November 13, 2026

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MESSENGER

Serving the Diocese of Covington, Kentucky since 1926

Giving Tuesday returns after successful year one

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

After nearly $600,000 was raised across almost 1,200 donors for 62 participating organizations, Giving Tuesday returns to the Diocese of Covington with Give Catholic NKY. Giving Tuesday has "exploded" across the country, said Jim Hess, director of Stewardship and Mission Services for the diocese. Rising in popularity, in both secular and religious organizations, Giving Tuesday falls annually on the Tuesday after Thanksgiving, this year on Dec. 1.



"After Black Friday and Cyber Monday, Giving Tuesday is really an opportunity to step back … really to be grateful for what you've been given and consider looking around at the needs of your community," said Mr. Hess.

In the Diocese, parishes, schools, ministries and organizations can participate in Giving Tuesday to raise necessary funds for projects or upgrades.

"A lot of our schools and parishes are doing really important projects," said Mr. Hess. Including bell tower repairs, security upgrades, additional AED devices, updated curriculum materials and more.

"One hundred percent of their [donor's] gift goes towards the cause of whatever organization they give to," said Mr. Hess. The money donated is also 100 percent assessment free up to 120 percent of the organizations fundraising goal.

"A lot of parishes and schools have been really creative as to what their projects are," he said. "I encourage people to click around on the website. Don't just click on your organization, but click around to see what other projects speak to you."

The Give Catholic NKY website provides an interactive shopping experience for donors on Giving Tuesday. Allowing them to peruse their options, before placing a donation in their digital shopping cart. At the end of "shopping," and selecting organizations to donate, donors are able to check out all at once.

"You can browse all the parishes and schools and ministries that are raising money, what they're raising money for, their goal that day, and you can add gifts to all the organizations that matter to you, and then check out all at once," said Mr. Hess. "It makes giving very easy," he said.

Because of the live leaderboard, which tracks donation amounts, donors are able to sort organizations by most or least amount donated. "There's always people that tell me they go on there and sort it in reverse order, and then give a donation to the church that has not raised any money that day," he said.

"It's likely people are going to donate somewhere," said Mr. Hess, "why not give them an opportunity to donate to the Church or their parish school or to Catholic Charities, or you name it, on Giving Tuesday."

To explore the 35 organizations already registered to receive donations on Giving Tuesday and to donate on Dec. 1, go to givecatholicnky.org.

Upcoming collection for retired religious supports lives of generosity and sacrifice

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

For generations, women religious have served the Diocese of Covington, and Catholic communities around the world, through service in schools, hospitals, missions and many other institutions. As women religious age, and as the cost of living increases, religious communities need help supporting these women who have given their lives to support their communities.

The 2026 national collection for the Retirement Fund for Religious will be held this year during the weekend of Dec. 12–13. Established in 1988 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, the Retirement Fund for Religious has addressed the needs of men and women religious across the nation, distributing over $1 billion in aid.

In the Diocese of Covington, where the mean age of some religious communities is over the age of 80, one woman religious encourages the people of the diocese to support her sisters in their old age.

Notre Dame Sister Nance Hehman was inspired to join the Sisters of Notre Dame through the very example of her

(Continued on page 4)

Bailey photo



Notre Dame Sister Nance Hehman, (center), laughs with other volunteers of Catholic Charities recognized at this year's "Catholic Family Night" at Great American Ball Park, Sept. 5.

A morning of remembrance, hope and reflection on human dignity at the Cathedral Basilica

Staff report

"Let us not abandon those who have gone before us; our prayers accompany them where our hands cannot reach." — St. Odilo of Cluny

During November, when the Church remembers the faithful departed, the St. Cosmas Oblate Deanery invites the faithful to a special morning of prayer, remembrance, and reflection on Saturday, Nov. 21, 9:30–11:00 a.m., at St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.

Sponsored by the St. Cosmas Oblate Deanery, the morning is part of the community's monthly gathering, but extends a warm invitation to guests, visitors and even the simply curious to join in a time of quiet prayer, remembrance and reflection.

Morning of prayer, remembrance and reflection
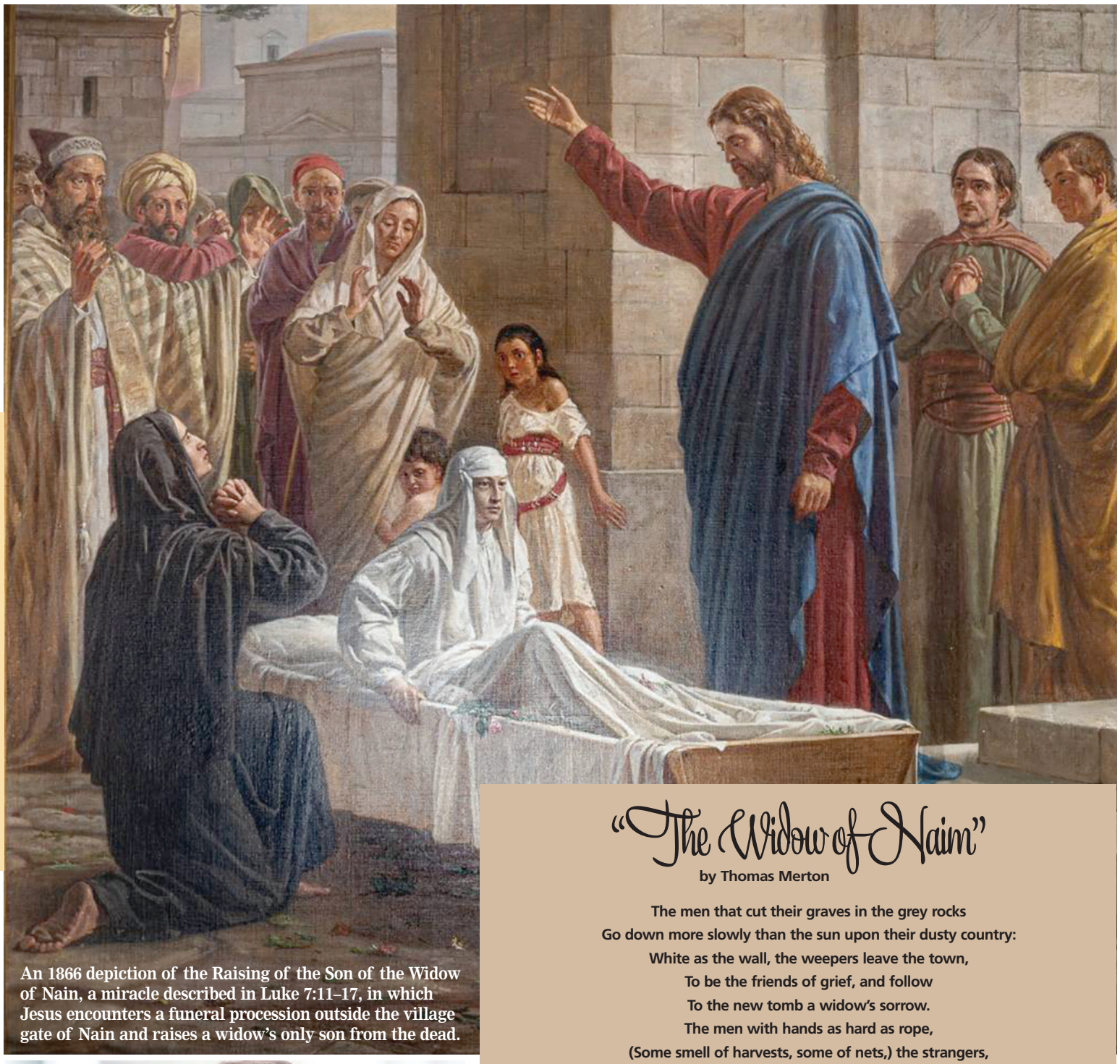
Saturday, Nov. 21, 9:30–11:00 a.m.

St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington

Guest speaker Garren Colvin, president and CEO, St. Elizabeth Healthcare , will share how St. Elizabeth's Catholic mission finds expression the daily work of caring for the sick and honoring the dignity of every person.

Sponsored by the St. Cosmas Oblate Deanery.

All are welcome!.



An 1866 depiction of the Raising of the Son of the Widow of Nain, a miracle described in Luke 7:11–17, in which Jesus encounters a funeral procession outside the village gate of Nain and raises a widow's only son from the dead.

In his Rule, St. Benedict instructs his community to "keep death daily before your eyes" (Rule of St. Benedict, 4:47). Far from a morbid fascination with death, this ancient wisdom invites us to embrace the preciousness of life, to live each day with greater intention, and to remember that our earthly journey finds its fulfillment in God. It is in this spirit that the Deanery offer a morning dedicated to remembrance and Christian hope.

The morning will begin with the Church's ancient tradition of Morning Prayer, followed by a solemn Mass incorporating the beautiful music, signs and symbols of the ancient Requiem Mass. Rooted in centuries of Catholic tradition, these sacred expressions invite us to contemplate the mystery of death through the promise of Christ's Resurrection. They remind us that our bonds of love transcend the grave and that, in prayer, we remain united with those who have gone before us.

Those attending are warmly encouraged to bring photographs of deceased loved ones, which will be included in this special remembrance. Together, these images will offer a moving expression of the lives we cherish, the grief we carry, and the Christian hope that sustains us.



St. Elizabeth Healthcare President Garren Colvin will speak Nov. 21 at St. Mary's Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, on the Catholic mission of healthcare. His talk follows morning prayer and Mass, which begins at 9:30 a.m.

Following Mass, Garren Colvin, president and CEO of St. Elizabeth Healthcare, will offer a reflection on the dignity of human life and the Christian call to compassionate care.

A Northern Kentucky native, Mr. Colvin has dedicated more than four decades to St. Elizabeth, beginning as a college student in 1983 and becoming President and CEO in 2015. Under his leadership, St. Elizabeth has expanded its mission of healing throughout the region, including significant advancements in cancer treatment, cardiovascular care, and community health. His longstanding commitment to service has extended beyond healthcare through numerous civic and charitable leadership roles, including service on the Diocesan Financial Council and on the Board of Thomas More University.

