November 20, 2026

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MESSENGER

Serving the Diocese of Covington, Kentucky since 1926

Bailey photos









(left) Father Conor Kunath, Rhonda Gruenewald and a parishioner discuss Vocation Ministry at the Nov. 14 training.

(right) Rhonda Gruenewald presents at the training in Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium inside the Diocesan Curia, Covington.

(left) At the training, a table with resources was set up, inspiring ideas on vocation promotion activities.

(right) Forty parishioners representing 21 parishes attended Vocation Ministry training, learning how to promote vocations in their parishes.

Vocations Ministry in the Diocese breathes new life to vocation promotion in parishes

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

Rhonda Gruenewald of Vocation Ministry visited the Diocese, Nov. 14, to share *Hundredfold: A Guide to Parish Vocation Ministry* with 40 lay people, representing 21 parishes. Vocation Ministry is a program started by Ms. Gruenewald to help parishes increase the number of vocations coming from their pews.

What began as an opportunity for Ms. Gruenewald to promote vocations in her own parish, in the Archdiocese of Galveston-Houston, has grown into a system that has been shared with over 15,000 priests and laity across more than 7,000 parishes. And now, Father Conor Kunath, vocations director in the Diocese of Covington, is bringing that system to the Diocese of Covington.

The Vocation Ministry system is "profoundly led by lay people at a fundamental level," said Father Kunath. "The pastor is always in charge," he said, "the parishioners are a direct collaborator. They come up with the idea, they implement the idea, they do all of the legwork."

Ms. Gruenewald emphasized the collaboration between priests and laity that, "when priests and parishioners work together with intention, the culture of the parish begins to change."

The goal is for each parish to establish a vocations ministry committee, filled with faithful laity dedicated to mission of vocations promotion. This committee will then begin basic activates to promote vocations at their parish. Activities like vocations coloring pages at after Mass donuts, a vocations booth at the parish festival, said Father Kunath, "just sprinkle vocation stuff into everything so that talking about vocations and discernment becomes normalized in a parish."

Ms. Gruenewald said, "The most effective starting points are simple and practical: regular prayer for vocations, priests who speak about discernment in homilies and conversations and a small group

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Bishop Iffert accepts recommendation to establish a Catholic Foundation

Laura Keener
Editor

Bishop John Iffert has accepted the recommendation of the Catholic Foundation Commission to establish a Catholic Foundation for the Diocese of Covington. The new foundation is meant to help Catholics plan gifts that support parishes, schools and charitable agencies for years to come.

The bishop said that in reviewing decades of financial data the Commission and its sub-committees determined that the need is clear. In comparison, nonprofit groups, including religious ones, usually get a share of their operating budgets from planned giving. That kind of giving includes gifts made through a person's estate. The Covington diocese has not come close.

"Normally, a not-for-profit, including a religious not-for-profit like the Church, normally eight to 10 percent on average of their operating budget comes from this kind of planned giving," Bishop Iffert said. "Here in the Diocese of Covington, it's been less than one percent."

And, he added that most of what the diocese does receive comes from one source. "Almost all of that, 90 percent or more, is from the estates of our priests, who leave their life savings back to the Church," Bishop Iffert said.

Jim Hess, director of the diocesan Stewardship and Mission Services Office, who helped lead the planning work, said the numbers stood out when the group looked back at the diocese's records.

"When we looked at estate giving and planned-giving across all of our parishes and schools in the diocese as a whole, the numbers were so small compared to national averages and dioceses our size that it was apparent," Mr. Hess said. "It was very clear that we were not doing enough to talk about and promote estate giving and planned-giving as just another aspect of living a life of Christian stewardship."

Johnna Herrmann, co-chair of the Foundation Commission's Governance subcommittee, looked beyond the need and toward the opportunity for success in her support for the foundation.

"One of the most exciting things I've learned is how a well-run Catholic foundation can help position a diocese for long-term success," Mrs. Herrmann said. "Through our research, we've studied best practices and learned from the experiences of other dioceses with established foundations. We've seen how strong stewardship, sound governance processes and well-managed endowments can create lasting support for ministries, education, charitable outreach in surrounding communities and future needs. It's inspiring to see how a foundation can help ensure the Church remains vibrant and responsive for years to come."

Planned giving, and charitable giving in general, come from the Catholic theology of stewardship. "What stewardship is, is really the recognition of gratitude, the recognition that everything that we have is gift," Bishop Iffert said. "Even what you've earned is gift … everything comes to us as gift, and the proper response to a gift like that is to return for the glory of the giver. How do we do that? Well, we contribute our time, our prayer, our finances, we contribute that to the mission of Jesus. That kind of charitable giving is essential for Christians because it's one of the key ways that we express our faith and our gratitude. We each have a need to give, to make a return to God. What our efforts are about is to help people to have an outlet to exercise that (expression)."

Mr. Hess said the group came to see that standing still was not a choice. "Doing nothing is no longer an option because the need is so

(Continued on page 4)

Inaugural Inclusion Week celebration begins December 7, honoring teachers and celebrating inclusion

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

Fire Foundation of Northern Kentucky has been operating in the Diocese of Covington for the last three years, working to bring a culture of inclusion to Catholic education. Their work over these years has yielded a director of inclusive education in the Diocese of Covington's schools office, as well as six partner schools and grants awarded in the sum of $154,600.

Now, it is time to celebrate and bring awareness to this work, said Mike Jacks, director of inclusive education, with Inclusion Week, Dec. 7–11.

Similar to Catholic Schools Week, Inclusion Week "invites administrators, educators, students and families to recognize, celebrate and strengthen our commitment to the unique, God-given dignity of every learner," Mr. Jacks told principals in a letter. The national theme for this week is "Together We Learn," a theme that hits home for Mr. Jacks and school administrators, as the Diocese's formal inclusive education programs are in its infancy.

"We've not done this before," said Mr. Jacks, referring to Inclusion Week, "so we are learning as we go. The theme of learning together fits because nobody knows how to do this exactly."

The goal is to have Inclusion Week be a week to celebrate inclusive education with daily activities that get students engaged. "I ask that every school in the diocese do something every day. It could be something little, like reviewing one of the inclusion saints, it could be something bigger," said Mr. Jacks. "The activities are meant to be meaningful, faith-filled, fun and engaging," he said.

Inclusion Week does not only engage students, but it recognizes those educators who work intentionally to advance the mission of inclusive education, recognizing a select few with the new Inclusion in Action award.

"You can nominate a teacher, a staff member, a cafeteria worker — anybody in the schools that you feel has contributed to inclusion and being an ambassador for inclusion," said Mr. Jacks.

This award, like Inclusion Week, is sponsored by the Catholic Schools Office in partnership with the Fire Foundation of Northern Kentucky and recognizes the hard work of educators and school staff.

"Teachers and administrators rarely get pats on the back, rarely get recognition. This was one of the ways that we could do that," said Mr. Jacks. "I just want people to know that there's amazing things going on, and it is because of our amazing teachers. It's because of administrators who believe in it," he said.

To nominate a teacher or staff member for the Inclusion in Action award go to https://forms.gle/ZaL4x5h6xHWJRikn9 or scan the QR code.

As inclusive education continues to grow in the diocese, Mr. Jacks hopes that Inclusion Week grows with it.

"My hope is that it becomes something that the students look forward to and we can grow it," he said. "I want people to know great things are happening, and if we continue on with this momentum, it's going to be amazing."



Thomas More University leads AI education and innovation with Catholic values

Dr. John (Jack) Rudnick, Jr.
Contributor

Dr. John Rudnick, professor at Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, has participated in both the first and now the second annual Builders AI Forum at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome. Here he shares his experience with Messenger readers and invites them to join the conversation at an upcoming AI Summit in February 2027.

Artificial intelligence is changing how we learn, work, communicate and interact. This was a key theme for the 2026 Builders AI Forum (BAIF), which took place on 5th and 6th November at the Pontifical Gregorian University, Rome, Italy.

I had the privilege of attending as a delegate from the USA for the education and health industry. This was attended by around 250 delegates worldwide. Educators, entrepreneurs, software developers, healthcare professionals, clergy and other leaders came together to discuss AI in an ethical way consistent with the tenets and teachings of the Catholic Church. The importance of Catholics being involved in shaping the future of AI was a foundational theme.

We cannot hide from AI, nor can we just accept everything that comes up. The "Magnifica Humanitas" encyclical anchored many of the discussions. We were able to think about how we can use Catholic values to shape how we develop, govern and use AI. We can look to the Catholic Intellectual Tradition and Catholic Social Teaching to guide us. Using the core values of humanity, solidarity, subsidiarity and the common good, we can decide when we should use AI, how we should govern it and when we should limit it.



Dr. Jack Rudnick, Jr. (left) and Vincent Higgins, CEO, Longbeard at the Builders AI Forum 2026, Rome, Italy.

A positive consequence of the encyclical, as recounted by many at BAIF, is the welcomed resource and interfaith dialogue that "Magnifica Humanitas" has provided. The forum highlighted how we can work with other faiths and those with no faith to work together to ensure we are working towards the truth, humanity and ethical innovation. There is increasing awareness that if we do not use our technology with ethics, there can be unintended consequences.

A key concern raised during the forum was protecting our children, young adults, older adults and vulnerable. AI can create images, voices, videos, and written content which can be very difficult to tell if they are real or not. AI is becoming a personal issue as well as a family issue. We want our children to be educated on proper uses of AI. Parents, grandparents, teachers, clergy and community leaders can all help by helping individuals to know when they are being deceived, how to check the facts, question any dubious information and make their own decisions. Catholic education always focuses on educating the whole person, and in our current world of AI, we need to ensure we are educating individuals to know what is real and what is fake.

A key takeaway from the Builders AI Forum 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. With our team, we worked together in a hackathon to solve real-world problems. 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 from mistakes and improve (refine and iterate).

President Dr. Joseph Chillo is the architect of building this initiative to ensure Thomas More becomes a thought

(Continued on page 16)

Join the AI conversation

"Exploring Pope Leo XIV's *Magnifica Humanitas*"

An evening of reflection on the vision of Pope Leo XIV and explore its relevance for our world today, with Msgr. William Cleves, pastor, Holy Spirit Parish, Newport

Monday, Nov. 30

Bishop Howard Memorial Auditorium

Diocesan Curia, Covington, KY

7 p.m. — Opening Prayer and Program

No preregistration required

Presented by: Intercommunity Sisters Peace and Justice Committee and the Diocese of Covington.

"AI Summit: Through the Lens of Catholic Social Teaching"

Feb. 18–20, Thomas More University

National and local speakers will participate in the planned sessions:

- **Thursday, Feb. 18**, focusing on students and alumni, this will look at how the AI landscape is changing and how we can move from AI literacy to AI fluency.
- **Friday, Feb. 19**, an interactive session for business executives and professionals looking to develop practical AI for their organizations.
- **Saturday, Feb. 20**, focusing on parents, educators, students, parish communities and the public.

Notre Dame Academy student tackles 2026 DPAA theme in Thanksgiving card artwork

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

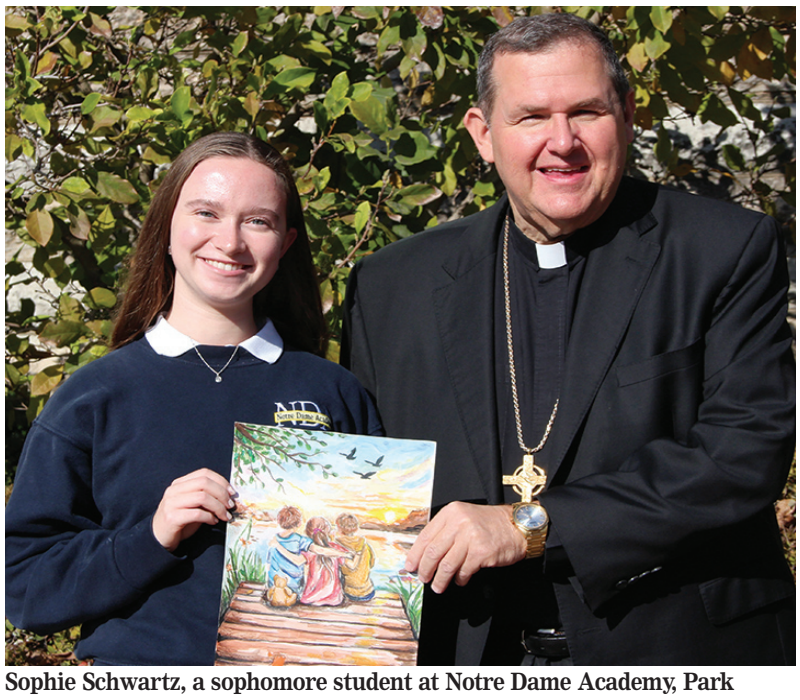
Sophie Schwartz, a sophomore student at Notre Dame Academy, Park Hills, had her artwork chosen from the work of her peers at Notre Dame Academy to decorate the front of Bishop John Iffert's Thanksgiving card this year.

