November 27, 2026

In This Issue

2 Retirement Fund for Religious
Meet Divine Providence Sister Carleen Schumacher

2 Give Catholic NKY
Holy Cross's campaign

3 CONNECT retreat

3 American GOAL

3 You're invited
Bambinelli blessing and Christmas tree lighting

3 Cathedral Concert Series
Advent Lessons and Carols

3 Messenger Mic'd
Special guest

8 St. Timothy students
A Thanksgiving tradition

9 Serra Club welcomes archivist

10 Equestrian Order investiture

Bishop's Schedule 3
Commentary 5
People and Events 7
Classifieds 12
Shopper's Guide 13
VIRTUS 13
News Briefs 15

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MESSENGER

Serving the Diocese of Covington, Kentucky since 1926

Advent 2026

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ:

As I try to recall where I packed away the Advent wreath, I am still basking in the glow of the first Teens Encounter Christ weekend in the Diocese of Covington. On that weekend, a young person asked, "Why are we taught to fear the Lord, and at the same time taught that God loves us unconditionally?" Other retreatants rightly answered that the Fear of the Lord is closer to awe than to slavish fear. Two images came to my mind immediately, and a third followed during prayer.

I thought of my father, now 88 and struggling with serious health concerns. In almost every conversation, he says, "I'm 88 years old. A person's got to die of something." Living at a distance, I fear I will not have time with him, will not support him as I would like, and will not give him what he deserves.

I also thought of a friend who has had a tough year. I hope to give a personal, special Christmas gift, but I fear that what seems meaningful to me will mean less to my friend and fail to do justice to our friendship.

Jan Romero photo via Unsplash



In prayer, just after that question about the fear of the Lord, a grandparent on the giving team prayed for a daughter expected to deliver another grandchild soon. The joyful anticipation of a 14th grandchild came with fretfulness for the safety of mother and child, which led this Christian to greater dependence on the Lord's providential care. It reminded me of first-time parents counting down the days, bag packed at the door, and of Joseph and Mary, fretfully away from home at the time of her expected delivery.

The Advent season and its preparations are filled with opportunities for worry and fear. Did I miss someone on the Christmas card list? Will the desired gift arrive on time? Will our family get along, or will someone leave with hurt feelings? Will this season lead me to deeper holiness of life, or will it be just another year of marking time?

Advent calls us to respond to God lovingly, faithfully and with a cheerful heart.

Beneath each worry is the same concern: that justice be done, that everyone be well treated and know they are loved, and that our gifts correspond to the significance of our relationships.

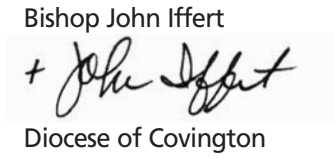
In this way, Advent points us toward the proper understanding of the Fear of the Lord. The youth are right. This gift of the Spirit is not a slavish fear that God will suddenly become unpredictable or set aside the merciful nature revealed to us in Christ. It is the fear that my poor return for the gift of God's very self will fail to be truly loving and worshipful and so be an injustice to the Source of All Justice. It is the overwhelming realization that I cannot match God love for love, and that I might even fall short of loving as completely as I am able. It is the worry that I will miss the opportunity to befriend someone who is a friend of the Lord and so prove myself a goat rather than one of the sheep (see Matt 25:31-46).

The Fear of the Lord, then, is to live on guard, watching for every opportunity to respond to God lovingly, faithfully, and with cheerful heart.

Advent focuses us on exactly this proper Fear of the Lord. Together we watch for the day with an attentiveness directed toward God, who, in the Incarnation, makes himself our friend and neighbor. And we commit ourselves to doing God justice by giving justly, fully, eagerly and warmly to God and to all our neighbors, nearest and farthest.

Blessed Advent journeys everyone. May every offering you prepare in this holy season be pleasing to the Lord.

Bishop John Iffert



Diocese of Covington

First Sunday of Advent, Nov. 29



Sister of Divine Providence reflects on ministry ahead of December collection for retired religious

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

In the 60s, when schools were in need of teachers, Divine Providence Sister Carleen Schumacher — then a young soon-to-be graduate from high school — stepped to the plate to fill that necessary role. Inspired by the women religious in her life, Sister Carleen continued to teach and serve her fellow sisters and community after professing her vows — as many women religious do and have done worldwide.

Now retired, Sister Carleen is one of many retired women religious in the Diocese of Covington and professed religious throughout the country. As costs of daily expenses and medical care rise, these communities require support from those they have served.

The Retirement Fund for Religious is a national organization established in 1988 by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. The fund addresses the needs of retired religious — including those within the Diocese of Covington — having distributed over $1 billion in aid over the years. This year, the Retirement Fund for Religious' national collection will be held the weekend of Dec. 12–13.



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.

Sister Carleen felt her call to the religious life all throughout her school years. "I loved being with the sisters," she said, spending one Sunday a month alongside her aunt, who was a Sister of Divine Providence herself. "I loved their lifestyle and everything, so I think I knew in my heart for a long time before I actually responded."

Carrying this vocation with her through high school and into her career, Sister Carleen's lifelong love of teaching and children had her working as a school educator and administrator for more than 30 years — a role fulfilled by many women religious at the time.

During her time as a religious sister, she also served with Catholic Charities' Parish Kitchen and as leadership for the Congregation of Divine Providence.

Having retired July of this year, Sister Carleen is taking a break from ministry — but not by choice. "I never wanted to take off," she said, but severe arthritis developed in her right knee — and now, Sister Carleen prepares for knee surgery ahead of the Thanksgiving holiday.

Even still, however, she continues to volunteer her time as a volunteer at the surgery waiting desk of St. Elizabeth Hospital, Ft. Thomas.

"But once this knee surgery is over," she said, "I would like to take more hours there, or I'd love to work at Parish Kitchen again."



Sister Carleen Schumacher, CDP

Interested also in the mission of the Notre Dame Urban Education Center, Sister Carleen joked that she's "not one that wants to sit around at home."

"I want to be involved somewhere," she said. "Anywhere I can help."

For years, religious sisters would visit parishes to prepare them for the Retirement Fund for Religious' annual collection. Sister Carleen was one of these sisters and did so because she was "convinced of the necessity."

"Most of the places that I went to," she said, "the people of the parish loved the sisters."

She believes that charitable giving to support religious brothers and sisters is "something people want to do."

"Most of us are really down to retirement," she said, "and there's not a lot of young people anymore. I think the need is great to support the sisters because they worked so much and did so much for the families — that now it's time for families to support them at this time in their lives. I think it's really important."

Holy Cross Parish's Give Catholic NKY campaign addresses the wants and needs of a growing parish community

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

Giving Tuesday in the Diocese of Covington offers parishes, schools, ministries and organizations, an opportunity to raise funds assessment free for a designated improvement project with its Give Catholic NKY campaign. As of Nov. 23, 50 diocesan organizations have registered to participate in the Dec. 1 national day of giving, hoping to raise funds for Catholic organizations — including Holy Cross Parish, Covington, who is raising money for an updated bell and exterior lighting system.

The current bell and bell system in the steeples of Holy Cross Parish are from the original church building, which was erected in 1890, and were moved to the current Church building in 1908. When Father Trinity Knight, pastor of Holy Cross Parish, arrived in 2024, it was discovered that "it had been a very long time since it [the bell] had been inspected," said Mike Monson, member of the parish finance council.

When Verdin Bell and Clock Company, Cincinnati, arrived to complete the inspections, it was soon discovered

(Continued on page 4)

Holy Cross Photos



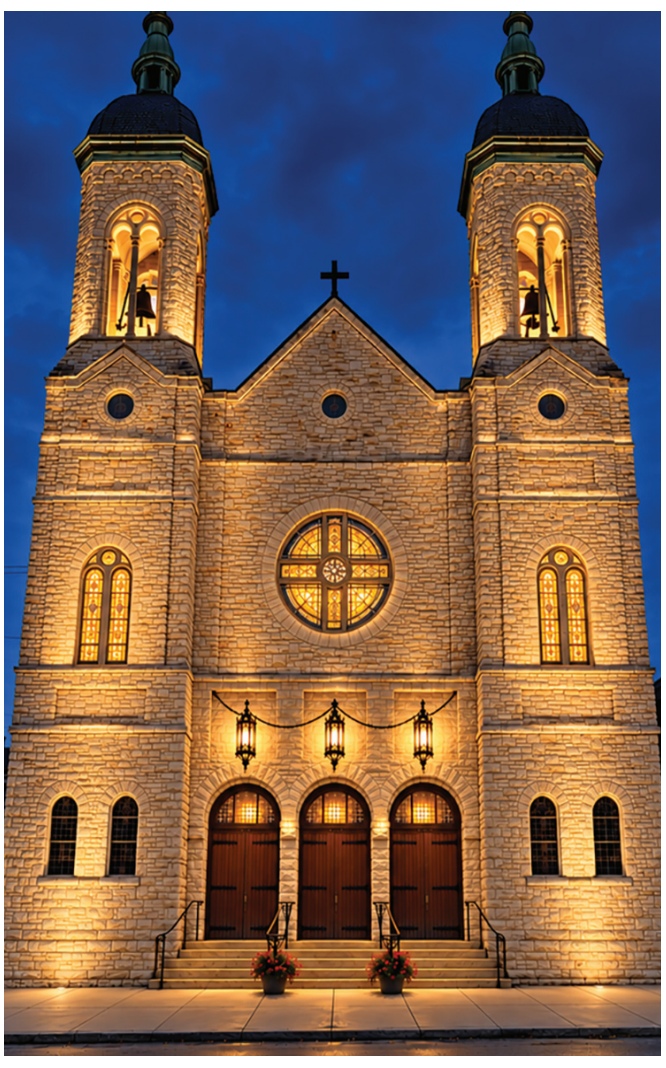




GIVE CATHOLIC NKY
NORTHERN KY'S ONLINE DAY OF CATHOLIC GIVING
DECEMBER 1, 2026
To explore projects or donate, scan the QR code or go to givecatholicnky.org.