Mr. Colvin will share how St. Elizabeth's Catholic mission finds expression in the daily work of caring for the sick, accompanying the vulnerable, and honoring the dignity of every human person.

All are welcome to this meaningful morning of remembrance and renewed hope in Christ's promise of eternal life.

"The Widow of Naim"

by Thomas Merton

The men that cut their graves in the grey rocks
Go down more slowly than the sun upon their dusty country:
White as the wall, the weepers leave the town,
To be the friends of grief, and follow
To the new tomb a widow's sorrow.
The men with hands as hard as rope,
(Some smell of harvests, some of nets,) the strangers,
Come up the hill more slowly than the seasons of the year.
"Why do you walk in funerals, you men of Naim,
Why go you down to graves, with eyes like winters,
And your cold faces clean as cliffs?
See how we come, our brows are full of sun,
Our smiles are fairer than the wheat and hay,
Our eyes are saner than the sea.
Lay down your burden at our four-roads' crossing,
And learn a wonder from the Christ, our Traveller."
(Oh, you will say that those old times
Are all dried up like water,
Since the great God went walking on a road to Naim,
How many hundred years has slept again in death
That widow's son, after the marvel of his miracle:
He did not rise for long, and sleeps forever.
And what of the men of the town?
What have the desert winds done to the dust
Of the poor weepers, and the widow's friends?)
The men that cut their graves in the grey rocks
Spoke to the sons of God upon the four cross roads:
"Men of Genesareth, who climb our hill as slow as spring or summer,
Christ is your Master, and we see His eyes are Jordans,
His hands and feet are wounded, and His words are wine.
He has let death baptize the one who stirs and wakens
In the bier we carry,
That we may read the Cross and Easter in this rising,
And learn the endless heaven
Promised to all the widow-Church's risen children."

What makes a Catholic cemetery Catholic?

D.D. Emmons
OSV News

Long ago, the Church designated two places as sacred: Catholic churches and Catholic cemeteries.

"Sacred places are those which are designated to divine worship or to the burial of the faithful by the dedication or blessing which the liturgical books prescribe for that purpose," according to the Code of Canon Law, Canon 1205. A bishop is responsible for the blessing.

That cemeteries or places of burial are considered sacred can be traced at least to the early Egyptians who specially prepared the body for burial. In those times and for centuries later cemeteries were located outside city walls; case in point, the Crucifixion and the tomb of Christ were outside Jerusalem.

Eventually, Christian burial sites were located inside city walls, including catacombs. With the growth of Christianity and the evolution of parishes, by the early Middle Ages parishioners were commonly buried in the yard adjacent to a church. The churchyard was part of the parish and the site was perfect to continually honor the deceased, but as time went by, that arrangement didn't last. More and more, cemeteries were built at locations separate from the parish.

That every parish has its own cemetery for its parishioners might be an ideal situation, but such is not the case. Today, Catholics who belong to a parish without a cemetery and desire to be buried in a Catholic cemetery pick from those managed by other parishes or the diocese.

Canon 1240 states: "1: Where possible, the Church is to have its own cemeteries or at least areas in civil cemeteries that are designated for the deceased members of the faithful and properly blessed. 2: If this cannot be achieved, however, then individual graves are to be properly blessed."

Many sectors of society seek to deny and keep the angel of death at a distance, but not so the Catholic Church. While we mourn and grieve when a loved one dies, the Church encourages us to honor death — it is not the end, but a change: "We shall not all fall asleep, but we will all be changed, in an instant, in the blink of an eye, at the last trumpet" (1 Cor 15:51-52).

We are made in God's image, thus the Church pays homage to both the soul and the body with utmost respect.

This special care is a reflection of how Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus carefully prepared the crucified body of Our Lord (cf. Jn 19:38). They covered it with spices, wrapped it in a burial cloth and placed it in a new tomb. Their courageous actions were based on the love they had

(Continued on page 4)

Brothers restore St. Mary Cemetery's wishing well during the month of All Souls

It's a pastoral addition to the scenery of St. Mary's cemetery, Ft. Mitchell — a simple wooden wishing well, prominently displayed under the branches of a tree amongst the cemetery's monuments and gravestones.

While visiting St. Mary's in search of the grave of his wife's grandmother, Rick Schwab saw the curious landmark having been worn down over the years, and had one brilliant idea.

"I have three brothers — two older, one younger," said Mr. Schwab, "And I thought it'd be a great project to get together and have the brothers restore it."

With help devising the plan from one brother, a retired architect, Mr. Schwab gathered the plans and materials for the project and, with permission from Don Knochelmann — director of Buildings and Properties for the Diocese of Covington — the four brothers worked to restore both the decaying roof and base of the wishing well, finishing the project with a decorative themed basket ahead of the Advent season, Nov. 9.

This project coincides with November as the month dedicated to the Holy Souls in Purgatory — a month traditionally dedicated to praying for the deceased.



Weathered wishing well at St. Mary's cemetery, Ft. Mitchell.



Wishing well at St. Mary's cemetery, Ft. Mitchell, restored by the Schwab brothers.

Correction

In the article entitled "'Breaking Bread' community dinners support the St. Joseph community through free meals and fellowship" some names were incorrect. The pastor is Father Eric Boelscher (not Father Ryan Belscher) and Christie's last name is Pavia (not Pazia). The *Messenger* apologizes for the error.



Bambinelli Blessing and Christmas Tree Lighting



Bishop John Iffert invites you back for an evening of Advent blessings.

Bring the infant Jesus from your nativity for a special blessing from Bishop Iffert.

Pizza, hot chocolate and cookies will be provided.

This event is free and open to all.

Dec. 13, after the 5:30 p.m. Mass at the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, St. Mary's Park, Covington

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.

Official Assignment

Effective September 25, 2026

Rev. Matthew Cushing
To: Spiritual Director, Our Lady of Victory Curia, Northern Kentucky Legion of Mary
Term: Five years
Continues other duties

Assigned by
the Most Rev. John C. Iffert
Bishop of Covington

Jamie N. Schroeder
Chancellor

Bishop's Schedule

Nov. 14–19
USCCB General Assembly, Baltimore

Nov. 20–23
TEC retreat, Jesuit Spiritual Center, Milford

What makes a Catholic cemetery Catholic?

(Continued from page 1)

come to have for Jesus, not because they had a strong faith in his resurrection. Today, when Catholics bury someone, we have complete faith in their resurrection. The people of God resting in a Catholic cemetery lived with that same belief.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church directly addresses how we respect the dead: "The bodies of the dead must be treated with respect and charity, in faith and hope of the Resurrection. The burial of the dead is a corporal work of mercy; it honors the children of God, who are temples of the holy spirit" (No. 2300).

The high regard and respect for a deceased Catholic is further exemplified by the Church's end-of-life rituals: confession, anointing of the sick, viaticum (the last rites), a wake or vigil, the funeral Mass, rite of committal and burial in the consecrated ground at a Catholic cemetery.

Each of these rituals is focused on assisting the soul of the deceased along its journey to meeting with Christ at the particular judgment. Throughout each step, the Catholic priest provides comfort to the dying and the family.

On this path, the cemetery is the final stop and the place of rest for the mortal body until the final judgment. While by tradition many Catholics are buried in Catholic cemeteries, they are not obligated to do so (cf. Canon No. 1180).

There are several reasons why a cemetery is designated as Catholic or, said another way, reasons that make a Catholic cemetery Catholic.

First, as mentioned, a Catholic cemetery is blessed or consecrated ground. A bishop or his designee has the honor to impart a blessing on a new cemetery. He walks around the boundaries of the area while sprinkling holy water. He continues the sprinkling over the entire grounds. He offers several prayers petitioning God that the cemetery be kept free from unclean spirits, "And at the end of time, when the angels sound their trumpets, let all who have received the sacraments of baptism, who have persevered in the Catholic faith until death, and who have their remains laid to rest in this cemetery, be rewarded in body and in soul with the unending joy of heaven," according to the blessing rite.

As time passes, the new cemetery becomes increasingly recognizable as Catholic by the manner and way a cemetery is adorned. The headstones, statues and images of saints, especially the Blessed Mother, of angels, the crucifix, the Pietà — all cry out the beliefs of those buried in this hallowed ground. Here we solemnly remember and pray for our beloved dead; we, too, seek some day to rest in such a sacred place. Management of the cemeteries, the values, standards and practices all reflect Catholic teaching.

The Church teaches us that there is an unbroken connection between those of us living and those faithful who have passed into either purgatory or heaven. We are all considered saints: those of us living are the Church Militant, we are responsible to pray for the souls in purgatory (Church Suffering); those in heaven, the Church Triumphant, pray for us.



OSV News photo/Simone Risoluti, Vatican Media

Pope Leo XIV blesses graves as he celebrates Mass for the feast of All Souls at Verano Cemetery in Rome Nov. 2, 2026. Worshippers gathered amid the tombs of the historic cemetery to pray for the dead during the annual liturgy.

The Catholic cemetery is a place we all have in common; we are one family of believers, a communion of saints. In life, no matter where they went to Mass, they were never strangers, and they are not strangers here. They received holy Communion every Sunday, went to Mass on Ash Wednesday, processed with the Blessed Sacrament to the altar of repose on Holy Thursday, adored the cross on Good Friday, walked the Stations of the Cross, waited in line at confession, kept their palms until next year, carried out all those beautiful traditions of Catholicism.

As members of the communion of saints, the living can offer prayers on behalf of our sleeping brethren. The Mass is the ultimate prayer, and we can seek a Mass intention for the repose of the soul of those departed. The Eucharistic prayers of the Mass remember "our brothers and sisters who have fallen asleep in the hope of the resurrection, and all who have died in your mercy" (No. 2).

