October 30, 2026

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Daylight Savings Time ends Nov. 1

It's getting to be time to Fall back. On Nov. 1 daylight savings time ends, remember to turn your clocks back an hour. Also, at this time, your local fire department encourages all to change the batteries in smoke detectors.

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MESSENGER

Serving the Diocese of Covington, Kentucky since 1926







(above, left) Dignitaries of Thomas More University work together to unveil the newly installed statue of the university's patron, St. Thomas More.

(right) The newly installed statue on the campus of Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, depicts the university's namesake patron saint.

(far right) Msgr. Gerald Twaddell blesses the newly unveiled statue of St. Thomas More as part of the ceremony proceedings. Msgr. Twaddell is chaplain of Thomas More University's Mary, Seat of Wisdom chapel.





Baker photos

(above, left) Thomas More University president Joseph Chillo (left) greets sculptor Matt Langford (right).

(above, right) Will Ziegler, attorney, philanthropist and major benefactor of Thomas More University, receives an honorary Doctor of Law from President Joseph Chillo as part of the dedication ceremony.

Thomas More University unveils statue of namesake saint, dedicates academic center to donor

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, received a gift in the form of a larger-than-life statue of its namesake and patron saint, St. Thomas More, which was unveiled on the campus in front of the Academic Center, Oct. 21. The ceremony brought together students, faculty, administrators and community members to celebrate the statue's dedication and blessing.

Designed and constructed by sculptor Matt Langford, Mr. Langford sought to highlight several qualities of the saint in his work — namely his "steadfastness, intellect and faith."

"The folds of his robe are rooted to the base in the manner of a tree rooted to the ground," Mr. Langford described in his remarks at the unveiling ceremony. "This is purposeful," he said. "This is metaphoric for his stability and the fact he would not be moved from his conscience."

St. Thomas More is notable for his unswaying dedication to his faith, famously opposing King Henry VIII's separation from the Catholic Church and declaration of himself as the head of the Church of England.

Mr. Langford also depicted the saint as "shorn of all status," lacking his typical S-chain or Tudor rose. "To that degree, I strayed from historical images," he said, still having chosen to keep the identifiable robes of the saint in the depiction, but leaning towards St. Thomas More's unwavering act of faith as symbolism for the statue.

Present also at the ceremony was Wilbert "Will" Ziegler, who donated the statue to the university. An alumnus of the school, as well as an attorney and philanthropist, Mr. Ziegler, 92, expressed his dedication to supporting the university as "long as he can walk around."

As part of the proceedings, Thomas More University president Joseph Chillo presented Mr. Ziegler with an honorary Doctor of Law, and declared the university's recently constructed academic center — which the statue is installed in front of — to be named after Mr. Ziegler.

"It is fitting that this building, devoted to the pursuit of knowledge and the formation of future generations," Mr. Chillo said in his remarks during the ceremony, "bears the name of a man whose life reflects the enduring value of education, the responsibility of leadership and the important of service to others."

"As we look ahead," said Mr. Chillo, "may the example of our patron saint and the legacy of Will Ziegler continue to inspire every member of our university community … to embrace the responsibilities of leadership, remain steadfast in our Catholic identity and pursue the common good with conviction and purpose."

High School placement test — a tool to set students up for success

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

The transition from middle school to high school can be challenging. Incoming freshman students face a world of unknowns behind the doors of their chosen high schools — new peers, new teachers, new buildings, new classes, new schedules, etc. Going from a class of 20 students to 100+ students can be daunting, and starting a new curriculum alongside that change can be even scarier. However, using the high school placement test, diocesan high schools are able to place students on a path that works best for them.

The high school placement test is being administered diocesan wide on Saturday, December 12. To register, contact the students intended high school.

Taken on Dec. 12 across the Diocese of Covington, the high school placement test provides a point of reference for high schools when deciding where to place incoming students. It is not a test of admission, rather a test of placement.

"It helps schools figure out which classes would be best for the students so that they can be successful," said Kendra McGuire, superintendent of Catholic schools. Unlike a standard curriculum that each student works through in middle school, high schools are able to differentiate classes based on student readiness levels.

"They [high schools] have different level classes and different plans," said Mrs. McGuire.

The high school placement test measures students' skills across five sections: verbal reasoning, quantitative reasoning, reading comprehension, mathematics and language arts. Based on student scores, high schools can determine which level classes will provide students with the best chance of success. "They look in all areas … students who can handle that rigor, or that pace, that helps inform that," said Mrs. McGuire.

The test is not the only area of measurement schools can use to place a student. In addition to the test, schools can also contact the student's middle school to learn more about them, engage in discussion with parents, and use the students' MAP test scores.

"It really is just part of the data points to help place a child for their best success in high school," said Mrs. McGuire.

In addition to placement, high school placement tests help high schools administer merit-based scholarships to incoming freshmen. The number of scholarships and amounts awarded vary by school; however, awards from each school can only be given to students that are tested at that school. This is why it is encouraged that students take the test at the high school they intend to attend. Though the scores can be shared across schools, scholarships cannot be granted to students who did not test at the awarding school.

High school placement tests are unique to private education, and in the Diocese of Covington, they help provide students and their families with data when making decisions on class placement, in addition to financial opportunity. Mrs. McGuire says that students and families shouldn't worry, and that the goal is for students to showcase what they know.

"Go in and do your best to try and showcase what you know … just go in and do your best," she said. If a student does not perform as expected, family and student input along with other data points can ensure that students get placed in a spot that is best for them.



Chicagoans meet in Rome

During a visit to Rome, Sept. 23, Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys greeted Pope Leo XIV. Pope Leo is the fifth pope that Bishop Foys was able to meet in person — Pope Paul VI, John Paul II, Benedict XVI, Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIV. "It was both an honor and a pleasure to meet in person Pope Leo XIV," Bishop Foys said noting that the Chicago neighborhood where he grew up was just 10 miles from the Pope Leo's childhood neighborhood.

High School Open Houses

Looking for a great high school? Attend an open house at one or more Catholic school in the Diocese of Covington.

Notre Dame Academy, Park Hills
Sunday, Nov. 8, 1–3 p.m.

Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria
Thursday, Nov. 12, 6–8 p.m.

St. Henry District High School, Erlanger
Sunday, Nov. 15, 1–3 p.m.

Villa Madonna Academic, Villa Hills
Sunday, Nov. 15, 1–3 p.m.

Covington Latin School, Covington
Saturday, Dec. 5, 9 a.m.–12 p.m.

Holy Cross District High School, Latonia
Sunday, Jan. 17, 1–3 p.m.

The following schools have already hosted its open house. If you missed it, please call or e-mail to arrange a visit.

Covington Catholic High School, Park Hills
859) 491-2247

Newport Central Catholic High School, Newport
E-mail: sgray@ncchs.com

St. Patrick High School, Maysville
(606) 564-5949

At Campbell County and Northern Kenton County Deaneries, Bishop Iffert completes anniversary celebrations

Maura Baker and Bella Bailey
Staff writer and Multimedia correspondent

On Oct. 21 and 22, Bishop John Iffert completed his five-leg tour of the deaneries within the Diocese of Covington — celebrating five different Masses with the people of the diocese in commemoration of his five-year anniversary as bishop and shepherd. These final two Masses were held at St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring — representing the Campbell County Deanery — and St. Pius Parish, Edgewood — representing the Northern Kenton County Deanery.

During his homilies at both Masses, Bishop Iffert recounted the story of his calling to be Bishop of Covington. A literal call — which he remembers receiving from Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the papal nuncio to the United States at the time.

He referenced the great commission of the apostles, saying, "When I was asked to come to Covington, and it was life changing, but I knew that I would find an established Church here. I knew that there would be people who love Christ and love the Church. I knew that there would be buildings. I knew that I would have a place to lay my head. I knew that I would have coworkers in this ministry. I knew that there would be a celebration and I'd be welcomed. I knew that I would have neighbors in the region, bishops to rely on for advice.

"The apostles didn't have any of that. There was no institution. There was no support," he said. "They were sent out into the world to do something that the world had never seen before, all on the word of Jesus, all on His command. They were sent out on this mission with

(Continued on page 6)

Baker photo



Surrounded by fellow clergy members of the Northern Kenton County Deanery, Bishop John Iffert raises the chalice during the consecration.

Community baby showers support expecting families beyond physical needs

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

The Diocese of Covington's Pro-Life Office, as part of the Pregnancy Care Network of Northern Kentucky, held a community baby shower, Oct. 27, in support of expecting parents and parents of newborns. The event, hosted at Florence Baptist Church, Florence, provides parents with standard infant necessities such as diapers, wipes and clothing, but also has resources for obtaining insurance and finishing a GED, ensuring that parents get not only the best for their babies, but also the support they need.



Bailey photo

A young boy explores the resources at the community baby shower, stopping at the Books, Bibs, and Beyond, table after a book caught his eye.

Community Baby Showers have been a staple of the Pregnancy Care Network's ministry since the first eight years ago.

"It's an opportunity for women and families who might not otherwise receive a baby shower normally … we're providing them with this baby shower to celebrate their baby, but also to give them the resources to be successful parents," said Faye Roch, director of the Pro-Life Office. "We're showing them that there are ways for them to be successful, we're providing for their needs but we're also providing them with resources."

(Continued on page 7)

During AllHallowtide, a headless bishop Jack-o'-Lantern reminds us of our martyrs

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

The air is getting colder and the days are getting shorter — the end of October and the start of November celebrates "All Hallowtide" in the Catholic Church. Consisting of All Hallow's Eve (Halloween), All Saints' Day and All Souls' Day, All Hallowtide serves as a time for us to remember the dead — including martyrs, saints and the faithful departed.

While a secular tradition originating from the carving of faces into turnips in Ireland, carved pumpkins, or "jack-o'-lanterns" have become a mainstay of the season in the United States. The Diocese of Covington's curia offices held a contest this year that had offices decorate their own pumpkins, and one such stood out for its interesting historical context.

Displayed beside a jack-o-lantern decorated as a headless bishop is a sign identifying a list of three martyrs in the Church — St. Denis of Paris, St. Nicasius of Rheims and St. Aphrodisius. These martyrs, while serving as interesting examples of seasonally Catholic trivia also remind us of the sacrifice of our Catholic saints.

The first of these saints, St. Denis of Paris, is famously depicted holding his own severed head. A bishop himself — although a real one, unlike our pumpkin friend — was martyred for his faith via decapitation due to his and his compatriots success in converting souls to Christ during the third century. He is the most famous "cephalophore" — "head-carrier" — in Christian hagiology.

St. Nicasius of Rheims is the patron saint of smallpox victims — having survived the disease himself — and another cephalophore martyr. Also a bishop, he established the Rheims Cathedral in France in the 5th century and was said to have received a vision from God predicting the invasion of the vandals into France. These same invaders would later be the ones to martyr the bishop, who is today remembered for his bravery and devotion, having been said to have said "let us abide the mercy of God and pray for our enemies. I am ready to give myself for my people" when asked if France should be prepared to fight the invaders.

The third saint, St. Aphrodisius, was said also to be martyred in France, having previously been a priest in Egypt during the first century. It's said that he sheltered the Holy Family at Hermopolis when they fled into Egypt and was later decapitated by Roman pagans.

As we celebrate and pray this AllHallowtide, let us remember the sacrifice of these cephalophore martyrs — and pray for all of the faithful departed, including those persecuted for their faith worldwide today.