(above, left and center) The bell that sits in the steeple of Holy Cross Parish has been worn down over time by the weighted hammer system, causing the bell to be dented and in a state of disrepair. As part of its Giving Tuesday campaign, Holy Cross Parish is raising funds to recondition the bell — ensuring its chimes can be heard for generations to come.

(left and right) The second piece of Holy Cross Parish's Giving Tuesday campaign is an exterior lighting project, which includes the bell towers. The goal is safety and beautification, ensuring that the Church becomes a beacon of light and safety for the community. The lighting in the bell towers will be equipped with a special capability, allowing it to change colors to match liturgical events.



Second CONNECT middle school retreat of 2026 ends an 'amazing' success

Maura Baker
Staff Writer

The second CONNECT youth retreat of 2026 was held, Nov. 20, at Thomas More University, Crestview Hills. This retreat — organized by the Diocese of Covington's Office of Youth Ministry — welcomes middle schoolers to "connect with God and with each other" through an evening of both fun and prayer.

The theme for this autumn CONNECT retreat was "restless hearts, come find rest," inspired by St. Augustine's theology on the restless heart which finds rest in the Lord. Middle schoolers heard a series of formation talks about the application of this theme, along with games and time in small groups, as well as time in prayer and adoration within Thomas More University's Mary, Seat of Wisdom chapel.

One hundred middle school students from across the diocese attended the retreat. Alongside them were 15 high-school aged leaders, 12 college-aged leaders, and 21 adult chaperones.

Dexter Bent, a third-year student at Thomas More University, served as the emcee of the retreat. Having served on the planning committees of past retreats for the Youth Ministry Office, this was Mr. Bent's first time leading the event as emcee — something he felt went "amazing."

"The entire time," Mr. Bent said, "I was checking where we were on the schedule. It lined up perfectly, which never really happens with youth ministry events."

But, Mr. Bent felt "God's grace" was all over the retreat, from the planning process to the actual execution.

Mr. Bent felt that students attending the retreat were "very involved" with the planned activities, especially during the adoration of the Eucharist.

"They were very invested in the moment," he said, "and they were very reverent — which," Mr. Bent joked, "is pretty rare for middle schoolers."

"I really want to give a huge thank you," Mr. Bent said, "to everyone who was part of the planning process. It would not have been the retreat that it was without each person that helped out."

More photos on page 10.

Baker photo



On the lawn of Thomas More University, Crestview Hills, students break into small groups as part of the CONNECT youth retreat, November 20.

Bishop's Schedule

Dec. 1–3
Catholic Conference of Kentucky/Province meetings, Owensboro, Ky.

Dec. 4
Diocesan Staff Service Awards, Summit Hills Country Club, Edgewood, 11:30 a.m.

Dec. 5
Diocesan Pastoral Council meeting, Curia Boardroom, 10 a.m.

Dec. 6
Advent Lessons and Carols, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, Covington, 3 p.m.

Dec. 7
Vigil Mass, Cathedral Basilica of the Assumption, 5:30 p.m.

Dec. 8
Curia Offices closed in observance of the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception

AMERICAN GOAL SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

Tax deduction vs. tax credits

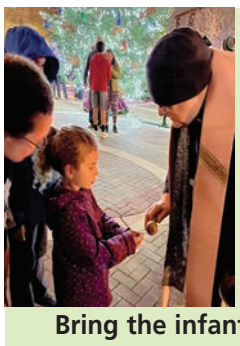
Tax deductions and tax credits both lower your tax bill, though they work differently.

A deduction reduces your taxable income, saving you a percentage based on your tax bracket.

A credit is much stronger — it directly cuts the actual taxes you owe dollar-for-dollar, making a $1,700 credit far more valuable than a $1,700 deduction.

If you have any tax liability at all for a calendar year, you can offset it dollar-for-dollar using the Scholarship Granting Organization tax credit starting in 2027, up to the statutory limits of $1,700 or $3,400 if married filing jointly.

The Diocese of Covington has chosen American Goal as its scholarship granting organization, connecting Kentuckians with the federal scholarship tax program that will launch Jan. 1. Families, donors and schools interested in learning more about the federal scholarship tax credit and American GOAL may visit www.americangoal.org.



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.

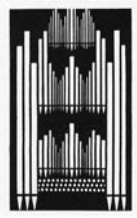
Pizza, hot chocolate and cookies will be provided.

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



CATHEDRAL CONCERT SERIES



Advent Lessons and Carols

The Cathedral Concert Series continues its 50th Season with the annual Advent Festival of Lessons and Carols on Sunday, Dec. 6, 3 p.m.

Scripture and sacred song foretell of the coming Nativity.

All are welcome to attend and participate.

Bishop John Iffert will be presider, with choral pieces sung by the Basilica Bishop's Choir and Advent Hymns respond to seven readings.

The Historic Matthias Schwab will be heard with guest organist, Richard Redmon.

All Cathedral Concerts are open to the public with no admission charge. A freewill offering is gladly accepted.

Visit cathedralconcertseries.org for more information on the current season and series history.

MESSENGER MIC'D
THE OFFICIAL MESSENGER PODCAST



"Messenger Mic'd," the *Messenger's* weekly podcast, welcomes a special guest to this week's episode — Bishop Emeritus Roger Foys. Join the hosts and Bishop Emeritus Foys as they discuss all things Advent, the liturgical new year and the best time to put up Christmas decorations. Check out the new episode on Saturday morning, Nov. 28, by scanning the QR code or visiting www.covdio.org/messenger.

Holy Cross Parish's Give Catholic NKY campaign

(Continued from page 2)

that the bell was in disrepair. Though not an immediate concern, it would need to be addressed quickly. Currently, the bell system operates using a weighted hammer, which over time has dented the bell which increases the risk of cracking.

As part of the Give Catholic NKY campaign, the parish is raising money to recondition the bell system. "That entails new controllers," said William Birri, facilities manager for Holy Cross Parish and Holy Cross District High School, Covington, "so, it'll be an automatic spring controller instead of a weighted one … so it'll be a softer hit. The bell is going to be reconditioned."

Reconditioning the bell "is going to alleviate that risk of it cracking," said Mr. Birri.

In addition to, the bell and bell system, the frame holding the bell will be repaired. "The frame is made of old wood timber. We're going to be replacing that with steel," he said. Currently holding the bell in place is an old wood frame and bolts that Mr. Monson said have been worn down considerably over the course of the bell's life. "What holds the bell up there are a couple of bolts, and when they pulled out one of the bolts to show us, it is worn down," he said.

The new frame will also allow an additional bell, which is something that could be considered for the future.

"Right now, we have just one small bell, and we do want to protect it," said Mr. Monson, "but if we ever wanted to add another bell to create more ambiance, deeper tone," he said the new frame would allow for that.

The bell will be removed from the bell tower for approximately six weeks. The current estimated timeline is for the bell to removed following the Easter season, and for its re-installation to be complete by the end of next year's summer months. The estimated cost for the bell, bell system and bell frame total $35,000.

While the inspection and plans were being completed for the bell, it became apparent that an empty bell tower and exposed electric would be a good opportunity to install lighting in the bell towers.

"We always wanted to be a light for the community and a beacon. We're like, 'let's light these bell towers out,'" said Mr. Monson. Lighting the bell towers turned into a whole exterior illumination project for Church.

Mr. Birri explained that the exterior illumination is important for a few key reasons, namely safety and beauty. "When there's light in the presence of darkness, it keeps evil away," he said. Mr. Monson said that the church "should be a place that people want to go to, feel safe to go to and be around."

"It definitely makes it safer," said Mr. Birri. In addition, it was thought that exterior lighting would help enhance the beauty of the church. "Architecturally, that church is amazing. We thought we should enhance the beauty of the church and it'll be more inviting. I look at it as another project of starting to bring more of the community, enticing people to want to be there because of how beautiful the place is," he said.