The priest says the prayers, and the congregation listening contemplates their deceased loved ones. In parishes, the entire month of November is given to remembering our departed friends and family. Masses are said and processions are sometimes conducted at Catholic cemeteries honoring the dead.

It is not unusual that the diocesan bishop will celebrate Mass or a prayer service remembering the deceased in all the cemeteries of the diocese — especially during November. The Catholic cemetery calls to mind the fidelity that exists in the communion of saints, that the dead are not forgotten, that they continue to be honored.

Collection for retired religious supports lives of generosity and sacrifice

(Continued from page 1)

teachers at St. Therese, Southgate, and Notre Dame Academy, which was situated in Covington at the time.

At the time, many diocesan schools were staffed almost entirely by women religious. "Seeing the sisters in my high school years, and seeing what they did," Sister Nance said, "how they contributed and gave their whole lives … I wanted to do the same thing."

And, after high school, Sister Nance did indeed follow in their footsteps — joining the novitiate and becoming a teacher herself, serving in schools across three different dioceses, including many schools within the Diocese of Covington.

As a teacher, Sister Nance's favorite part of the job was "seeing the kids grow." Having taught thousands of children since the start of her ministry, Sister Nance still gets recognized by her students, many of whom are adults well into their 40s and 50s, describing the experience as "very fulfilling."

As a teacher, Sister Nance's final teaching role was at St. Augustine School, Augusta. Shutting down operations after the COVID-19 pandemic, Sister Nance retired at the time, as well — though her ministry is far from complete.

"My brother told me once," Sister Nance said, "We all burn out before we rust out." And Sister Nance lives by this, utilizing her "good health" in roles such as volunteering with St. Elizabeth Cancer Care, teaching CCD at St. Augustine and serving on the Southern Deanery board as religious representative.

"I think the responsibility of good health is using it for other people," Sister Nance said about her ministry post-retirement.

Looking back on her life as a Sister of Notre Dame, Sister Nance recalls that her and the other teachers made nothing. "We didn't get any money at all from the schools or the parishes," she said, with salaries coming later in her career — remaining rather modest, just to support the ever-increasing cost of living.

With about 50 Sisters of Notre Dame over the age of 80, Sister Nance encourages the generosity of the diocese towards her sisters. "The sisters gave up so much," Sister Nance said, "and now the sisters need help — it's time to give back."

Recognizing the high cost of living, Sister Nance also encouraged those without means to donate to the fund to offer prayers and encouragement towards retired religious, saying that these are "just as important."

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COMMENTARY

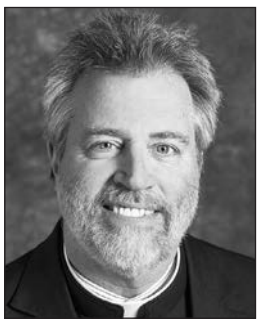
‘You wicked, lazy servant!’

The readings for the Thirty-third Sunday in Ordinary Time — Cycle A — are: Proverbs 31:10–13, 19–20, 30–31, 1 Thessalonians 5:1–6 and Matthew 25:14–30.

The striking word in what the master says to the third servant in this weekend’s Gospel may be not “lazy” but “wicked.” But how is being lazy wicked?

It is not a mistranslation, because the Greek word used here — *poneros* — does in fact mean “wicked” or even “evil.” Laziness, for us, is not something desirable, we may even despise people who are lazy, but we do not think of them as evil, or even as sinning.

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Stephen Bankemper

We even use the word as a sometimes-acceptable thing, as in, “I was feeling a little lazy, and just stayed home and read.” We are even expected to be lazy at times, as on vacation, and if a person is never lazy, we might accuse them of being a workaholic. What is going on here in Jesus’ parable?

The parable is teaching about what the Church calls *acedia* or *sloth*. The Church not only considers it sinful, but one of the seven capital sins. (Called capital because they engender other sins, other vices. CCC #1866) We know the first six — pride, avarice, envy, wrath, lust and gluttony — and understand what is wrong about them, but we do not often speak of sloth.

The Catechism defines sloth as “a culpable lack of physical or spiritual effort.” (CCC, Glossary) Read “physical” here not as I never go to work or exercise, but as I do not do acts of my religion, for example, go to Mass, pray, tithe, do the corporal works of mercy. Notice that the heart of the sin is not that I do not act, but that I do not even try. It is a sin because it is a “culpable” lack of effort. I could do them, but I just do not want to do them.

The Catechism categorizes sloth as a sin against God’s love. Paragraph #2094 lists various aspects of this sin.

It shows indifference: a person neglecting or refusing to reflect on divine charity.

It shows ingratitude: a person failing or refusing to acknowledge divine charity and to return love to God.

It shows lukewarmness: a person hesitating or neglecting to respond to divine love, as in refusing to respond to the prompting of the Holy Spirit.

And it shows a person refusing the joy that comes from God, even being repelled by divine goodness. It is interesting that the Catechism uses the word “joy” here. What does the master in the parable say to the first two servants? “Well done. … Come, share your master’s joy.”

Sloth is not dryness in prayer, or difficulty in the spiritual life. That is God acting in a way to strengthen our relationship with him. Sloth is a kind of spiritual laziness on my part and is a sin of omission, as opposed to the other capital sins, which are sins of commission. And in fact, the third servant does nothing; he does not even put his master’s money in the bank, which would involve little effort and no creativity.

The result is the opposite of sharing his master’s joy: he has the talent taken away from him, and he is thrown into the darkness outside to wail and grind his teeth.

The Church gives us a foil to sloth in the first reading. The “worthy” wife is not idle. “She obtains wool and flax/ and works with loving hands./ She puts her hands to the distaff,/ and her fingers ply the spindle./ She reaches out her hands to the poor,/ and extends her arms to the needy.”

Various writers have commented on the presence of sloth in the modern world. Karl Barth, the great Protestant theologian, thought that sloth was the distinctive sin of our time, pointing out that modern man has time and energy for earthly things, but little for spiritual things. Pope Benedict XVI is well known for his comments on the “dictatorship of relativism,” among other things the thought that one religion is as good as another, that you can think what you think and I can think what I think, a disposition that leaves us spiritually listless, indifferent and uncaring.

What is the antidote to sloth? If sloth, or acedia, is a kind of spiritual depression brought on by “lax ascetical practice, decreasing vigilance, and carelessness of heart,” (CCC 2733), the antidote is fairly straightforward: to do our spiritual practices and think often about what God has done for us to gin up gratitude and a desire to return God’s love. And it would seem particularly antidotal to ask ourselves these questions: What gifts (talents) has God given me, and (how) am I using them?

The lesson of the Scriptures today is clear: “For to everyone who has [and uses], more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not [and does not use], even what he has will be taken away.”

Let us discover and use our spiritual gifts, that we may one day share together in our Master’s joy.

Father Stephen Bankemper is pastor, St. Catherine of Siena Parish, Ft. Thomas, Ky.

Memento mori

Over the past few months, I have attended funerals for loved ones and prayed for others whose family members have passed away. Some families lost loved ones who lived long, full lives and others who were much younger. Losing our loved ones brings us so much grief but it also reminds us what is really important in life.

VIEWPOINT



Kendra McGuire

As I sat at the bedside of my dying uncle, all of these things came into perspective. We have so little time in this life with one another, and yet we give that time away like we have all the time in the world. For my cousin who passed away unexpectedly in his early forties, we all thought there was plenty of time. But death has a cruel way of reminding us that we do not know how long we have on this earth.

In our current culture our attention is pulled in many directions. We are drawn to material things and thus busy work schedules which leave little time for family. The time we do have for family we have sacrificed for things like travel sports, gaming, TV or just doomscrolling on our personal devices.

We can honor our loved ones by recognizing the things that are most important in life and being more intentional about making them a priority. Instead of spending time writing a long email complaining about something that really isn’t that big of a deal, go spend time with your children. Stop wasting time on social media and call a family member you haven’t spoken to in a while. Instead of worrying about the messy house or outdated kitchen, have family or friends over just for fun. These are truly the moments that will reflect a life well lived and will fill our hearts with love and gratitude when we remember those we lost instead of feelings of regret.

These reflections should also lead us to the internal question of whether or not our souls are prepared for eternal life. I am saddened by the funerals I have attended where the strong faith of a grandmother or grandfather is recognized by all present, but the extended family clearly hasn’t been to church in years. I worry that we heard over and over that God loves us, which he does, but forget that He also gave us the free will to choose a life where we follow Him or one that follows the ways of the world. We must recognize that only one of those paths leads to heaven.

There is a Latin phrase that I have seen recently on Catholic shirts and spiritual items — “memento mori.” Translated into English this means “remember death” or “remember you will die.” At first glance this may seem a bit morbid, but when you remember the family and friends who have passed from this life, it is a reminder that keeps our life ordered toward heaven and our eternal life. If we fail to keep this in perspective, we may miss out on the important moments of life with one other or fail to answer Jesus’s call to truly be His disciple.

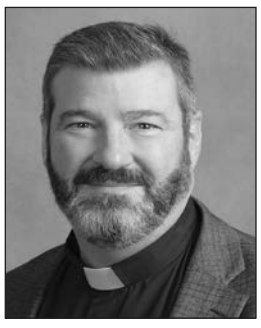
During the month of November, we are called to pray for the dead. We should pray daily for the souls of all those who have gone before us into eternal life. And we should also use this prayer time to reflect on our own lives. Are we living our lives as followers of Jesus or are we following all the things of this world that will lead us away from our families and eternal life? Many times throughout sacred scriptures we are reminded to be ready. This past weekend we heard this again in Jesus’s parable of the ten virgins. So today and every day, let us actually heed Jesus’s words when He says, “Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour.”

Kendra McGuire is superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Covington, Ky.

Both/and: Learning to live the whole mystery of Christ

Often, I must decide between two apparently different choices; do one more chore or take a break with my wife; gas up the car or clean the gutters; watch the action/adventure movie or watch the Bengals lose again. But are they so disparate that I must make a choice. Or is there another option?