Baker photos

(above) In the lobby of the diocesan Curia, Covington, pumpkins decorated by the Curia offices display different designs and costumes. Staff and guests to the Curia were welcomed to vote on their favorite design.
(top) A particular jack-o-lantern on display depicts a headless bishop, complete with a beretta. A sign beside the pumpkin describes three saints who were executed via decapitation: St. Denis of Paris, St. Nicasius of Rheims and St. Aphrodisius.

MESSENGER MIC'D
THE OFFICIAL MESSENGER PODCAST

Messenger Mic'd

The Diocese of Covington's *Messenger* has launched "Messenger Mic'd," a weekly podcast highlighting news beyond the news in the Diocese of Covington. New episodes are released every Saturday morning — scan the QR code or visit www.covdio.org/messenger to catch up on the latest news and be sure to tune into this week's episode.

Correction

In last week's *Messenger*, Oct. 23, Notre Dame Sister Michelyn Beckerich, who greeted Bishop Iffert at his anniversary celebration at Holy Spirit Parish, was misidentified. The *Messenger* apologizes for the error.

Reporting Misconduct in the Diocese of Covington

Anyone who has experienced sexual misconduct by a cleric, employee or volunteer of the Diocese of Covington is asked to contact Ms. Julie Feinauer, diocesan victims assistance coordinator (859) 392-1515. Professional assistance and pastoral support will be provided in confidentiality and with respect.

A copy of the "Diocesan Policies and Procedures for Addressing Sexual Misconduct" is available by contacting the Chancery, (859) 392-1510 or visiting www.covdio.org and going to "Sexual Misconduct Policy."

Informando sobre conducta inapropiada en la Diocesis de Covington

Cualquier persona que haya experimentado conducta sexual inapropiada por parte de un clérigo, empleado o voluntario de la Diócesis de Covington está invitada a ponerse en contacto con Ms. Julie Feinauer, coordindora diocesana para dar asistencia a las víctimas. Teléfono (859) 392-1515. Asistencia profesional y apoyo moral serán ofrecidos de una manera confidencial y con respeto.

Una copia de "Normas y Procedimientos sobre Conducta Sexual Inapropiada" está disponible poniéndose en contacto con la Cancillería, Teléfono (859) 392-1510, o visitando www.covdio.org y marcando "Sexual Misconduct Policy."

Notre Dame Academy

OPEN HOUSE



NOV. 8 | 1-3 PM

Discover the Notre Dame Life at Our Open House!

Notre Dame Academy welcomes all grade school girls and their families to our Open House on Sunday, November 8, from 1–3 p.m. Future Pandas and their families will enjoy personal tours led by our NDA ambassadors, meet our dedicated faculty and students, and learn about the many academic, spiritual, athletic and co-curricular opportunities that make Notre Dame Academy such a special place.

Explore our beautiful campus and state-of-the-art facilities while learning about our curriculum, faith formation, student life, tuition assistance and admissions process. Come experience how Notre Dame Academy empowers young women to grow in faith, pursue excellence and make a difference in the world!

SCAN HERE TO REGISTER

Reservations are required.

ndapandas.org



U.S. Department of Education National Blue Ribbon School 2018

Please join us for our open house

Bishop Brossart High School

THURSDAY, NOVEMBER 12TH | 6:00-8:00PM

Bishop Brossart invites you to join our Open House to receive a guided tour of our facilities and to answer questions you may have about Bishop Brossart.

For more information call Bishop Brossart High School at **(859) 635-2108**.

Scan QR code to complete questionnaire prior to attending Open House

COMMENTARY

The quiet ministry of the cafeteria: serving, caring and building community

VIEWPOINT



Laura Hatfield

When we think about Catholic education, we often think of the classroom where students learn, grow in their faith and prepare for the future but the mission of a Catholic school extends beyond the classroom. Each day, in school cafeterias throughout the Diocese of Covington, another important part of that mission takes place.

The cafeteria is more than a place to eat lunch. It is a place where friendships grow, community is built and the simple act of sharing a meal brings people together.

Behind every meal served is a team of dedicated employees who arrive early, prepare food, serve students and work hard to make each lunch period a positive experience. Their work may not always be visible to the larger school community, but it is an important part of caring for the children entrusted to us.

In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus reminds us, "For I was hungry and you gave me food" (25:35). These words speak directly to the heart of our mission. Feeding children is not simply about providing nourishment. It is an opportunity to put our faith into action through service, compassion and respect for the dignity of every child.

A kind word, a welcoming smile, or a little extra patience can mean more than we realize. For some students, the cafeteria may be one of the busiest places in their school day, but it can also be a place where they feel welcomed and cared for. Around the lunch table, children share stories, strengthen friendships and learn the importance of community.

Our cafeteria employees are part of this experience. Through their daily work, they demonstrate that ministry does not always happen in a church or a classroom. Sometimes, it happens in a kitchen, behind a serving line or through a simple act of kindness offered to a child.

The Diocese of Covington School Lunch Program is grateful to be part of the larger mission of Catholic education. We recognize that every school has its own community, traditions, and needs, but we share a common purpose: to support the well-being of our students and help them grow in an environment rooted in faith and care for others.

Sometimes, the most meaningful expressions of faith are found in the ordinary moments of everyday life. In our school cafeterias, those moments happen one meal, one smile, and one child at a time.

Laura Hatfield is director of the School Lunch Program for the Diocese of Covington, Ky.

A Marvel-ous message

GUEST

Joe Glaser

I cannot say whether or not this analogy has been made by others in the past — but even if it has, it bears saying again. In recent years, comic book heroes have been some of the biggest draws to the box office when it comes to motion pictures. Movie makers, along with comic book publishers like Marvel or DC, find these epic adventures to be quite lucrative.

In fact, comic books have been hugely popular for many years, and a rare, sought-after issue can bring a very large sum of money from a collector who desires to possess it.

What is the basic premise of these comic book stories that has captivated the hearts of so many over the years? It is fairly simple. There is a unique individual (or individuals) who, through some event or alien origin, etc., has a special power (or powers) beyond those of a normal human being.

Whether it is the ability to fly, transform, exhibit superhuman strength or any number of other capabilities, these beings are able to protect the population from those with evil designs or plots against humanity.

Now, I realize that — for true comic book aficionados — I have greatly oversimplified the complexities and intricacies of the plethora of characters, stories, plots and themes that fill the pages of comic books or graphic novels. For this, my apologies. But I think you can understand what I am trying to convey.

The hero — in the case of these ongoing sagas — is most likely to have an unassuming alter ego that they take on for the general day-to-day activities of their lives. Think of Superman — living as Clark Kent, the mild-mannered reporter for the Daily Planet. Think of Batman and Robin as Bruce Wayne and Dick Grayson. There's Peter Parker, Diana Prince, Tony Stark, T'Challa — the list goes on and on.

The point is that these are people you would see in your daily life and yet be unaware of the great power or powers that they possess. But when humanity is facing a crisis — these characters spring into action — veiling themselves in some form of disguise (often involving Spandex) and taking down the enemy with their superpowers.

In the Catholic Church, we have superheroes of our very own. They, too, have their unassuming, modest identities for the typical activities that they encounter in their day-to-day routines. And like other superheroes, they don't boast of their superhuman capabilities — but rather, they keep it quietly tucked away, until they need to battle the crises that plague humanity — like spiritual dryness or weakness, sinfulness, original sin, possession and more.

Just like Jesus, who was the creator of the universe and all things were at his command but was veiled by human form — these Catholic superheroes also remain modest, though they wield mighty power in certain situations; allowing them to battle with the fierce enemy that threatens the human condition.

Jesus could have annihilated his enemies with a look — just as Clark Kent could defeat the most heinous criminal with a swift blow of his hand — but neither acted until the time was right and they were appropriately garbed. Jesus wore the disguise of a humiliated criminal — Clark Kent, the famous cape and suit with the signature "S" on the front.

I am sure by now you have guessed that these Catholic heroes are our priests, bishops and cardinals.

Just like Superman or other comic book heroes, when preparing for battle, they veil themselves in their superhero garb — whether it be an alb, a stole, a chasuble or other priestly garments — preparing themselves for the actions that lay before them.

They battle spiritual weakness or dryness, venial sins, and the weight of the broken world that can crush their parishioners. By celebrating Mass and — through their superpower — the power of Jesus, Himself, they call down the very Spirit of God to the altar, consecrating the bread and wine into the Body and Blood of Jesus as spiritual food for our life's journey. Wow! We gain strength and perseverance, cleansing and renewal — even true union with God — through this powerful sacrament of the Holy Eucharist.

They battle general sinfulness, mortal sin, addiction, discouragement and sometimes despair through the very power and authority of Jesus, himself, in the Sacrament of Reconciliation as they free the penitent parishioner of their burden — restoring that person to right-relationship with God.

They battle the effects of original sin as they baptize a new member into God's holy family. Sometimes, like Robin to Batman, a trusty, faithful sidekick (your parish deacon) can take on such a task. Even the holy bond of matrimony may be handled by the deacon — but only if it has been delegated to him from the priest.

Some priests, bishops or cardinals have specialties — like opening hearts to the Spirit through the Sacrament of Confirmation or battling demons or the devil, himself, through exorcism. Some may have additional gifts like healing through the power of the Holy Spirit.

These activities that we, so often, take for granted are

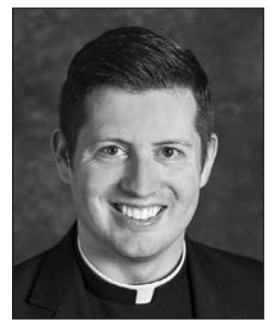
(Continued on page 20)

Beloved and blessed

The readings for the Solemnity of All Saints — Cycle A — are: Revelation 7:2–4, 9–14, 1 John 3:1–3 and Matthew 11:28.

When we sit down with the Sacred Scriptures, we never exactly know what God is going to say to us; as the Word of God, we can echo St. Augustine from his Confessions that they are "ever ancient and ever new." In my reflection with the readings for this weekend, I was drawn in a particular way to two words — that's all! From the First Letter of St. John: "Beloved." And in the Gospel, from the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed."

GO AND GLORIFY



Very Rev. Daniel Schomaker

In the month of November, the Church calls the faithful to reflect on death. St. Benedict in his Rule reminds the monks to "Keep death before your eyes always." This is not to be done out of fear but out of faith, hope and love.

Sadly, the world in which we live is really messed up. Fear, hate, discord, etc., etc., etc., pervades our society. But we who understand that we have been made with and through an intentional love, know that we are called into an eternal bliss. We are called to be saints! Hence why God refers to us as his "beloved"— those he loves!

Do we understand, I mean really, at our core, how much God loves us? Unfortunately, I don't think we always do. But, HE DOES! Beyond anything we can possibly imagine. And the proper response to being loved is to love in return. Maybe this week, we don't focus so much on trying to love others (always very, very important) but instead allow ourselves to be embraced by the love of God. This has to be an intentional act of the will and intellect, so it will take effort. We have to let God in and love us from the inside out.

When we allow ourselves to be loved by the One who IS love, it is then that we begin to find blessedness, beatitude, happiness! Being poor in spirit, or meek, or one who mourns doesn't typically evoke happiness and joy, unless we get down to the heart of the matter — love!

On this November 1, we celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints — those individual, unique human persons whose names are lost to history, but who allowed themselves to be loved by God and who intentionally loved him in return, and so have received the gift of Heaven.