The lighting project has been broken into three phases. Phase one includes upgrading and replacing the current fixtures that hang by the front doors, as well as installing lighting fixtures on the side doors.

"Currently, there's two light fixtures that sit in-between the three [front] doors. We're going to take each light fixture and put them over the side doors. Then, put three fixtures over top of the three doors to illuminate the doors better," said Mr. Birri.

The second phase of the lighting project will include the bell tower illumination, which includes being able to change the lighting to match the liturgical celebration, something that excites both Mr. Birri and Mr. Monson.

"Just the thought of that is super exciting because how many people really don't know where Holy Cross is? You're going to be able to see them [the bell towers] and people are going to wonder 'What's that?'," said Mr. Monson. "If you could start the conversation about Jesus and the Church," because of the lights he said, "it's a good start."

The third and final phase of the lighting project will be the lighting on the ramp and entrance to the perpetual adoration chapel. In total, the lighting projects will cost approximately $50,000 and has a similar timeline to that of the bell restoration, with hopes to have both projects completed by the end of summer 2027.

Holy Cross Parish's Give Catholic NKY goal totals $70,000, and it is the first time the parish has participated.

"We've looked at it, seen how it's worked, and it is exciting and something to promote," said Mr. Monson. "We all are still just one Church, and we're all supposed to be working together, but we still have our little home that we've got to take care of," he said.

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, scan the QR code or go to givecatholicnky.org.

"This is a start. We want to grow from that, and we think about the future of it. These are some of the wants to make our home better, and to leave it better, and for the next group to be able to build upon too," said Mr. Monson.

Mr. Birri expressed his gratitude to the parishioners of Holy Cross Parish. "I'm so excited, just because of all the recoil I've had from the parishioners and the community of how people are going to see this project get completed and how nice it's going to look and how it's going to enhance the campus. I'm super excited for the future," he said.

To explore other organizations projects or to donate,







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- COINS & PAPER MONEY
- ROOKWOOD & ROSEVILLE POTTERY
- KY DERBY & RACING ITEMS
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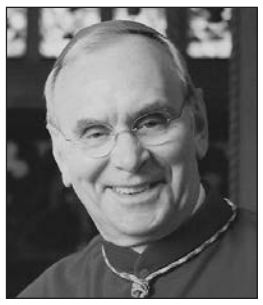
COMMENTARY

Happy New Year!

The readings for the First Sunday of Advent — Cycle B — are: Isaiah 63:16b–17, 19b; 64:2–7, 1 Corinthians 1:3–9 and Mark 13:33–37.

Happy New Year! I know it's not January 1! I'm referring to the Liturgical Year, not the calendar year. The First Sunday of Advent ushers in the new Liturgical Year. So, Happy New Year!

GO AND GLORIFY



Bishop Roger J. Foys, D.D.

On this first Sunday of Advent, I always find it a good time to reflect on the year gone by as well a time to look to the year ahead. What have I done with my time in the past year? Have I lived up to the standards presented in the Gospel message? Have I made the best use of the gift of time that the Lord has given me? Have I been faithful to the Lord, to His Word, to the Church? Have I truly cared for and about others who have crossed my path? Have I been generous, merciful, forgiving, compassionate and just? Have I touched the lives of others for good?

And then of course there's looking ahead. If the Lord calls me home today, would I be ready? Am I prepared? As we enter this Advent season the whole notion of being prepared comes to the fore. The Advent season is a time to reflect especially on our preparedness, our readiness. We have some four weeks to prepare for the celebration of the anniversary of the birth of Jesus as well as to prepare for the Lord when He will come again to call us home. What do we do? How do we prepare? How we prepare during this Advent season will tell us much about how we are preparing for the Lord's call.

Years ago, actually decades ago, when I was a parish priest, one of my parishioners told me that for the longest time she hated Christmas. I was surprised at this — who doesn't like Christmas! I asked her what was behind her dislike of Christmas. She told me how busy she was preparing for Christmas each year. The cooking, the baking, the cleaning, the Christmas cards that needed to be sent, the shopping for Christmas presents and then the wrapping, the decorating — it was just all too much to do in too little time. It wore her out and by the time Christmas day came along she was just too tired to enjoy it. All she wanted to do was to sleep.

Finally, one day she realized that all the so-called preparations were wearing her out so much that she could not really prepare for Christmas and as a result she was missing the true meaning of Christmas. It happened when her second-grade daughter came home from school with an Advent calendar. There was something to do each day leading up to Christmas. It didn't have anything to do with the preparations she was so busy about each Advent but rather provided some spiritual direction for each day with a meditation on the Advent season. The teacher had asked the children to have someone in their family do the meditation with them. Her daughter had asked her mother to partner with her.

My parishioner said she reluctantly agreed to join her daughter in the Advent calendar project thinking that it wouldn't take much time away from her usual preparations. After the first few days she told me she became engrossed in the simple meditations and looked forward to them. She realized that for so long she only thought she was preparing for Christmas when in fact she was missing the point of the Advent season and wearing herself out in the process. "That changed my way of preparing for Christmas," she told me. "I finally became aware of what was really important."

The pre-Christmas season can often be a very busy time. Unfortunately, it can be a time when we lose sight of what is really important, what really matters. There are still many practical preparations that will need to be done, without a doubt. But if we focus only on the mundane and forget what it is we are about to celebrate, those mundane preparations will overwhelm us.

When we celebrate the new calendar year, we often make resolutions. Perhaps it is not a bad idea to make some resolutions for the liturgical year and what better time to begin than this first week of Advent. It doesn't have to be anything elaborate. Each of us knows where our spiritual life needs a lift and can act accordingly. Our Christmas, and our entire year will be much brighter if we prepare as we ought.

Happy New Year!

Most Rev. Roger J. Foys, D.D. is Bishop Emeritus of the Diocese of Covington, Ky.

The sound of silence

Earlier this month I had the privilege of attending a United States Conference of Catholic Bishop's Respect Life Office gathering and retreat for pro-life leadership. The gathering was held and led by the Sisters of Life.

For those who may not know, the Sisters of Life were founded in 1991 by the late Cardinal John O'Connor, Archbishop of New York. The sisters are an active contemplative religious community who give themselves fully to the protection and enhancement of the sacredness of every human life, beginning with the most vulnerable.

VIEWPOINT



Faye Roch

What perfect timing, Respect Life Month and all of its activities were behind me, I was over the mind-numbing election commercials and solicitations, and my free time was full of family activities — not that I'm complaining, but I felt like I did not have a moment to myself.

We arrived at the retreat center on a lovely fall day in Connecticut anticipating a very busy next few days full of talks and fellowship. As many new and old friends from around the country started arriving, we spoke of the days ahead and I heard someone say that we would be doing a silent retreat. Ha, ha I thought she's just kidding, right?

Well, no, she wasn't. That evening as we gathered for our welcome dinner, we were told of the upcoming schedule which would be full of many prayerful opportunities — daily Mass, morning prayer, evening prayer, adoration and talks given by the Sisters, but during our meals and when we had any free time, there was to be silence. We were also asked to put our phones away and log off social media.

Yikes, I thought, this is going to be a challenge. My husband will tell you I don't know a stranger; I can meet someone on vacation and within five minutes end up knowing where they live and how many kids they have. I have been on many retreats where we had short periods of silence but never had to be silent for more than a day. I needed to embrace the sound of silence.

The peace, the quiet and times of contemplation were such a beautiful gift and as our time together for the gathering came to an end, I did not want to go back into the everyday world full of noise and chaos. It was hard to leave the beautiful sacred space that the sisters had created. I needed to make some changes and be open to moments of silence.

Of course, as I thought about my experience, the song "The Sound of Silence," written by Simon and Garfunkel popped into my head. This song was popular when I was growing up. I never had really reflected on the song's lyrics until I was writing this article. I pulled up a Google search where it said the song's message was a warning about human disconnection and people's inability to truly communicate despite constant noise or surface-level talk. This truly hits me; our culture is so full of noise and disconnection. This song, written in 1964, emulates where we are today, with empty communication, alienation and indifference and false distractions.

I am very guilty of living with constant noise and distractions. Look around wherever you are; people are on their phones almost constantly. Young and old alike, we are so distracted that we not only become disconnected with others, but we have become numb to the truths of our faith. Our phones are the false gods that we idolize.

Advent is coming and what a challenge it would be for all of us to push aside our worldly distractions and embrace the "sound of silence" during this time of waiting to celebrate the birth of our Savior.

Faye Roch is director of the Pro-life Office, Diocese of Covington, Ky.

Breaking my heart

Living and working here in Kitale, Kenya, breaks my heart nearly every day. Often, I am troubled as I prepare for Monday morning where I will begin the week working at the St. John Bosco Rehabilitation Center.