The card, which goes out to donors of the year's Diocesan Parish Annual Appeal (DPAA), features Ms. Schwartz's artwork — which depicts three children sitting together on a pier, overlooking a lake. The mixed media artwork was created via colored pencils, watercolor paints, acrylic paints and paint pens — creating a landscape that follows the 2026 DPAA theme, "Live as Children of Light."

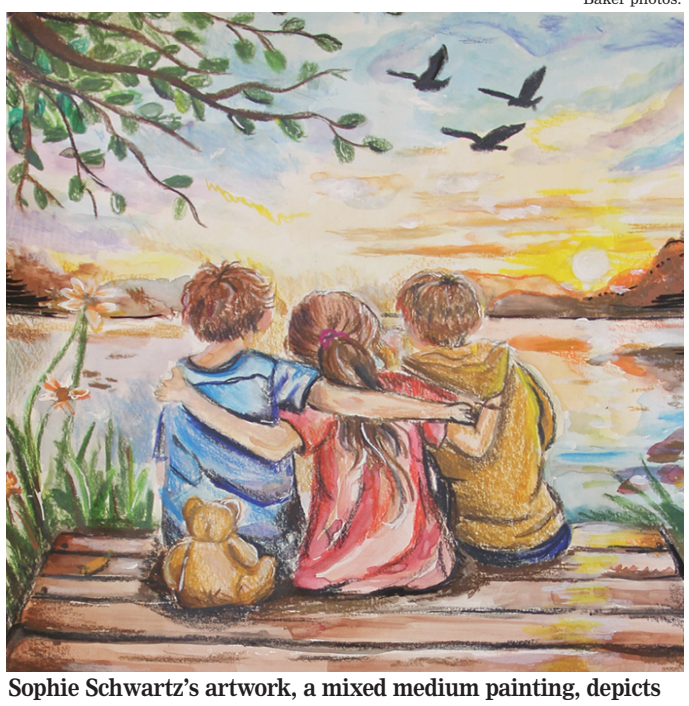
When asked about her concept for the artwork, Ms. Scwartz said that the theme brought to mind the idea of "friendship."

"It's happy," she said, "with a very childlike spirit, which is what I think of when I hear 'children of light'." The depicted figures are intended to represent a group of three friends, with the different mediums working to achieve a colorful but realistic image, according to the artist.

Baker photos:



Sophie Schwartz, a sophomore student at Notre Dame Academy, Park Hills, smiles for a photo with Bishop John Iffert. Ms. Schwartz met Bishop Iffert at the diocesan Curia, Covington, after her artwork was chosen for his Thanksgiving card this year.



Sophie Schwartz's artwork, a mixed medium painting, depicts three friends sitting together. Friendship was a key theme of the work, which was drawn on theme of the 2026 DPAA — "Live as Children of Light."

Workshop on the Second Vatican Council introduces the 'new evangelization,' importance of implementing the council's teachings in the life of the Church

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

More than 60 years after the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s, the Diocese of Covington's Office of Catechesis and Evangelization welcomed the curious of the diocese to a conference, Nov. 14, titled "Proclaiming the Joy and Hope of Christ to the Modern World."

Held at Thomas More University's Ziegler Auditorium, Crestview Hills, the conference welcomed Professor Lucas Pollice, chief mission officer for the Diocese of Colorado Springs, as speaker. The conference, which covered the whole day, explored the Second Vatican Council's vision for evangelization, catechesis, parish life and discipleship.

The conference follows the diocese's pastoral plan, as part of its efforts to improve catechesis among the laity.

Prof. Pollice, in his introduction to the day's conference, said that "200 years from now, Catholics are going to be looking back at this time in the Church as this time of great

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Baker photos

(above, left) A woman lowers her head in prayer as the agenda for the Vatican II Council conference, titled "Proclaiming the Joy and Hope of Christ to the Modern World," began, Nov. 14.

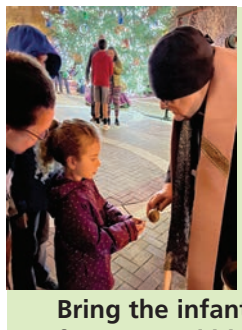
(above, right) Professor Lucas Pollice, chief mission officer for the Diocese of Colorado Springs, was the presenter of the Office of Catechesis and Evangelization's conference on Vatican II, hosted Nov. 14 at Thomas More University, Crestview Hills.



Retirement Fund for Religious National Collection

December 12–13

Collection supports the Retirement Fund for Religious, which addresses the care needs of senior religious brothers and sisters in our diocese and nationwide.



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



GIVE CATHOLIC NKY

NORTHERN KY'S ONLINE DAY OF CATHOLIC GIVING

DECEMBER 1, 2026

Giving Tuesday has returned to the Diocese for its second year, following an impressive year one where nearly $600,000 in funds were raised for Diocesan organizations. This year, 45 organizations have registered to participate, all raising money for upgrades in equipment or aesthetics. To explore organizations projects or to donate on Dec. 1, go to givecatholicnky.org.

Bishop's Schedule

Nov. 20-23
TEC Retreat, Jesuit Spiritual Center, Milford

Nov. 24
Catholic Charities Board meeting, Curia, 1 p.m.

Nov. 24 (continued)
Serra Club priest appreciation dinner, Blessed Sacrament Parish, Ft. Mitchell

Nov. 25-27
Diocesan Curia closed in observance of Thanksgiving

New life to vocation promotion in parishes

(Continued from page 1)

of committed lay people who keep the effort alive."

Father Kunath said that committees are encouraged to "find activities you think would work at your parish and make sense for where you are as a vocations committee, and then you implement them one little thing at a time."

Father Kunath and Ms. Gruenewald first connected in 2021 at a conference for vocations directors. Right away, Father Kunath recognized Vocations Ministry as something unique saying "it was a system, not a product."

Inside her book, *Hundredfold: A Guide to Parish Vocation Ministry,* Ms. Gruenewald includes a list of 67 vocation ministry activities, broken down by phase, category, time of year, preparation time needed, ease and funds needed. Activities such as a spiritual adoption program, a get to know your priest questionnaire, art contest and altar server recognitions, come at no cost. In addition, *Hundredfold: A Guide to Parish Vocation Ministry* explores each of the 67 vocation ministry activities listed, providing practical steps to implement the activities at a parish level.

"People were very energized by the information. She makes it so simple and easy for people to do that," said Father Kunath, "I think people are excited that we can encourage young men to the priesthood."

While Father Kunath initially sought Vocation Ministry to promote religious vocations, the system inherently promotes all vocations the faithful might be called to including the priesthood, religious life and marriage. "It's going to help all vocations across the board over the length of its implementation," he said.

Ms. Gruenewald said, "when vocation promotion is approached intentionally, prayerfully and collaboratively, it changes parish culture. Over time, that culture produces more young people who are open to God's call, whether to the priesthood, consecrated life and holy matrimony."

Father Kunath emphasized that this system is "not an 18-month project … this is the rest of the life of the Diocese" he said. "We're going to need priests for as long as Jesus hasn't come for the second time, and so, if we commit to this, one of our biggest problems is going to be solved so naturally," he said.

"Because God has not stopped calling, the Church must never stop inviting," said Ms. Gruenewald.

Vocations Ministry in the Diocese is "us planting seeds so we can have a rich harvest in the future," said Father Kunath.

Bishop Iffert accepts recommendation to establish a Catholic Foundation

(Continued from page 1)

great," he said. "The opportunities for our parishes and schools are great. We just need to begin the conversation as a diocese."

Mr. Hess said the effort began about a year and a half ago. He and Chris Goddard, the executive director of Catholic Charities Diocese of Covington, started talking about how to spread the word on estate and legacy giving.

"We started having conversations with other dioceses about what they do and what works, and it became very clear that the best structure to promote this kind of giving through was a foundation," Mr. Hess said.

The team then brought in consultants from L'Etoile Development Services to help lead the conversation not only around the establishment of a foundation but also for the strategic planning process for Catholic Charities, Schools and Diocesan governance. Everyone in the diocese was encouraged to take part in the planning.

The Foundation Commission met over five months this spring and summer. Mr. Hess said the group started with 60 or 70 people, and many stayed to the end. Subcommittees were developed to talk about specific needs like data, software and governance.

Bishop Iffert said he chose a wide-open process on purpose. He wanted every voice to have a chance to be heard.

"I really have this fundamental belief that guides me, that everything we need to resolve our problems exists in the community," the bishop said. "God gives us those gifts. So often we look outside our community for answers, and we try to duplicate something from somewhere else, which may or may not work because people are different and places are different."

He said the process is about more than sharing information, it's engagement.

"People should know how their Church functions," Bishop Iffert said. "They should know what we have. They should know how we use it. I wanted to bring those voices in."

Bishop Iffert said that everyone's participation is different and valuable. "I believe there are lots of different ways that people function in this process. Some people will be truly expert and they will bring expertise. Other people will be our solid prayer foundation, and they will be the people who have that very prudent relationship with Christ, and they can apply that to many varieties of situations. Other people may just have an inspiration that they didn't expect, and we don't expect. They might say something that triggers something in the rest of us. It's my fundamental belief that everybody has something to offer, everyone has something to share."

Mr. Hess said, "we really felt that this process warranted getting more people involved," and that the effort has paid off. "It really has been a wonderful journey, and I think has helped bring many people in the diocese along, who maybe didn't initially understand the purpose of why we would establish a foundation. We've been able to meet so many people who have expertise in the different fields we needed advice in."

Mrs. Herrmann, parishioner at St. Barbara Parish, Erlanger, was one of those nearly 70 persons that answered the call to participate on the Foundation Commission. With over 25 years of customer care, consulting and leadership experience working in Human Resources, plus volunteering at St. Elizabeth Medical Center's pastoral care department, Mrs. Herrmann "felt inspired" to help lead the Foundation Commission.

"I was inspired by Bishop Iffert's invitation for the laity to participate in researching the possibility of creating a Catholic Foundation for our diocese," said Mrs. Herrmann. "It was an open invitation to help envision how we can strengthen the Church's mission not only for today, but for generations to come. The opportunity to learn, collaborate with others, and explore what a foundation could mean for our parishes, schools, ministries and communities was something I felt called to support. I appreciate how Bishop Iffert is very intentional about collecting the voices of our people and then prayerfully discerning a path forward based on our input."

Bishop Iffert said he is pleased so far, though he admitted to some nervousness. "I pray every day, help us get this right," he said.

Bishop Iffert said many people hear the word foundation and picture a large pile of money. He said that is not the idea.

"A foundation is really a staff of people who have the time and the expertise to be able to walk with people and to help them identify what they can give, where they want to give it, what the needs of the organization, the parish, the school, the agency that's receiving it are," the bishop said.

He said the foundation will also help donors write agreements that protect their wishes. "They want to know that their gift is secure, and that it's going to have long-term effect, and it's going to be used the way that they hope it will be used," Bishop Iffert said.

Mrs. Herrmann sees the function of a foundation as the safeguard of ministries and a source of unity.

"The foundation exists to serve the entire Diocese of Covington and all the people in our region," she said. "Its mission is to help individuals, families, parishes, schools and ministries create safe, secure and lasting charitable endowments that support the mission and loving work of our Church. Ultimately, the foundation is a way for us to come together as one diocesan family, ensuring that Christ's love continues to be shared through the ministries and outreach that make us His hands and feet throughout our diocese and surrounding communities."