On Monday, November 2, we celebrate the Commemoration of all the Faithful Departed, those who have died with the hope of Heaven who still need some purification before they can enter into the perfection of Heavenly bliss.

And every day, in November and beyond, for us who still live in this "valley of tears," let us "keep death before our eyes always" as we long to truly experience eternal bliss, where we will join all the angels and saints in praising God as his beloved and blessed.

Father Daniel Schomaker is pastor, Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell and director, Office of Worship and Liturgy for the Diocese of Covington, Ky.

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Bishop anniversary celebrations

(Continued from page 2)

no place the way they had, no protection or security, no health insurance policy."

"We know the great commission, right? We heard, 'Go out to the whole world,'" Bishop Iffert said. "So often we think of it in terms of God baptizing in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and we report the numbers of baptisms every year to this day."

While we're "very good" at keeping those records, Bishop Iffert mentioned that the difficult part is to "make disciples."

To form disciples is to "help them to encounter Christ in his love," Bishop Iffert said, "and to accept that love in a joyful, self-emptying way gains so much purchase in our lives that it leads to joyfully accepting and embracing the cross."

At the end of each of his homilies, Bishop Iffert thanked the parishes, both for his years as bishop and for praying with him at the two Masses — and all five Masses he held for his anniversary during the past month.

Both parishes welcomed Bishop Iffert for a reception following Mass, allowing him an opportunity to mingle with the people of the deaneries who have supported and welcomed him during his first five years.

Bailey and Baker photos





(left) Bishop John Iffert shares his homily with the people of the Northern Kenton County Deanery at his fourth anniversary Mass, October 21.

(above) The St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring, music ministry ensemble provided the music for Bishop Iffert's Campbell County Deanery Anniversary Mass. Complete with hand bells, choral accompaniment and timpani.

(below) The priests of the Campbell County Deanery were in attendance and listened attentively as Bishop Iffert recalled the story of how he became bishop.





(above) As Bishop Iffert celebrates his anniversary Mass with the Northern Kenton County Deanery at St. Pius X church, Edgewood, parishioners from deanery parishes gather to celebrate with him. In front is Jamie Schroeder, chancellor, a parishioner of St. Pius X.

(left) A young family enjoyed the reception following Mass where Bishop celebrated with the people of the Diocese at St. Joseph Parish, Cold Spring.

(right) Parishioners of the Campbell County Deanery gathered to help Bishop Iffert celebrate five years as shepherd of the Diocese.





(right) Bishop Iffert receives a gift from St. Pius X pastor Father Baiju Kidaagen in honor of his five year anniversary as bishop of the Diocese of Covington.



Community baby showers

(Continued from page 3)







(left) A young mother checks into the community baby shower with her baby preparing to explore the many resources available to them both.

(above) Notre Dame Sister Maria Stacey volunteered her time at the community baby shower, helping families check in and providing them with their welcome gift.

(right) An expecting mother peruses the table of donated clothes, picking out an outfit for her new baby.

Twenty-six ministries were in attendance, including St. Henry Parish, Elsmere, and St. Paul Parish, Florence, who provided gifts for expecting families. Also in attendance were notable Catholic organizations such as St. Elizabeth Hospital, Diocesan Catholic Children's Home and the Franciscan Daughters of Mary, along with religious sisters who volunteered to help run the event.

"It's a great witness to the people who attend and the people who work there," said Mrs. Roch about the diocesan support. "The generosity of the people in our churches and parishes really overwhelms me … I think it's just so beautiful."

The first Community Baby Showers were held in Boone, Kenton and Campbell County, with the location rotating as the events were held. As word about the baby showers spread, more counties were interested in hosting and supporting their expecting families.

"They love it," said Mrs. Roch, "I think just helping other people and seeing the impact that it provides. So, we're hoping to move into more outlying counties."

What started in school gymnasiums and cafeterias has now far outgrown the capacity of those spaces and requires more space and more technology. Churches of other denominations, like the Florence Baptist Church, the site of this event, have volunteered the use of their facilities.

"I think this is great that we are working with another Christian church," said Mrs. Roch. "We all have the same goal: we want to help moms, and we're working together in this effort." While the extra space is a bonus, Mrs. Roch enjoys the updated technology. "We can communicate a little bit better," she said. "I believe … at the last baby shower we had people who spoke 12 different languages, so it's easier to put somebody's name up on a screen when they win a raffle item, or to put information on the screen, it's a little bit easier."

Ministries, agencies, parishes and the Boone County community came together to celebrate life and to provide parents and expecting families the resources they need to be successful.

"I think we should feel very proud to be representing the Catholic Church and just showing them what we are doing to help people who are less fortunate than we are," said Mrs. Roch.

Bishops apologize over 'manipulated' White House video of prayer over Trump

Kate Scanlon
OSV News

Multiple U.S. bishops who attended an Oval Office meeting with President Donald Trump less than two weeks before the midterm elections offered their regrets after a video taken of the meeting circulated by the White House sparked controversy.

Critics said the video, showing a dozen Catholic bishops praying over Trump on Oct. 22 risked creating the appearance of an endorsement shortly before the midterm elections.

Archbishop Jeffrey S. Grob of Milwaukee, one of the attendees at the meeting, offered a public apology Oct. 25 and said the administration publicized the encounter "without the consent of the participants."

"Please know that my intention was never to cause confusion, anger, or disappointment among the people entrusted to my care," Archbishop Grob said.

The meeting, Archbishop Grob said, "was in no way an endorsement of the president, his policies, or his party." He said he saw it as an opportunity to "discuss matters of importance to the Church and our people, including immigration enforcement, religious worker visas, and human dignity."

"We were told the meeting was to be a private discussion, that several Catholic members of the cabinet might make an appearance, and that there could be an opportunity to pray privately with the president," he said. "I took some time to weigh the decision and ultimately felt that, if I had the opportunity to offer my voice in a way that might improve the lives of God's children, I ought to take it. I pray for our elected officials on a daily basis, so it seemed appropriate to do so in person."

Archbishop Grob said after a 90-minute discussion with White House domestic policy staff and advisers, "we were eventually ushered into the Oval Office," where the "president greeted us."

"We were then directed to stand behind him and pray. After which several photos were taken and we were ushered out. Unbeknownst to the group of bishops a video was also taken," he said. "But permission for the public distribution or posting of either the video or photos was not given by the bishops."

After the video was circulated by the White House, Archbishop Grob said he started getting messages "of serious concern over the possibility that I had inadvertently participated in a political event less than two weeks before a national election."

He said, "I also heard from some who felt wounded because of the ways they or their family had been harmed by the president's policies."

The Catholic population in the U.S. has felt the brunt of the Trump administration's mass deportation policies, a joint report from the National Association of Evangelicals, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Migration and Refugee Services, the Center for the Study of Global Christianity at Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary, and World Relief estimated. That report found more than 10 million Christians living in the U.S. would be vulnerable to deportation under Trump administration policies implemented in 2025, and 61% were Catholic. It found more than 1 in 6 Catholics are either vulnerable to deportation themselves or could see a family member deported, barring law or policy changes.



OSV News screenshot/@MargoMartin47 on X

Denver Archbishop James R. Golka and a group of U.S. bishops pray over President Donald Trump in the Oval Office of the White House in Washington in a video posted on X Oct. 22, 2026, by the administration's communications staff. The meeting was confirmed by the Archdiocese of Denver in a statement that day.

"I feel a heavy sadness, not only over the pain I caused, but also for the fact that something so sacred to a group of religious leaders, prayer to our Heavenly Father, would be manipulated in that way," Archbishop Grob said. "We came in good faith to try to work for the betterment of our fellow human beings, to ease their suffering, to build up the common good, and to pray with a president, not to pose for a

(Continued on page 8)

Prayer over Trump

(Continued from page 5)

political photo opportunity to benefit the few."

He added, "We should never have been put in that position by the White House. I did not go without reservations. I wish I had heeded them. Please know that I have heard these concerns, understand how I caused them, and I apologize for any damage my actions have done. We are, as ever, a pilgrim people. And that includes bishops."

Bishop William M. Joensen of Des Moines, Iowa, also expressed regret in a statement, saying he was invited to the meeting to "discuss policies spanning a variety of issues. These issues included immigration and the exploitation of vulnerable poor persons; visas for international clergy, incentives for restorative reproductive medicine and advancement of a culture of life versus access to abortion-causing medicines; and support for private education with newly available federal tax credits."

"As a bishop, I am frequently called upon to engage people whose positions and actions are not aligned with the Church's teachings, including local and higher-level elected officials," he said. "I regarded this invitation as a distinct opportunity on the Memorial of St. John Paul II to bring the Gospel and the Church's teachings to bear on contemporary matters that impact people in our Diocese and beyond. There was also a concluding opportunity to pray for and with our president, that God would guide his heart and impel him to lead in a way consistent with the dignity of his office."

The meeting came shortly after a recent survey by the nonpartisan Pew Research Center found Trump's approval rating among U.S. Catholics has 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.

It also came just weeks after many U.S. bishops strongly objected to a proposed and later canceled livestream of a military execution, and amid the ongoing war in Iran, which Pope Leo XIV has rebuked.

Some of the Trump administration's immigration policies have also prompted criticism from the USCCB, notably 'indiscriminate' mass deportations or policies that separate families.

The second Trump administration's record on life issues has been met with mixed reception from Catholic leaders. They lauded a brief window of time where taxpayer funds were stripped from Planned Parenthood, but that funding has since resumed.

They also objected to the Trump administration's attempts to expand in vitro fertilization, or IVF, and its approval of a second generic form of mifepristone, making a drug commonly used for first trimester abortion cheaper to acquire.

The Trump administration has also thus far declined to roll back the Biden administration's eased restrictions on mifepristone, and has sought to block state challenges to it pending a safety review by the Food and Drug Administration that will not be concluded until after the midterms.

Bishop Joensen acknowledged that "there are many things tied to this present Administration that are blatantly at odds with our Catholic faith."

"The advance communication we received indicated that we were to have a conversation and that key officials would be interested in hearing our perspective," he said. "None of us bishops were unaware that our meeting was on the cusp of a national election. Yet in no way did any of us intend by our involvement to endorse any political party or any individual candidate."

He added, "That said, in retrospect, I would have done well to be more mindful of Jesus' admonition: 'Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves' (Matthew 10:16). I wish I had been more shrewd and less simple, like those who exploited our meeting for partisan political purposes. I pray I am more prudent and wise going forward, even as I remain resolute in my openness to engaging and praying for political leaders at all levels."

A spokesperson for retired Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, said in written comments provided to OSV News the three-hour meeting "was organized by the White House Faith Office as part of its regular outreach to faith leaders."

"During the far-ranging conversation, Archbishop Naumann voiced his principal concerns including the need for stricter regulation of the chemical abortion pill as well as the ethical and moral concerns surrounding In Vitro Fertilization (IVF)," the statement said.

Topics raised at the meeting also included efforts to "protect children from the predatory pornographic industry that targets our youth," and that industry's ties to human trafficking, as well as "the protection of religious liberty, immigration as well as other issues," the statement said.

"The White House staff promised to share the concerns and recommendations raised during the session with President Trump," the statement said. "Following the meeting, President Trump met with the bishops in the Oval Office for a 15-minute greeting. During the meeting, the President expressed his gratitude to the bishops for prayers asking God to bless and guide the President, his staff and the nation."