BELIEVE, TEACH, PRACTICE



Deacon Scott Folz

Making decisions is hard. Every day we stand between two goods and wish someone would just tell us which one is right. Strong or gentle. Busy or prayerful. Confident or humble. Right or kind. Life keeps handing us pairs and asking us to pick a side. In its chaos, the world likes this side-picking. It feels basic, clean, simple. The Gospel is more demanding. It keeps saying, “choose both.”

Jesus is this unity of apparently conflicting alternatives, the “Great Both/And.” He is priest and victim: the one who offers the sacrifice and who is the sacrifice. He is fully God and fully man. Lion and lamb. King and servant. Judge and advocate. The Word who is also flesh. Split and separate any of these and you no longer have the Christ of Scripture. This is not a puzzle for theologians to decipher; it is a way of life for all of us.

Either/or thinking is efficient. It cuts away whatever feels extra. It also leaves half the Gospel on the table and makes us smaller. If we choose only strength, we hide our need. If we choose only weakness, we refuse the gifts God gave us. If we choose only justice, we become harsh. If we choose only mercy, we become vague. If we choose only prayer, we neglect our neighbor. If we choose only action, we slowly become empty, exhausting ourselves. Christ does not ask us to become half-human to become holy. He asks us to bring our whole selves into communion with him — the messy parts, the unfinished parts, and the desire for holiness too.

This is the pattern of salvation from beginning to end. God is high above all things, and nearer than our breath. He commands the mountains and the seas with a roar, and he guides us with a whisper. The kingdom is already among us, and not yet complete. We are sinners and, by his grace, saints in the making. We lose our life and find it. We die with Christ, and rise with him. Mary is virgin and mother. Jesus calls Peter the rock and Satan. The Church is a visible people and the hidden Body of Christ. Bread remains bread to the senses and becomes the Body of Christ in the sacrament. These are not ties we settle by splitting the difference; we must hold them together, or they stop being true.

Living both/and in Christ is not vagueness but fidelity to the person our minds cannot make smaller or simpler. It looks like this:

Pray and act: Sit with the Lord (preferably first). Then keep the appointment, make the call, do the work. Prayer without love grows isolated. Work without prayer grows brittle.

Tell the truth and stay kind: Charity that will not name what is wrong is not charity. Truth that will not love the

(Continued on page 13)

Sacred Heart of Jesus Lay Carmelite Community celebrate 10 years

Diana Henke
Contributor

The Sacred Heart of Jesus Lay Carmelite Community recently celebrated its 10 year anniversary. Members aspire to deepen their relationship with Christ through the spirituality and traditions of the Carmelite Rule of St. Albert of Jerusalem. The community meets on the third Saturday of each month following the 8 a.m. Mass at St. Henry Catholic Church in Erlanger.

At the heart of Carmelite spirituality is a desire to grow closer to God through prayer, contemplation and service. Carmelites place particular emphasis on interior, personal prayer — quietly placing themselves in God's presence, listening to him and growing in friendship with him.

Carmelite spirituality also has a deep devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, honored especially as Our Lady of Mount Carmel. The prophet Elijah, whose life was marked by prayer and zeal for God, is honored as a spiritual father and model of the Carmelite tradition.

The Carmelite tradition traces its beginnings to the late 12th and early 13th centuries, when a group of Christian hermits settled on Mount Carmel in the Holy Land. Seeking to live a life devoted to Christ through prayer and contemplation, they received a Rule of Life from St. Albert, Patriarch of Jerusalem, in the early 13th century. That Rule continues to provide the spiritual foundation for Carmelites today.

Throughout the centuries, the Carmelite family has given the Church many beloved saints, including St. Teresa of Avila, St. John of the Cross, St. Therese of Lisieux and St. Teresa Benedicta of the Cross (Edith Stein). Their writings and lives continue to teach Christians about prayer, trust in God and the journey toward a deeper union with him.



The Sacred Heart of Jesus Lay Carmelite Community recently celebrated its 10 year anniversary.

Lay Carmelites are members of the Third Order of Carmel. While living their ordinary lives in the world — with their families, occupations and responsibilities — they seek to live the Gospel according to Carmelite spirituality. Through prayer, community and service, they strive to bring the contemplative spirit of Carmel into their homes, parishes and daily lives.

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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.

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.

St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs, will be hosting a Breaking Bread community dinner, Nov. 15, 6–6:30 p.m., in Noll Hall. The dinner will feature a Thanksgiving-style turkey dinner. The community dinners are open to the public. Volunteers can contact the parish office at (859) 341-6609 for information.

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.

"Recognizing and Processing Trauma" a webinar for survivors and those who care for them, Nov. 23, 6:30–8 p.m., CDT. Contemporary trauma research increasingly suggests that trauma resides in the body. What does that actually mean? What can be done to process the trauma? Father Derek Sakowski, a priest for the Diocese of La Crosse, will share some of the lessons and practical tools that he's learned on his own journey of healing and his accompaniment of others. Sponsored by the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, visit https://archspm-org.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_-47ehkFCTwCSTAc-P7Xovw#/registration to register.

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/



Learning's a blast

First and second grade students at Prince of Peace School, Covington, engaged in learning project by reading the book, "My Mouth is a Volcano." After discussing the lessons in the book, students made their own volcanoes erupt.

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.

New scholarship tax credit could expand access to Catholic schools, say education leaders

Kimberley Heatherington
OSV News

The Federal Scholarship Tax Credit, or "Education Freedom Tax Credit" — a federal tax credit for donations to 501(c)(3) public charities providing scholarships to elementary or secondary school pupils — threw a proverbial lifeline to Catholic schools following its passage into law July 4, 2025.

A nationwide network of U.S. Catholic parochial schools once served about 5.6 million students — during the 1964-65 school year. But over the next 60 years, enrollment in those schools plummeted 70 percent — to currently fewer than 1.7 million students.

The scholarship tax credit provision — which becomes effective Jan. 1 — could eventually lead to increased contributions to Catholic nonprofits that grant scholarships for K-12 students. The contributions could in turn increase the number of scholarships that can be offered — and thereby hopefully expand access to, and enrollment in, Catholic schools.

But will it work?

"Certainly, we're hopeful that it will have an impact on enrollment," Sister Dale McDonald, a member of the Sisters of the Presentation of the Virgin Mary and vice president of public policy for the National Catholic Educational Association, told OSV News.

"The big challenge is, how much money can the SGOs (scholarship granting organizations) raise to be able to have something to give in scholarship aid?" Sister Dale said. "For some populations, it has to be large enough that it would make it possible for them to enter. If the question is $5,000 or $12,000 — and you only get $1,200 — that may not be enough to make a difference," she explained. "It has to be a substantial scholarship for people of very low income."

During 2025-2026, the NCEA recorded 6.6 percent of Catholic school students received Title I services. Title I is a major U.S. federal education program under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that provides supplemental funding to schools serving high numbers or percentages of children from low-income families. Another 14.2 percent of Catholic school students are eligible for a free or reduced-cost lunch.

"People of modest income can also apply," continued Sister Dale, "so they certainly could be helped, and maybe a mother doesn't have to work another job and a father doesn't have to work two jobs, if they can get $1,200 or $1,400. It all depends on the amount of money the scholarship organizations raise, and then the way in which they set up their own priorities for how they will administer applications."

The U.S. Treasury Department estimates approximately 95 percent of American children live in households that meet the income limit for the scholarship tax credit.

Shawn Peterson cautions that increased Catholic school enrollment won't happen overnight. The president of Catholic Education Partners, which works nationally to help families access Catholic schooling, Peterson is also chairman and co-founder of Reficio, now known as the American Catholic Education Fund, the largest Catholic SGO in America.



OSV News photo/Bob Roller

Fifth-grader Isabella Lara Torres works on a problem during math class at Sacred Heart Grade School in Prescott, Ariz., Jan. 20, 2026.

"It's going to take some time," Peterson said. "And it's not on Day 1 — you're not going to flip a switch and it's going to be magically all different than it was the day before. But as we've seen with state programs — once you get them up and running and people are used to them — you get a lot of giving. The beauty about this is — because it's a national program — there's going to be potential for billions of dollars to be raised."

The American Catholic Education Fund is partnering with all the dioceses in Texas, Missouri, South Dakota, South Carolina and Alaska, as well as dioceses in Montana, Oklahoma, Illinois, and the nation's oldest, the Archdiocese of Baltimore. The Personal Ordinariate of the Chair of St. Peter, one of three Catholic dioceses with Anglican heritage, is also included. The Diocese of Covington is partnering with American Goal, modeled after the nationally recognized GOAL Scholarship Program in Georgia, which has successfully administered scholarship tax credit programs for more than 18 years.

For parents wondering how the scholarship tax credit works, Peterson offered OSV News a brief review.

"It's for anyone that owes any kind of federal income tax. It is indeed a credit, so it's dollar for dollar," he said. "It's up to $1,700 a year for individuals, and $3,400 for married couples filing jointly."

A tax credit reduces federal income tax dollar for dollar, unlike a deduction, which reduces taxable income.

"Parents can designate a school where their money can go — any donor can — but you cannot designate a child," Peterson said. "So grandma and grandpa can't give $3,400 and say, 'I want this to go to Bobby or to Julie as a scholarship.'"

"But," Peterson explained, "how it does translate into that is, you can choose a school or you can choose a diocese if you want. ... Down to that granular level, parents could give money — and then they're giving it toward their school, and their child's school is going to benefit from those funds. The more funds that come in," he added, "the more that school is going to have scholarships to give out. You just cannot earmark a child."

And can donors be certain their contributions will be used for a scholarship?

"It is a scholarship program, so schools do need to use these funds for that," confirmed Peterson. "A scholarship will go to a child; these funds will find their way to a child."