Leaders also hope the foundation can grow to help in other ways. Bishop Iffert said it could support stewardship in parishes and help with future capital campaigns, so that money and know-how stay in the diocese.

The bishop stressed that the foundation is not a rival for gifts. "The phrase that folks use is, you don't give to a foundation, you give through a foundation," he said. "The foundation is not a competitor with these agencies, but really it's about developing a capacity to help our parishes and our schools to do the work that we all know we need to do, and we just don't have anybody who has the time to do it."

Both men said the foundation is not only for wealthy donors. Bishop Iffert said some people who have saved a few hundred thousand dollars might find it hard to pay for legal help on their own.

"We want to make sure that we have the resources to be able to help people first consider where their love is, consider where their hearts are, and then to invest their lives, the resources they've developed throughout their life, in a way that's going to see fulfilled what they hope to encourage," the bishop said.

Mr. Hess agreed. "Everybody needs a will and a plan for their estate," he said. "The foundation is really going to be a resource for every parish and school, making some of these planning tools available to all Catholics in the diocese."

He said that is the group the foundation is meant to serve. "Those individuals who currently don't have a plan, who need help putting one together," Mr. Hess said.

Much work remains to establish the foundation. Bishop Iffert said the foundation will be a separate 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, with its own board of directors, bylaws and founding documents.

"That's the first step, is to begin to create those legal documents that establish this foundation, and then to work out those bylaws that will govern the relationship between me and the foundation board, between the board and the Church," the bishop said. "Then, the work of beginning to identify potential board members, and eventually, looking at identifying initial staff members."

No one has been named to lead the foundation. Bishop Iffert said the board will be responsible for building a staff, with his input. "There will be a board of directors that will have fiduciary responsibility for the foundation," he said.

Mr. Hess said the team is now working with a legal team on those papers. They are also getting ready to apply to the Internal Revenue Service for nonprofit status.

"That can take some time with the IRS, unfortunately, but in the meantime, the foundation will still be able to accept gifts," Mr. Hess said. "The diocese will just accept gifts on behalf of the foundation."

Work also continues on setting up advisory committees and finding board members. A data committee is studying what technology the foundation will need, apart from what the diocese's stewardship office uses now.

While the commission's job is ending, Mr. Hess said the larger job is just starting. "I hope that many of the commission members will continue to be generous with their time and their talents," he said.

As the process moves forward, Mr. Hess said he is eager to share stories from families who have already set up what he calls their Catholic legacy.

"Really beautiful and inspiring stories of faith, in ways that Catholics are remembering their parish or the school that taught their children and are being very thoughtful about their giving and how they want to pass on what God has entrusted them with," he said.

Bishop Iffert thanked the commission members and anyone who has thought about how the Church will be supported in the future. "I'm grateful to anyone who would stop and think about how the Church is supported as we go forward, and how the resources to continue educating children and providing for our parishes can be developed," he said.

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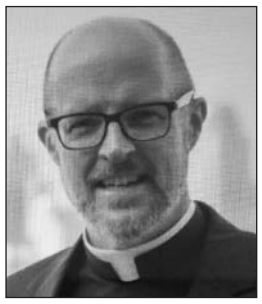
COMMENTARY

Christ the king of love and truth

The readings for the Solemnity of Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe — Cycle A — are: Ezekiel 34:11–12, 15–17, 1 Corinthians 15:20–26, 28 and Matthew 25:31–46.

As our opening collect for the solemnity of Christ the King indicates, we pray for all things to be restored in Christ precisely because of the fragmentation wrought by a society that is rejecting Christ. Tragically, nowhere is this fragmentation more apparent, and even scandalous, than in the community of people who ought to know better, the Church.

GO AND GLORIFY



Father Phillip DeVous

On this solemnity, we pray that Jesus might present to the Heavenly Father "an eternal and universal kingdom, a kingdom of truth and life, a kingdom of holiness and grace, a kingdom of justice, love and peace." Too often, we see that these things which are perfectly united in the person of Jesus Christ, our King, are divided, and even severed, in our King's mystical body, the Church. Confronting this division can be difficult and painful, but surely if we are to receive the unity and peace bestowed on us by the Son of God, we must grapple with the sources of our division and distress.

Peace, of course, is the tranquility of order. For there to be a proper order that is just and loving, there must be truth. So much of our turmoil today has its roots in the separation of truth from love. Beware of those who bandy about the slogan "all you need is love", because all they are going to propose is some version of therapeutic hedonism along the lines of the principalities of the world, the flesh, and the devil, and not the divine charity characteristic of the Kingdom of Christ.

The truth is not hateful nor is it antithetical to love. In Christ the King, we see the perfect unity of incarnate truth and love, and we are asked to bend the knee and surrender the ego. The proposition that truth and love are opposed to each other is a distinctly contemporary error. It is an error manufactured so as to reduce the demands of the Kingdom of Christ and to hollow out the very substance of what it means to be a disciple: one who glories in obedience to the commands of Christ, the King of the universe.

The sundering of truth and love results in our being governed personally and socially by sentiment-strong feelings governed by passions untutored by truth and guided by what is socially contagious. As the philosopher and theologian, Dietrich von Hildebrand observed, when you dethrone truth as the primary category of perception (I want to see truthfully) and the highest end of human life (I want to achieve the highest good), you end up in a situation worse than even that of malevolent lying. Rather, you end up being possessed by fantasy.

When truth is dethroned and divided from love, the fantasies which come to possess us always terminate in idolatry. We fashion in our minds, perhaps even within the consciousness of whole communities, a Jesus who suits my every desire, supports my every whim, and sees spiritual progress in every trendy social contagion and novelty of the age. The vision of this idolatry is always sentimental — a simulacrum of love coupled to a delusional state of perception.

The illusory state of mind brought on by this idolatry is dangerous and disintegrating. The sentimentalism resulting from the separation of love and truth often turns murderous. To paraphrase the novelists Flannery O'Connor and Walker Percy — sentiment leads to the abortion clinic, to euthanasia, to the abuse of the migrant, to the exploitation of the poor, and the social sanctioning of child mutilation along with other moral horrors which threaten to terminally swamp our society.

Truth is the correspondence of the mind to reality, and love is a total gift of self to God with one's whole being and loving our neighbor according to the pattern of Christ's own way, truth, and life. Considering this, we can see that our liturgical contemplation of the kingship of Christ is a clarion call to conversion — to a total unity of truth and love through him, and with him and in him within our persons and throughout our polity.

Long live Christ the King!

Father Phillip W. DeVous is the pastor of St. Charles Parish, Flemingsburg and St. Rose of Lima Parish, Mayslick, Ky.

Autumn leaves

The seasons come and go. Living in a weather zone that has four seasons with distinct types of weather has a particular kind of joy.

MUSINGS



Sister Fidelis Tracy, C.D.P.

Autumn brings on a tendency for reflection. Days get shorter and there is more darkness, inviting quiet and the call to ponder. Each season has its own beauty and the invitation to reflect on some aspects of life. Spring's glorious green leads to thoughts about the wonder of new life. During the winter months, the silent falling of the snow that covers the ground with pure whiteness calls for quiet reflection.

Autumn reminds us that new life can only come when we can let go of something that we are holding and that the letting go is beautiful. Autumn emphasizes for us that the beauty of life resides in dying and rising, in the firmly held belief that death is not the end but the preparation for the glorious newness that awaits.

The leaves lie in the ground and await the perfect moment to blossom forth again. We may shiver in the cold and dark of the winter months, but we know that the earth is preparing for the new life that will appear. And autumn continually reminds us of the life that is hibernating and preparing to burst upon us.

The hills in autumn are clothed in green, red, gold, yellow and all the shades between. No painter's pallet could hold more beauty. God surely looks and says, "Now that is good. That is beautiful and very good!"

Yet the falling of leaves announces a season of growing darkness, and the cold of winter. Days grow shorter and we get out our heavy clothes as we shiver in the shorter days. We could easily forget to see and wonder at the beauty of autumn. Letting go of light and warmth, letting go of pleasure and merriment, letting go of the sensed presence of the God of life is a necessary element of true life.

A rhythm which marks our seasons also marks our spiritual life. Some days we sense God's presence. Other days we struggle to believe that God is with us. Let us be grateful for both the abundant light and the darkness we experience. Without the struggles and the loss of the sense of God's presence we might take God's grace and presence for granted and forget to be grateful. Just as the dying leaves on the ground provide the fertilizer that will allow new life, so the moments of darkness in our spiritual lives are a necessary condition for the joy of God ever present.

Life, like the seasons, ebbs and flows. Constant highs would rob us of the joy that glorious moments bring. Without struggle we would cease to eagerly await peace and know its delight. We must hold joy, the felt presence of God, the experience of the abundance of life with a light grasp. Autumn leaves must fall if new life is to arise.

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

Had enough of 'AI slop?'

I enjoy scrolling through social media at times just to relax or distract my mind when it feels overwhelmed. Yet, scattered between videos from my favorite creators, lies all kinds of material that, while hyper-realistic, feels entirely unnatural. Other videos appear too perfect, too smooth and utterly devoid of meaning.

VIEWPOINT



Sister Hosea Rupprecht

With the rise of generative artificial intelligence, has also come the rise of what is being termed "AI slop." It's that mountain of AI-generated filler that increasingly inhabits social media, mostly for the purpose of catching our attention, getting clicks, inflating the statistics and keeping us in our feeds.

As the percentage of AI slop on social media continues to climb, what does this trend mean for us who would rather celebrate the genius of human-created art rather than get sucked in by algorithm-driven dribble?

When we evaluate AI, precision in our language matters. Humans create; AI generates. While crafting an effective AI prompt takes skill, the resulting product springs not from human ingenuity, but from statistical probability.

In his 1999 "Letter to Artists," St. John Paul II reminds us that human artistic expression reflects God's own creative power. Authentic art draws inspiration from something no machine possesses: human experience, suffering, emotion and reflection. No machine has the heart and soul of a person, as much as it might sound or look as though it does.

When Pope Leo XIV met with a group of artists in Rome at the beginning of October, he emphasized that there is an "ontological difference between art and what a machine can generate through statistical calculation based on millions of images created by others." At its very core, authentic culture and art "preserve the spark" of what it means to be human.

Facing an endless stream of AI-generated content online naturally brings frustration. As the technical quality of these tools improves, the line between human craftsmanship and machine generation blurs. When we constantly have to guess whether a story, image or video is real, our capacity for empathy can easily decay into cynicism.

Honing our critical thinking skills becomes paramount when dealing with the volume of AI slop online. Rooted in Catholic Social Teaching, how can our online habits honor human dignity and celebrate God's truth, beauty and goodness?

First, pause and evaluate. Learn to identify the subtle signs that distinguish human creation from AI generation. Ask critical questions like who created this? Is there a real person behind this? Take a moment to verify the source. While ethical creators clearly label AI-generated material, many do not. Checking the origin of what you consume fulfills your responsibility to engage with technology mindfully.

Second, prioritize human-created content and craftsmanship. Consider the long credits that roll at the end of a film. They extend for minutes because hundreds of people poured their labor, skills and passion into that single story. Recognizing and supporting artists, writers, musicians and creators of any kind, honors their labor and respects their God-given gifts. For example, when searching for workshop graphics, I use royalty-free sites such as Pixabay or Unsplash, but I intentionally filter for human-created media — leaving the mountain of AI images behind.

Finally, slow down. Balance rapid social media scrolling with deeper, more meaningful encounters. Read a physical book, visit an art gallery or museum and appreciate the humanness of what you see. Even better, bring family or friends along. Take time to study the statues, paintings and stained-glass windows in your own parish church, letting that sacred beauty nourish your interior life.

Recognizing the reality of "AI slop" does not mean we must reject technology altogether. We can use AI tools constructively without outsourcing our core creative gifts or eroding human dignity. The reward of awareness lies in being at peace in our own interior life and giving praise that we are made in the image and likeness of God.

As baptized Christians called to be the salt of the earth and the light of the world, we cannot stop at merely spotting AI slop. Rather we actively seek to champion human creativity that reflects the goodness, truth and beauty of God. By insisting on authenticity in our media choices, we bear witness to the inherent dignity of the human person — a dignity no machine can ever replace.