In a written statement provided to OSV News, Kansas City Archbishop W. Shawn McKnight said, "Archbishop Emeritus Naumann's attendance to the White House on October 22 was done on his own behalf. His actions and presence at that event were not representative of myself or the Archdiocese of Kansas City in Kansas."

After controversy over the video, Archbishop James R. Golka told the Denver Catholic, the archdiocesan news outlet, "Though I originally thought it would be a private meeting, I knew that it could be shared and that some might use it for political purposes."

"But as I prayed about it, I thought that this is what Catholics do. We pray for people. No matter whether we agree or disagree on anything, we always pray for our country and leaders," he said.

Archbishop Golka said that he understands "that many people saw the video, posted by the Administration twelve days before an election, as an endorsement."

"That was never my intention," he said. "The bishops of the United States teach that the Church cannot champion any candidate or party. I hold to that. However you vote, you ultimately belong to Jesus who loves you infinitely more than you can imagine."

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has long held that it will not endorse or oppose specific candidates for public office, instead referring Catholics to its document "Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship" as a guide for discerning their choices at the ballot box.

Chieko Noguchi, a spokesperson for the USCCB, told OSV News the organization had no role in the meeting.

The midterm elections are scheduled for Nov. 3.



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Jeremiah 29:11

Some dos and don'ts of promoting vocations

Most Rev. John Iffert
Bishop of Covington



Most Rev. John C. Iffert

What do you do if you know a young man who you think would make a good priest?

Here's what you **DON'T** do. Don't ignore it. Don't make a joke about it. Don't throw it out casually like it doesn't mean anything to you. Don't bring it up constantly in front of other people or embarrass him in front of his friends (or the girl next door). Don't give him a nickname and start calling him "Father" or "Padre." Don't give him the idea that you'll be disappointed if he decides not to be a priest, or that priesthood is the only vocation from which one can serve God or contribute to the life of the Church. Don't pretend that you know that he was meant to be a priest, or what is best for him.

DO pray about why you think he might have a priestly vocation. Do spend some time in thought about why you think the young man would be a good priest. Do sit and make a list of related qualities that you see in him that you would like to see in a priest. Is he kind? Prayerful? Upstanding? A leader? A person who inspires others? A person of service?

Once you understand why you see a potential priest in him, write a letter telling him that you see qualities in him that you associate with a holy priest you've known. Tell him about why the priesthood is important to you, the difference a good priest has made for you or your family and invite him to pray about what God is inviting him to be.

Give him an idea about next actions. You might give him a little book or pamphlet about priestly vocations or the life of a saintly priest. Tell him that he can talk to his parents, to you, to his pastor or chaplain, or call Father Conor Kunath, our Director of Vocations, at (859) 392-1500.

Offer your ongoing help, and assure him of your prayer, whatever he discerns in life. Affirm his gifts and your support.

Finally, talk to the young man, privately and purposefully. Ask him if he has ever thought about the priesthood. Tell him that you hope he is considering a vocation to the priesthood and why. Then give him your letter and reiterate your support in any vocational life that God has in store for him.

This is very important. If the young man is still a minor, be sure to talk with his parents about why you think he should consider a priestly vocation and ask their permission before you talk with him or give him your invitation to discernment. If the parents are OK with you talking to their son about a vocation, invite one or both of them to be part of the conversation.

Of course, the same principles apply to inviting a young man or woman to consider a vocation to consecrated life. Think about the person and why you have the impression that they have a religious vocation. Take the time to reflect and put your invitation in writing. Assure them of your support regardless of where discernment takes them. Offer concrete support and to help them connect with others who can help point the way.

In my own discernment, people who raised the question with me and were patient with me when I was fearful or self-doubting were a huge help to me.

Here's praying that you and I can be that kind of support to the next generation.

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Pray the master of the harvest to send out laborers to his harvest

Father Conor Kunath
Contributor

Throughout his ministry Jesus routinely uses farming imagery to describe the labor of the kingdom of God. The more time I spend in ministry, as a priest and as the vocations director, the more I realize just how perfectly apt an analogy it is.



Father Conor Kunath

Success in ministry and in the Church depends just as much on hard work as it does on an abiding patience and a practiced awareness of pastoral situations. An easy example is preaching. I spend a few hours every week reflecting on the Scriptures and crafting homilies. On Sunday, I preach for about 10 minutes and then begin the process again on Monday morning.

I sow the seed on Sunday, but I won't have much idea of how the harvest will be until weeks, or months, or even years later. I don't get to see whether the seeds I've planted through my preaching will grow in my parishioners' hearts, until they finally, hopefully, sprout into an act of conversion or faith. The point is that I plant seeds, but I can only do so much to help them grow.

It is the same situation in my vocation work. I can host vocation events and have people pray for vocations, but I can only do so much to make vocations happen.

While this reality can be difficult to accept at times, it does teach an important lesson about vocations work. The fact of the matter is that vocations don't just happen. They take years and years of careful cultivation and encouragement in the right environments to blossom.

Think about it. Even when a young man discerns that God is calling him to the priesthood, there is still, on average, seven years before his ordination. For him to even hear God's call, so much has to go right; and for him to persevere in his vocation until ordination, even more has to go exactly right.

I cannot make any of it move any faster, and I have to be patient with the whole process if I hope to raise good and holy vocations for the Diocese of Covington. Just like a farmer, I plant the seeds of vocations at the proper times; but I have to trust that the soil is good and the weather is just right if I hope to bring in a harvest.

I share this reflection with you because if the diocese wants to see an abundance of vocations, we need to be patient; but we also need to start cultivating a culture that encourages and normalizes discernment and holiness. That is the fertile soil that bears the fruit of priestly vocations. It is in a Church that understands that holiness is the universal vocation of all God's people. That doing God's will is always the right choice.

So, you are certainly asking, "Well what should I do then, Father?"

The answer is surprisingly simple. Strive for a continuously deepening personal holiness.

Holiness is discerning, and then doing God's will every day. It is committing to a deep life of prayer and pursuing moral perfection to the best of your ability. Holiness is for everyone, and God is, without question, inviting each of you into a deeper relationship of love with him. Pursue that relationship, and let yourself become an instrument of God's grace for the Church in Covington and become that rich soil where discernment and vocations grow and bear fruit.

As we celebrate this year's National Vocation Awareness Week, remember that cultivating vocations

(Continued on page 11)

The best years of my life

William Fuller
Contributor

My time in seminary has been the best years of my life. Nowhere else have I been as encouraged and as enabled to grow as a man, a student and a child of God.

I began discerning the priesthood as a small child when I realized that there were certain "boring" jobs that none of my peers wanted to do when they grew up, such as being a garbage man, or even a priest. I considered that somebody needs to become a priest, and it could be me.

Obviously, my understanding of vocation has matured and developed since then, but the priesthood had always been on my heart since this consideration. As I was nearing the end of high school, the priesthood was still on my heart and I loved serving the Mass. Therefore, I decided to enter seminary with the Diocese of Covington to discern whether the Lord was calling me to this vocation.

I entered seminary right out of high school at 19 years old, and I was nowhere near ready for the priesthood. In fact, I didn't even know how to pray the Divine Office or participate in the devotional life of the Church. I was still very much a teenager.

Thankfully, the seminary formators understood where many of my classmates and I were coming from. All first-year seminarians are required every day to attend Mass, pray certain hours of the Divine Office, pray the rosary, make a Holy Hour and other formational activities. Keeping up with these expectations was not always easy (especially the academic classes). Nevertheless, these practices instilled the virtues we need for further formation.



William Fuller

Growing in formation with a fraternal community has been one of the greatest blessings in my time in seminary. Being in an environment where everyone earnestly strives to grow closer to the Lord was a brand new experience for me. These men have become my brothers in the Lord, and together we grow as men of sacrifice in imitation of the Lord Jesus.

In my first year, we adopted a motto that will stick with us forever: "Esto vir!", which is Latin for "Be a man!" We study, pray, work, eat meals, play football and more, all together. In even ordinary moments, we call upon each other to strive for holiness.

Another novelty for me was living in close proximity to a chapel. Most urban parishes unfortunately cannot keep the church building open for visitors, but at seminary, I can visit the Lord anytime. We are encouraged to sit in the presence of the Eucharistic Lord throughout the day. A quick visit to the Lord before an exam or in the middle of a study session grounds us in what is most important: our relationship with God.

I wasn't too sure how long I would stay in seminary when I first entered. Although I felt drawn to the priesthood, I did not yet understand what the spirituality of the priesthood looked like. It is said that nobody knows their vocation with certainty when they enter seminary, and this rang especially true for me. Over time, however, I received a significant number of consolations confirming I am where the Lord wants me to be.

First and foremost, the Blessed Virgin Mary has been my life, my sweetness and my hope. Her intercession and nurturing love have allowed me to grow in my imitation of Christ by being her child in Bethlehem. What better formator can I have than she who raised the Lord?

It is a little hard to describe, but growing in union with the Blessed Virgin and learning to love her as Jesus loves her opens me up to receiving her motherly consolation. Being in the parish, serving the liturgy and catechizing children as a Totus Tuus missionary have also provided me with some great consolations.

I am currently a senior in college seminary. After graduating this spring, I will likely have four more years of formation before priestly ordination. Even now, I recognize that I am not ready to be a priest.

Nobody can possibly prepare himself for that life by his own strength, but the prayer of the Church is a powerful thing. Therefore, I ask you all in the Diocese to pray for me as I continue my formation, that the Lord instills priestly virtues in me and brings me closer to conformity with the Lord Jesus.

William Fuller is a seminarian for the Diocese of Covington, Ky., in his third year, Discipleship Stage, of formation at the Pontifical College Josephinum, Columbus, Ohio.

(Continued from page 10)

requires good soil, hard work and patience. Put in the hard work of growing in personal holiness. Pray daily, go to Mass weekly and confess your sins as often as you need to.

Nourish the vocation's culture by vocally encouraging and normalizing holiness, so that the young men that God has called to ministerial service will have the support and direction they need to be faithful to their vocation.

And finally, be patient. If we nourish the soil and put in the hard work of doing God's will daily, over time, vocations will, without doubt, begin to blossom and abound in our Diocese.

Father Conor Kunath is director of the Vocations Office for the Diocese of Covington, Ky.



Mastering your weakness and overcoming fear

Joseph O'Bryan
Contributor

My vocation story is not my own, but the Lord's. He leads me with Our Blessed Mother, Mary, and glorious St. Joseph, guiding me along the way.

I grew up in a Catholic household, gathering in the living room to pray the rosary almost every evening. Although I didn't realize it then, this built a devotion to Our Lady in me. But at a young age, I also had a dream of Our Mother: I looked up at the sky, saw her and my heart filled with joy. What I felt was indescribable, but I can say now she has been undoubtedly present in my life then and now.

Fast forward to when I was 11-years old, the tragic loss of my brother Kyle, who committed suicide, happened. This shocked and horrified us all. I had no words and didn't know how to act; this reality paralyzed me. As I looked back on this awful tragedy that happened in our family, at the same time we had so many people support us and be present with us during that time.

In high school, I went through a dark period in my life. The thoughts that consumed me were those of the devil. I was still going to Sunday Mass. However, my relationship with God felt as if I had buried him and forgotten him. I did not pray regularly; I did not spend time in Adoration; I did not read Scripture; I did not take the time to listen to his voice. I was instead in a state of paralyzing fear, which drove me to feel hopeless and anxious constantly.