GUEST



Theresa Glaser

I know, now, after working here for nearly 3 years, that after my students return from their homes in the slums surrounding Kitale, my heart will be repeatedly battered, first from their subdued comportment, and secondly from small reminders during the day that they come from homes without enough food, without sufficient protection against the rain, crowded with too many family members in the confined space of a mud structure that holds few, if any comforts.

This morning, two small girls helped me to prepare for the day. We have an agreement: if your help involves washing rags from the classroom, you are rewarded with a small fruit drop sweet. Natasha and Peris were first to poke their heads into the classroom door. I sent them off to wash some dishtowels we had used the week before.

What causes me to suffer is watching them choose exactly the fruit drop which will be right. They thoughtfully sort through the wrapped candies on the desk in front of them, considering yellow, or red or purple. I resist hurrying them in the task. This is a big deal. Natasha looks up and asks "blue?" It breaks my heart — there are no blue pieces.

Milton comes to my door. He resides at Bosco but already attends the formal school classroom at the nearby public school. He should be at school but has been kept "home" for illness. I see his blood-shot watery eyes, apparently from an eye infection that he acquired over the weekend. I have the bag of sweets still not put away and I offer him one, hoping to cheer him. He will be taken to the doctor later by our patron. He leaves my classroom feeling better about the day.

I go with our social worker to visit a student's home in a nearby informal settlement. The mud structure, which houses four children and their single mother in an area I estimate to be 10 by seven feet, is divided by a cloth curtain to separate the sleeping area. There is no furniture outside of four rickety wooden chairs and, in the corner, a bentwood cage which houses a rooster and an unknown quantity of chickens.

The mother supports her family by filling discarded plastic bottles with an insecticide that she prepares herself and sells for less than one dollar for a soda sized bottle. Before we leave, I purchase two bottles, paying slightly more than her asking price.

At the door, overwhelmed by her sale for the day, she offers me one of her chickens. I am both touched and shamed. I have met the woman from the Gospel who donated two copper coins.

With 41.9 percent of the population of Kenya living on less than $3 a day, suffering here can abound in plenty, in many forms and sizes. It is only morning Mass that keeps me going, an opportunity to pray for wisdom, guidance and perseverance for myself and for the families of the poor whom we serve.

Jesus told us that "the poor you will always have with you." Perhaps poverty and its trickle-down effects can't be entirely "fixed," but my hope is that being witness to it, walking alongside with love and working in my ministry can somehow lighten the load.

Theresa Glaser is a parishioner of St. Anthony Parish, Taylor Mill and a lay missionary for Maryknoll Lay Missioners. In January 2024, she began a three-year mission in Africa and will be sharing updates with Messenger. For photos see page 14.

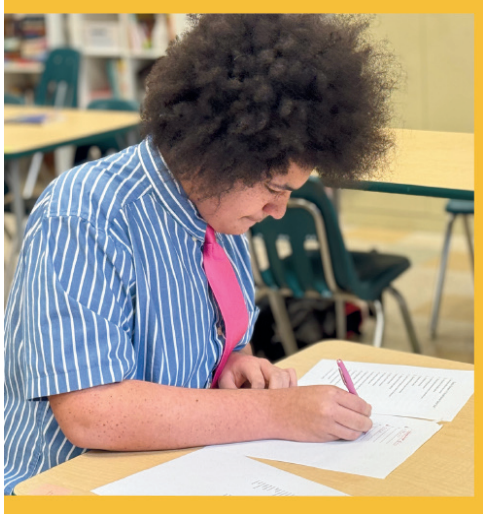


CLS
COVINGTON LATIN SCHOOL

OPEN HOUSE

Saturday, December 5

9:00am









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The prayer intention for December, as recommended by Pope Leo XIV, is for single-parent families. Let us pray for families experiencing the absence of a mother or father, that they may find support and accompaniment in the Church, and help and strength in the faith during difficult times.

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. 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.

The Knights and Dames of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem are sponsoring an Advent Day of Reflection, Dec 5, 10 a.m. to 2:30 p.m., Mary' Seat of Wisdom Chapel, Thomas More University, Crestview Hills. Talk presented by Msgr. Gerald Twaddell on the theme "Blessed are the Persecuted." The day will also include rosary, opportunity for Confession, Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and lunch. Cost is $20 for the day. For more information, contact us at info@eohsjcovington.org

12th annual International Nativity Display will be available for viewing at Bishop Brossart High School, Alexandria. The display features over 200 nativity sets made by artists and craftsmen from 88 different countries. The display is handicapped accessible, free and open to the public on the following days: 10 a.m.–4 p.m., Dec. 6, 13, 19, 20 and 27; 10 a.m.–1 p.m., Dec. 24. Enter at the main entrance. Show sponsors: St. Joseph COF #2094 Cold Spring, Ky.

"Comfort and Joy: Advent Concert" with Sarah Hart and Steve Angrisano, Dec. 9, 7 p.m., St. Mary of the Assumption Parish, Alexandria. Join us for an evening of live music with two talented musicians who both have songs featured in the Breaking Bread hymnals. This is a free event celebrating the Advent season.

Join St. Agnes Catholic Church, Ft. Wright, for The Vigil Project's "Way of the Star," a one-night Advent mission, Dec. 13, 6 p.m.; doors open at 5:30 p.m. Inspired by the traditional Stations of the Cross, "Way of the Star" guides participants through five prayerful meditations on the Nativity story. Original instrumental and vocal music, beautiful sacred artwork, and Scripture come together–create an immersive experience of prayer and reflection, culminating in Eucharistic Adoration. Free and open–all ages. Following the approximately 105-minute program, everyone is invited–Murphy Hall for hot chocolate and fellowship.

New Beginnings provides participants with an opportunity–heal, find support, and move forward despite the challenges of separation or divorce. Facilitated by individuals who have experienced similar losses, this program offers encouragement, understanding, and hope as participants embrace a new beginning. Upcoming winter session is Thursdays: Jan. 21, 28; Feb. 4, 11, 18, 25; March 11, 18, at Catholic Charities Diocese of Covington, Covington.–register: https://covdio.org/new-beginnings-2/. For information contact Isaak A. Isaak, (859) 392-1529 or iisaak@covdio.org.

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

Extraordinary Ministers are needed, especially on Sundays, at St. Elizabeth hospital in Edgewood. If you are a Eucharistic minister, or are interested in becoming one, contact the Pastoral Care office or the Volunteer office at St. Elizabeth for more information, (859) 301-2000.

Notre Dame Urban Education Center, Covington, is seeking adult volunteers to tutor children in grades K-8 one day a week in the Homework Plus Program, Monday–Thursday, 3–5 p.m. The center is also seeking volunteers to assist in the Early Learning Program, Monday–Thursday, 8:30-11:30 a.m. The program runs Sept. 8, 2026–May 13, 2027. Volunteers must be Virtus trained and compliant. Contact Brandi at (859) 630-9475 or blenihan@nduec.org for information.

St. Vincent de Paul Northern Kentucky is in urgent need of Call Center volunteers to answer calls for assistance. On average, we receive over 1,700 calls each month. Shifts are available M-F, 10 a.m.–noon and noon–2 p.m. Training and initial shifts at our Erlanger location, with remote volunteering possible after. Must be 18+ years old. Background check (provided) required. Visit www.svdpnky.org/volunteer to register.

Volunteers needed at St. Vincent de Paul NKY's Erlanger Food Pantry. Volunteers assist neighbors as they shop and keep the shelves stocked. More than 300 families are served each month. Shifts are: Tuesdays, 9 a.m.–noon and 4–6 p.m.; Wednesdays, 9–11 a.m. (stocking only); and Thursdays, 9 a.m.–noon. Visit www.svdpnky.org/volunteer to register.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



Emmaus retreat

The Diocese of Covington's first Women's Emmaus Retreat was recently held. Forty Hispanic women, most from Cristo Rey Parish, came together to encounter Christ, supported by nine dedicated team members and 20 Emmaus sisters from Miami.

St. Timothy students create 250+ cards, spreading holiday cheer to nursing care facilities across Boone County

Bella Bailey
Multimedia Correspondent

Students at St. Timothy School, Union, came together as part of an annual tradition to create cards for the residents at nursing home facilities across Boone County. This year, the student body came together, under the leadership of long-time volunteer Donna Repenning, to create over 250 Thanksgiving cards; with plans to create another 250 for Christmas.

Mrs. Reppening has been creating cards with students at St. Timothy for the last five years, however, it all began much earlier when she and her neighbor, Lizzy, a student of St. Timothy, began making cards together.

"I was doing cards with Lizzy since she was about five years old," said Mrs. Reppening. "The teacher contacted me and just asked … if I wanted to come in and do cards, and that's how it started." At the time, Lizzy was in the second grade and the cards they created were dropped off at the nursing home.

