from 59% to 39% over the same period.

More broadly, the same survey found that registered voters are more likely to support Democratic candidates than Republican ones across most religious groups. Pew found that among Catholics, white Catholics and Hispanic Catholics were divided over their support for congressional Republicans or Democrats in the midterms.

Pope Leo XIV's brother shares his own cancer battle, the role of faith and his one request

Simone Orendain
OSV News



CNS photo/Vatican Media

Pope Leo XIV speaks with his brother Louis Prevost and sister-in-law Deborah Prevost in the papal library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican May 19, 2025. Louis Prevost, a current cancer patient, spoke with OSV News Oct. 16, 2026, about his own experience battling cancer strengthened by faith and prayer following the news his brother, Pope Leo, has lung cancer.

While Pope Leo XIV was recovering from an Oct. 13 surgery to remove the lower lobe of his right lung where doctors found cancer, his oldest brother Louis Prevost was in a Florida hospital receiving treatment for a blood cancer that had become very active after seven years of being at a "low level."

Prevost told OSV News Oct. 16 that he and his wife, Deborah, "would be in Rome right now" with his brother otherwise.

"But we're each confined to each other's respective hospitals," he said with a chuckle.

Pope Leo, 71, is recuperating at Gemelli Hospital in Rome where doctors said he was having respiratory physical therapy and had returned to his regular diet the day after the procedure and that his "recovery is proceeding as expected." From the hospital, the pope on Oct. 16 offered Mass and made a call to Russian President Vladimir Putin, urging a ceasefire in Russia's war with Ukraine.

On Oct. 13, CBS News reported Deborah Prevost shared with the news network that her husband has multiple myeloma. This form of cancer grows in plasma cells, which are a type of white blood cell. According to the Mayo Clinic, the cancer makes abnormal proteins that "can build up and damage organs, such as kidneys."

Prevost's cancer was diagnosed in 2017 and had been at a "very low" level of activity "for years" until three months ago, she said. The brothers spoke prior to Pope Leo's surgery when the pontiff called to let them know what was happening.

"We keep praying, keeping spirits up for both of them," she told CBS News.

Louis Prevost, 75, explained to OSV News that he had entered a clinical trial in 2019 that involved the cycling of blood cells out of his body and infusing the healthy cells back in, in a process that can take seven to eight hours. He said this time, the clinical trial has become more scientifically advanced, with the side effects being less severe.

He told OSV News he has "absolutely" leaned on his faith throughout the illness.

"I firmly believe in the power of prayer, because when I was first diagnosed, I wasn't given much of a survival

(Continued on page 14)



Pope Leo XIV's brother shares his own cancer battle

(Continued from page 13)

chance. And here it is, nine years later and I'm still kicking and feeling OK and still around," said Prevost.

"As much as I can, I'm fully on board with all the sacraments and the blessings of the Church," he said. "And all the prayers from my own family and the messages that I get from friends and people that I have never met that say 'We're praying for you.'"

Vice President JD Vance, a fellow Catholic, also noted that Louis Prevost was battling cancer in an Oct. 14 post on X praying for the "good health and full recovery of Pope Leo XIV." He said, "May God keep both of these brothers healthy for years to come."

Prevost told OSV News he has been seeking the intercession of St. Carlo Acutis, the first millennial saint, who died within days of being diagnosed with leukemia at 15 years old. And lately, Prevost said, he has also been asking for the newly beatified Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen's intercession.

Prevost said both of their parents had cancer, but that his form of cancer was not hereditary.

He said he suspected his cancer was brought on by environmental factors, such as exposure to chemicals while serving in the U.S. Navy.

Prevost said he was grateful for the prayers, but he had one request.

"I always ask people, 'Keep praying for my brother, that he makes a full recovery,'" Prevost said, "because I think he's the pope the Church needs at this time."

Protecting God's Children for Adults Safe Environment Trainings

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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:

- October bulletin: posted Sunday, Oct. 4; due Tuesday, Nov. 3.

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:

- Wednesday, Nov. 4 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
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- Wednesday, Dec. 9 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Wednesday, Dec. 9 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Thursday, Jan. 7 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Thursday, Jan. 7 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Wednesday, Jan. 20 9–11:30 a.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- Wednesday, Jan. 20 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington

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National/World

Trump administration extends TPS for Ukraine, Sudan, but uncertainty remains

WASHINGTON — The Trump administration on Oct. 18 extended protections from deportation to people from Ukraine and Sudan, allowing them to continue living legally in the U.S. for now. Temporary Protected Status grants the U.S. government the power to shield eligible migrants from deportation if they are from countries experiencing dangerous conditions such as war, disaster, or other unrest. The Trump administration has sought to end TPS for several countries, notably Haiti, which is racked by extreme levels of gang violence, but it also recently granted an extension to El Salvador. In a written statement provided to OSV News, a spokesperson for DHS confirmed the extension without sharing a rationale, stating that an announcement on each country's TPS "will be made at the appropriate time," and until such announcements are made, nationals of those countries "present in the U.S. under TPS retain protection." David Spicer, director of policy and engagement for migration at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, told OSV News Oct. 19 the organization "is closely monitoring the situation facing people relying on TPS without clarity on the future of their designations." He said, "The conference continues to urge the administration to abide by the requirements of the TPS statute, to carefully consider conditions in countries of origin and the threats to human life that could come with forcibly repatriating people, and to provide meaningful notice about the future of these designations so that families, employers, and communities can plan accordingly."