Peterson is quite optimistic concerning the possible success of the Federal Scholarship Tax Credit.

"This is going to be transformative for Catholic education across the country," he predicted. "And there's some states that have opted in that don't have state programs, like Kentucky and New York. So New York and Kentucky, for example — this is going to be an opportunity for New Yorkers and Kentuckians o experience school choice."

On Oct. 9, New York Gov. Kathy Hochul, who is Catholic, announced New York state would opt into the scholarship tax credit program, a move that could — despite opposition from the powerful public school teachers' union — benefit more than 2.7 million New York public, parochial and private school students.

"We know there are families who want this for their children but have not always had the financial means to make it possible," Sister Mary Grace Walsh, an Apostle of the Sacred Heart of Jesus and superintendent of schools in the Archdiocese of New York, told OSV News in an e-mail. "This program may help open that door."

During the 2025-2026 academic year, the Archdiocese of New York experienced four elementary school closures, one secondary school closure, and two campus consolidations.

"The FSTC may help more families choose a Catholic education, and give our schools greater opportunities to meet the needs of their students," she said. "We cannot predict exactly what this will mean for individual schools, but I believe it gives us another reason to look ahead with hope."

Still, Sister Mary Grace — like Peterson and Sister Dale — is encouraged.

"What gives me great hope is the possibility of reaching families who may have always wanted a Catholic education for their students but did not think it was possible because of the cost," she said. "We have an opportunity to say yes to more students — and to help them grow in faith, discover their potential, and know that they are loved."

The Messenger contributed to this article.



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‘We are all impacted by AI but nobody’s listening’ to one another, cardinal warns at conference



Dr. Jack Rudnick (standing), professor at Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, Ky., contributed to the opportunities, challenges, and progress being made in higher education at the Builders AI Forum, Nov. 5–6, 2026, in Rome.

Isabella Reed

Catholic News Agency — Vatican Bureau

An annual forum on artificial intelligence held in Rome aimed to foster a new interdisciplinary community dedicated to supporting the development of AI products that serve the Church’s mission.

The Builders AI Forum, held Nov. 5–6 at the Pontifical Gregorian University, was centered on Pope Leo XIV’s encyclical “Magnifica Humanitas” and brought together companies leading in Catholic AI, venture capital, and angel investors as well as prominent AI thought leaders and researchers. Dr. John (Jack) Rudnick, professor at Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, Ky., was among the participants.

In his opening remarks, Cardinal Michael Czerny, a founder of the Vatican’s inter-dicastery commission on artificial intelligence, drew on his work with the commission to remind participants that we “cannot treat learning as an isolated, transactional process but rather a communal, dialogue form.” He went on to say that “we are all impacted by AI but nobody’s listening [to one another].”

Vincent Higgins, CEO of the Builders AI Forum, said the event aims to cover four areas: AI in evangelization, in healthcare, in education, and in building and scaling AI for responsible development in creating critical safeguards online.

The prefect of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Communication, Maria Montserrat “Montse” Alvarado, echoed the importance of collaboration — not only with those in the AI community — but also with the Holy Father. She asked the forum participants to ask themselves, “Who are we supposed to be as we develop and shape this technology?”, reminding them that they must not lose their interdependence but “leverage the network through the people in this room.”

Over the course of the two-day summit, religious and industry leaders, as well as policy advocates, gave testimonies reflecting what was being discussed in the workshop groups.

One participant was Megan Garcia, who tragically lost her son, Sewell, by suicide after forming a romantic attachment with a chatbot. She told EWTN News the primary message she wants to advocate for is accountability — “Who is responsible when AI hurts a child?”

To make AI chatbots safe for children in the future, Garcia said that companies need to partake in third-party release testing and make sure that they cannot release, retain, or sell children’s data. Speaking through her personal experience, Garcia highlighted that any policy that is designed to protect children against the dangers of AI would absolutely need to include a measure of accountability.

Repeated many times over the conference, many participants said AI in Catholic schools needs to be kept in line with our Church systems, teaching, and philosophies. Families are operating in their own bubbles, but they need to start having a larger conversation with the community so everyone can be in tune with what is available for families and what should be censored, people at the forum argued.

Speaking on the importance of aligning AI with Catholic morals and beliefs, Matthew Sanders, CEO of Longbeard, a company that organizes the Builders AI Forum, told EWTN News: “AI when it is designed today is designed to align with a billion people, which is an impossible task.”

Thomas More University’s, Dr. Rudnick, said that a key take away was a simple message — “Just Build: Build, Pilot, Improve, Iterate.”

“This was not about pushing to use technology without any safeguards. It was about putting aside the theory and starting to find solutions that have been considered ethically,” Dr. Rudnick said. “With our team … a valuable lesson that was shared is that we do not need to have all the answers to start using AI responsibly. We can start with small uses of AI (build), release for progress (pilot), learn and improve (refine and iterate).”

A common theme through every workshop group, especially among AI entrepreneurs, was the need to train their own models by making sure they have access to all the right information. This has been a main focus for Longbeard, particularly its product, Magisterium AI, which Bishop Stephen Wang of the Diocese of Arundel and Brighton in England mentioned when speaking about priestly formation and AI.

“The reality is that so many people are discovering the faith or seeking answers to their questions through the internet, through AI… this is the starting point,” Wang said in comments to EWTN News, noting the importance of using AI as a tool.

Through his experience at the Venerable English College in Rome, Wang reflected that young men coming into seminary are already immersed in AI, so it is important to give them the tools for discernment. The process of priestly formation is very holistic, and it is important to acknowledge the presence and utility of AI in this formation, he said.

According to in-house statistics by Magisterium AI and Hallow, their AI tools have helped bring people to the faith and into the Church. Erich Kerekes, CEO and founder of the Hallow app, told EWTN News that “prayer is fundamentally a relationship… coming before God, bringing your needs before him… that is something AI will never be able to come up with.” Alvarado reiterated this notion, saying: “The message can’t be communicated by AI. It s communicated through AI. AI is not a person, AI is a tool.”

“The first thing AI builders need to hear from the Church is that [we’re] listening… if they feel accompanied, we’ll find a way together,” said Czerny, as Sanders said builders should “start from the world and what you want to build and work backwards.”

Jeffrey Quesnelle, co-founder and CTO of Nous Research, said in comments to EWTN News that “humans in our messiness and our incompleteness are a source of friction in a lot of instances in life.” Ultimately, he added, “AI should make you better today than yesterday, better tomorrow than today.”

The Messenger contributed to this article. In an upcoming issue, the Messenger will feature more from Dr. John Rudnick on his participation at the AI Builders Forum.

In Pope Francis' homeland, Pope Leo carries forward a legacy of prioritizing the poor



Mirta Franco Godoy, a longtime waste picker, stands among bales of recyclable plastic beneath a banner featuring Pope Francis at the Nodo Fiorito recycling facility in Lomas de Zamora, Buenos Aires province, Argentina, Nov. 9, 2026.

Josephine Peterson
Catholic News Service

With seven mouths to feed, Mirta Franco Godoy knew she had to find work fast.

In 2001, Argentina's economy came crashing down amid mounting public debt, economic instability and a run on the country's banks.

Her family had previously managed to get by with odd jobs, including tailoring and seamstress work. But as the economic crisis deepened, those earnings were no longer enough.

Desperate to make ends meet, many Argentines began sifting through trash, collecting cardboard and other recyclable materials to sell to companies. Known as "cartoneros," or waste pickers, they became part of a growing informal economy. At the time, Argentina had no widespread municipal system for separating recyclable materials from ordinary trash, instead sending most waste to landfills.

"We started collecting cardboard because we were struggling to make ends meet," Godoy told Catholic News Service in a Nov. 9 interview.

During her first year as a waste picker, Godoy recalled preparing a large pot of food for people living on the streets when Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio, then-archbishop of Buenos Aires and the future Pope Francis, appeared.

As she began lifting the heavy, hot pot to distribute the food, Cardinal Bergoglio intervened.

"He wanted to carry the pot, but we wouldn't let him," she said. "But he insisted that we do it together."

Argentina gave the Catholic Church its first Latin American pope but never welcomed him home during his 12-year pontificate. Now Pope Leo XIV has come to a country where Pope Francis' memory remains a source of both pride and political controversy, retracing his predecessor's footsteps while advancing his vision of a Church close to the poor.

Throughout his visit, Pope Leo's itinerary has been closely connected to Pope Francis' years in Argentina, including stops at Buenos Aires Cathedral, where Cardinal Bergoglio served as archbishop from 1998 until his election as pope in 2013, and the Pequeño Cottolengo Don Orione de Claypole, a charitable institution associated with his ministry.

At the Catholic University of Argentina, where the Argentine pope once served as grand chancellor, Pope Leo addressed workers, business leaders, trade unions and popular movements Nov. 9, emphasizing the dignity of work and the responsibility of governments and businesses to protect vulnerable workers.

He specifically mentioned waste pickers, farmers and artisans as examples of grassroots movements that organize themselves to address economic hardship, recalling Pope Francis' longstanding support for such workers.

Pope Leo said those movements advocate the three principles Pope Francis frequently identified as essential to social justice: "tierra, techo y trabajo" — land, housing and work.

The pope emphasized that economic activity must serve human dignity rather than reduce workers to their productivity, drawing on the social teachings of both Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIII.

He also defended the role of workers' associations and trade unions in protecting people excluded from formal employment, calling on public authorities to promote stable policies that foster employment and social inclusion.

For waste pickers like Godoy, organizing collectively transformed what began as a means of survival into a movement seeking recognition, labor protections and a greater voice in Argentine society.

Initially, waste pickers faced resistance, particularly from police, but grassroots organizing eventually helped them establish cooperatives and join a union of informal workers.

Under previous government programs, some received a supplemental payment equivalent to half the minimum wage, while cooperatives gained access to spaces where workers could sort cardboard, plastic and glass for sale to larger companies.

There are now approximately 6,000 waste pickers in Buenos Aires, Godoy said.