The tradition has grown and evolved and now Mrs. Reppening and Lizzy, along with fellow students Mabel and Sophie, hand deliver Thanksgiving cards to the Boonespring Skilled Nursing Facility, Union, every year. The group has been delivering cards to the residents of Boonespring since they were third graders, and now as seventh graders, they have developed a personal relationship with many of the residents.

"They don't need me," said Mrs. Reppening, gesturing to the three girls as they walked confidently through the hallways greeting residents, "now they're so comfortable; they could talk to anybody about anything."

After five years of hand delivering holiday cheer, the residents recognize the three students. One resident in particular, 102-year-old Rose Marie, has a close relationship with the girls. Greeting them with a big hug and smile, she said, "So nice to come and see me, thank you so much for coming." Another resident whom the students stopped in the hall said to them, "I'm so proud of you and I appreciate you very much."

Photos provided by St. Timothy School





(above, left and right) Students at St. Timothy School created over 250 Thanksgiving cards for nursing home residents across Boone County. A tradition that has grown in popularity at St. Timothy, culminated in a record-breaking number of cards this year, created by almost the entire school.

Bailey photos



(left to right) Mabel, Rose Marie, Lizzy and Sophie, all share a hug after they deliver this year's Thanksgiving card. The group has known each other for five years now, the girls even know Rose Marie's birthday and life story.





Bailey photos





(above, below and page 8 bottom) Lizzy, Sophie and Mabel have hand delivered cards to the residents of Boonespring for the past five years. Now, they have personal relationships with many of the residents.

It is this kind of cheer that the students appreciate most about this annual tradition. "I like seeing people smile and making them happy," said Lizzy. While Sophie explained that for her, the cheer is contagious, "I like to make them happy, and I get happy when they smile," she said.

The delivery experience transcends the piece of colored construction paper and well wishes. Mabel, one of the students who delivers the cards, said that when going from room to room, "I realized that not everyone has all the stuff that we do, and all the stuff we take for granted."

Sophie agreed, saying "there's some people you walk in the rooms, and they'll have pictures of their family members and cards, and there's others that you'll walk in and it's just a plain room. So, then we like to help them out."

Many residents leave the cards on display year-round, as a personal effect.

The three girls recognize the positive impact that the cards have on the residents, but also the influence it has on the students at St. Timothy. Mable said that making the cards is "setting a good example for the other kids." Lizzy said, "I think it's a good example for them to learn to make people feel loved."

When writing in the cards, Sophie said that she tries to "think of things that I would want to hear if I didn't have as much family and friends that come and visit me. I like to say stuff like 'Jesus and God loves you,' and I try to make them feel loved."

Next year will be the girls final year participating in this tradition at St. Timothy as they will graduate and advance to high school. However, they plan to keep the tradition alive. "We'll continue doing this," said Lizzie.

Ashley Rehkamp, principal of St. Timothy School, said to the *Messenger* in an email that "our students aren't just making cards. They are learning the importance of giving their time, showing compassion, and building relationships with people who truly appreciate their visits … I think it is a beautiful example of Catholic education extending beyond the classroom and into our community."



Serra Club welcomes diocesan archivist

At the Serra Club for Vocations, Northern Kentucky, meeting in November, Dave Schroeder (center) spoke on his role as archivist for the Diocese of Covington, as well as his time leading the Kenton County Public Library. What a blessing he is for our Diocese as he meticulously preserves the documents, pictures, books, etc. of everything that has taken place throughout the Diocese of Covington. He is pictured with Dennis Reinersman, president of the NKY Serra Club, and Alan Pickett. The Serra Club for Vocations is a group of Catholic men and women who pray and work to foster vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and religious life. For more information e-mail Dennis Reinersman at dennis.reinersman1@gmail.com.

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Equestrian Order invests lay faithful from Diocese of Covington

Two members of the Catholic faithful from the Diocese of Covington were invested into the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem on Sunday, Sept. 27. In a solemn ceremony held at Sacred Heart of Jesus Church in Cleveland, Ohio, His Eminence, Fernando Cardinal Filoni, KGCHS, the Cardinal Grand Master of the Order, solemnly invested Sir Michael Jacob Monson, KHS and Dame Heather Lynn Monson, DHS of Holy Cross Parish, Covington.

Sir Michael and Dame Heather were among 81 candidates invested in a grand ceremony that drew more than 550 Knights and Dames from across six midwestern states. The large attendance and vast scale of the ceremony made for one of the most impressive gatherings of the Order in recent years.

With their investiture, the Monsons became the newest members of the Covington-Lexington Section of the Equestrian Order.

A solemn Memorial Mass followed the investiture ceremony, which was celebrated by Cardinal Filoni in remembrance of deceased Knights and Dames of the North Central Lieutenancy who died during the past year. His Eminence Cardinal Blase J. Cupich, KGCHS, Cardinal Archbishop of Chicago and the Lieutenancy's Grand Prior, concelebrated the Mass along with eight Bishops and Archbishops of the Order.

The Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jerusalem is an ecclesiastical Order of the Holy See and Pontifical Order of Chivalry, with the Pope as its head and under whom it thrives. Its historical roots can be traced back to the year 1099 and the First Crusade.

Members make a lifelong commitment to live a life of the Order's spirituality and make a commitment to its mission of service and support for the Christians in the Holy Land. Today the Order numbers over 30,000 members worldwide.

The North Central Lieutenancy, one of nine lieutenancies of the Order in the United States, includes the states of Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin.



Photos submitted



(above, left and center) Fernando Cardinal Filoni, KGCHS, Cardinal Grand Master of the Equestrian Order of the Holy Sepulchre of Jersalem, solemnly invests, Sept. 27, Sir Michael Jacob Monson, KHS and Dame Heather Lynn Monson, DHS of Holy Cross Parish, Covington.



(above) Following the investiture, Sir Michael and Dame Heather Monson were among the 81 candidates invested, becoming the newest members of the Covington-Lexington Section of the Equestrian Order.

CONNECT middle school retreat

(Continued from page 3)

Baker photos



(above) Outside the Academic Center, a small group of students attending the CONNECT retreat throw a ball to one another.

(below) A volunteer signs in a family for the CONNECT retreat outside of Thomas More University's Ziegler Academic Center, Crestview Hills.





(above) A student in a shirt with the text "Be Not Afraid" watches on as attendees of the CONNECT retreat engage in "icebreaker" style games with their peers.

(below) A boy participates in an "icebreaker" game at the November 2026 CONNECT retreat.



Pope Leo hails CNEWA's century of service as Jerusalem director barred from boarding flight to Rome



OSV News photo/Mario Tomassetti, Vatican Media

Pope Leo XIV meets with a delegation from the Catholic Near East Welfare Association at the Vatican Nov. 20, 2026, on the occasion of the organization's 100th anniversary.

Paulina Guzik
OSV News

Through the activities of the Catholic Near East Welfare Association, "the closeness of the universal Church is made concrete for countless people who might otherwise feel forgotten or abandoned," Pope Leo XIV told representatives of the major Church humanitarian relief organization at the Vatican Nov. 20.

Celebrating 100 years since the founding of CNEWA, the pope expressed "deep gratitude" to those contributing to its daily activities.

The pope noted that CNEWA's commitment "has taken many forms" throughout the century of its existence, "including supporting bishops and clergy, preparing men and women for leadership, strengthening Catholic education, caring for those in need, responding to emergencies and accompanying local Churches as they seek to minister to their communities."

In this way, the organization "contributes not only to meeting immediate material needs but also to building up the life and mission of the Churches themselves."

Over the century of its existence, CNEWA has assisted those "facing poverty, conflict, displacement and other forms of suffering," the pope said.

Pope Pius XI founded the Catholic Near East Welfare Association in 1926 "as an instrument of love and a sign of hope for those in need scattered throughout the historic but unstable lands of the ancient Eastern churches," CNEWA said on its website — noting that areas of operations are the Middle East, Northeast Africa, India and Eastern Europe.

Michael La Civita, director of communications and marketing for CNEWA, was in Rome for the audience with the pope.

"What is interesting is how our story is very much the same story as it was in 1926," he told OSV News. "And that is: crisis, emergency and how the people in their need, regardless of who they are, of their faith community or not, turn to the Church and ask for help. And so that story has not changed."

He noted however that it's "always better to light one candle than curse the darkness. So we've been lighting a lot of candles and we're not going to stop lighting those candles yet."

"We exist to put ourselves out of business," La Civita noted in an interview from Rome, where CNEWA organized several events to mark the centenary. "In a perfect world, there would be no need for aid agencies.

"There would be no need for an agency such as ours for a response of the Holy See, to assist the Eastern Churches in and how they live and witness the Gospel," he continued. "Not just for Catholics, but for all Christians, and in fact for all people of goodwill where we serve."

Seventy representatives of CNEWA's regional offices joined in the audience with Pope Leo Nov. 20. The delegation was led by Archbishop Ronald A. Hicks of New York and CNEWA's president, Msgr. Peter Vaccari, and accompanied by Sister Raffaella Petrini, president of the Governorate of Vatican City State.