Pope Leo sends message to San Francisco celebrating Franciscan mission's 250th anniversary

SAN FRANCISCO — Pope Leo XIV has congratulated the city of San Francisco as it marks the 250th anniversary of the Franciscan mission at the heart of the city's founding. In a message dated Oct. 1, the pope sent "greetings of good wishes" to Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone, civic leaders and city residents as they commemorate the founding of Misión San Francisco de Asís in 1776. Pope Leo's message was delivered by Archbishop Gabriele G. Caccia, apostolic nuncio to the U.S. and shared by the Archdiocese of San Francisco Oct. 9. The mission, also known as "Mission Dolores," was one of 21 missions founded by Franciscan missionaries and Native Californians along the California coast. It was dedicated by St. Junipero Serra on Oct. 9, 1776. In his message for the mission's 250th anniversary, Pope Leo expressed his "gratitude for the abundant graces that the Almighty has bestowed over the last two hundred and fifty years." He also prayed "that this occasion may be an opportunity for the local community to continue to grow in unity and harmony, seeking always to care for the needs of the poorest and least among us."

Pope Leo calls Putin from hospital urging ceasefire, aid to starving Ukrainians

ROME — Pope Leo XIV spoke by telephone with Russian President Vladimir Putin Oct. 16, calling for a ceasefire in that nation's war on Ukraine and humanitarian aid to Ukrainian civilians starving amid a Russian blockade. The Holy See Press Office announced that the pope — currently in Rome's Gemelli Hospital following an Oct. 13 lung cancer surgery — "expressed his deep concern about the grave humanitarian situation in the city of Oleshky," located in Ukraine's partially occupied Kherson region. Pope Leo's call comes after a Sept. 19 appeal by the Ukrainian Council of Churches and Religious Organizations, urging the pope and other global religious leaders to intervene. Oleshky and its surrounding area are estimated to have more than 6,000 civilians remaining there, including some 200 children, who are "effectively trapped in a 'gray zone' near the front line," with no food deliveries since the end of May, said UCCRO. The Holy See Press Office said Pope Leo "called for a ceasefire to allow the delivery of food and medical assistance, and the voluntary and safe evacuation of the civilian population." In addition, said the press office, "the Holy Father reaffirmed the Holy See's commitment to promoting dialogue and peace." Russia's attacks — initiated in 2014, and accelerated by a 2022 full-scale invasion — have been classified as a genocide in multiple human rights reports.

Holy Land Church leaders condemn settler attack on Christian village, European diplomats

JERUSALEM — Christian leaders in the Holy Land condemned recent Israeli settler attacks in the West Bank, including an Oct. 17 assault on Palestinian civilians and European diplomats during the annual olive harvest near Taybeh, one of the last remaining Christian villages there. In an Oct. 20 statement, the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem said the attack reflected broader settler violence affecting Palestinian villages and peaking during harvest season, when families gather olives that support their livelihoods and ties to the land. Reuters reported masked settlers ambushed a convoy that included diplomats from Belgium, Poland and France. Among those attacked was Bernard Baudoux, mayor of Aulnoye-Aymeries, France, who said he was violently thrown to the ground. A day earlier, settlers allegedly burned olive trees and threw rocks, injuring several people, including Washington Post photographer Heidi Levine. Church leaders welcomed President Isaac Herzog's condemnation but said continued attacks demonstrate impunity and called for accountability. "Unfortunately, the facts on the ground show that these attacks continue because of the impunity enjoyed by those who commit them," they said.

Canadian bishops express sorrow, pledge prayer following deadly military base fire

EDMONTON, Alberta — Two Canadian Catholic bishops expressed sorrow and pledged prayer following a deadly fire at one of that nation's military bases. An Oct. 17 blaze at Canadian Forces Base Wainwright killed four service members and wounded 39 other persons, with at least 19 of the latter sustaining critical injuries. "Behind every uniform is someone's beloved son, father, brother, or friend — someone who answered the call to serve Canada and contribute to peace and security throughout the world," said Bishop David Motiuk of the Ukrainian Catholic Eparchy of Edmonton in a statement to OSV News. Noting that the community is "deeply shocked and saddened" by the fire, Bishop Motiuk stressed that "our hearts, thoughts, and prayers are with the families of those who lost their lives, the injured, and the entire CFB Wainwright community during this time of profound sorrow." The head of Canada's Military Ordinariate in a statement posted on Facebook expressed "great sadness" over the tragedy in Wainwright. "I am praying for all the victims, the injured, and their families," Bishop Scott C. McCaig said. "We stand ready to help in any way we can and urge prayers from all members of the Ordinariate," which has its headquarters in Ottawa, Ontario.