When I was a Senior in high school, I decided to enter the Air Force Reserves as an electrician. This gave me a purpose, a goal to accomplish and a way to be part of something bigger than myself. I learned discipline in daily life, built healthy habits and learned to tackle challenging tasks. Although the military gave me a great foundation to live a disciplined life and foster friendships, I still dealt with this spiritual attack from the devil.

However, after hearing a podcast about an ex-Navy SEAL, I experienced a sudden change. He spoke about overcoming fear, saying, "master your weaknesses." In turn, I thought of my own weakness: being in the silence. As I grappled with the reality of my own fear, with nowhere else to go, I set my mind to accomplish this task. For no reason at all, I reached for the first book I saw on my nightstand: my Bible from confirmation class.

From then on, I set my will on reading Scripture every day in silence to combat this paralyzing fear. Still, I did not pray regularly.

During a deployment in the Middle East, those anxious thoughts came back. "I thought I solved this problem." I thought to myself. It felt like I was trying to solve a puzzle on my own.



Joseph O'Bryan

Then, suddenly, I thought of the word "humility." In that moment, I realized that until then, I had relied on myself to carry every burden and trial in my life. At that, I went to the base chapel and sat there … with Jesus present. This was the first time I willingly sat alone in Jesus' presence. "I need him," I thought.

On a rosary walk one day, I felt a burning desire to serve God in a ministerial way. It was a desire I had never felt before; a heavenly delight. Not thoughts of "this would be a cool job," but my soul burning within me for this way of life.

At that, I contacted my pastor at Immaculate Heart of Mary, saying that I think I am called to the priesthood. In the month of September of 2023, my dad's friend came up to me saying, "Joe, have you ever thought about becoming a priest? You would be a good priest."

After that conversation, my heart increased even more to follow Jesus through the priesthood.

Seminary has been such a blessing in my life. I never thought I could be more joyful, more authentically free, and more enraptured by the beauty of God Almighty. At the seminary, I have learned what it means to be a disciple of Christ and to be configured to his Most Sacred Heart through daily work, fraternity and prayer. Every day is an opportunity for me to give myself wholly to Jesus through the Most Immaculate Heart of Our Mother and St. Joseph. Every day is an opportunity to give myself to my brothers, as Jesus says, "I have come to serve, not be served." (Mark 10:45)

Joseph O'Bryan is a seminarian for the Diocese of Covington, Ky., in his second year, Discipleship Stage, of formation at the Pontifical College Josephinum, Columbus, Ohio.

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Vocations wants you for the 'Memorare Army'

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

In the Diocese of Covington, the Vocations Office encourages prayer for vocations to the priesthood — and all vocations — in a simple way. It starts with a simple prayer most Catholics know — the "Memorare," Latin for "remember."

The inspiration for encouraging prayer for vocations through the Memorare was inspired by similar campaigns throughout the Church, according to Father Conor Kunath, director of the Vocations Office, who coined those praying the Memorare for vocations within the diocese the "Memorare Army."

"We liked that it gave the people who prayed for vocations a name," Father Kunath said, referencing the "army" of prayerful faithful, "but it also serves as a call to action. We need people on the front lines praying for and promoting vocations. And an army evokes that sense of urgency and cooperation so well."

The Memorare, as a prayer, was chosen for many reasons — its practicality and accessibility as a common household prayer is one. "We wanted to make praying for vocations as easy and convenient as possible and having a prayer that everyone already knows be the prayer for vocations made a lot of sense," Father Kunath said.

"On a spiritual level," he continued, "we chose the prayer because Mary has the title 'Mother of Priests' and she is a tremendous help to so many priests in their vocations, but she also very often plays a major part in helping so many young men hear the call of her son to the priesthood."

While not an organized army, the idea of the Memorare Army encourages the importance of praying intentionally for the discernment of vocations.

"Throughout the Gospels Jesus tells us that, 'The harvest is abundant, but the laborers are few so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers to his harvest,'" Father Kunath said. "Jesus makes it clear that if we want laborers for the abundant harvest of souls then we must ask God the Father to send out those laborers and we do that especially through prayer. This is the reason that prayer for vocations is so critical."

"Persevering in a vocation or just in holiness is not easy," he said. "It truly takes the support of the whole community to nourish and build up any vocation, but especially vocations to the priesthood."



OSV News photo/Wikipedia Commons, Public Domain

This is a painting of Mary crushing the serpent under her feet in the Immaculate Conception by artist Giovanni Battista Tiepolo (1696–1770). The Memorare ("remember"), which invokes the intercession of the Blessed Virgin, is a prayer suggested by the Diocese of Covington's Vocations Office for prayer for vocations.

The Memorare

Remember, O most gracious Virgin Mary,

that never was it known

that anyone who fled to thy protection,

implored thy help,

or sought thy intercession,

was left unaided.

Inspired by this confidence

I fly unto thee,

O Virgin of virgins, my Mother.

To thee do I come,

before thee I stand,

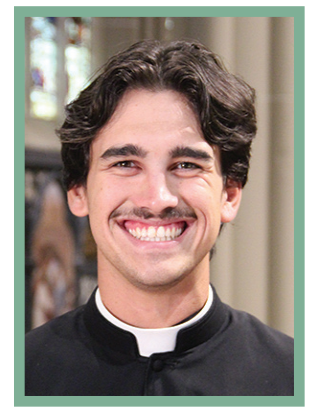
sinful and sorrowful.

O Mother of the Word Incarnate,

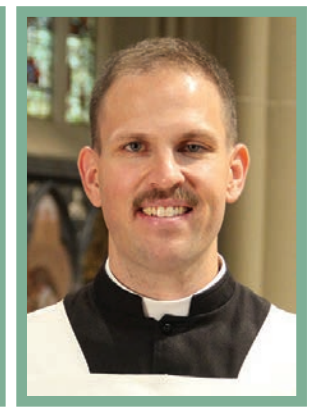
despise not my petitions,

but in thy mercy hear and answer me.

Amen



Joseph Dierker



Michael Shulte

St Pius X parish extends our prayers and best wishes to Michael Shulte, Joseph Dierker, and other seminarians of the diocese as they prepare for the holy sacrament of Ordination.

ST. PIUS X Catholic Church

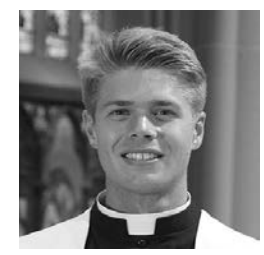


Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish wishes our very own **Evan Ihrig** all the best on his seminary studies!

IHM SAINTS REACH HIGHER

Holy Cross Parish extends our prayers and best wishes to Will Fuller as he prepares for the holy sacrament of Ordination.





Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish wishes our very own **Joseph O'Bryan** all the best on his seminary studies!

IHM SAINTS REACH HIGHER

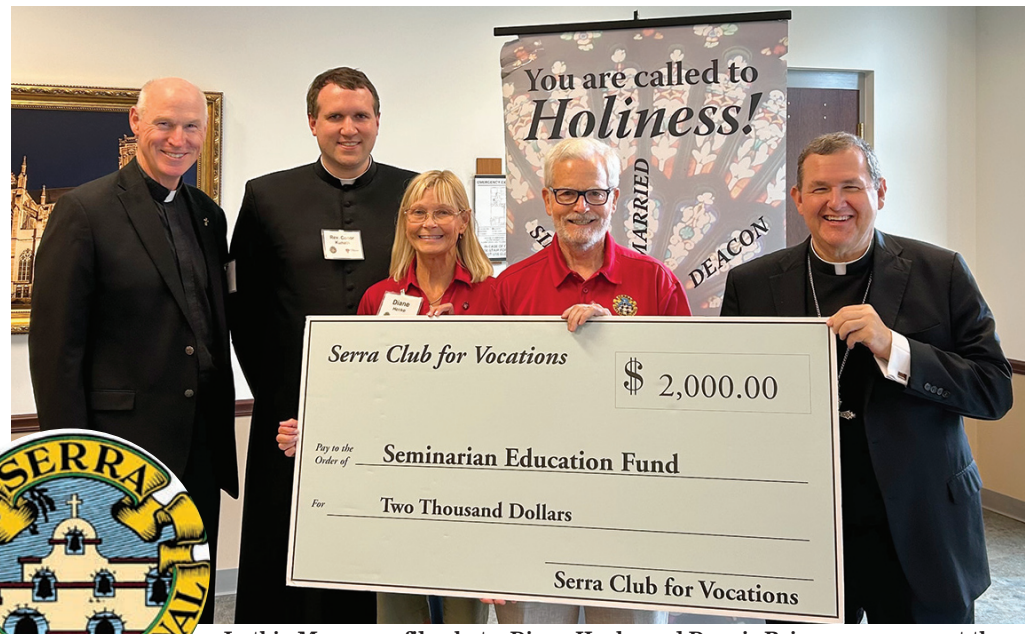
Serra Club for Vocations supports vocations in the Diocese through prayer and connection

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

The Serra Club for Vocations in Northern Kentucky is a large and active group in the Diocese of Covington dedicated to encouraging vocations to the priesthood and religious life, while supporting the priests, deacons and women religious of the Diocese. They provide assistance financially to the Diocese's Priest Retirement Fund and Seminary Education Fund and spiritually and socially, through programs such as the women religious picnic, priest appreciation dinners and private prayer.

"I love being in this group," said Diana Henke, parishioner at St. Pius X Parish, Edgewood. "I just enjoy having an outlet to recognize and help pray and support vocations, because I think that there's not enough appreciation for all the work that any of them do."

"All of the people in the club are very dedicated and generous," said Dennis Reinersman, president of the Serra Club for Vocations. For Mr. Reinersman, being a Serran is about having an opportunity to make a difference in diocesan vocations. "I thought the best way to contribute was to help increase vocations for religious life … the opportunity to make some positive impact in terms of the number of seminarians and women religious," he said.



In this *Messenger* file photo, Diana Henke and Dennis Reinersman present the Seminarian Education Fund with $2,000 during the annual seminarian picnic. Pictured from left to right is Deacon Jim Fortner, chief operating officer of the Diocese of Covington; Father Conor Kunath, vocations director; Diana Henke, Serra Club member; Dennis Reinersman, president of the Serra Club, and Bishop John Iffert.

For Mrs. Henke, it is about supporting and appreciating those who have accepted the call to religious life, and those who are currently in formation.

"What I love is the seminarians," she said. "They're our future for the Catholic Church, they're going to be our priests, and we really need to support them."

Mr. Reinersman shares this sentiment.

"If we don't have seminarians, we don't have priests, and we don't have priests, we don't have the Eucharist and we don't have access to reconciliation," he said.

Part of seminarian support in the Serra Club for Vocations is through support on an individual level. Where a Serran will spend time with a seminarian throughout the year and offer encouragement and guidance.

"It's good for them to see the encouragement that the Serrans are willing to give them," said Mr. Reinersman

The Serra Club for Vocations recognizes the work of the religious sisters in the Diocese of Covington, those who administered care in hospitals and ran our schools, forming the next generation of Catholics.

"They've given their lives to teaching children, I was brought up by teachers, all of my teachers were nuns, and I learned so much from them, especially my Catholic values. You can't put a price on that," she said.

The Serra Club for Vocations is open to anybody who wishes to be part of the mission in supporting vocations.

"It's just a wonderful organization," said Mrs. Henke. "We do a lot for vocations, and we encourage people to pray a lot for all of our vocations." And, if you're not a member of the Serra Club, Mrs. Henke said, then you can still offer your prayers. "Whether you're a Serran or not, pray for vocations because we always need those prayers," she said.