Sister Raffaella, a Franciscan Sister of the Eucharist, will be awarded CNEWA's Faith & Culture Award in December in New York City.

Calling CNEWA an "important instrument of solidarity between the Christian communities in North America and those of the East," Pope Leo said that through the charitable activities, "the closeness of the universal Church is made concrete for countless people who might otherwise feel forgotten or abandoned."

Pope Leo noted during the audience that CNEWA's service "is particularly necessary at the present time" as "across the Middle East and in other regions, Eastern Christians continue to face the effects of war, persecution, instability and poverty."

Many are forced to flee, the pontiff noted, highlighting that "when a Christian family is forced to leave its homeland, much more is lost than a place of residence: a community is weakened, a living tradition is placed at risk and the presence of the Church is diminished."

For this reason, the pope stressed, "accompanying Christians of the East in their homelands is an essential work of hope," adding that at a time "when so many of them are tempted to discouragement, your presence is a reminder that they are not alone and that suffering and uncertainty do not have the final word."

One particular absence during the audience made the papal words resonate especially loud.

Joseph Hazboun, regional director for CNEWA's Jerusalem office, was not allowed to board his plane from Tel Aviv to Rome by Israeli authorities, La Civita told OSV News.

"The staff was able join us, but Joseph was not," La Civita said, adding that it was Hazboun who was bringing a gift for the pope to Rome — a ceramic porcelain model of the edicule in the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem "created specifically for the Holy Father."

Since Hazboun was not allowed to board his plane, "unfortunately we came empty handed" to Pope Leo, as the gift was already checked in Hazboun's personal luggage.

"I think that message is probably a metaphor for what is happening in that part of the world today, where you have these arbitrary violations of human dignity," La Civita told OSV News, adding that CNEWA's fundamental mission is the exact opposite - "promoting human dignity and the value of every human life."

"By remaining close to those who are in distress and helping local Churches respond to their needs," CNEWA "enables many families to remain rooted in their communities," the pope highlighted. "In doing so, you help to preserve the spiritual, the liturgical, the cultural and human heritage of the Eastern Churches — a treasure that belongs not only to these local communities but to the entire Catholic Church, thus enriching the whole Body of Christ."

While La Civita told OSV News Pope Leo was the fourth pope he has met while serving the organization, it was a special moment for him personally to hear the pontiff speak perfect American English without an accent.

"This is my fourth ... audience with a Holy Father. I've been doing this for a long time, but to hear it in American English, I must say personally, was striking."

"To hear him in American English and to hear him speak so beautifully eloquently about the work of the agency, of CNEWA as an agent of healing and hope, and what we have done for these 100 years — and charging us to do more as we enter the second century — it's something that all of us are still feeling and experiencing even now," La Civita said hours after the audience with Pope Leo.

"As you begin the next century of your history, may the Lord strengthen your commitment to the Eastern Churches and enable you to continue being a tangible sign of the closeness, solidarity and loving concern of the universal Church for her Eastern sons and daughters," Pope Leo said.

CNEWA is hosting anniversary events in New York in December, with the Healing and Hope Annual Gala Dinner planned for Dec. 15 at Fifth Avenue's Plaza, in the presence of guest of honor, Frá John T. Dunlap, prince and grand master of the Sovereign Military Order of Malta.

CNEWA's Christmas Concert for Peace will take place Dec. 13 at Our Lady of Lebanon Maronite Catholic Cathedral in Brooklyn, New York.

US bishops bring liturgical texts into harmony with new Catholic American Bible

Gina Christian
OSV News

The nation's Roman Catholic bishops have approved updated versions of the Roman rite Mass lectionary and Book of the Gospels, with translations now matching those in the forthcoming Catholic American Bible.

The favorable Nov. 18 vote — with 196 in favor, five against and three abstaining — took place amid the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' annual fall plenary assembly, held Nov. 16-19 in Baltimore.

The Catholic American Bible will replace the New American Bible Revised Edition, or NABRE, which was released in March 2011 and has been the English translation of Scripture used in the readings at Masses. The new biblical translation will be available in 2027 through approved publishers, including Our Sunday Visitor, the parent company of OSV News.

The bishops' decision on the lectionary and Book of the Gospels will now be submitted to the Vatican Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments for official confirmation and recognition.

"It is about consistency," Auxiliary Bishop Michael G. Woost of Cleveland, chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Divine Worship, told OSV News.

With the upcoming 2027 release of the newly translated Catholic American Bible, said Bishop Woost, "we needed to bring those translations into the lectionary," which contains the passages of Scripture to be read at the day's liturgy.

Eastern Catholic churches have their own specific lectionaries, as do a number of Protestant Christian denominations.

The Book of the Gospels, a dedicated liturgical book containing the Gospel texts, is used in both the Roman and Eastern Catholic churches, and reverenced during the liturgy as a sign of Christ's presence.

"The Gospel, in a unique way, represents for us the presence of Christ in the midst of the assembly," as the Second Vatican Council stressed in "Sacrosanctum Concilium," its constitution on the sacred liturgy, said Bishop Woost.

"So when the word is proclaimed, we are encountering Christ," he said.

Bishop Woost told OSV News that the newly approved Book of the Gospels has been expanded "so that it can be used more often," including during "many of the major feasts and solemnities."

For example, he said, the updated version includes the passage for All Souls' Day (Nov. 2), the Masses for which "tend to attract a large crowd" of those "coming to pray for their deceased relatives and friends."

The use of the Book of the Gospels during those liturgies helps "elevate the solemnity of those particular occasions" and reinforce the awareness of Christ's presence in his word, said the bishop.

Bishop Woost told OSV News that he and his fellow prelates are "really hoping" that with their aligned translations, the Catholic American Bible, the lectionary and the Book of the Gospels will encourage "people to actually read the Scriptures before coming to Mass."

Doing so provides an opportunity to "pray with" and "meditate upon" the Scripture passages, "and then hear the same readings when they go to Mass, especially on Sundays," he said.

"It's a good idea to at least start looking at the readings long before you go to Mass," Bishop Woost advised.



OSV News photo/Bob Roller

Cleveland Auxiliary Bishop Michael G. Woost speaks during a Nov. 18, 2026, session of the fall general assembly of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in Baltimore.

He pointed out that many parishes print the list of the week's daily Scripture readings in their bulletins, making it easier for the faithful to access them.

The USCCB also makes the readings available in both English and Spanish on its website at usccb.org.

"Really enter into praying" with the Scriptures before Mass, Bishop Woost said, noting that "you don't have to read all of them at once."

"Make one reading (from Mass) part of your daily prayer throughout the course of the week," he suggested.

That practice will enable the faithful to realize more deeply the significance of Scripture in the celebration of the Mass, he said.

"Christ is present in our midst through the proclamation of his word," said Bishop Woost.

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Young adults, AI, migrants, racial justice and updated pro-life plan round out bishops' meeting

Peter Jesserer Smith
OSV News

Evangelization of young adults, the challenges of the artificial intelligence revolution, overhauling the bishops' pro-life priorities, fighting racism with a day of prayer, and solidarity with immigrants rounded out the second day of public sessions at the U.S. bishops' fall plenary assembly.

The morning of Nov. 18 began with the bishops quickly approving items they had discussed the day before, the first day of public sessions during the Nov. 16-19 meeting in Baltimore.

The bishops voted overwhelmingly to approve a new Mass lectionary and Book of the Gospels, without any amendments, which will make the readings at Mass harmonize with the texts Catholics can read in the forthcoming Catholic American Bible. (See related article page 12.)

The bishops also voted overwhelmingly to approve a resolution on diocesan financial reporting through 2031 and the updated "Socially Responsible Investment Guidelines for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops."

Archbishop Charles C. Thompson of Indianapolis, chair of the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, then introduced Auxiliary Bishop Richard Umbers of Sydney, who spoke about the 2028 International Eucharistic Congress in Sydney with its theme "This is my body given for you."

Bishop Umbers said the congress has heavily drawn on the U.S. experience with the National Eucharistic Revival and the 10th National Eucharistic Congress, and per Pope Leo's request, will place a special priority on youth.

"It does touch on the Real Presence, but it also touches on what Christ does for us, why he does that for us," he said, "so that we be Christ-like for others, so that we give of ourselves for others, so that we become like him."

After breaking for lunch, the U.S. bishops shifted their focus to listening to a panel of experts from The Catholic University of America regarding their own research into young adults under 30.

Brandon Vaidyanathan, a professor of sociology at The Catholic University of America, opened the discussion with findings from Gallup's 2026 Beauty and Belief survey which took place in March and April of 2026. He went into detail into the findings that 64% of Catholic young adults say religion is more important to them now than it was five years ago compared to 41% of Catholic adults over 30.