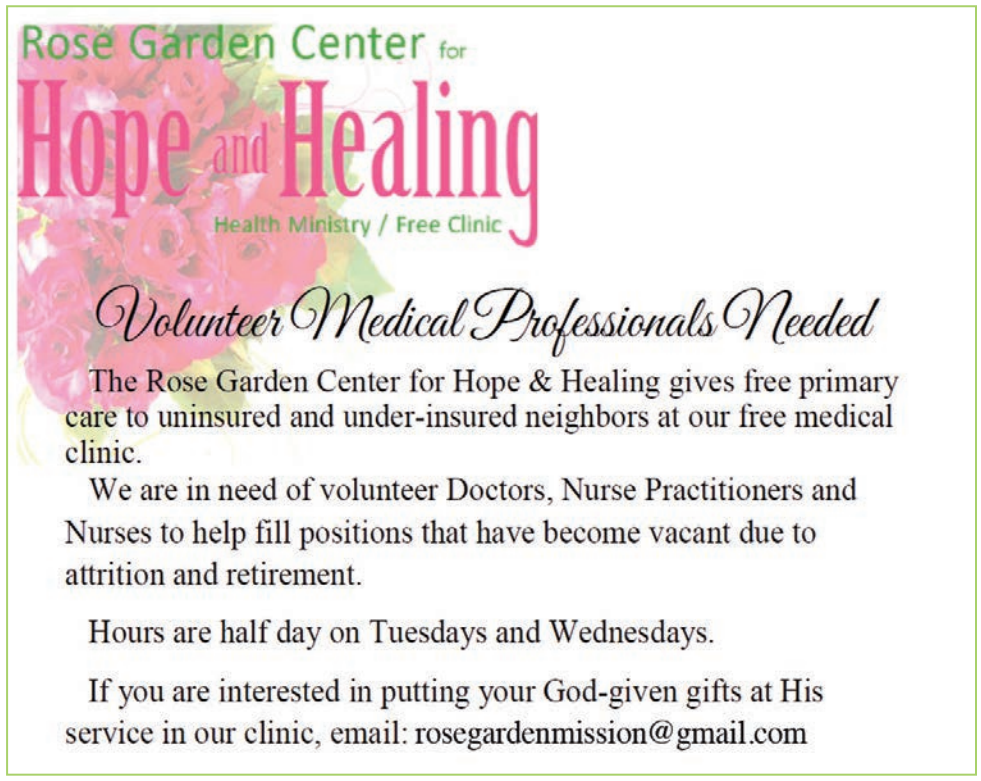
French bishops condemn 'unacceptable violence' as riots sweep nation

PARIS (OSV News) — French Church leaders have strongly condemned a wave of violence that swept across France over the Oct. 17-18 weekend during demonstrations that began as protests against the rising cost of living. The unrest has plunged France into "shock, fear, and despair" and raised serious questions about the causes of the crisis, the country's bishops said Oct. 19. Cardinal Jean-Marc Aveline of Marseille, president of the French bishops' conference, denounced the "unacceptable violence," which included attacks on police, looting, arson and damage to public buildings. The disturbances followed weeks of student-led protests that had expanded into broader urban unrest. Authorities reported that hundreds of thousands participated in demonstrations, but violent groups overwhelmed many gatherings, injuring hundreds of police officers and causing extensive destruction. One of the most severely damaged sites was the historic city hall in Limoges, which was largely destroyed by fire. In Marseille, Cardinal Aveline noted that churches, businesses, a police station and municipal offices were targeted. Archbishop Olivier de Germay of Lyon described the violence as evidence of a society in crisis and called the destruction a dead end, urging reconciliation. President Emmanuel Macron also condemned the unrest and appealed for peaceful political dialogue instead of chaos and destruction.

Catholic groups raise alarm about DOJ guidance on institutionalizing persons with disabilities

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — Key Catholic organizations, including the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, have urged Congress to reject recent Department of Justice guidance that they say weakens protections for people with disabilities. The concern centers on a June DOJ slip opinion that reinterprets the 1999 Supreme Court decision Olmstead v. L.C., which established that people with disabilities generally have the right to receive care in integrated community settings rather than being placed in institutions when appropriate services are available. The DOJ guidance argues that neither Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act nor Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires states to provide services in integrated settings. While the opinion does not carry the force of law, it serves as internal executive branch guidance and departs from the longstanding interpretation of Olmstead recognized by federal courts. In an Oct. 14 letter to Congress, Archbishop Shelton J. Fabre of Louisville, Bishop Edward J. Burns of Dallas, and representatives of other Catholic organizations described the guidance as "deeply troubling." They warned that subsequent DOJ actions raise doubts about the department's commitment to enforcing disability integration protections and could result in significant hardship for people with disabilities and their families.





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