The monastic way of life

Benedictine Sister Kimberly Porter
Contributor

Benedictines take a vow of conversation, or fidelity to the monastic way of life. A commitment to conversatio is a pledge to process not just a single moment of conversion. Our rhythm of prayer, community and values provide the context for our conversatio, a daily turning as we each try to seek God.

In my early monastic days, I thought it was about big moments of conversion. I've come to realize, however, that it is in the small daily choices and the ongoing effort to listen for God at work in my life, to listen to my sisters and the world at large.

This weekend I was reminded of just how practical the call to conversatio can be. We changed our seating in chapel to support our prayer together. Changing the physical space brought us closer to each other, created fuller singing, and has provided opportunities to practice our patience and grace with one another.

This experience gives me a different perspective. I am invited to practice curiosity and less judgment as we work through the implications of the new arrangement. It invites me to accept the gifts of this change and the conversatio it calls me to in my prayer.



Sister Kimberly Porter, OSB

Changes can be challenging; they sometimes are for me. Our recent changes in chapel remind me that we are always in process. Even when change is uncomfortable it opens up possibilities. Possibilities for connection, for new perspectives and for our hearts to be softened to receive the gift of conversatio.

I am grateful for the gift of conversatio and the possibility and hope it invites me to consider in my own life and even in our world.

Sister Kimberly Porter is a Benedictine Sister of St. Walburg Monastery, Villa Hills.





VOCATIONS

Consecrated women of Regnum Christi live as brides, sisters and mothers while sharing their faith with others

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

While discerning their vocation, there are many pathways which a young person (or any person) can consider. When we think of vocations, the priesthood and religious life come to mind first, then perhaps marriage and the single life. For Rachel Peach — a consecrated woman of Regnum Christi — she responded to a different call and became a consecrated woman of Regnum Christi

Regnum Chrisi is a "spiritual family," according to Ms. Peach, with origins in the Legionaries of Christ religious order. The movement includes the order's priests, as well as consecrated men and women and laity.

"It's a shared spirituality of wanting to live your faith actively and share it with others," said Ms. Peach. Regnum Christi is an international movement, aimed towards "boosting" spiritual faith "to be able to share it in a missionary way," Ms. Peach explained.

Her calling to be a consecrated woman is threefold: seeing herself as a spouse, a sister and a mother.

"One thing especially about our type of consecrated women that I think is really unique," she said, "is this real experience of being a spouse of Christ."

Ms. Peach explained that being a part of Regnum Christi is not just full-time missionary work, but a relationship with Christ. "The core of my consecration is Jesus saying, 'Will you be mine and I'll be yours'," she said.

Ms. Peach compares the life of a consecrated woman to those of consecrated virgins, where she lives with seven other consecrated women in her community located in Ohio's Anderson Township — although the consecrated women minister on both sides of the river. Describing it as a type of sisterhood, the women engage in ministry together — "learning from each other and helping each other," even while having different day to days.

She also said that she has "many spiritual children."

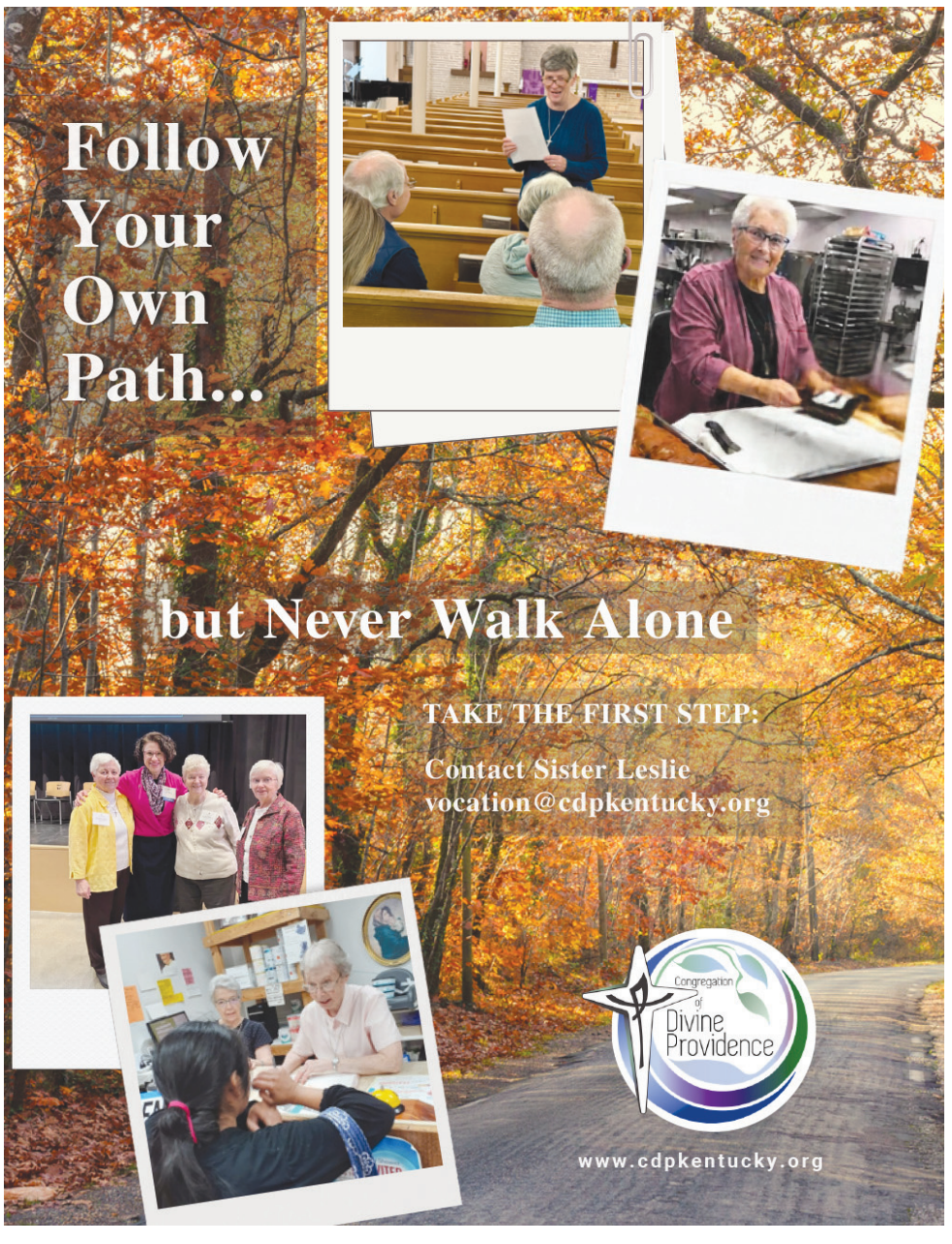
"Everyone he (Jesus) brings into my life, I'm called to be a sister or mother to them in some way," Ms. Peach said. "That's very beautiful, and very fulfilling."

"When you're thinking about vocation, it's very normal to feel nervous and even some spiritual pressure," Ms. Peach said, reflecting on discernment. For those currently discerning their own vocations, she suggests to "just focus on your friendship with Jesus and see where that goes … try to get to know him and let him love you day by day, and you'll find your next steps."



Peach photo

Rachel Peach, a consecrated woman of Regnum Christi, leads a Eucharistic Procession outside during Vacation Bible School at Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell.





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Oh brother! There's a priest in the family

Laura Keener
Editor

Nobody knows us better than our siblings, especially when siblings are close in age. In the course of playing, living and growing up together, siblings have a front row seat to our worst flaws and our best virtues. They are our ultimate critics — knowing we're far from perfect, routinely making a point of it and yet quick to defend if anyone else dares to challenge us.

So, what's it like when your brother becomes a priest? We reached out to Sean Kunath, brother of Father Conor Kunath, to gather some insights.

Sean, his wife Sarah and three young children are parishioners of St. Anthony Parish, Taylor Mill. He is two years younger than his brother, Father Kunath. The brothers are part of a large family. Their parents, Dr. Arthur and Colleen Kunath, have seven children and 28 grandchildren and counting.

Father Kunath was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Covington on June 1, 2019. In addition to being pastor at Sts. Boniface and James Parish, Ludlow, Father Kunath is also vocations director for the Diocese of Covington and chaplain for Notre Dame Academy, the Serra Club for Vocations Northern Kentucky and the Couple-to-Couple League of Northern Kentucky.

Mr. Kunath said that Father Kunath's vocation to the priesthood came as no surprise.

"For as long as I can remember, Conor had always expressed the firm intention of becoming a priest," said Mr. Kunath. "I think he, himself, has stated that he felt called to the priesthood as early as seven or eight years old."

That early priestly calling did not interfere in the typical brotherly relationship that the two shared growing up or have now.

"I don't think our relationship as brothers has changed too dramatically. It honestly doesn't feel like we've changed much in the way we interact or converse," said Mr. Kunath. "At the same time, I am aware of a new and deeper reality that is present in my brother. I recognize the fact that he has been transformed by Christ at his ordination to be a particular instrument of God's grace and mercy. Whenever I see him administer the sacraments, I am aware of this deeper reality of his person. In those moments, it's not really my brother Conor anymore, but Christ Himself before me, pouring out His grace and mercy through my brother. In that way, it's really something amazing to see, but it's not like I'm going to tell him that to his face. Humility is a virtue after all."

Mr. Kunath also finds it amusing when people share their admiration for his brother, the priest. But he appreciates and has a deep understanding of the priestly vocation as being set apart from the vocations of marriage and single life.

"Well, I do think it's funny to hear how complimentary people are about him. It's not surprising, since he is a good priest (so far as I can tell), but it's sometimes incongruous to my own experience of him as a brother: the smack talk, the derision, and so on. I think anyone who has a sibling can relate to that," said Mr. Kunath. "I do think that, generally speaking, people have a hard time understanding the priesthood and its meaning. I remember in college that a number of people bristled when told that the religious life was a higher calling than the married life. I assume that's more or less derived from the general American egalitarian disposition. It honestly never made much sense to me. We see in Mary and Martha that there is a hierarchy of vocations. While we should desire to pursue the highest vocation, we should also be aware that God calls some to a higher place and some to a lower place, and that our pride is what is injured when we hear that. The archangels and angels do not complain that they are not Seraphim and Cherubim but rather glory in the work that God has set out for them, despite it being of a lower order. Why should we do otherwise?"



The Kunaths, (sitting) Colleen and Dr. Arthur (standing from left) Father Conor, Aidan, Caitlin, Colin, Sean, Stephen and Corrie.

Given Father Kunath's multiple priestly assignments in addition to the demands of being readily available to minister to God's people, it's expected that he would have less time for his family. That fact doesn't diminish the desire to be close from the people who love him most — his family.

"While I do think that his vocation has introduced some amount of friction, it's not altogether surprising to me," said Mr. Kunath. "By responding to God's call, Conor has put his hand to the plow, and as his family, we shouldn't expect to be the primary focus of his time, energy and attention."

Those "frictions" said Mr. Kunath are a part of all vocations.

"In all honesty, we should always expect a vocation to introduce some friction in our lives," Mr. Kunath said. "Christ Himself says that He came to bring division (Luke 12: 49-53). When we respond to God's call in our lives, there will always be others who will question it, who will push back against it, who will fight it. Often this opposition is borne out of a genuine goodwill and love, but that goodwill does not prevent the pain and confusion that ensue. When my brother was ordained, he was set apart for the work of the kingdom of God and that must always come first in his life now."