One of the movement's leaders, Sergio Sanchez, was invited to Rome for Pope Francis' inaugural Mass in 2013 and subsequently participated in dialogues with Vatican officials and popular movements on social inclusion and labor rights.

Pope Leo's itinerary reflected his predecessor's longstanding relationship with the poor and marginalized in Buenos Aires, where he was known for traveling by public transportation and personally engaging with people living in poverty.

Marian Father Diego Maximino, an Argentine priest now based in Washington, said Cardinal Bergoglio was deeply involved in the daily lives of ordinary Argentines.

Although some disagreed with his political positions and theological approach, Father Maximino said Pope Francis' commitment to mercy, particularly toward the poor, was widely recognized.

"He was like a prophet," the priest told CNS in an Oct. 22 interview by phone.

Yet Pope Francis' willingness to challenge political leaders and established interests also contributed to his complicated relationship with his homeland.

Argentina's last papal visit was in 1987, when St. John Paul II visited for the second time.

David Lantigua, an associate professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame who specializes in Latin American Christianity, said Pope Francis knew how easily the Church could become entangled in Argentine politics and may have feared a visit would be interpreted as an endorsement of a particular political administration.

"I think it was just too close to home. I think he probably did have the intention of going back," Lantigua told CNS Oct. 30, adding that Pope Francis became more explicit



CNS photos/Lola Gomez

Pope Leo XIV greets the faithful from the popemobile upon arriving at the Monumento de los Españoles in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Nov. 9, 2026, before celebrating Mass.

about that desire toward the end of his life.

While Pope Francis was frequently outspoken in his criticism of economic and political systems, Pope Leo has largely advanced similar concerns through an emphasis on dialogue, social cohesion and institutional responsibility to protect the human dignity of all people.

Addressing President Javier Milei, government authorities, civil society leaders and diplomats Nov. 8, Pope Leo called for the protection of democratic institutions and urged public officials to exercise power in service of the common good.

"Democracy, then, is also a part of Argentina's heritage that needs to be safeguarded," he said, emphasizing the importance of listening to people with opposing views and seeking agreement.

He also stressed that political authority carries an obligation to promote the well-being of all citizens, including those struggling to support their families despite working.

Pope Leo's remarks came as waste pickers and other informal workers continued to face economic uncertainty under Milei's administration. The president, who was elected in 2023, has been categorized by international media as a far-right politician.

Godoy said government payments supporting waste pickers had disappeared, along with funding for improvements in the impoverished neighborhoods where many of them live.

"Everything has gone backwards," she said.

The pope did not directly address those claims, but in his meeting with workers the following day, he argued that neither governments nor corporations should replace grassroots initiatives, but should instead support and strengthen them.

His message echoed Pope Francis' longstanding defense of popular movements and their role in advancing social justice.

Throughout his Argentina visit, Pope Leo repeatedly invoked his predecessor's teachings on poverty, human dignity and the Church's responsibility toward marginalized communities.

During his four days in the country, Pope Leo drew immense crowds, with an estimated 2.5 million people attending his Nov. 9 Mass, another 1 million gathering for a prayer vigil in Buenos Aires Nov. 10, and more than 2 million at his Nov. 11 Mass outside the Basilica of Our Lady of Luján, according to local estimates.

At a Nov. 10 Mass in Córdoba where an estimated 650,000 people attended, Pope Leo again recalled Pope Francis' insistence that the poor need not only material assistance but also the love and spiritual care of the Church.

In a meeting with clergy Nov. 10, Pope Leo emphasized the need to provide spiritual care to the poor, a priority his predecessor had championed as archbishop through his support for the "curas villeros," that is, priests who live and minister in Buenos Aires' impoverished settlements.

Earlier, during a Nov. 9 visit to the Pequeño Cottolengo Don Orione de Claypole, which serves people with disabilities and other needs, Pope Leo emphasized the inherent dignity of every human life.

"Today I would like to affirm that your lives are not a burden on society," he said. "A nation's progress is also measured by how it welcomes all people with disabilities and particular needs."

Lantigua said Pope Francis' emphasis on the poor reflected a broader transformation of the Latin American Church following the Second Vatican Council, when bishops increasingly emphasized pastoral ministry, social justice and the Church's responsibility toward marginalized communities.

"You can't villainize Francis for caring for the poor. He is the pope after all," Lantigua said. He sees Pope Leo as continuing that mission while placing particular emphasis on unity and avoiding the divisions that characterized parts of Pope Francis' pontificate.

"Unity is going to be found in proximity to Christ, and where do we know we can find Christ? In the poor," Lantigua said.

For many Argentines, Pope Francis' legacy remains deeply personal even as his relationship with the country's politics continues to provoke debate.

Marta Ramos, speaking to CNS Nov. 8 among crowds gathered to welcome Pope Leo in Buenos Aires, said the enthusiasm surrounding Pope Francis' election eventually became complicated as political groups sought to appropriate his words and actions.

"I think that's why he didn't come here, so as not to divide this country even further," she said.

Ramos said she believes Pope Leo is following a similar path, but with a different temperament.

"I think he's very reserved. You have to listen to him," she said. "He's very profound, but he's not as expressive as the other popes."

Meanwhile, the Argentine Church continues some of the pastoral traditions Cardinal Bergoglio established, including an annual outdoor Mass in Buenos Aires' Plaza Constitución dedicated to waste pickers and other marginalized workers.

Although Pope Francis never returned to Argentina as pope, his successor has brought his message back to the country where much of it first took shape.

With two Holy See flags flying in front of the Casa Rosada, Argentina's presidential offices, Rosa González told CNS that Pope Leo's visit offered hope for greater unity in a country marked by political divisions.

"I believe Francis left a great legacy, but I think Leo's new dawn awakens in us another chapter of the papacy," she said.

Turning 400, the 'new' St. Peter's Basilica

(Continued from page 16)

have seen it as Abercius of Hierapolis did. It was a brick wall painted red, with marble altars shoved into it, on a hillside. So I don't know that it would have been one of the top 10 Instagram worthy things for people to see.

Then it was enclosed into a basilica by Constantine (in the fourth century, with that structure also known as Old St. Peter's Basilica). You can go down into the crypt and see the remains of that basilica.

Now, after about 1,000 years, the basilica began to cede (to gravity). So you can imagine pilgrims walking up and seeing the church listing to its side, with two-by-fours holding it up in the back. It was probably not a great image for the Church.

The striking thing, the really shocking thing, was the decision (by Pope Julius II) to tear down that church. That's the kind of question you and I would have been discussing, if we'd done this interview in 1506: "Do you really think it was a good idea?" My hair would probably be on fire.

It was a remarkable vision that Pope Julius II had to allow (architect Donato) Bramante to build a new church, preserving exactly the site of St. Peter's tomb. You can see the remnants of the story in the present basilica. And you can see that always, at the core, no matter what happens, there's always the tomb of St. Peter.

The new church by Bramante was intended to show that Christianity — at the time 1,500 years old — could produce things as beautiful as those made by the ancient Romans, who had a run of 1,250 years. In tearing down the old church, Bramante earned himself the nickname "Maestro Ruinante," or the "Master of Ruin," and then he died without leaving instructions on how to finish the new church. So then we have a Reformation, a church with just a couple of pews, and Peter's tomb.

And then out of the ashes of that comes Michelangelo, who produces that extraordinary dome, which to this day is the landmark of Rome. He gave the last 19 years of his love for, in his own words, "the glory of God, the honor of St. Peter and the salvation of my own soul."

OSV News: Which of the recent upgrades to St. Peter's Basilica do you feel has been most important?

Lev: I would say the greatest upgrade, if we could put it that way, was already undertaken the year before by the Knights of Columbus. They were the ones who decided to step in and really begin enhancing Gian Lorenzo Bernini's baldacchino (the ornate marble and gilded wood canopy over the basilica's high altar, which in turn sits over the tomb of St. Peter). They were the ones who funded the restoration of the altar of the Chair (of St. Peter, the second altar in the basilica).

Those beautiful objects are meant to draw our attention to the true purpose of St. Peter's Basilica, which reverences and venerates the tomb of our first pope, the "prince of the apostles," as he's called. So frankly, the 3D multimedia experience, the bistro or coffee shop or whatever it's going to be — those things, I think are very, very secondary to the true function and the true importance of what the basilica needs.

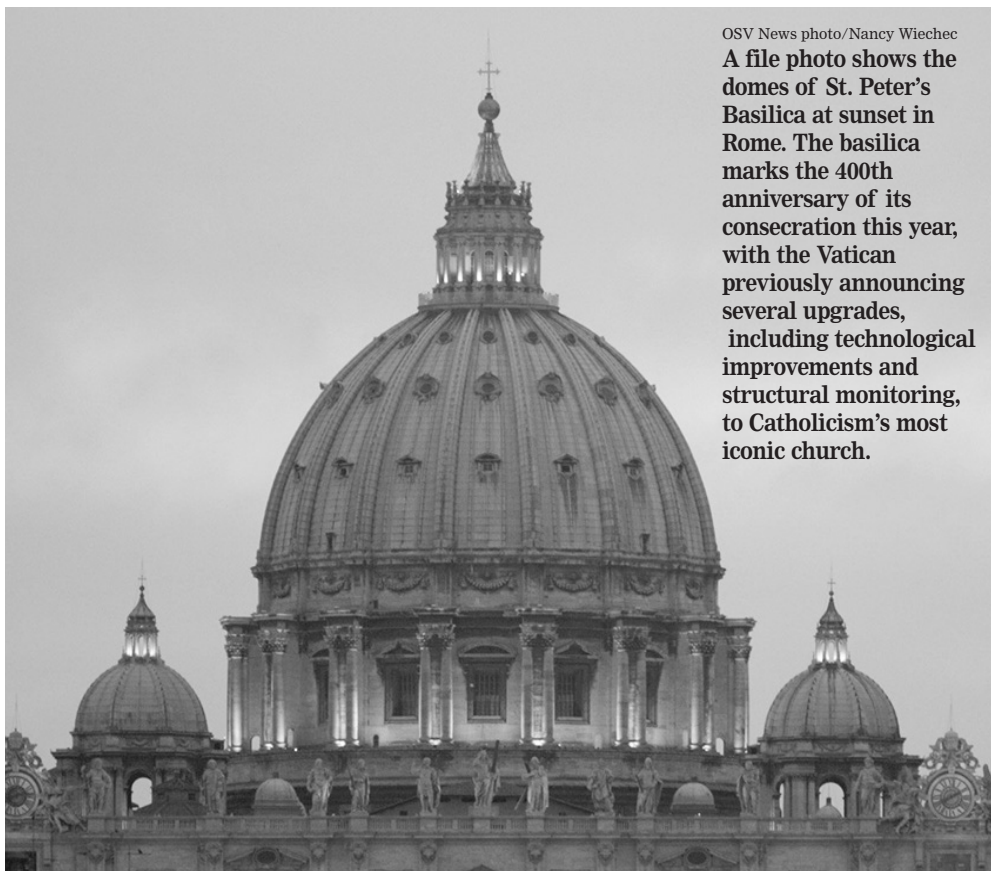
OSV News: St. Peter's Basilica is so many things to so many people: a sacred space, part of humanity's cultural patrimony, a tourist destination. How do you navigate all those realities, particularly from a conservation perspective?