Sister Hosea Rupprecht, a Daughter of St. Paul, is the associate director of the Pauline Center for Media Studies.

St. John the Evangelist Parish and St. Ann Mission undergo projects of restoration and beauty as Covington churches continue to grow



Hennigen photo

Construction equipment is seen outside of St. John the Evangelist Parish, Covington, stands as the parish undergoes multiple efforts to restore and beautify the campus, including repairing the church's stained-glass windows.

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Two churches — St. John the Evangelist Parish, Covington, and St. Ann Mission, Covington — are undergoing efforts to support both the beauty and longevity of the church buildings and grounds.

Father Michael Hennigen, who is the pastor of both the parish and the mission, said that the two projects are separate, despite the two churches being connected, with it being a "brain blast" moment between both parishes' finance councils, as both churches are seeing a steady growth in Mass attendance.

Describing St. Ann Mission as a "hidden gem" within Covington — "the gem on the hill" — projects to support the mission's growth include expanding available parking, but efforts to beautify the church's grounds are underway as well.

"We've already in the last couple months had all the concrete around the church redone," Father Hennigen said, along with some of the church's stone walls.

Now, a stone cross that was recovered from the top of the former St. Ann's School will be given a new home in the place of a removed tree that was previously threatening the church's rectory. The cross will sit proudly at the top of a flagpole, which will wave both the American and the Vatican flag.

Putting the cross on top of the flag pole was the idea of the mission's music director Daryl Sandy, who has played at the church for 50 years and also serves on the Buildings and Grounds Committee, as well as other longtime council members Greg Fryman and John Wheatley.

"When we talked about the necessity of the tree coming down," Father Hennigen said, "we talked about how to incorporate the cross, which was sitting on the front porch of the rectory."

The cross's inclusion will "show the connection between the old school and the mission now," Father Hennigen said — with other beautification projects, such as redoing the roofing and gutters, having taken place as well.

At St. John the Evangelist parish, similar projects are also taking shape.

"We have a company now who is taking care of all the sealing around all of the stained-glass windows," Father Hennigen said, commenting on the beauty of the church's windows. This sealing, which will prevent leaking into the church, will protect both the interior and exterior of the building.

"These projects are all about beautifying our churches," Father Hennigen said. "They're already very beautiful, but we have to keep them in good condition — it's all a part of restoration."

"I jokingly say, although it is very true," Father Hennigen added, "is that we have projects until Jesus returns."







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/.

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/

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.



School-wide rosary

On October 3, grade school students at St. Anthony School, Taylor Mill, gathered together to pray the rosary. Eighth grade students came up with a scene for each mystery, acting it out before the rest of the school.



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.

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.

Pope Leo XIV completes 12-day journey to South America, including homecoming in Peru

Pope Leo XIV arrived in Uruguay Nov. 6, telling journalists aboard his 13-hour transatlantic flight from Rome that he was "convinced that this trip had to go forward" following lung cancer surgery a little more than three weeks earlier. The 71-year-old pope appeared energetic as he interacted with journalists aboard the plane at the start of his 12-day journey to Uruguay, Argentina and Peru, scheduled for Nov. 6-17. Here is his trip in briefs.

Pope makes call for evangelization in secular Uruguay

PAYSANDÚ, Uruguay — Pope Leo XIV opened his 12-day South American journey with a call for renewed evangelization in Uruguay, one of the region's most secular countries, where Catholics make up just over a third of the population and nearly half claim no religious affiliation. Celebrating Mass before an estimated 40,000 people in Paysandú, Pope Leo pointed to the example of Blessed Jacinto Vera, Uruguay's first bishop and the famed "gaucho bishop," who traveled the country on horseback in the 19th century spreading the Gospel through charity and missionary zeal. "Faith," Pope Leo said, "has been part of the life of the Uruguayan people since their earliest days, and it must be passed on to future generations with creative courage." The pope encouraged Catholics to "carry forward the mission of evangelization with enthusiasm," urging them to be "bridges" that help others encounter Christ. Drawing on local symbols, he compared the Church to Uruguay's palm groves and praised mate as "a sign of familiarity, friendship and encounter." The previous evening in Montevideo, Pope Leo defended the dignity of human life "from conception to natural death." Local Catholics described living their faith as a minority experience, but many welcomed the papal visit as a source of encouragement and visibility for the Church.

At soccer stadium, Pope Leo tells Uruguayans life in Christ is the ultimate goal



OSV News photo/Simone Risoluti, Vatican Media

Uruguay's President Yamandu Orsi and Pope Leo XIV walk in Independence Square in Montevideo, Uruguay, Nov. 6, 2026.

MONTEVIDEO, Uruguay — Pope Leo XIV turned one of world soccer's most historic venues into a place of prayer Nov. 7, telling 70,000 people in Montevideo's Centenary Stadium that holiness, not mediocrity, is the ultimate goal of the Christian life.
Addressing the crowd in the stadium built for the first FIFA World Cup, the pope urged Catholics in Uruguay to "be saints" and give themselves completely to God. Speaking in a country where soccer is often compared to a religion, he said true freedom and happiness are found in Jesus Christ. The pope also emphasized the real presence of Christ in the Eucharist, encouraging people to spend time in Eucharistic adoration and speak to Jesus "as you would to a friend." During the evening vigil, young Uruguayans shared testimonies of conversion, including 22-year-old Giovanni, who said he discovered the faith after encountering a chapel and priest at the University of Montevideo. A married couple spoke about raising a Catholic family in secular Uruguay. Pope Leo directly addressed the country's secularization, warning that a world built without God risks losing sight of the human person. He encouraged young people to embrace marriage, family life and generous service to others before leading the crowd in the Our Father and imparting his blessing.

Pope Leo shares advice for Catholic parents whose children left the faith

FLORIDA, Uruguay — Pope Leo XIV offered a message of hope to parents and grandparents grieving over loved ones who no longer practice the Catholic faith during a Nov. 8 Mass at Uruguay's national Marian shrine. Celebrating with an estimated 50,000 pilgrims at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Thirty-Three in Florida, the pope pointed to St. Monica as a model of perseverance in prayer for children who have drifted from God. "I know that many of you carry a very specific sorrow," the pope said, speaking to parents who wonder whether their efforts to pass on the faith were in vain. He urged mothers and grandmothers to continue witnessing through prayer, love and patient example, adding, "There are doors that you cannot open, but God can." Pope Leo also challenged fathers and grandfathers to imitate St. Joseph through prayer, sacramental life, integrity and respect within their families, drawing loud applause from the congregation. During the pilgrimage, the pope renewed Uruguay's consecration to the Virgin Mary and reflected on the shrine's ties to the nation's 1825 struggle for independence. The Mass concluded his two-day visit to Uruguay before he departed for neighboring Argentina as part of his South American tour.

Pope Leo XIV arrives in Argentina, meets President Milei, urges respectful dialogue

BUENOS AIRES —Pope Leo XIV arrived in Buenos Aires on Nov. 8 and used his first speech in Argentina to urge political leaders to strengthen democracy, protect unborn life and pursue respectful dialogue across political divides. After arriving from Uruguay, the pope met privately with Argentine President Javier Milei at the Casa Rosada before addressing civil authorities at the Palacio Libertad. Pope Leo paid tribute to the late Pope Francis, the Buenos Aires native who led the local archdiocese before his election to the papacy in 2013. Calling his visit "personally meaningful," Pope Leo said he was retracing the footsteps of his predecessor in Francis' homeland. In remarks that touched on politics, culture and social concerns, the pope said democracy is strengthened through listening, careful speech and a willingness to seek common ground. He urged public officials to exercise authority as service and work for the common good. Pope Leo also highlighted the dignity of every human person, calling for particular concern for the unborn, people with disabilities, those suffering from illness and others facing vulnerability. He also warned that a nation should reflect when young people feel compelled to leave their homeland to pursue their dreams. The pope will remain in Argentina through Nov. 11 before traveling to Peru.

Pope Leo meets privately with five Argentine abuse survivors

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina — Pope Leo XIV met privately Nov. 9 with five people abused by clergy or Church institutions in Argentina, listening individually to their experiences during an encounter that lasted more than an hour, the Holy See Press Office said. The meeting took place before the pope traveled to the Catholic University of Argentina for an encounter with representatives of the world of work. Earlier in the day, he celebrated Mass at Buenos Aires' Monumento de los Españoles before approximately 2.5 million people, according to local authorities. The five survivors were presented by the local Church, the Vatican statement said. "The pope spoke with each of them individually, listening to their accounts, the painful experiences they had endured, and their suggestions for strengthening paths toward healing within the Church," the statement said. At the conclusion, Pope Leo greeted the survivors all together, blessed them and thanked them for the meeting and their "testimony of faith." "To them — and through them, to the other victims whom it was not possible to meet — the pope conveyed his closeness and his commitment to strengthening measures for protection, well-being, welcome, and accompaniment within the Church," the statement said. The encounter came during Pope Leo's second day in Argentina, a country where the dimensions of the abuse crisis remain unknown.



OSV News photo/Yara Nardi, Reuters

Pope Leo XIV embraces an inmate as he visits the Federal Penitentiary Complex in the Villa Devoto neighborhood of Buenos Aires, Argentina, Nov. 11, 2026, during his Nov. 6-17 apostolic journey to Uruguay, Argentina and Peru.

Pope Leo holds up Argentine businessman as a model of lay holiness

BUENOS AIRES, Argentina — Pope Leo XIV has again pointed to Enrique Shaw, the Argentine businessman and father of nine, declared venerable in 2021, as a model of how faith can transform economic life. Speaking Nov. 9 at the Pontifical Catholic University of Argentina in Buenos Aires, the pope praised Shaw as a Catholic entrepreneur whose conversion through the Church's social doctrine shaped his vision of business as "a true community of people called to grow together." Pope Leo, who called Shaw "the future Blessed," highlighted the layman's conviction that Christian business leaders are called to sanctify both themselves and their profession. Shaw wrote: "It is necessary to form Christian business leaders and provide them with a specific way of living: that of contributing to a better world." Born in 1921, Shaw left a promising naval career to marry, raise a family and serve the Church through business leadership. As managing director of Rigolleau Glass, he expanded health and welfare programs for workers and famously persuaded shareholders to reverse plans to lay off 1,200 employees during a 1961 economic crisis. His granddaughter, María Elena Critto, said Shaw "embodied Catholic social teaching in the business world" and challenged Catholics to live their faith consistently at work, at home and in Church. Shaw, declared venerable in 2021, is now on the path to beatification after recognition of a miracle attributed to his intercession.