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Whom to call

For in-depth information about religious life, permanent diaconate, lay pastoral ministry or priesthood, please contact the following individuals.

Priesthood

Father Conor Kunath
Vocation Office, 1125 Madison Ave,
Covington, KY 41011-3115
(859) 392-1566
E-mail: ckunath@covdio.org

Permanent Diaconate and Lay Pastoral Ministry

Msgr. Gerry Reinersman
Pastoral Ministry Formation Office,
1125 Madison Ave,
Covington, KY 41011-3115
(859) 392-1564
E-mail: greinersman@covdio.org

Deacon Brian Cox
Pastoral Ministry Formation Office,
1125 Madison Ave,
Covington, KY 41011-3115
(859) 392-1568 E-mail: bcox@covdio.org

Religious Communities of Women

Benedictine Sisters of Covington,
www.stwalburg.org
Sister Rita Brink, O.S.B.
St. Walburg Monastery
2500 Amsterdam Rd, Villa Hills, KY 41017-5316
(859) 331-6324
E-mail: ritabrink@yahoo.com

St. Joseph the Worker Sisters,
www.ssjw.org
Mother Mary Christina Murray, SJW
St. Joseph Convent
1 Saint Joseph Ln., Walton, KY 41094
(859) 485-4914.
E-mail: sjwvocations@gmail.com or motherchristinasjw@gmail.com

Congregation of Divine Providence of Kentucky
www.cdpkentucky.org
Sister Leslie Keener, C.D.P.
(859) 441-0700, ext. 22
E-mail: vocation@cdpkentucky.org

Notre Dame Sisters of Covington,
sndusa.org
Sister Mary Ruth Lubbers, S.N.D.
1601 Dixie Hwy, Covington, KY 41011
(859) 750-8190
E-mail: rlubbers@sndusa.org

Congregation of the Passion of Jesus Christ, www.erlangerpassionists.com
Sister Mary Catherine, C.P.
1151 Donaldson Hwy, Erlanger, KY 41018
(859) 371-8568
E-mail:sister.marycatherine@outlook.com

Public Association of the Faithful

Franciscan Daughters of Mary,
www.fdofmary.org
Mother Clare Marie Borchard, F.D.M.
PO Box 122070, Covington, KY 41012-2070
(859) 512-5575
E-mail: fdmsisters@gmail.com

Ways to support vocations

Become a prayer partner. Prayer partners are individuals and families who agree to pray for a specific seminarian as he discerns his call. Call Father Conor Kunath at (859) 392-1566 or e-mail: ckunath@covdio.org

Many parishes have vocation committees. If your parish doesn't, consider starting one.

The **Serra Club of Northern Kentucky** is part of an international organization dedicated to supporting vocations. Contact Jeff Jenn at (859) 512-5482 or e-mail: jeffjenn54@gmail.com
Visit www.serranky.org or www.serrainternational.org.

Our diocesan **Knights of Columbus** send each seminarian a financial contribution for personal expenses. Call Tim Buerger at (859) 750-7183 or visit kofc.org/joinus.

Make a financial contribution to the diocesan Seminarian Education Fund, 1125 Madison Ave., Covington, KY 41011-3115 or online at www.covdio.org.

Families — the seedbed of religious vocations

A newly-released study from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University, surveyed seminarians who were ordained to the priesthood in 2024. The data shows that families continue to be the seedbed of religious vocations: of the 392 respondents, 95% were raised by their biological parents, and 88% were raised by a married couple who lived together.

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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/.

"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 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. Peter's COF Court #1492 will host its annual Matching Funds Turkey Raffle, Nov. 7, Social Center of Sts. Peter & Paul School, California, after the 5 p.m. Mass. There will be bingo, raffles and plenty of food. Proceeds benefit the needs of Sts. Peter & Paul Parish.

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.



Powering ACUE

Seventh- and eighth-grade students at Prince of Peace Elementary, Covington, are learning about forms and sources of energy, including batteries and solar power. This lesson is a part of the school's new science curriculum, Amplify, which was paid for through a generous donation to all ACUE schools.

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/.

The Angelico Project will be hosting a November Architecture Tour, Nov. 21, 9 a.m., at St. Monica Church, Cincinnati. Visitors are welcome to step inside some of the region's most beautiful churches and discover the stories their walls, artwork and architecture tell with a new tour monthly.

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.

St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, offers Veneration of a relic of the True Cross, on the first Friday of every month, from noon–1 p.m. Confessions are offered concurrently. The monthly veneration is held in silence and concludes with a blessing and the opportunity for the faithful to come forward to personally venerate the True Cross relic. The monthly veneration is sponsored by the Knights and Dames of the Covington-Lexington section of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem.

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Savannah bishop shares timeless witness of Georgia Martyrs ahead of beatification

Lauretta Brown
OSV News

What would you give your life for? This is the question and challenge that Bishop Stephen D. Parkes of the Diocese of Savannah has been putting before young people receiving the sacrament of confirmation as his Georgia diocese prepares for the historic beatification of five Franciscan missionaries who laid down their lives for their Catholic faith on that same soil over 400 years ago.

"This has relevance for today," he told OSV News in a recent interview, "because in our world today, there's just so much happening and so much going on. And we hear all these divergent opinions and you think, 'Well, what do I believe? What do I feel so strongly about that I'm going to shed my blood for it?'"

"We know many are suffering; they're just struggling today and trying to find their place and wondering how their gifts and talents are going to serve the world," he said, "And when we embrace something and we feel strongly about it, well, we stand up for it."

The Georgia Martyrs, five Franciscans from Spain who were martyred in 1597 ministering to the Guale people, without any Spanish military presence, were Friars Pedro de Corpa, Blas Rodríguez, Miguel de Añon, Antonio de Badajóz and Francisco de Veráscola.

"The native peoples adopted them, welcomed them into their culture, and the Franciscans were good at evangelization. So, the five of them, they settled into various missions and they ended up becoming a part of the everyday life of the people," he noted. "That in and of itself was remarkable."

Their martyrdom came after Father Pedro de Corpa stood by the Church's teaching that marriage is between one man and one woman when the soon-to-be chief Juanillo wanted to take a second wife. Juanillo had Father Pedro killed and started an attack on the other Franciscans serving in different missions who were hunted down and killed.



OSV News photo/Gretchen R. Crowe

A monument to Pedro de Corpa and Companions, also known as the Georgia Martyrs, stands outside of Nativity of Our Lady Church in Darien, Ga., May 26, 2026. The monument, sculpted by Timothy Schmalz, was blessed in 2021. In an interview with OSV News, Bishop Stephen D. Parkes of Savannah, Ga., talked about the upcoming Oct. 31 beatification of the Georgia Martyrs.

Bishop Parkes observed the distinct personalities of each of the Georgia Martyrs.

"Each one would have suffered individually," he emphasized, "and they would have made that decision to say, 'I am going to give my life for this.' And that's a huge decision."

"This was almost 200 years before our country was even officially founded," he added, "it's very interesting to note that the faith was a part of life in such a way that it made its way to these shores."

Bishop Parkes first heard of the Georgia Martyrs when he became bishop of the Diocese of Savannah in 2020.

"Immediately upon my arrival," he said, "I noticed pictures of these five men around in almost every place that I went; but also, people were very excited to tell me (about them), which says something about the devotional life of the people in the local area. That's been an important part, I believe, of their cause."

"To get to know them, to spread the word, history is so important," he added, "especially in our faith, as we well know, we celebrate history. We learn from history. And I notice in Georgia, there's a great love for history."

The beatification is the first ever in the state of Georgia and the Southeast United States and the sixth beatification to take place on U.S. soil.

Regarding why the beatification was moving forward now all these years later, he said such things take time: both as people become familiar with the story, but also as their story is appreciated more.

"We don't really know; there's mystery in it," he said. "I've asked that question, 'Why is it that it's happening during my time as bishop?' And there's mystery in that. And I say, 'Well, God has a plan somewhere along the line and I'm very grateful for that because it's a big opportunity for us to promote our Catholic faith.'"

Bishop Parkes said he hopes the beatification might result in a veneration of the Georgia martyrs by married and engaged couples within the diocese.

"Wouldn't it be beautiful if every household, every marriage that's being prepared, every couple preparing for marriage knows the story; that they look to the martyrs for their intercession, to these new blesseds — as of Oct. 31 — for their intercession for loyalty, faithfulness, fidelity in their marriage?"

"What a beautiful witness," he said. "Maybe they'll have pictures of them in their home, and that would be something that, again, would be part of our local Catholic culture."

Bishop Parkes said that he attended the beatification of

(Continued on page 21)

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A Marvel-ous message

(Continued from page 5)

hugely profound and are of the most supernatural nature (if I may be redundant). If we could really see — if we could truly comprehend the awesome power and consequences of these seemingly simple acts, we would better understand how these called individuals are tirelessly fighting the good fight for us, and all of humanity, every single day.

Of course, all of this power is coming directly from Jesus. He is the ultimate source of this strength and has authority over all creation. But he transfers this power to his servants that they may battle the forces that attempt to derail man's relationship with God and keep him separated from his Creator.

So, the next time you see a priest, bishop or cardinal perhaps you may see them a little differently. You may recognize them as the superheroes that they truly are. But don't expect them to boast about it. They prefer to keep their true identity quietly hidden behind the hard-working, mild-mannered, friendly face of the ordinary man that may pass by you unnoticed on the street.

Joe Glaser is a parishioner of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish, Burlington.

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:

- 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.

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- Wednesday, Nov. 4 6–8:30 p.m., Diocesan Curia, Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium, Covington
- 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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Georgia Martyrs

(Continued from page 19)

Blessed Fulton J. Sheen in September, calling the experience "beautiful" to be able to "learn more about Fulton Sheen," who was a "great communicator and touched millions and millions of lives."

"The story of the martyrs is different," he said. "It's kind of delving into our history, our heart, realizing that from hundreds of years ago that holy people walked here in our soil and what they went through for our faith to be here today."

"We wonder, we struggle with things in our faith or promoting the faith," he said, "and resistance. What did they face back then? They lost their lives for it, because there was a lack of understanding or an openness about it."

Bishop Parkes was able to visit St. Catherines Island, the only site of martyrdom that has been identified with certainty where Father Miguel de Añon and Brother Antonio de Badajoz lost their lives. The mission on St. Catherines, rediscovered in the 1980s, is located on the privately owned island, and is closed to the general public.

"They were able to recreate what that Guale village looked like, even to the point where we actually have a place there through the generosity of the St. Catherines Island Foundation, we are able to have an outdoor chapel there," he said, adding that the diocese planted a group of palm trees on the outline of the chapel.

"I believe 430 of the natives are buried there," he said. "I went there on All Souls' Day, my very first visit, and it was just a beautiful experience, connecting with the history."

Bishop Parkes said the beatification taking place on Oct. 31, Halloween, was no coincidence.

"We had to submit a number of dates to the dicastery, and then it would be approved by the Holy Father," he explained. "This was our first choice."

"Halloween has taken a dark turn in these last decades," he said, "and there's a lot of nonsense that goes along with it. And I think this is a reminder of what it really is, and that is All Hallows' Eve and the next day is All Saints' Day. So we will be having a Mass of Thanksgiving at the Cathedral Basilica of St. John the Baptist on All Saints' Day, where we will recognize obviously all of the saints, but recognize these new blesseds."