Lev: At the end of the day, you never lose sight of the fact that although perhaps many visitors are there simply for the art or because they have to check something of their list, the reason why (Renaissance sculptor, painter and architect) Michelangelo donated the last 19 years of his life to building the basilica's dome (completed by Giacomo della Porta and Domenico Fontana) — the reason why we have this extraordinary collection of amazing works — is because of St. Peter.

If you really want to understand the core, the seed, of the basilica, it's St. Peter. He was murdered for a crime he didn't commit, and they dug a hole and put his body in it. This was not a very auspicious beginning for Christianity in Rome. But what the Romans didn't realize when they discarded his body like so much garbage is that they really planted a seed.

And the beauty of St. Peter's is the way we see that it has been growing — and not just growing, but flourishing — for 2,000 years. From a moment that looked like utter despair and the end of the Christian community, whose leader had been taken and murdered, we now see this incredible structure.

And it (the basilica) does not speak to vengeance or a sense of getting even with these people. When we walk up to St. Peter's, and we see those arms (Bernini's semicircular colonnades that frame St. Peter's Square), that embrace of St. Peter drawing us all there — it's a compelling story. It doesn't matter where you're from, or what your religion or your background is. You are welcomed into a story where defeat is not the end, and out of ugliness can come beauty, and that story speaks to every human being.



OSV News photo/Nancy Wiechec

A file photo shows the domes of St. Peter's Basilica at sunset in Rome. The basilica marks the 400th anniversary of its consecration this year, with the Vatican previously announcing several upgrades, including technological improvements and structural monitoring, to Catholicism's most iconic church.

OSV News: What are some of the common reactions you've seen as you observe people in St. Peter's Basilica?

Lev: I'll give you two things: One is wonder, one is joy. When you manage to get people through the front door — access to the basilica leaves much to be desired — but when people step through the front door, they are awestruck. The sense of wonder that people experience when they cross that threshold is an amazing, beautiful thing.

On the one hand, you have this sense of the awesomeness of the space, the drama, the gilding, the gigantic statues — and then, when you immediately walk in, you look to the right and see Michelangelo's Pietà (the lifesized marble representation of Mary cradling Jesus following his descent from the cross). There is something so intimate, so personal (about the work); it's not grandiose, not triumphant, but this acceptance of suffering, this sense of hope in the darkness.

Seeing people gathered around that image, I look at their faces; and they all seem to share in that sense of longing, that sense of being able to understand and to enter into the experience of loss, suffering, hope.

The important thing about that work, and about the basilica and everything in it, is a reminder that no matter how dark things get, hope saves.

I love this anniversary of St. Peter's Basilica, because it was such a nightmare building project. It took 120 years, 12 architects, 20 popes. The Protestant Reformation happened while we were building St. Peter's. The cheeky answer to how much the basilica cost is "Germany and England." Half the architects didn't talk to each other. Half the popes couldn't stand each other.

And yet, you walk in that church, and none of that is visible to you. I tend to call St. Peter's Basilica the "game face of the Catholic Church," because it really makes 2,000 years look easy — this amazing sort of providence that works all these moving parts from different ages together.

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Live the whole mystery of Christ

(Continued from page 5)

person in front of us is not yet the truth of Christ. He names the sin and then has mercy on the sinner. So must we — reject the wrong and embrace the person.

Receive mercy and practice repentance: We do not have to pretend we are fine. We also do not have to move into our failures and unpack. Confession holds both honest sorrow and real restoration. We know our weakness, and we still belong to the God who made us in his image.

Bear the cross and expect the resurrection: Christian hope is not denial. It looks at loss, delay, illness and disappointment without lying, and still refuses to let death have the last word. Christ died in order to restore life. We must suffer with Christ if we are to share in the salvation he has won.

Belong to the Church and take personal responsibility: No one follows Jesus as a private venture. No one is excused from conversion because "the Church will handle it." We are all members of the Body of Christ, and each of us is called to holiness in our words and actions, in the unique way that God made us.

Be strong and be small: This is the very biblical definition of meekness. Use the competence God gave you. Then admit you cannot save yourself. That combination looks a lot like holiness.

We are given salvation and sent to serve. Faith without charity never reaches our brothers and sisters. Works without faith never reach the heart. In the Eucharist we are drawn into intimacy with Christ, then dismissed to be Christ in the world.

Deacon Scott Folz is assigned to the Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington.

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- November bulletin: posted Sunday, Nov. 1; due Tuesday, Dec. 1.

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- 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
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French bishops defend Catholic schools amid education unrest

Caroline De Sury
OSV News

France's bishops used their Nov. 3-5 plenary assembly in Lourdes to confront the country's deepening education crisis, as strikes, school blockades and political battles over funding have pushed the issue to the forefront of public debate.

Church leaders said concerns about young people's anxiety and uncertainty prompted a major Catholic education initiative launched in 2025 and continuing through 2028.

"We knew that the younger generations were uncertain and anxious," Bishop Benoît Bertrand of Pontoise, one of two vice presidents of the bishops' conference, emphasized during a press briefing in Lourdes. "But when we launched this initiative a year ago, we did not expect this issue to become so urgent or to take on the scale we are seeing today."

The 80 diocesan directors of Catholic education were present in Lourdes along with the bishop conference's secretary general of Catholic education, layman Guillaume Prévost, who was appointed in 2025.

Catholic schools in France educate over 2 million students in over 7,200 schools, about 17% of the nation's total student population.

The assembly came days after French lawmakers debated a proposal to end government funding for teachers in Catholic schools. The measure was ultimately rejected, averting what Catholic education leaders warned could have triggered widespread school closures and added pressure to an already strained public system.

"We want relationships based on mutual respect among all those involved in education," said Prévost, secretary general of Catholic education. "We believe that the Catholic education system is an asset for the entire country, but we try as much as possible to reach out to everyone, including those who criticize it."

Bishop Matthieu Rougé of Nanterre, president of the bishops' Council for Catholic Education, called for attention to the "search for meaning" expressed by the protests in high schools that rocked France in recent weeks.

"Our country is going through turbulent times, and we are clearly dealing with a deeply wounded society," he said. "There is a great thirst for meaning among our contemporaries, young and old alike, for whom, at times, the inability to find it leads to violent protests."

"We stand in full solidarity with the teachers who are voicing their difficulties today," Prévost added. "We must take care of the adults who take care of the children."

For Prévost, one of the reasons for the crisis in education is "the rise in tensions between school staff and families."

"In this regard, Catholic education is facing fewer difficulties than public education," he noted. "There is a strong tradition and culture of supporting children in Catholic schools that relies on collaboration with families. That is one of their strengths."



OSV News photo/Abdul Saboor, Reuters

Protesters demonstrate in Paris Nov. 5, 2026, as part of a nationwide day of strikes and protests called by French labor unions over wages, the cost of living and public services. High school and university students demanding better school conditions joined the demonstrations.

But Prévost also highlighted the fragility of families themselves. "It is no coincidence that schools are struggling," he said. "The family is the institution that has been most disrupted in recent times. Inevitably, the weakening of families due to conflicts has repercussions at school. And this is not just about single-parent families, disadvantaged families, or families with an immigrant background. A majority of children today experience their parents' separation. We cannot continue to pretend that this is not the case."

Beyond education, the bishops addressed the upcoming presidential election, scheduled spring of 2027, which is expected to be highly tense and polarized. The latest polls suggested that the second round would pit Marine Le Pen's far-right party, the Rassemblement National, against Jean-Luc Mélenchon's far-left party, France Insoumise. Mélenchon clearly implied that if Marine Le Pen wins — as all polls predict for now — riots could destabilize the country.

In Lourdes on Nov. 5, the bishops heard Jérôme Fourquet's analysis of the outlook for the presidential election. As director of the opinions and strategies' department at the prestigious French Institute of Public Opinion, or IFOP, he pointed out that the violent strikes of recent weeks reflect "a culture of rioting" that has become "structural," involving a "total disregard for the rules" in which anger is expressed impulsively and without restraint, against the backdrop of a weakening of state institutions.

In this context, the bishops hope to offer "guidance on discernment" in the coming months.

"Our goal is to ensure that votes are not cast solely on impulse or emotion," Archbishop Vincent Jordy of Tours, also vice president of the bishops' conference, explained.

"We want to contribute to the electoral debate with constructive proposals, rather than stoking the feelings of fear and anger that currently prevail," said Bishop Bruno Valentin of Carcassonne and Narbonne and a member of the bishops' working group on the presidential election. "It is about using words to build, not to fuel a climate of civil war."