(Continued on page 18)

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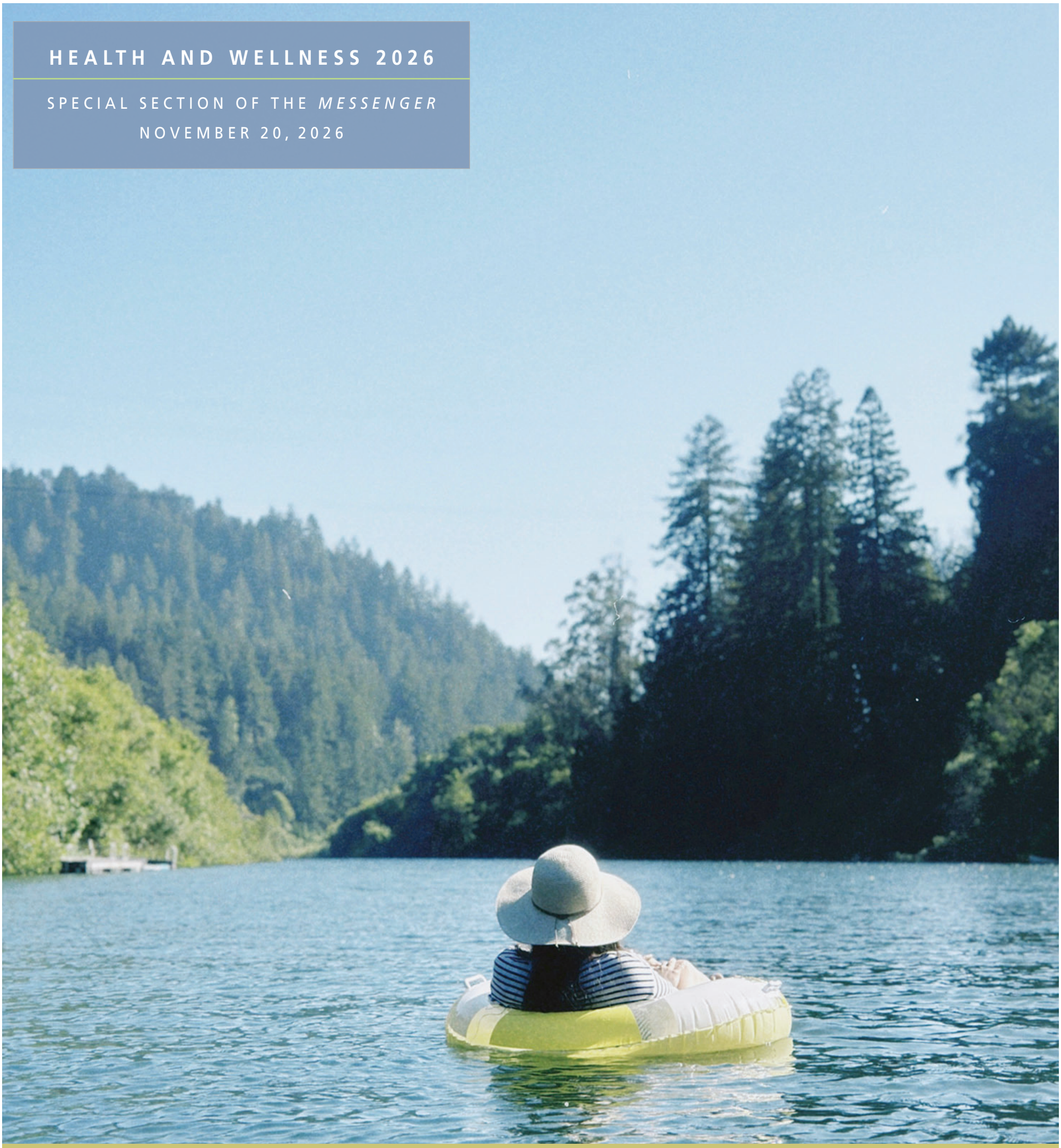

Photo credit: Christopher Stites via Unsplash

"He leads me beside still waters. He restores my soul."

—Psalm 23

‘No plans to quit’: Terry Foster approaches 50 years in emergency nursing, compassion is his calling

Abigail Wright
NKyTribune

The smell of freshly baked Mountain Dew cake still takes Terry Foster back to his childhood.

His mother, Mary Ruth Foster, was a night clerk at St. Elizabeth Healthcare, raising six boys in Taylor Mill. The cake became her signature dessert. If it was sitting uncovered in the kitchen, the boys knew it was fair game, and if it was covered, they would ask who died.

The recipe has endured through decades of birthdays, holidays and funerals, but it is not the only thing Mary Ruth passed on to her son. She also unknowingly introduced him to the place that would define his life’s work.



Terry Foster

In 1973, at 14 years old, Mr. Foster began volunteering at St. Elizabeth, an attempt by his mother to get him out of the house during the long summer hours. What started as a teenager’s first volunteering position soon became the beginning of a career that, next year, will reach an extraordinary milestone: 50 years as an emergency nurse.

Now 68 and still living in his hometown of Taylor Mill, Mr. Foster has spent the past five decades caring for patients during some of the worst moments of their lives, and he has no intention of slowing down.

“There are tremendous highs and tremendous lows,” Mr. Foster said. “I still remember some patients and situations and stuff that you never will get over, but, oh my gosh, what a great ride it’s been. And I’m still riding, no plans to quit.”

Mr. Foster’s path into nursing was anything but predetermined. While volunteering in the emergency department, he encountered something that would not only surprise him, but change the course of his life forever.

“I had no idea a guy could be a nurse,” Mr. Foster said, recalling the first male nurse he had ever seen.

Watching the staff work quickly and compassionately through emergencies further cemented his future in nursing.

“I saw what nurses did, and I was in the ER as a 14-year-old, and probably saw things I shouldn’t have seen, but I was like, ‘I love this,’” Mr. Foster said. “And I just got bit by the bug, you know? So, that’s what sealed the deal.”

He officially joined St. Elizabeth as an employee in 1975 before graduating from Booth Memorial Hospital School of Practical Nursing in Covington in 1977. Additionally, he completed a master’s degree in critical-care and trauma nursing at the University of Cincinnati in 1997.

Over the years, Mr. Foster has served as a volunteer, ward clerk, staff nurse, charge nurse, clinical director and night supervisor, as well as critical-care nurse specialist for St. Elizabeth’s emergency departments since 1998.

Despite the long list of credentials that follow his name and a resume that includes more than 40 professional publications, over 5,000 lectures across all 50 states, national nursing awards and induction as a Fellow of the Academy of Emergency Nursing, Mr. Foster can still clearly remember the fear he felt walking into his first shift at the emergency department as if it were yesterday.

“I was scared to death,” Mr. Foster said. “I just remember thinking, I hope I can handle whatever comes in, because what I like (about the ER), but also what is a little stressful, is you don’t know what’s gonna come through the door.”

That uncertainty, he said, has never disappeared, but it is also what keeps emergency nursing meaningful because every patient arrives carrying a different story.

“It’s the worst day of their life, but it’s my responsibility to do what I can to make that better,” Mr. Foster said. “And if it’s saving them, certainly, that’s what we’re gonna try to do. But we’ve had some people that have come in that can’t be saved. I think to myself, well, we couldn’t save them, but I’m gonna make sure they have a peaceful and a dignified and a respectful death.”

Compassion, he believes, extends beyond medicine.

“I love the fact that I have been able to take care of people of every age, of every background, every ethnicity, a homeless person, or a CEO, intelligent, or has a lot of intellectual challenges, and I love that I can take care of them, and at some level, it’s communicated that I care about them,” Mr. Foster said.

Ironically, someone who nearly earned the title of “quietest” in his high school graduating class has become known for connecting effortlessly with strangers, something Mr. Foster jokingly calls the “nurse aura.”

“People will come up and just start talking to us (nurses) because they feel like there’s just a presence there or whatever. And sometimes these people have issues, or they’re challenged or things like that, but they feel comfortable with us,” Mr. Foster said.

That comfort often comes through humor, something Mr. Foster has developed a national reputation for in the medical world.

“It’s very respectful humor, not about anybody’s station in life, or age, or race, or ethnicity, or anything like that,” Mr. Foster said. “I try to decrease somebody’s anxiety. Like, sometimes, if I can tell a person’s really tense, and they need an IV in, I’ll say, ‘Thank you for letting me do that, I’ve always wanted to learn how.’”

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Come away and rest: The benefits of a retreat

Houston Watson
Contributor

"Come away by yourselves to a deserted place and rest a while." Jesus said this to the apostles when they came back from their first mission, no doubt weary and worn. (Mark 6:31)

We have all been there, for one reason or another. It is easy to lose track of prayer between family and work commitments, or to become overwhelmed by the burdens of life. Sometimes, we simply need to pause, step away and allow ourselves to rest in sacred silence.

The very word "retreat" means a purposeful, planned withdrawal. When an army retreats, it is not a sign of defeat. Rather, it is a strategic decision to regroup and gather strength. St. Ignatius of Loyola, whose Spiritual Exercises shaped the modern retreat, compared prayer to physical training. Walking and running exercise the body. In the same way, he wrote, spiritual exercises prepare the soul to let go of disordered attachments and seek God's will. Therefore, we might think of retreat as a purposeful withdrawal that allows the soul to rest and regroup, so that our spiritual life is revitalized. The Church has recommended the practice for centuries, and there's good scientific research showing retreat is beneficial for our minds and bodies, too.

Pope Pius XI took retreats seriously enough to write an encyclical on them. In Mens Nostra (1929), he argued that retreats suit the development of the whole person, natural and supernatural alike. He also arranged for the pope and the Roman Curia to make the Spiritual Exercises every year, a custom his successors have kept. His view is founded on a fundamental tenet Catholic theology: grace builds on nature, so the mind and body we bring into prayer deserve care as well.

Doctors have a name for the lift people get from stepping out of their routines: the "vacation effect." A randomized trial published in *Translational Psychiatry* in 2016 tested it by sending healthy women to the same California resort for six days. Half the newcomers simply relaxed. The other half learned a meditation practice alongside a group of experienced meditators.

Every group felt much better by the end of the week. However, in the months that followed, the women who had learned a contemplative practice experienced lower stress for longer than those who had only vacationed. The program in that study was secular, but it does suggest that how you spend your time away affects how long the benefit lasts.

Silence is an important part of any retreat, and it too has positive benefits on the mind and body. For example, in

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His reputation as both an educator and storyteller eventually caught the attention of TLC's "Untold Stories of the ER."

About 15 years ago, producers of the show searched online for unusual emergency department cases. They came across one of Mr. Foster's lectures and were immediately interested.

The producers left Mr. Foster an email while he was at work, which he assumed was a fellow nurse pulling a prank on him.

"I said, 'I'm really sorry, I thought you were one of my friends playing a joke on me.' And she was like, 'What kind of friends do you have?' And I said, 'Well, it's kind of what kind of friend have I been, also,'" Mr. Foster recalled of that first phone call with a producer.

The call turned out to be legitimate, and Mr. Foster became the first nurse ever featured on the physician-focused television series, recently completing filming his 11th episode.

Yet, he still "can't stand" to watch himself on TV.

While Mr. Foster said he enjoys being on set, the most defining moments of his career came from within hospital walls.

He remembers the 1977 Beverly Hills Supper Club fire as the most horrific event he had witnessed up until the COVID-19 pandemic.

"I swear, I thought I was seeing the end of the world," Mr. Foster said of COVID.

Patients died daily.

"And then you just went back and did it again the next day," Mr. Foster said.

Remarkably, Mr. Foster never contracted COVID during the pandemic despite working on the front lines.

He credits much of his longevity to St. Elizabeth itself.

Having worked briefly within the Mercy hospital system for several years, Mr. Foster said the culture and "family atmosphere" at St. Elizabeth is what kept drawing him back.

St. Elizabeth President and CEO Garren Colvin often jokes that Mr. Foster has worked there so long he must have worked the night shift with Henrietta Cleveland, the woman who founded the hospital in 1861.

The joke resonates because generations of employees and patients know Mr. Foster by name, and he knows them too.

Rather than expressing frustration when familiar faces return to the emergency department, Mr. Foster just sees another opportunity to provide care for a person in need.

"Instead of saying, 'Are you back here again?' Mr. Foster said, 'You know, it's like, 'Hey, I'm here to take care of you."

That same compassion extends well beyond the hospital.

After his wife, Peggy, was diagnosed with leukemia in 1994 and passed away the following year, Mr. Foster fulfilled a promise she never had the chance to carry out.

She had wanted to organize an annual fundraiser for leukemia patients once she recovered.

Instead, Mr. Foster created the Peggy Foster Memorial Fund in her honor. The fund continues to provide wigs, hairpieces and other assistance for cancer patients and their families.

While Mr. Foster continues to work part-time at St. Elizabeth, he likes to say he's full-time in everything else.

Mr. Foster volunteers with Covington's Parish Soup Kitchen, breast cancer support organizations, Holy Cross Catholic Church, the St. Elizabeth Foundation as well as numerous charitable groups. During winter storms, local road crews know they can count on Mr. Foster to make them breakfast while they work long hours clearing icy streets.

"I feel like I have a gift to talk to people, relate to people and stuff," Mr. Foster said. "If they can use me for a breast cancer support group, for the parish kitchen, for Go Pantry, anything like that I can help with or help advance that for somebody, I'm happy to do that."

Nearly five decades after a teenage volunteer first walked into the emergency department, Mr. Foster still arrives with the same sense of purpose.

"It's an incredibly rewarding career," Mr. Foster said. "It's something I have never regretted a day being a nurse. Are some days better than others? You better believe it. But I've never regretted it."

As long as patients keep coming through the emergency department doors, the boy who discovered nursing while following his mother's footsteps to St. Elizabeth intends to keep answering the call.