He said, "It's a great connection, I think, to make, that we should live liturgically. And this is an opportunity for us to live the liturgical life of the Church within our secular calendar."

He said that having the beatification on a Saturday would also help those traveling from all over the state to attend as the diocese is over 37,000 square miles.

The diocese is expecting over 8,000 people to be in attendance for the beatification and have already had to expand the event to a larger venue.

"I feel as though we've put into place and planned all of the tools that are needed for a milestone, memorable, spiritually fulfilling celebration," Bishop Parkes said. "We'll let the Holy Spirit take it from there."

Massachusetts pro-life activist's sainthood cause suspended

Gina Christian
OSV News

The canonization cause for Ruth V. K. Pakaluk — a Massachusetts wife, mother, convert and pro-life activist — has been suspended, according to the cause's leaders.

In a brief statement posted to its website, the Ruth V.K. Pakaluk Foundation said it "has suspended its petition to the Bishop of Worcester to formally open Ruth's cause of beatification and canonization."

The foundation added, "This decision is based on considerations that extend beyond Ruth herself, her life, or her witness. Ultimately, the matter rests in God's hands and will proceed according to the judgment of the Church."

The Vatican had given the Diocese of Worcester, Massachusetts, permission to proceed with the cause in late September 2025, with Pakaluk named a "Servant of God," the title given to a candidate for a sainthood cause.

Pakaluk, who died at age 41 in 1998 after a lengthy battle with cancer, was a mother of seven (losing her son Thomas to sudden infant death syndrome) and an ardent pro-life advocate.

A native of New Jersey, she met and married her future husband, Michael Pakaluk — now an economist and philosopher at The Catholic University of America in Washington — while both were students at Harvard University. Regarding themselves at the time as atheists, with Michael Pakaluk a lapsed Catholic, they embraced the faith shortly after their graduation.

Following the birth of their first child, Ruth Pakaluk became involved in the pro-life movement. She was asked to join the board of Massachusetts Citizens for Life and later served as its president.

Pakaluk also developed an extensive public speaking schedule, while living out an active prayer and catechetical ministry at her parish, St. Paul Cathedral in Worcester, and raising her family.

Diagnosed with breast cancer, Pakaluk conceived her seventh child shortly after completing chemotherapy, giving birth to daughter Anna Sophia in 1993. Later that same year, her cancer was found to have spread extensively.

Amid subsequent treatment, Pakaluk tended to her family while continuing her parish ministry and pro-life activism. By 1998, she was given just months to live. Nonetheless, she completed the annual March for Life in Washington that year, collapsing immediately afterward and requiring hospitalization.

She died Sept. 23, 1998, and is buried in Notre Dame Cemetery in Worcester.

Following the Vatican's 2025 approval to proceed with her sainthood cause, Michael Pakaluk said he had prayed for the cause to open, but did not credit any one person with initiating it.

"Lots of people have spoken about it … believed a cause should open up," he told The Catholic Free Press, Worcester's diocesan news outlet.

He sad he had "always been happy to cooperate" with anyone pursuing the cause.

Pakaluk said he viewed his late wife's canonization cause through the lens of the Second Vatican Council, which set forth a pattern of holiness for laypeople.





Catholics must engage with modern culture, not reject it, pope says

Josephine Peterson
OSV News

Catholics must not live their faith in opposition or "hostility" toward modern culture, Pope Leo XIV said, emphasizing that integrating faith and culture is essential to living out the Christian vocation and sharing the Gospel with others.

"The authentic relationship between faith and culture is rooted in the Incarnation," he said in his address to English speakers during his weekly general audience Oct. 28 in St. Peter's Square. "Faith, therefore, enriches and brings to fulfillment every culture it encounters, and is itself called to become a culture that is shaped by Christ."

Throughout history, the Catholic Church has played a significant role in creating educational opportunities, the pope said, noting that many medieval universities arose from the Church and contributed to the development of Western civilization.

The Church continues to promote access to education and culture, he said, citing the Second Vatican Council's pastoral constitution "Gaudium et Spes" and its call to overcome illiteracy and to ensure that everyone has access to fundamental cultural opportunities.



CNS photo/Lola Gomez

Pope Leo XIV smiles from the popemobile while riding around St. Peter's Square at the Vatican before his weekly general audience Oct. 28, 2026.

Pope Leo also emphasized the importance of expanding access to higher education, especially for women, and encouraged Christians to deepen their scientific and cultural knowledge alongside their understanding of the faith.

"The Church promotes culture because it is a good in itself; it is a service to the human being and to the fulfilment of her vocation on earth," the pope said during his main catechesis in Italian.

Yet the development of human knowledge and culture also raises new and deeper questions, prompting believers to reflect more deeply on their faith, he said.

Faith itself is interwoven with culture through traditions, art, poetry, thought and science, Pope Leo said. Quoting St. John Paul II, he said "a faith that does not become culture is a faith that is not fully embraced, not fully thought through, not faithfully lived."

Faith is not limited to any one culture, but can take root in all cultures, shaping them according to the example of Jesus Christ through charity, service and recognition of God as Father, he said.

"In this way, the Church draws from the various cultures all that is good, beautiful and true, in order to embody and transmit the message of the Gospel," the pope said.

He urged theologians in particular to collaborate with experts in other disciplines, arguing that intellectual inquiry and religious formation should develop together.

The pope said that cultural expression can open people's minds to fundamental questions about the meaning of the world and human existence, helping prepare them to receive the Gospel.

Catholics, he said, must strive to understand the cultures they live in, rather than approach the modern world with opposition.

"Achieving a mature and responsible synthesis between faith and culture is, in fact, a necessary condition for persevering in the Christian vocation," he said, as well as for communicating the faith to others in a credible way.

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Pope Leo's doctors confirm his visit to Latin America two weeks after lung surgery

ROME — Two weeks after surgery for lung cancer, Pope Leo XIV has been cleared by doctors to proceed with his planned Nov. 6-17 trip to South America, the longest and most demanding journey of his pontificate so far. In a statement released Oct. 26, papal physician Dr. Luigi Carbone said there are no medical concerns that would prevent the pope from traveling to Uruguay, Argentina and Peru as scheduled. The Vatican said the pope's recovery is progressing well and that he has gradually resumed his responsibilities while balancing work with appropriate periods of rest. "The Holy Father looks forward with great joy and enthusiasm to this journey," the statement said. Pope Leo added: "I am looking forward to returning to the continent where I've experienced so many moments of my life." Preparations in Peru are continuing without interruption. Msgr. Guillermo Inca Pereda, coordinator of the papal visit, said a Vatican advance team arrived Oct. 26 for final planning. Despite speculation that the high-altitude stop in Cusco might be dropped following the pope's surgery, he said, "Nothing is ruled out." The trip will cover more than 19,000 miles on 14 flights, with Pope Leo celebrating nine public Masses and ending the journey in Chiclayo, Peru, where he served as bishop from 2015 to 2023.

Ethiopian Orthodox leaders call for justice, protection after 60 Christians killed in attacks

ADDIS ABABA, Ethiopia — Ethiopia's Orthodox Christian leaders are urging the federal government to intervene after armed assailants killed 60 believers in two rural attacks south of the capital. Opening their plenary assembly Oct. 26 in Addis Ababa, bishops of the Holy Synod condemned the bloodshed as a "reprehensible, inhumane deed" violating basic human rights and freedom of religion. The violence struck farming communities across the Arsi Zone, roughly 120 miles south of Addis Ababa. Church officials reported 14 people were killed Oct. 20 in the northern Merti district, followed by an Oct. 24 assault that left 46 dead across several villages in neighboring Shirka. Over 20 people were severely wounded, and 20 homes were burned down.Authorities blamed the Alliance for Survival, an armed rebel network that includes the Oromo Liberation Army, though the group has historically denied targeting civilians.Warning that violence against Orthodox Christians is escalating, Church leaders called on security forces to deploy immediately, stop future assaults and bring the attackers to justice.

Jordan reels afterattack on church, King vows 'harshest retaliation'

AMMAN, Jordan — Church bells rang out at noon across Jordan Oct 24 in remembrance of the victims of a massacre in the kingdom's south that killed eight people and wounded 40 others during a funeral service the day before. Mourners had gathered at the St. George's Orthodox Church in Hammoud, one of Jordan's small Christian hamlets in the southern area of Karak, when three gunmen reportedly fired continuously for five minutes at them before fleeing the scene. One of those present said up to 200 mourners were in and around the church for the funeral service, adding that most of the victims were aged between 50 to 70 years old. Another parishioner told CNN that she and others fled and hid behind the church's altar for safety, fearing she would not make it out alive. Jordan's King Abdullah II condemned the massacre, vowing the "harshest retaliation" against the attackers. Archbishop Giovanni Pietro Dal Toso, apostolic nuncio to Jordan, also denounced the attack and visited the injured and their families in several hospitals on Oct. 24, accompanied by Bishop William Shomali of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem, "to convey the closeness, solidarity, and condolences of the Holy Father," Jordan's official Petra news agency reported.

Vatican diplomat warns UN of arms race in space, calls for ban on all space weapons

NEW YORK — As space-based technologies and exploration expand, the Vatican's top diplomat to the United Nations is warning against the militarization of outer space — and the lack of a sufficiently strong legal framework to counter such a threat. "At a time when conflicts and mistrust are already putting severe strain on the international order, humanity cannot afford to extend an arms race beyond the Earth," said Archbishop Christophe Z. el-Kassis, the Holy See's permanent observer to the U.N. in New York. The archbishop shared his thoughts in an Oct. 21 statement delivered at a scheduled discussion on outer space held by the U.N.'s First Committee during the 81st session of the multilateral body's General Assembly. Noting rapid developments in, and dependence upon, space-based technologies, the archbishop pointed to the dire consequences of weapons in space. While the 1967 Outer Space Treaty bans nuclear and mass destruction weapons, the legal framework still has critical gaps, he said, calling for a comprehensive ban on weapons in space. "Outer space must remain a domain of peaceful cooperation and shared responsibility, preserved for the benefit of all humanity and for present and future generations," he said.

Most Catholic health institutions in Illinois temporarily protected from assisted suicide law

CHICAGO — A significant number of Catholic health workers in Illinois are now covered by a temporary restraining order on the state's new physician assisted suicide law that took effect Sept. 12. The Thomas More Society, a Catholic-run public interest law firm, said in early October it added the Illinois Catholic Health Association, Catholic Medical Association, Christian Medical and Dental Associations, the National Association of Catholic Nurses and Catholic Psychotherapy Association, Inc., and another two individuals, as plaintiffs in its lawsuit against Illinois' secretary of financial and professional regulation and the director of public health. Judge Franklin Valderrama of the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Illinois Eastern Division on Oct. 5 granted the addition of the plaintiffs that will temporarily allow them to continue to practice their profession without being compelled to refer terminally ill patients to other healthcare workers that would help them end their lives with lethal prescription drugs. They also will not be facing steep fines and sanctions, such as loss of licensure to practice medicine for describing the law as physician-assisted suicide. Thomas More Society filed the original lawsuit Aug. 11 to cover Bishop Thomas J. Paprocki of Springfield — whose diocese includes two Catholic health systems — four Catholic doctors and a Lutheran nursing facility. The firm said the judge's Oct. 5 expansion of coverage of the temporary hold to the Illinois Catholic Health Association alone protects "95% of the state's Catholic health care institutions."

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For more information, contact:

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