National/World

Healthcare ministry join in suit over state's assisted suicide law

ALBANY, N.Y. — New York Archbishop Ronald A. Hicks, the Archdiocese of New York and ArchCare Catholic healthcare ministry on Oct. 29 joined four orders of nuns and other ministries in a lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of New York in Albany, challenging the state's Medical Aid in Dying Act, which took effect Aug. 5. A temporary restraining order currently protects the nuns and ministries from the law; Archbishop Hicks is seeking the same for ArchCare and other Catholic providers. The case, Carmelite Sisters for the Aged and Infirm v. Letitia James, is being handled by Becket, a religious liberty law firm based in Washington. James is the state attorney general. A similar order is in effect in Illinois. The New York law means that those who care for the terminally ill are required "to proactively inform and counsel their patients about their 'option' to kill themselves," which the lawsuit argues "is far broader than anything required by states such as California, Oregon, and Washington." "We refuse to allow New York to force us to harm the very ones we've been called to care for," Archbishop Hicks said in a statement released by Becket.

Trump tells '60 Minutes' immigration policy 'too tough,' open to making a deal with Democrats

WASHINGTON — Days after midterm elections in which Democrats won major congressional gains and flipped several statehouses, President Donald Trump suggested he may be open to a bipartisan immigration deal, acknowledging that his administration's immigration crackdown "is too tough." In a Nov. 8 interview on CBS News' "60 Minutes" with correspondent Ross Douthat in Washington, Trump said he would "love to do something on immigration" and admitted his mass deportation push may have hurt him politically. The interview focused on issues that shaped voters' decisions, including the war with Iran and immigration. Trump said some Democrats had already contacted him about a possible compromise. Catholic advocates for migrants responded with a mix of hope and caution. Dominican Father Brendan Curran, promoter of justice and peace for the Dominicans of Canada and the United States, said he was "delightfully surprised" by Trump's remarks and viewed them as a positive step, while emphasizing that meaningful progress would require serious negotiations. Others were more skeptical. J. Kevin Appleby, senior policy and communications fellow at the Center for Migration Studies, noted that immigration reform has long been difficult to achieve and said he remains cautiously doubtful that a deal will materialize. However, he argued that any agreement should include protections for long-term immigrants with families who have established lives and contributed to U.S. communities.

Over 90 US lawmakers call for Pope Leo to address next Congress

WASHINGTON — Ahead of the Nov. 3 midterm elections, a bipartisan group of more than 90 U.S. lawmakers urged House Speaker Mike Johnson to invite Pope Leo XIV to address Congress, saying the U.S.-born pope's "unique perspective" and "ties to our country" would be "a unifying force" for officials. On Oct. 30, Rep. Mike Thompson, D-Ca., and Rep. Brian Fitzpatrick, R-Pa., spearheaded a letter signed by 91 members of Congress, asking Johnson and House Minority Leader Hakeem Jeffries to formally invite the Chicago-born pope to speak at a joint session of the legislative body in January, when it convenes for its 120th session. "As the first ever American-born Pope, his unique perspective, and ties to our country, would serve as a unifying force for members of Congress," said the lawmakers in their letter. "Following a divisive election, Pope Leo's unifying message of service, compassion for fellow mankind, and the importance of human dignity would be especially timely." The letter attracted media attention following the tumultuous election, which saw Democrats regain robust control of both the House and the Senate. Despite the historic flux in the midterms, at least one lawmaker has continued to express support for the Pope Leo initiative, with Rep. Wesley Bell, D-Mo., posting on X Nov. 6 that he had signed the letter. In their request, the lawmakers said that Pope Leo's proposed "visit would offer a much-needed outlook as we navigate complex foreign and domestic issues."

Church and Poland mourn after mass shooting in Krakow's historic Main Market Square

KRAKOW, Poland — Six people were killed and 15 wounded Nov. 7 when a gunman opened fire at random passersby in Krakow's Main Market Square, turning one of Europe's best-known pilgrimage and tourist destinations into a scene of terror. The attack began shortly after 3 p.m., when a 25-year-old Polish man drove into the square and opened fire with a military-style long gun, according to police. Authorities later recovered additional firearms and ammunition from his vehicle. The suspect, who was wounded and arrested by police, had also allegedly killed his parents and sister before traveling to Krakow. As shock spread across Poland, Cardinal Grzegorz Rys urged residents not to give in to fear or indifference. "We do not want to be, we cannot be, and we are simply unable to be indifferent at a time like this. We want, we need, and we must stand together," he said, calling for prayers and a special Mass at St. Mary's Basilica overlooking the square. Church leaders across the country expressed solidarity with victims and families. "I stand in spiritual solidarity with all those who suffered in this exceptionally brutal act and support them with my prayers," said Archbishop Tadeusz Wojda of Gdansk. European leaders also condemned the attack, while investigators continued searching for a motive. Authorities said the suspect reportedly held radical far-right views.

'Decisive action' needed at upcoming UN climate conference

WASHINGTON — Ahead of the United Nations' annual climate conference, two U.S. Catholic bishops and the leader of a top Catholic aid agency are calling for "decisive action" in protecting humanity and the planet it calls home. "The global Church continues to witness the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor," said Archbishop Shelton J. Fabre of Louisville, Kentucky; Bishop A. Elias Zaidan of the St. Louis-based Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles; and Sean Callahan, president and CEO of Catholic Relief Services. Archbishop Fabre is chair of the U.S. Catholic bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, while Bishop Zaidan heads up the bishops' Committee on International Justice and Peace. Callahan leads the bishops' official overseas humanitarian and development agency. Their joint statement was issued Nov. 6; the U.N.'s COP31 is taking place Nov. 9-20 in Antalya, Turkey, Discussions of curbing global warming, moving away from fossil fuels and funding nations most impacted by climate change must be matched by concrete steps, said the statement. "We ask leaders to leave Antalya having matched the scale of their commitments to the scale of the need — and to remember, in every negotiating room, that behind every number is a family making difficult, daily decisions on survival amidst more extreme, erratic, and frequent climate shocks," they said.

UK honoring Pope Leo indicates new closeness in ties, Church leaders say

OXFORD, England — King Charles III's decision to bestow a rare honorary title on Pope Leo XIV is being seen by some Catholic and Anglican observers as the latest sign of warming ties between the British monarchy and the Vatican after centuries of division. The U.S.-born pope was named a "papal confrater" of St. George's Chapel at Windsor Castle in late October, one year after Charles became a "royal confrater" of Rome's Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls during his 2025 Vatican state visit. Anglican and Catholic leaders praised the gesture as a symbol of growing friendship and spiritual fellowship. "Connections between the royal family and Vatican are still quite new," Timothy Guile, chairman of the English Catholic History Association, told OSV News. The development follows a series of high-profile exchanges since Charles became king in 2022, including Catholic participation in his coronation, a visit to a Jesuit church in London, and meetings with Pope Francis and Pope Leo. While major doctrinal differences remain, especially over issues such as women's ordination and same-sex blessings, some observers say practical cooperation is becoming easier. Analysts expect Charles to continue strengthening ties with Catholics, even as constitutional limits on the monarch's religious role remain in place.

Red Week highlights persecuted Christians, 'fundamental right' of religious freedom

BROOKLYN, N.Y. — The papal charity Aid to the Church in Need is calling on U.S. parishes, schools and families to join in marking Red Week, an international campaign for persecuted Christians. The Nov. 15-22 observance, which ACN expects to draw some 125,000 participants, will combine prayer and events highlighting the global scope of Christian persecution. In late October, ACN released "Persecuted and Forgotten? A Report on Christians Oppressed for Their Faith 2024-26, which found deteriorating conditions for Christians in 55% of 18 countries studied from 2024-2026. Bishop Robert J. Brennan of Brooklyn, N.Y., whose diocese is home to ACN's U.S. offices, said the report showed the "shocking" manner of "just how mainstream — dare I say tolerated — the persecution of Christians is as simply part of the global reality." According to ACN — which has worked since 1947 to support the Church in areas where it is fragile or under attack — religious freedom is "seriously violated" in 62 of 196 countries, with an estimated 220 million Christians "directly exposed to persecution." Overall, "some 413 million Christians live in countries where religious freedom is seriously violated," said ACN's U.S. office in its Oct. 30 press release for Red Week. The office encouraged Americans to light churches in red while also wearing the color, which symbolizes martyrdom, along with praying, hosting talks on persecuted Christians and raising funds for ACN's work. U.S. participants can register for Red Week at https://www.churchinneed.org/redweek/.



Turning 400, the 'new' St. Peter's Basilica shows 'hope saves,' says expert

Gina Christian
OSV News

St. Peter's Basilica marks the 400th anniversary of its consecration this year, with the Vatican previously announcing several upgrades, including technological improvements and structural monitoring, to Catholicism's most iconic church.

Pope Leo XIV will mark the anniversary year with a Nov. 18 Mass. Ahead of the liturgy, OSV News spoke with art historian and author Elizabeth Lev about St. Peter's Basilica as it marks another milestone.

The founder and director of LizLev Tours, Lev has worked as a guide in Rome for more than 25 years and teaches at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas Aquinas, also known as the Angelicum. She has also served as a commissioner of Rome's tourism board and as a consultant for the Vatican Museums.

This interview has been edited for length and clarity.



OSV News photo/Simone Risoluti, Vatican Media

Pope Leo XIV celebrates Mass with the blessing and imposition of the pallium on new metropolitan archbishops on the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul in St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican June 29, 2026. The basilica marks the 400th anniversary of its consecration this year, with the Vatican previously announcing several upgrades, including technological improvements and structural monitoring, to Catholicism's most iconic church.

OSV News: As the basilica is being readied for the future, take us back through time, and describe what the site of St. Peter's tomb once looked like.

Lev: If you had been in, say, the year 190 A.D., you would

(Continued on page 12)

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