This article was first published July 14, 2026, on the NKY Tribune website and has been reprinted with permission.





Come away and rest

(Continued from page 11)

a 2006 study published in the journal Heart, Italian researchers played several styles of music to volunteers and slipped two-minute stretches of silence between the tracks. During those silent pauses, breathing, heart rate and blood pressure fell below the levels recorded before the music began. The silence relaxed people more than slow music did.

Our screens deserve a mention here. I think most of us would probably admit we spend far too much time on our screens, and that they aren't doing our spiritual lives a whole lot of good. Retreats offer a perfect opportunity to unplug. In a 2025 trial published in *PNAS Nexus*, 467 adults agreed to block mobile internet on their smartphones for two weeks while keeping calls and texts. Nine in ten improved in mental health, well-being or their ability to sustain attention, and the gains held two weeks after the internet came back on. Only about a quarter kept the block on the whole time, and the researchers still saw clear benefits overall.

Finally, retreat houses often have beautiful, spacious, wooded properties, and this is an ideal environment for mental and physical wellbeing. A 2019 study in Scientific Reports drew on nearly 20,000 people in England. Those who spent at least two hours a week in nature had 59 percent higher odds of reporting good health than people who spent none.

You don't need a full week to go on retreat. St. Ignatius himself adapted the Exercises for people who couldn't leave their work, so shorter formats have a long history. Local retreat houses, like the Jesuit Spiritual Center at Milford, offer day and weekend retreats, perfect for those with a busy schedule.

In our increasingly noisy and chaotic world, it is easy to lose sight of God and fall out of good prayer habits. A retreat is a perfect way to enter into sacred silence and find rest so that your mind, body, and soul can be re-oriented towards God. Consider making a retreat this coming year.

This advertiser submitted article is provided by the Jesuit Spritual Center. Houston Watson is Director of Marketing for the Jesuit Spiritual Center, Milford.

Visio Divina: The art of using art to pray

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

Art and wellness often go hand in hand. Terms like "art therapy" are baked into common knowledge — but how can artwork encourage and uplift our spiritual lives?

Visio divina, or "divine seeing", shares roots with *lectio divina*, the practice of meditating slowly and carefully on sacred Scripture. With visio divina, the same theory applies to sacred art and icons.

It is the practice of "looking at artwork and meditating on what messages the Holy Spirit gives you through a visual aid," said Ceil Dorger, an art historian and art history professor at Mt. St. Joseph University, Cincinnati — who employs visio divina in her own prayer practice.

"Art uplifts our soul and is a conduit to God" she said. "If prayer is lifting our heart and mind to God, then art can be the escalator — and, in that way, very much influence our spiritual lives."

When engaging in visio divina, you "invite the Holy Spirit to enlighten your experience," as you gaze at an artwork or image, Ms. Dorger said. "It's a quiet, contemplative practice."

"One would notice what thoughts come to mind — what emotions arise after you've invited the Holy Spirit to guide you?"

These thoughts can be rather literal, such as reflecting on a painting of a scriptural account. Or perhaps the construction of the image by the artist can inspire in a particular way that "hits you" during the contemplative viewing that is visio divina.

Regardless of how you pray, engaging with artwork via visio divina can help to invite the Holy Spirit in a new way, allowing another avenue for deepening one's life in prayer.



CNS photo/Paul Haring

A woman takes a photo on her phone of an image in the exhibit, "He Became Flesh," in the crypt of the Basilica of San Lorenzo in Florence, Italy, Nov. 9, 2015.

Helping older adults live well: The benefits of Charlie's Club at St. Charles Community



Friends enjoy creating crafts together at Charlie's Club, part of the ministry of St. Charles Community.

St. Charles Community
Contributor

Healthy aging is about more than just physical health. It is about staying active, keeping the mind engaged, building friendships, and finding joy in everyday moments. For older adults who continue to live at home, having opportunities to stay connected and receive

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Grief and the holidays: Caring for mind, body and soul

Cheryl Jones Darpel
Contributor

November is a special month for the Catholic Church, a time when we remember and pray for those who have died. On All Souls' Day, many of us lit a candle or heard a loved one's name read at Mass. For families who lost someone this year, the remembering does not end there.

Thanksgiving, Advent and Christmas follow close behind, bringing traditions, family gatherings and sometimes the painful reminder of an empty chair at the table. If this is your first holiday season without someone you love, you may find yourself dreading days that once brought joy. You may wonder how to celebrate when someone so important is missing.

These feelings are not a sign of weakness or a lack of faith. They reflect love. Grief does not follow a calendar, and the holidays can bring emotions to the surface when we least expect them. With a little preparation, support and grace toward ourselves, we can find ways to navigate the season.

Grief is more than sadness. It affects our mind, body and soul, often in ways we don't anticipate. In relation to our mind, it effects concentration, memory, and decision-making can become difficult. Many people describe feeling mentally exhausted and living in a fog.

With our body; sleep disturbances, changes in appetite, fatigue and physical tension are common. And in relation to our soul, our relationship with God may be different. Some find themselves drawing closer to him, while others feel doubt, anger or distance. Remember that questioning, struggling, and even anger are not failures of faith. God welcomes us in our sorrow, just as we are.

Recognizing these responses can help us to extend patience with ourselves and with others in our family who are grieving differently.

The days leading up to a holiday are often harder than the day itself. Deciding a few things ahead of time can take some of the weight off. Choose your gathering. You do not have to go to everything. Pick the ones that matter most, and it's alright to leave early.

You can also tell your family what helps. Some people want to hear their loved one's name. Others want a quiet, simple day. Say which you need.

You may also keep or change traditions. Some families keep every tradition while others try something new, such as a different Mass time or dinner at a different house. There is no right or wrong approach. Or to lighten the load, you can shop online, buy a pie instead of baking it, or let someone else host. You don't have to do everything like you once did unless you enjoy it and it helps you navigate the holiday.



CNS photo/Gregory A. Shemitz

Stones left by visitors are seen atop gravestones at St. Peter's Cemetery in the Staten Island borough of New York.

Many people worry that mentioning their loved one will upset others. More often, it brings comfort. A few ways to keep your loved one present would be to light a candle or set out a favorite photo at the holiday table; share stories, invite each person to tell a favorite memory, and let the children join in; ask your parish to offer a Mass for your loved one, and remember them in your own prayers; visit the grave with a wreath or flowers or give a gift in their name to a cause they cared about or do something they would have done.

Grief is hard work, and your body needs care through it. Try to maintain regular meals and sleep, spend time outdoors, and take regular walks when possible. Be mindful of alcohol, which can worsen sadness and interfere with restful sleep.

You don't have to carry grief alone. Talk with a friend, your pastor or a deacon. Ask whether your parish has a bereavement ministry or support group. Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Covington offers counseling with a licensed therapist, and your doctor can help too.

Reach out for more help if, months from now, you still cannot get through daily tasks. If you ever think about harming yourself, call or text 988, the Suicide and Crisis Lifeline, any time of day or night.

Advent is a season of waiting, preparation and hope. For someone grieving, that hope may be difficult to recognize. Yet our Catholic faith reminds us that death is not the end of our story. We are grounded in the promise of Christ's resurrection and the hope of eternal life.

We do not have to choose between remembering those we have lost and embracing the joy of the season. Both can exist together. We can miss deeply, cherish memories and still find moments of peace and gratitude.

As Jesus promised, "Blessed are they who mourn, for they will be comforted" (Matthew 5:4). This holiday season, give yourself and those around you grace to grieve, freedom to remember, and hope to move forward.

This advertiser submitted article is provided by Ronald B. Jones Funeral Home. Cheryl Jones Darpel owns Ronald B. Jones Funeral Home, which has served families in Northern Kentucky since 1935.

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additional support can make a meaningful difference in their overall well-being.

At St. Charles Community in Covington, Kentucky, they believe everyone deserves to feel valued, supported and connected. That is why Charlie's Club has been an important part of the community since 1986. The Adult Day Health program provides adults age 60 and older with a welcoming place to spend their day, enjoy meaningful activities and receive support in an environment centered on health, wellness, and compassionate care.

A day at Charlie's Club is about much more than simply having somewhere to go. It is an opportunity to make new friends, enjoy familiar activities, try something new and be part of a community. From music, games, and crafts to group activities and gentle exercise, each day offers opportunities to nurture the body, and mind.

Staying physically active is an important part of healthy aging. At Charlie's Club, participants are encouraged to move, stretch and take part in activities that support strength, mobility, and overall wellness. Nutritious meals, daily routines and opportunities for social interaction also contribute to a healthier lifestyle.

Just as important is caring for mental and emotional health. Spending time with others, sharing stories, laughing, and participating in group activities can help reduce loneliness and provide a sense of purpose and belonging. For individuals experiencing memory loss or dementia, a familiar routine and supportive setting can offer comfort while encouraging engagement and connection.

Charlie's Club is also a valuable resource for families. Caring for an aging loved one is an act of love, but it can come with challenges and responsibilities. Having a trusted place for a loved one to spend the day gives family caregivers time to work, run errands, attend appointments, or simply take a break. Knowing someone they love is being cared for in a safe and supportive environment can bring families much-needed peace of mind.

At St. Charles, they understand that every individual has different needs. St. Charles's goal is to help participants maintain their abilities, enjoy meaningful experiences and continue living at home while receiving the daytime support they need.

Healthy aging should include opportunities to laugh, learn, move, connect and enjoy life. That is what we strive to make possible at Charlie's Club every day.

If you or someone you love could benefit from additional daytime support,companionship, and engaging health and wellness activities, you are invited to learn more about Charlie's Club at St. Charles Community. Sometimes, a little extra support can make a meaningful difference in the lives of older adults and the families who care for them.

For more information, please contact: Christie Laughlin at St. Charles Community, (859) 331-3224

This advertiser submitted article is provided by St. Charles Community.



GriefShare: A journey of hope and healing

Colonial Heights
Contributor

The loss of a loved one is one of life's most difficult experiences. Whether your loss is recent or occurred years ago, grief can bring feelings of loneliness, sadness, anger, anxiety and uncertainty. While every grief journey is unique, the challenges that accompany loss are often shared by many.

GriefShare is a 13-week support group ministry hosted by local churches and senior living communities, designed to walk people through their grief journey with compassion, understanding, and hope. At its heart, GriefShare combines expert guidance with meaningful peer support to help participants navigate life after loss.

Each weekly session includes a 30-minute video seminar featuring respected counselors, pastors and grief experts, followed by a supportive group discussion and personal workbook exercises that encourage reflection and practical application.

Participants receive guidance on topics such as: Loneliness and isolation; grief-related anxiety; anger and unresolved emotions; feelings of guilt; difficult questions about faith and loss; navigating holidays, anniversaries and special occasions and finding hope for the future.

Through expert teaching and real-life testimonies, participants gain valuable tools and encouragement to face the challenges of grief one step at a time.

For many older adults, grief can be especially challenging. The loss of a spouse, sibling, lifelong friend or family member often represents the loss of decades of shared memories, traditions and companionship. Holidays and special occasions can make those feelings even more profound.

GriefShare provides seniors with a caring environment where they can connect with others who truly understand the experience of loss. Participants often discover comfort in sharing memories, building new friendships, and finding support from people walking a similar path.

Whether you choose to share your story or simply listen, GriefShare offers a safe, welcoming space where you can heal at your own pace.

GriefShare is a welcoming support group for anyone grieving the death of a family member or friend. Each meeting combines practical guidance from grief experts with honest conversations and encouragement from others who understand what you are going through.

There is no pressure to have the right words or to "move on." Instead, you'll find a safe place to share your story when you're ready, listen when you need to, ask questions and discover helpful tools for navigating life after loss.

While grief may change the way we experience life, healing is possible. Through faith, community and support, many people find renewed hope and purpose on the journey ahead.

Please join Colonial Heights Senior Living for GriefShare at beginning January 7, 2027, at 1 p.m. at the on-campus library in Florence. Whether your loss is recent or happened years ago, GriefShare is here to walk alongside you as you find hope, healing, and encouragement for the road ahead. We welcome all who are seeking support during their grief journey.

This advertiser submitted article is provided by Colonial Heights Senior Living.