Vaidyanathan and other Catholic University experts did a deep dive into the data, answering bishops' questions afterward, but overall making clear that the Church is still "pretty far away in terms of revival."

The presentation made clear that the present generation of young adults identifies less as "spiritual" and more as "religious but not spiritual" than the older generation. It noted that young men and women under 30 are equally likely to consider themselves religious, but with men gravitating toward identity and women toward the interior life. It noted they report a strong desire for community and moral guidance. It also noted that 58% of Catholics ages 18-29 are Hispanic, but they attend Mass weekly at a lower rate.

Bishop Oscar Cantú of San Jose, California — home to Silicon Valley and the hub of AI development — gave the bishops an update on the USCCB's new Task Force on Preserving Human Dignity in the Age of Artificial Intelligence, which he chairs.

Acknowledging the fears, even among the bishops, that AI poses an existential threat to humanity, Bishop Cantu said this moment "represents a significant opportunity for the Church," and drew a comparison to what the Church achieved following Pope Leo XIII's 1891 encyclical "Rerum Novarum" during 19th century industrialization and Pope Leo XIV's 2026 encyclical "Magnifica Humanitas" on the technological revolution driven by AI.

"The Church therefore has a duty similar to the one it embraced in 1891: not to reject progress, but to insist that progress remain ordered to the human person," he said. "And just as 'Rerum Novarum' ultimately led to concrete results, including minimum wage laws, social security, and child labor restrictions, 'Magnifica Humanitas' asks us to work for policies and practices that keep artificial intelligence at the service of the human person."

He explained the task force has begun implementing the USCCB's mandate in the following areas: formation opportunities on AI for bishops and diocesan leaders; helping Catholic education with AI literacy and best practices; public policy work with the USCCB government relations team to continue advocating for clear guardrails on the development and use of AI;

continued engagement with the tech sector that includes more voices in society as called for by "Magnifica Humanitas"; and developing a "theology of human dignity for the digital age."

"At a moment when society is asking what machines can do, we must remind the world who the human person is. 'Magnifica Humanitas' calls us not to fear the future, but to help shape it, with humanity at the center," he said, adding, "Let us together take up that responsibility together, with faith in Christ, who is the source of our hope."

Bishop Daniel E. Thomas of Toledo, Ohio, chair of the Committee on Pro-Life Activities, asked the bishops for permission to begin updating their pastoral plan on pro-life activities, last updated in 2001. He noted dramatic changes have taken place since then, with the overturning of the 1973 Roe v. Wade decision, the teachings on human life from three additional popes following St. John Paul II from the death penalty to other end-of-life issues.

He also noted that abortions are on the increase, with pills to procure them widely available, with in vitro fertilization, or IVF, and other artificial reproductive technologies on the rise.

Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, a former chair of the pro-life committee, spoke in support of developing a new pastoral plan, emphasizing it will also reflect the important work the pro-life committee has been doing the past two decades.

Archbishop Gabriele G. Caccia, the papal ambassador to the U.S., also spoke up and called for a revised plan to include advocacy for banning human surrogacy, which he described as a new form of trafficking worldwide and "another frontier" for the pro-life movement.

The bishops unanimously voted to update the plan, 205-0.

Bishop Daniel E. Garcia of Austin, Texas, chair of the Subcommittee for the Promotion of Racial Justice and Reconciliation, presented a proposal to designate the last Sunday in October as a day of prayer for racial justice. He noted that this observance would serve as a bridge between October, which is Respect Life Month, and November, which honors Black Catholics and Native American Catholics' heritage and history. He said the Sunday readings for Mass also fit well with the theme.

Bishop Garcia referred to the findings of an Oct. 26 report from the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate that indicated 60% of adult Catholics in the U.S. believe racism exists within their local community, with about 4 in 10 (39%) saying they have experienced racial discrimination generally.

Before the vote, Bishop Garcia told OSV News that ending racism "first and foremost" begins with prayer "asking God to heal our hearts of the wounds of the past, and to help us as we try to work through this complex situation that we encounter today, both civilly but also in the Church."

The bishops were overwhelming in their approval, but not unanimous, voting 180-15 to approve the day of prayer for racial justice, with seven abstentions.

The bishops concluded the day's presentations with a report by Bishop Brendan J. Cahill of Joliet, Illinois, chair of the Committee on Migration, marking a year since the U.S. bishops issued their special pastoral message on immigration.

Bishop Cahill warned of a "culture of indifference" informing the treatment of migrants in the U.S. and around the world. He in particular called out the U.S. government's "manipulations of the truth, which dismiss God-given human dignity" that can be seen in its "emphasis on mass detention and mass deportation to the sudden revocation of legal status and work authorization for millions of people."

He detailed the challenges the Church faced with the government, particularly in providing pastoral and sacramental ministry to Catholics in immigrant detention, but he also noted substantial relief had been obtained for religious workers from overseas who serve the Church in the U.S.

Bishop Cahill also noted the Justice for Immigrants campaign, the conference's "You Are Not Alone" initiative, the recent Evangelical-Catholic Dialogue on Immigration, and the Cabrini Pledge, named for St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, as examples of its the conference's ongoing work to advocate for the life and dignity of immigrants.

"As we pray and move forward together, may Mother Cabrini continue to inspire us and be a reminder to us that no task is too difficult as long as our purpose remains the Lord," he said.

The meeting concluded with the Collect for St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, and a reminder for bishops to make sure their tablets were charged for the following day's closed-door session.

Glaser photos





(above) A social worker visits a student in his family home in Kitale, Kenya.

(left) The student's mother stands at the door during Teresa Glaser's and the social worker's departure from the home visit. ***See page 5 for related commentary.***

National/World

Pope Leo marks World Day of the Poor with call to restore voices, hopes of those in need

ROME — Marking the 10th World Day of the Poor on Nov. 15, Pope Leo XIV urged Catholics to see people living in poverty not as recipients of charity but as brothers and sisters whose dignity, voices and hopes must be restored. At the Vatican, Archbishop Luis Marín de San Martín celebrated Mass on the pope's behalf while Pope Leo continued his pastoral visit to Latin America, including Peru. In his homily, Archbishop Marín said, "The love received at the altar must become concrete charity in daily life," calling on Christians to recognize Christ in those who are hungry, lonely or excluded. Spending the afternoon in Peru's Amazon region, during the longest apostolic trip of his pontificate so far, Pope Leo linked care for vulnerable communities with care for creation. "Anything that harms the dignity of life destroys the beauty of the earth," he said during Mass in Pucallpa. Across the world, Catholic communities paired prayer with practical assistance. At the Vatican, 1,500 food packages were distributed and medical clinics expanded free services. In Poland, Church leaders emphasized restoring dignity through personal encounters, shared meals and hospitality. The observance, established by Pope Francis in 2016, continues to challenge Catholics to move beyond sympathy and build real relationships with those in need.

Inaugural Catholic Military Conference prompts reflection on 'Living and Serving Justly'

CHANTILLY, Va. — "Living and Serving Justly" was the theme of the inaugural Catholic Military Conference sponsored by the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services Nov. 9-11 in Chantilly. Its 280 attendees represented all branches of the armed services for three days of lectures, workshops and prayer. Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, who heads the military archdiocese, said it was designed to stay above the political fray, he added. "I generally make a considerable effort to keep my intentions on the social doctrine of the church and church teachings, and avoid partisan politics." He told OSV News that he saw the conference as a way "to teach Catholics to live their faith" and "to know they are supported in their faith." Also, "to deepen our understanding of just war to really view security as protection of the human person," he added. Day 2 of the conference was devoted to discussing "Magnifica Humanitas," Pope Leo IV's first encyclical. The pope addresses safeguarding human dignity and spiritual identity in the age of artificial intelligence and technocracy. He also declared that the just war theory is outdated. "The coin of war is life itself — the life that only God gives," said conference speaker retired Army general and author James Dubik. "War ... damages lives and changes living, sometimes forever. This is why wars should only be fought sparingly."

St. Louis archbishop on ICE lawsuit: 'We're just asking for a space' to give sacraments

BALTIMORE — Priests in the Archdiocese of St. Louis attempted to seek accommodations to ensure their ability to distribute Communion to and hear confessions for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement detainees before it filed a federal lawsuit in October, Archbishop Mitchell T. Rozanski told OSV News during the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' fall plenary assembly in Baltimore. The issue originated, Archbishop Rozanski said during an interview Nov. 17, when about a dozen priests seeking to minister to those in detention went to the prison and they "were only allowed to speak to the detainees on the telephone through the glass." "They were not able to hear confessions," he said. "They were not able to give them Communion. Not able to celebrate Mass. Nothing of the sacraments." The lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Missouri, said the Ste. Genevieve County Detention Center — which ICE uses for migrants awaiting deportation proceedings — has refused to accommodate clergy seeking to provide sacraments to migrants held there, due to their no-contact policy that prevents priests from meeting detainees face to face. The policy has left clergy unable to provide sacraments to detainees.

US bishops focus on building 'construction sites of hope,' elect leaders in fall assembly session

BALTIMORE — At the opening public session of their Nov. 16-19 fall plenary assembly in Baltimore, U.S. Catholic bishops emphasized evangelization, human dignity and building up hope amid growing societal concerns over artificial intelligence, conflict and social division. On Nov. 17, the bishops approved a special message to Pope Leo XIV, expressing gratitude for his recovery from lung cancer surgery and reaffirming support for his priorities on promoting peace, the dignity of immigrants, the renewal of marriage and family life, and the ethical use of artificial intelligence. Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops president, outlined four "construction sites" of hope rooted in Jesus Christ: strengthening families, particularly through sacramental marriages, deepening worship, fostering synodal dialogue and discernment, and renewing civic life. The bishops also held leadership elections, giving Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend a full term as USCCB secretary, and electing various bishops as chairmen-elect for six and to serve on the boards of Catholic Relief Services and Catholic Legal Immigration Network, or CLINIC. The bishops approved a new budget, extended the Religious Retirement Fund Appeal another five years and reviewed proposals involving liturgical texts, financial reporting and socially responsible investment guidelines that address emerging issues such as AI, cryptocurrency and private prisons. The bishops approved the Archdiocese of Philadelphia going ahead with a cause for canonization of Maria Middleton, an 18-year-old devoted to Mary and the Eucharist who died of brain-stem cancer, and heard about preparations for the 2031 celebration of the 500th anniversary of the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Panelists see pope's apology on slavery as a call to work for healing and justice

WASHINGTON — At a dialogue hosted by Georgetown University Nov. 9, panelists praised Pope Leo XIV's slavery apology in his recent encyclical on artificial intelligence, saying it offered a call to action to work for healing and justice. Panelist Rachel L. Swarns, a journalist, said she was "deeply and profoundly moved" by the words of Pope Leo, who called slavery "a wound in Christian memory, one from which we cannot consider ourselves detached." Her 2023 book "The 272" chronicled the story of how in 1838, the Maryland Society of Jesus, the Jesuits, sold 272 enslaved men, women and children to Louisiana sugar plantation owners, and that sale helped ensure the financial survival of Georgetown College, now the university. Another panelist, Washington Auxiliary Bishop Robert P. Boxie III, said the issues of slavery and artificial intelligence might seem unrelated, but the encyclical's emphasis on safeguarding human dignity ties together past injustices and emerging technologies. "Slavery and the systems that allowed it to take hold reduced persons to economic value, property, prosperity for someone else," said the prelate, who is one of the nation's African American bishops and the youngest U.S. Catholic bishop.

Global poverty rate at risk of increasing amid aid cuts,

NEW YORK — The global poverty rate is at risk of increasing across several key factors amid cuts in foreign aid from the U.S., according to Fordham University's 2026 Pope Francis Global Poverty Report. The report, published Nov. 13, shortly before the 10th annual World Day of the Poor on Nov. 15, is a response to the late Pope Francis' address to the United Nations General Assembly in 2015, researchers said. "Recovery from the pandemic that we observed in reducing the global poverty gap has now not only stalled, but it may be reversing itself," Henry Schwalbenberg, an associate professor of economics at Fordham and one of the researchers, said. A new "reversal in the fight against global poverty," Schwalbenberg said, "would not be due to a pandemic, but rather to anti-poor public policy choices on a global scale." The Trump administration dissolved the U.S. Agency for International Development and moved some of its remaining functions under the Department of State's purview. Those cuts included grants to faith-based groups, including Catholic Relief Services, the overseas relief and development agency of the U.S. Catholic Church. The State Department later awarded a $240 million grant in humanitarian and disaster response assistance to CRS, a fraction of the grants the group received from USAID when it was operational.

'God's truth will prevail,' says archbishop as Ukrainians mourn past, present atrocities

NEW YORK — Metropolitan Archbishop Borys A. Gudziak of the Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia joined Archbishop Daniel of the Western Eparchy of the Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA in presiding over a Nov. 21 prayer service at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York honoring the victims of the Holodomor famine. "God's truth will prevail" over past and present Russian atrocities in Ukraine — and people of goodwill are called to do their part through prayer, awareness and advocacy, Archbishop Gudziak said. The cathedral's pews filled. Attendees included Ambassador Andrii Melnyk, Ukraine's permanent representative to the United Nations; Denys Sienik, chargé d'affaires at the Embassy of Ukraine in the U.S.; human rights lawyer Oleksandra Matviichuk, chair of the Nobel Prize-winning Center for Civil Liberties; and Michael Sawkiw Jr., president of of the Ukrainian Congress Committee of America and chair of the U.S. Committee for Ukrainian Holodomor Genocide Awareness. Several hundred participants processed more than 2 miles to the cathedral for the service from St. George Ukrainian Catholic Church in the city's East Village section, carrying signs along with symbolic stalks of wheat, which they laid on a table before the cathedral's sanctuary. Holodomor Remembrance Day will be marked Nov. 28 this year.

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Blessed Sacrament Parish	415	285	130	$273,827.85	$112,600	$161,227.85
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Divine Mercy Parish	93	100	(7)	$46,919.85	$59,900	($12,980.15)
Holy Cross Parish	123	125	(2)	$63,414.25	$9,900	$53,514.25
Holy Redeemer Parish	11	15	(4)	$3,068.00	$2,700	$368.00
Holy Spirit Parish	139	170	(31)	$111,524.23	$48,300	$63,224.23
Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish	289	305	(16)	$179,232.55	$171,100	$8,132.55
Mary, Queen of Heaven Parish	210	235	(25)	$151,297.92	$40,900	$110,397.92
Mother of God Parish	223	215	8	$165,682.88	$70,900	$94,782.88
Our Lady of Lourdes Parish	26	25	1	$13,601.35	$35,900	($22,298.65)
Our Savior Parish	14	25	(11)	$16,200.00	$5,000	$11,200.00
St. Agnes Parish	328	320	8	$217,253.16	$140,200	$77,053.16
St. Ann Mission	26	35	(9)	$37,828.00	$8,700	$29,128.00
St. Anthony Parish	62	70	(8)	$37,662.00	$27,000	$10,662.00
St. Augustine Parish, Augusta	54	70	(16)	$35,015.00	$37,300	($2,285.00)
St. Augustine Parish, Covington	111	135	(24)	$170,856.59	$32,500	$138,356.59
St. Barbara Parish	303	350	(47)	$176,915.00	$134,500	$42,415.00
St. Benedict Parish	68	80	(12)	$30,926.16	$26,600	$4,326.16
St. Bernard Parish	42	90	(48)	$17,625.21	$21,500	($3,874.79)
St. Catherine of Siena Parish	96	115	(19)	$92,013.00	$59,900	$32,113.00
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St. Edward Parish, Cynthiana	79	60	19	$31,716.00	$18,000	$13,716.00
St. Francis Xavier Parish	74	70	4	$37,475.50	$26,500	$10,975.50
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St. James Mission, Minerva	19	25	(6)	$6,690.00	$5,500	$1,190.00
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St. John the Baptist Parish, Wilder	18	20	(2)	$5,260.00	$3,400	$1,860.00
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St. Joseph Parish, Crescent Springs	242	255	(13)	$232,239.83	$149,100	$83,139.83
St. Joseph Parish, Warsaw	39	55	(16)	$12,182.00	$11,000	$1,182.00
St. Mary of the Assumption Parish	424	435	(11)	$197,423.94	$135,400	$62,023.94
St. Matthew Parish	29	35	(6)	$17,730.00	$13,400	$4,330.00
St. Patrick Parish, Maysville	127	140	(13)	$57,016.00	$55,600	$1,416.00
St. Patrick Parish, Taylor Mil	180	155	25	$78,106.64	$61,400	$16,706.64
St. Paul Parish	209	235	(26)	$148,228.13	$75,900	$72,328.13
St. Philip Parish	59	75	(16)	$45,323.00	$12,600	$32,723.00
St. Pius X Parish	540	550	(10)	$480,708.74	$226,100	$254,608.74
St. Rose of Lima Parish	24	25	(1)	$10,675.00	$11,400	($725.00)
St. Therese Parish	150	160	(10)	$68,084.55	$7,200	$60,884.55
St. Thomas Parish	202	270	(68)	$121,541.45	$144,400	($22,858.55)
St. Timothy Parish	377	360	17	$267,601.49	$121,600	$146,001.49
St. William Parish	55	60	(5)	$40,749.00	$20,500	$20,249.00
Sts. Boniface and James Parish	34	45	(11)	$21,670.00	$13,900	$7,770.00
Sts. Peter and Paul Parish	143	145	(2)	$67,699.18	$32,500	$35,199.18
Transfiguration Mission	3	15	(12)	$1,611.10	$2,600	($988.90)
Friends of the Diocese	22	0	22	$7,895.00	0	$7,895.00
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