CNS photo/Sam Lucero, The Compass

woman spends a quiet moment near the graves of her husband and son at Allouez Catholic Cemetery in Allouez, Wis., May 28, 2018.

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Keeping the faith when dealing with mental illness

Cecilia Cicone
OSV News



OSV News screenshot /Pope's Worldwide Prayer Network

Pope Leo XIV is pictured praying his October 2026 prayer intention dedicated to mental health. Holding an image of St. Dymphna, patroness of people suffering from mental disorders and of mental health professionals, Pope Leo addressed the Lord, saying that it is he who knows the innermost depths of our hearts and "the silent wounds that sometimes no one sees."

When you're sick, it impacts nearly every aspect of your life. If you can't get out of bed in the morning, you can't go to work, you can't socialize with other people and you can't cook your own meals. It takes all of your energy just to heal.

It's probably pretty easy to imagine a time when you were so sick that you couldn't get out of bed. Everything hurt, and you just wanted to feel better, whether it was tea with honey, flu medication or painfully taking a shot of apple cider vinegar. You were willing to do whatever it took to feel better.

God made us whole beings: body, mind and spirit. When one part is a little bit off, it impacts everything else. It's difficult to have a strong body without also having a strong mind and spirit. For those of us who experience mental illness, it's natural that it would affect the other aspects of our being as well: our body and our soul.

I was a novice in formation for religious life in a convent when I started to have mental illness symptoms seven years ago. When I first started having trouble sleeping, I wasn't exactly sure what was going on. For weeks on end, I wouldn't get more than an hour or so at night, and naturally, that impacted my prayer. It impacted my ability to live in community, to focus and build relationships, too.

Eventually, as my symptoms got worse and I experienced more panic attacks, flashbacks, nightmares and dissociation, praying like I had been used to praying became nearly impossible.

I was used to waking up every morning and immediately spending 30 minutes praying on the Gospel for the day, followed by morning prayer and Mass and then another Holy Hour at some point during the day. I also did an additional 30 minutes of personal prayer and then evening prayer. Before bed, I was used to praying with the next day's Gospel and doing an examination of conscience.

My day had been rooted in contemplation and in closing my eyes, becoming aware of the Lord's presence and entering into deep conversation with him. Suddenly, I couldn't even close my eyes without descending into panic and disconnection from reality. The life of prayer that had grounded me and been such a comfort suddenly felt like torture.

Eventually, I needed to leave religious life because of my mental illness, but praying didn't get easier, even as I went to therapy. I was diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder and dissociative identity disorder. Every single time that I went to see a therapist or a doctor, I said how much I just wanted to be able to pray and go back to the life that I knew.

There's no one-size-fits-all solution for Catholics who are experiencing mental illness or for Catholics who love and want to help us. As nice as it would be to be able to say, "Just pray this novena or go on this retreat or read this book and you'll be better," each of us has a struggle that only God understands. Truthfully, even science hasn't caught up to understand the root causes of many mental illnesses and exactly how to treat them.

But one thing that is always the case is that experiencing a sickness of the mind will definitely impact the soul and the ability of someone to relate to God and practice their faith. It can bring struggles with it, but it can also bring great experiences of grace.

For some people, going to Mass might be the only time during the week when they experience any kind of peace. For others, being in Mass, surrounded by other people and unpredictable noises with a social expectation of sitting quietly for an hour could be a source of panic that turns into a mental health crisis.

Just like many of us experience a great peace when we go to the sacrament of reconciliation, for some, especially those who may experience scrupulosity (which may be related to obsessive-compulsive disorder), confession can bring up some of the symptoms that are torturous for them.

Some prayers, like the holy rosary, are a great source of connection and calm in the midst of mental turmoil. For others, the repetition and rhythm of the rosary may lead to dissociation and a disconnection from reality.

There's no one-size-fits-all solution for Catholics suffering from mental illness because Jesus is not an impersonal, one-size-fits-all healer. He's personal and intimate, and so, just as no one's suffering is exactly like someone else's, the way Jesus meets and heals them is going to be unique, too. And his healing always happens in his perfect timing, which is not always in this life.

I can't say that one prayer book or listening to a YouTube video or podcast will definitely heal you or your loved ones. But I can say this: Jesus is more gentle and more understanding and more compassionate than we could ever imagine. He has given us the sacraments and the life of the Church as great gifts even though he is not constrained to only act in these ordinary ways.

Holding on to the faith while experiencing mental illness, first and foremost, is rooted in the grace of perseverance. It's a humble prayer of telling the Lord that you don't want to give up, that you want to keep trying, but that you need him. Jesus will not deny that prayer, and you may be surprised in how he chooses to answer it.

Cecilia Cicone is an author and communicator who works in diocesan ministry in Northwest Indiana.

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Thomas More University leads AI education and innovation with Catholic values

(Continued from page 2)

leader in the region and nationally regarding AI education and innovation. Our AI Steering Committee is led by Dr. Kelly French and Dr. Jay Langguth and is working on policies, guidance and opportunities to implement AI responsibly. As co-chair, I am working with Robert Cotter, director of Instructional Design and Learning Management System Liaison, and others across the University to improve AI literacy. We are looking to increase applied learning and innovation. We also have the Zembrodt Centre for Entrepreneurship and Innovation. This gives us opportunities to work with entrepreneurs to develop, test and refine practical AI. A valuable part of our work is with Hannah Keegan from the Centre for Catholic Faith and Education and Dr. Caitlin Dwyer, chair of the Theology Department.

We are looking to ensure we can be more intentional in our approach to using Catholic values, being thoughtful with our decisions and ensuring we are creating humans. Most importantly, we want to ensure our students not only know how to use new technologies but when, why and how they should be using them.

AI literacy is knowing what AI is, how it works, what it can/cannot do and what ethical issues could come up. AI fluency is making sure you know how to use it effectively, critically and responsibly. Both are important. Our faculty members are using AI in their teaching, applied research, research and experiential learning. Others are discerning its potential applications in the classroom and are a bit more tentative.

While a machine can complete tasks that would have been done by a human, we should still recognize the value of the individual. AI should be used to augment decision making. We need a human involved, and a human person's name needs to accompany documents for which responsibility is needed.

Based on the momentum from Rome, Thomas More University will be hosting an AI Summit three days on 18th, 19th, and 20th February 2027. This will look at AI through the lens of the Catholic intellectual tradition.

This event will help to get the conversation started in our local Northern Kentucky community. We will be sponsoring an "AI Summit: Through the Lens of Catholic Social Teaching." National and local speakers will participate in the planned sessions:

— Thursday 18th February we will be focusing on our students and alumni. This will look at how the AI landscape is changing and how we can move from AI literacy to AI fluency.

— Friday 19th February we will be holding an interactive session for business executives and professionals looking to develop practical AI for their organizations.

— Saturday 20th February we will be focusing on parents, educators, students, parish communities, and the public.

The Summit will look at AI literacy, using AI responsibly, ethical considerations and how to protect individuals from swindles, fake content, misinformation and other risks. This will give people an insight into how AI is being used, how it could benefit them, and how we can ensure we are being responsible. We have amazing opportunities to use AI to improve education, provide more information about healthcare, improve organizations, help with evangelization and meet important community needs.

Catholic institutions, educators, families and communities are charged with many responsibilities that now include helping shape the expectations for moral AI use. As part of the Catholic intellectual tradition, we know faith and reason go hand in hand. AI's value can be assessed by how students flourish and participate in processes that promote a common good.

Thomas More University's message from Rome is to build thoughtfully, pilot responsibly and be honest in use and evaluation. AI will play a part in our future. Our Catholic faith, reason, education and responsibility must be used to help shape AI before AI shapes us.

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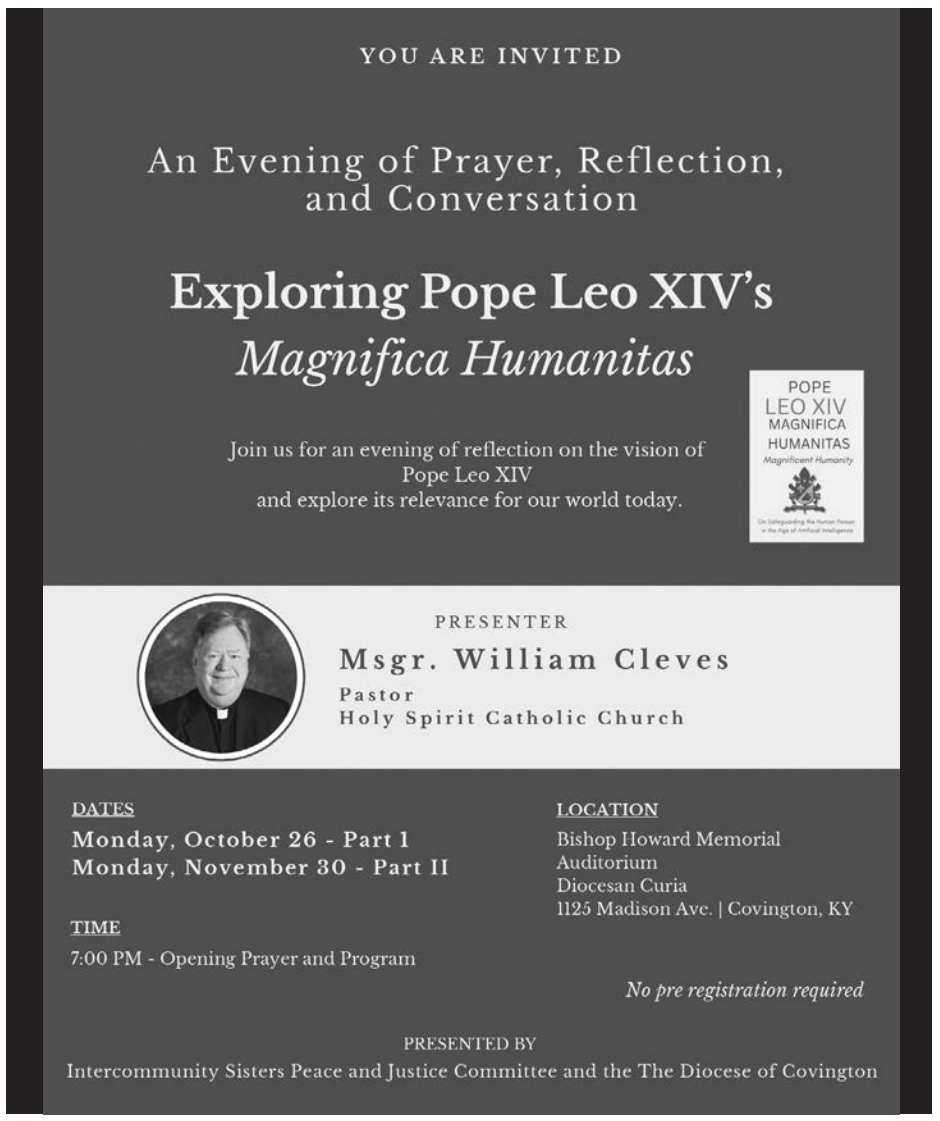

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Workshop on the Second Vatican Council introduces the 'new evangelization'

(Continued from page 3)

renewal."

"They're going to be talking about the great Second Vatican council, and they're going to be talking about the new evangelization," he said, explaining that "we're just beginning to see the fruits of the new evangelization 60 years after the council."

"I'm really hoping today to open your eyes to the reality of the Second Vatican Council," Prof. Pollice said. "We've had a difficult 60 years, as you can imagine, with various interpretations of the council."

He introduced those attending the conference to the four main documents, or "constitutions," of the council — which serve as the "blueprint" and "pastoral vision" for the new evangelization, and the basis for Vatican II and the conference's goal.

The first part of the day's sessions outlined the "missionary renewal" of the Second Vatican Council, followed by more in depth overviews of each constitution.

"St. John Paul II was acutely aware of the Second Vatican Council and the urgent importance of implementing the Council faithfully in the life of the Church," said Prof. Pollice. "The year 2000 was the springboard of the Church into the third millennium and the new evangelization … so it's a very exciting time to be Catholic."

"It's something St. John Paul II would say," he told attendees of the conference, "'Shout the Gospel from the rooftops', and that's what Vatican II was all about."

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(Continued from page 8)



OSV News photo/Simone Risoluti, Vatican Media

Pope Leo XIV smiles as he celebrates an outdoor Mass at Pampas de Pimentel near Chiclayo, Peru, Nov. 13, 2026, during his Nov. 6-17 apostolic journey to Uruguay, Argentina and Peru.

Pope recalls Argentine saints in Córdoba; priest says apostolic trip like 'new Pentecost'

CORDOBA, Argentina — Pope Leo XIV urged Argentines to embrace their missionary calling during a Mass in Córdoba Nov. 10, pointing to the witness of Argentina's saints as models of evangelization and service. Celebrating Mass before an estimated 650,000 people outside an aircraft manufacturing facility, the pope highlighted St. José Gabriel del Rosario Brochero and St. María Antonia de Paz Figueroa, known as Mama Antula, praising their dedication to spreading the Gospel in challenging circumstances. "We are all called to holiness. This is our task here on earth: to attain perfect union with God," Pope Leo said. "This calling is always missionary: we must make known to others the beauty that we have come to know in Christ." Preaching in front of a large cross commissioned by Father Brochero, the famed "gaucho priest," Pope Leo said, "Only those who have experienced friendship with Jesus Christ are capable of undertaking the task of evangelization." He also praised Mama Antula's tireless travels across Argentina, saying she "knew how to combine contemplation with service to neighbor." The pope encouraged Catholics to follow the example of the nation's saints, telling worshippers: "Today, it is our turn to follow the radiant example of holiness they have left with us." The Córdoba stop came during Pope Leo's South American tour, which has drawn massive crowds, including 2.5 million people at a Buenos Aires Mass the previous day. After Mass, the pope was scheduled to meet people served by the archdiocese's outreach to the poor before continuing his visit to Argentina. Later in the day, Pope Leo addressed priests, religious and seminarians outside the cathedral in Córdoba. There he urged them: "Remember that the way we live out our vocation is what evangelizes. Neither age nor physical limitations can extinguish our zeal. Our strength may run out, but God's power never will."

Pope Leo urges Peruvian youth to reject lie that sin brings happiness

LIMA — Pope Leo XIV is urging young people in Peru not to fall for the "dangerous suspicion" that following God means giving up their dreams or needing sin to be happy. Speaking at a Nov. 12 prayer vigil at Lima's National Stadium, the pontiff warned youth to reject evil and anchor their lives in passion, vocation and friendship. Before his address, Pope Leo heard moving testimonies of grief and isolation from three young Peruvians, including a medical student who reconnected with God through dancing, and a religious sister who overcame deep depression after her mother's death. Echoing their stories, the pope encouraged youth to speak honestly to Jesus in their sorrow, spend quiet time before the Blessed Sacrament, and lean on their church community. He reminded young leaders they do not have to carry every burden alone, adding that a simple gesture of friendship can change a life.

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Pope Leo XIV moved to tears by testimonies of faith and hope during Argentina visit

ROSARIO, Argentina — Pope Leo XIV was moved to tears several times during his four-day visit to Argentina, as three personal testimonies of suffering, faith and renewal touched him and millions watching across the country. At the Don Orione "Little Cottolengo" home in Claypole Nov. 9, Marta Torres, a woman with disabilities who was abandoned by her mother as a child, described finding acceptance and a permanent home. Presenting the pope with her book, she said: "I want my story to be known and heard, because I want to do good." The following day in Córdoba, Father Martín Carranza, whose disabilities followed a medical operation 11 years ago, shared how he had continued serving as a priest with the help of technology. Pope Leo embraced him and recalled his own recent hospitalization, saying: "Neither age nor physical limitations can extinguish our zeal." At Buenos Aires' Villa Devoto prison Nov. 11, inmate Maximiliano spoke of overcoming addiction and rediscovering God. "Every day is an opportunity to start anew, and there is a life worth living," he said. The pope urged inmates to remember that "a new life is possible" before departing for Peru.

Pope Leo XIV's Mass in Chiclayo an emotional reunion with his 'beloved' diocese



OSV News photo/Yara Nardi, Reuters

Women become emotional as Pope Leo XIV speaks during a meeting at Saqsaywaman national archaeological park on the outskirts of Cusco, Peru, Nov. 15, 2026, during his Nov. 6-17 apostolic journey to Uruguay, Argentina and Peru.

CHICLAYO, Peru — "What a joy it is to return to Chiclayo! It is a blessing for me to be with you once again," Pope Leo XIV said in his homily at an outdoor Mass at Pampas de Pimentel near Chiclayo Nov. 13. It was an emotional homecoming as the pope returned to Chiclayo, the Peruvian diocese he once led. The Mass was attended by hundreds of thousands of people who were overjoyed to be reunited with their former bishop. Chiclayo is a coastal city in northern Peru where the future-Pope Leo, then Robert Prevost, served as bishop from 2015 to 2023. One million people lined the streets of Chiclayo for miles holding balloons and handmade signs as the pope was driven from the airport to the remote location of the Mass. Many people held up religious statues and images from their homes to have them blessed as the pope passed by. In his homily, Pope Leo reflected on "the urgent and binding duty of every baptized person to proclaim the Gospel" and to place Jesus Christ "at the center, both of our proclamation and of our existence." He said, "For a baptized person, love of neighbor is at the heart of the Christian message."

In Chiclayo, Pope calls on local clergy to reject clericalism, warns students against soulless tech

CHICLAYO, Peru — Pope Leo XIV returned to his former diocese in Chiclayo, Peru, on Nov. 13, delivering a two-part message on Church reform and artificial intelligence. Speaking first to clergy and lay leaders at the Shrine of Our Lady of Peace, the pope urged pastors to shed clericalism and turn talk of synodality into concrete action. He emphasized that lay participation is not a concession, but an expression of baptismal dignity, calling for a church that listens and defends the poor. Later, addressing students and faculty at Santo Toribio de Mogrovejo Catholic University, Pope Leo warned against the pitfalls of soulless technology and a "technocratic paradigm" that values efficiency over human dignity. He reminded the academic community that higher education must be more than job training — urging students to cultivate a living relationship with God and challenging professors to translate scientific expertise into works of social justice and care for creation.

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Pope Leo entrusts Chiclayo and his papal ministry to Mary at coronation ceremony

CHICLAYO, Peru — At a coronation ceremony at the cathedral of Chiclayo, Pope Leo XIV crowned a statue of the Virgin Mary and entrusted the city he once served as bishop to her maternal protection. In his homily on Nov. 14 at the Cathedral of St. Mary, the pope expressed his gratitude "for the years the Lord granted us to walk together" and for returning to his former diocese as the Successor of Peter. Preaching before the coronation rite, the pope thanked the faithful "for the years the Lord granted us to walk together" and reflected on his return as the Successor of Peter. He said the crowning of Mary was a sign of the Church's gratitude and devotion to the Blessed Mother. As Pope Leo arrived at the cathedral with Bishop Edinson Farfán Córdova, crowds greeted him with chants of "El papa es Chiclayano" ("The pope is Chiclayan"). Thousands later filled the square outside as he placed a gold crown on the blue-and-gold-robed statue while the choir sang the "Magnificat." In his homily, the pope acknowledged a world marked by violence, suffering and division, saying that "a defenseless child is God's answer to a humanity plunged into darkness, yet longing for unity and reconciliation." He urged Catholics to preserve their Marian devotion and continue walking together "as one family of God." Entrusting his papal ministry to Mary's Immaculate Heart, Pope Leo prayed for peace, reconciliation and faithful discipleship throughout the region and beyond.

Pope Leo flies in helicopter to Peruvian Andes, honors missionaries who trekked there for centuries

CHICLAYO, PERU — Pope Leo XIV returned Nov. 14 to one of the remote Andean communities he visited as bishop of Chiclayo, celebrating Mass before more than 20,000 faithful in

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Santa Cruz de Succhabamba, Peru. Traveling by military helicopter after presiding over the crowning of a statue of the Immaculate Virgin Mary in Chiclayo, the pope stopped to pray at the town's parish church and meet with people with disabilities. He described his return as "a great dream that the Lord has made possible." Many in the community remembered how he regularly made the difficult four-and-a-half-hour journey through the mountains to visit them as bishop and never missed the community's patronal feast. At the outdoor Mass, Pope Leo praised the enduring Christian heritage of the Peruvian Andes and honored generations of missionaries. He also addressed challenges facing rural communities, including declining populations and the equitable sharing of resources. Before the final blessing, the pope spoke affectionately to a community he knows well from years of pastoral visits and thanked them for their witness and faithfulness to the Church. Referring to Jesus' question about finding faith on earth, he said: "I know that if Jesus decides to come to Santa Cruz, he will find faith."

From the Andes to the Amazon, Pope Leo flies from Cusco to the rainforest in whirlwind day in Peru

PUCALLPA, Peru — Pope Leo XIV crisscrossed Peru on Nov. 15, traveling from the high Andes of Cusco to the Amazon rainforest city of Pucallpa as he nears the end of his 12-day South American apostolic journey. In both locations, the pope encountered local Indigenous peoples, encouraging them to remain firm in their Catholic faith while continuing to seek justice and peace. In Cusco, where hundreds of thousands lined the streets, Pope Leo prayed at the Saqsaywaman archaeological park and reflected on how God reaches people through their cultures and languages. He also led the Angelus and urged the faithful to reject a "throwaway culture" that judges people by productivity, emphasizing the dignity of the sick and elderly. Honoring Cusco's deep devotion to the Lord of the Earthquakes, the pope presented a ceremonial shroud as a sign of his affection for the people. Later in Pucallpa, Indigenous leaders described ongoing threats from illegal logging, mining, drug trafficking, pollution and violence. Responding to testimony that dozens of Indigenous leaders have been killed defending their lands, Pope Leo said their "blood cries out to God and demands justice." Celebrating Mass in the Amazon, he linked environmental destruction to threats against human dignity and called Catholics to work for healing, hope and the protection of creation.



OSV News photo/Alessandro Cinque, Reuters

Pope Leo XIV gestures to the faithful from the balcony of the Apostolic Nunciature in Lima, Peru, Nov. 12, 2026, during his Nov. 6-17 apostolic journey to Uruguay, Argentina and Peru.

Pope Leo's spontaneous nighttime greetings recall St. John Paul II's 'papal window' tradition

LIMA, Peru — Pope Leo XIV concluded his visit to Peru Nov. 15 with an impromptu greeting to hundreds of faithful gathered outside the apostolic nunciature in Lima, continuing a tradition of spontaneous nighttime encounters throughout his longest papal trip to date. After a microphone failure prompted him to count aloud in Spanish, "Un, dos, treeees!" the pope thanked the crowd for its warm welcome and blessed their religious items. He also offered a special message to young people: "You are a sign of hope. Do not lose hope! Believe in yourselves! Believe in Peru! Always believe in Jesus Christ!" During visits to Lima, Chiclayo and Argentina, Pope Leo frequently departed from prepared remarks, encouraging unity, faith and missionary discipleship. In Buenos Aires, he also greeted crowds following a youth vigil attended by 1 million people. The spontaneous encounters recalled St. John Paul II's famous appearances at the "papal window" in Kraków, a tradition continued by Pope Benedict XVI and Pope Francis. Pope Leo's anticipated 2028 visit to Poland could bring the tradition full circle. Kraków resident Adam Leszczynski said confidently: "I know he will stand at that window to greet us!"

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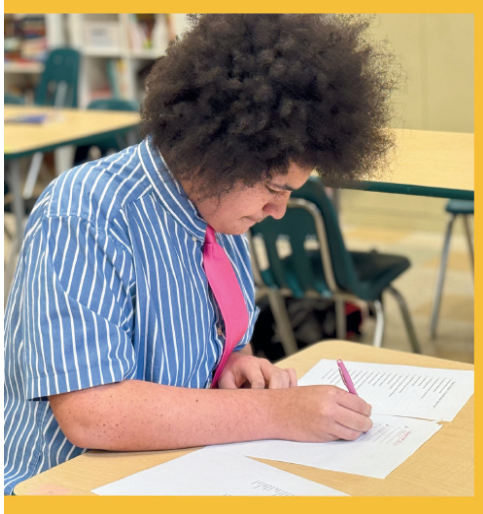







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