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My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Today we received the news of the death of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI. Words cannot capture our grief, as together, with Catholics around the world, we mourn his passing into eternity, trusting in the Lord’s promise of immortality to those who faithfully unite themselves to him.

God has truly blessed the Church through this Servant of the Servants of God. Following the horrors of the Second World War, Joseph Ratzinger offered his life to God as a priest. Blessed with profound intellectual gifts, he served as a peritus at the Second Vatican Ecumenical Council and was an authentic interpreter of the documents of the Council. His numerous theological works, which demonstrate his profound love for the Church and a desire to know the Truth, remind us of the Fathers and the Doctors of the Church.

Called by St. Paul VI to serve as Bishop of Munich-Freising, he responded generously, until in 1981, Pope John Paul II called him to Rome, where he began his admirable service as Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, until his election as Pope in 2005. Retiring from office in 2013 due to health reasons and for the good of the Church was an act of great courage and profound humility, characteristics which marked his life. During these last years, he committed himself to praying for the Church and to preparing himself to meet the Lord. That day has arrived, and we commend Him to the Lord of Mercy, who was his heart’s desire.

As a teenager and college student, I began to read and study him thoroughly, along with Hans Urs von Balthasar and Henri de Lubac. His writings deepened my love for the Church, and when I left medical school, I went to a house of spiritual discernment in Rome, the Casa Balthasar. Then-Cardinal Ratzinger was our Cardinal Protector. He was scholarly yet gentle, like someone’s grandfather, who was unfailingly kind yet knew absolutely everything – a true wisdom figure.

While in the seminary, I read practically everything he wrote, and a new world – a new vision – opened before my eyes. I began to see the unity of the Faith and my own vocation in a new light. Serving faithfully beside St. John Paul II, despite his own desire to retire to write theological works, I saw, from a distance, a man who put aside his own interests once again for the good of the Church.

Living in Rome during the agony and death of St. John Paul II, I witnessed firsthand how Cardinal Ratzinger, as Dean of the College of Cardinals, held the Church together during a period of mourning and discernment. His homilies at the papal funeral and prior to the entrance into the Conclave revealed his ability to lead the Church at that critical time. It was with profound joy, standing in St. Peter’s Square, that I witnessed him on the balcony and later attended his installation as Pope.

As Pope, his encyclical letters, Apostolic Exhortations, and homilies offered great clarity as he offered resistance to the dictatorship of relativism and attacks on the dignity of the human person and the human family, while proposing the truth of the Faith and the joy of the Gospel. Living as a priest in Rome with him as Pope and Bishop had a significant impact on my own vocation and priestly ministry. His pastoral visit to the United States in 2008, under the theme of “Christ Our Hope” also inspired many young people to discern their vocations and remain faithful to the Lord.

Recognizing, however, that his own physical weakness and what the Church needed for this new era, he humbly tendered his resignation, living the Petrine Ministry in a different, in a hidden way.

Words cannot express my personal sorrow. I invite all Catholics to give praise and thanks to God for the life and ministry of Pope Benedict XVI as we commend him to the Lord, asking the angels to lead him into paradise so that he may hear those blessed words, “Well done, good and faithful servant; come, share your Master’s joy.”

Yours in our Crucified and Risen Lord,

Most Reverend Earl K. Fernandes
Bishop of Columbus
More than 50,000 people were in St. Peter’s Square for the funeral on Thursday, Jan. 5 of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, a leading theologian of the 20th century and the first pope to resign from office in nearly 600 years.

Royalty, cardinals, patriarchs, government officials and many Catholic families and religious attended the funeral on a cold, foggy morning at the Vatican. More than 3,700 priests concelebrated the Mass.

Cardinals Joseph Zen, Daniel DiNardo, Timothy Dolan, Gianfranco Ravasi, and Giuseppe Betori, all cardinals created by Benedict, were seated in the front row. The Vatican said 125 cardinals concelebrated.

The ceremony began with the transport of the pope emeritus’s wooden coffin from St. Peter’s Basilica to the square.

Archbishop Georg Gänswein, Benedict’s personal secretary, approached the coffin, knelt before it and kissed it. The crowd—formed by the sorrowful mysteries of the rosary in Latin for the repose of the soul of the late pope.

The funeral Mass was simple and solemn, in accord with Benedict’s wishes. The Sistine Chapel Choir sang the Salve Regina, In Paradisum and other hymns. An image of the resurrection of Christ was emblazoned in the$s, in accord with Benedict’s wishes.

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Before Benedict’s burial, a ribbon was placed around the coffin, along with three seals: from the Apostolic Chamber, the Pontifical Household and the office of liturgical celebrations. The coffin was then placed in a zinc coffin and sealed.

The zinc coffin was placed in another wooden coffin and then entombed on the north side of the central part of the Vatican crypt. On the wall above the spot there is an image of the Virgin Mary and the child Jesus flanked by angels.

Cardinals from Germany, France, Ghana, India, Australia, Uganda and many more countries who attended the funeral, especially because it was the first Mass he had ever concelebrated at the Vatican.

“Although we have lost a great man, we are not mourning. We are celebrating a spiritual giant, a great man, a gift to the Church and to the entire world because Pope Benedict was a man not only for the Church but for the entire world,” he said.

The priest from Uganda’s Archdiocese of Mbarara, currently studying in Rome, said that he believes that the late pope emeritus is a saint.

“Pope Benedict was a humble pope, but a great theologian. We have learned from his humility to approach God from the Word of God. But what I like most from his preaching is that God and science are not opposed to each other ... and what touched me most recently in the life of Pope Benedict XVI was his last words,” Father Musinguzi said.

“For 71 years he has given homilies and innumerable essays. He has written 66 books, three encyclicals, four exhortations, and he has generalized all of them in four words, which were his last four words: ‘Jesus, I love you.’”

Father Anthony Agnes Adu Mensah from Accra, Ghana, said that he joined in the chants of santo subito at the end of the funeral Mass. “I feel in my heart that Pope Benedict is a saint,” the priest said.

As Benedict was laid to rest, speakers and attendees at the SEEK23 Catholic conference, held Jan. 2-6 in St. Louis, remembered the late pope’s scholarship and love for Christ.

Father Mike Schmitz, a speaker at SEEK23 and host of the “Bible in a Year” and “Catechism in a Year” podcasts, remembered, what he learned about looking in the Catechism for answers to a question he had about the faith. The boldness and clarity of the explanation he found there stuck with him, he said.

Later, Father Schmitz learned that Benedict — then a cardinal — had presided over the committee to create the Cat-

See BELOVED POPE, Page 6
At Requiem Mass, bishop lauds Benedict’s stance for truth

Church bells tolled throughout the diocese at 9:55 a.m. Monday, Jan. 2 for five minutes in remembrance of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI after his death at age 95 on Dec. 31 in Rome.

The five minutes of solemn bell ringing at Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral was followed by a Requiem Mass for the late pontiff offered by Bishop Earl Fernandes and concelebrated by 10 priests from the diocese with deacons assisting.

A congregation of more than 100 people attended the hastily arranged Mass at the cathedral that included young Catholics, parents with small children, religious sisters from several congregations and older people showing their respect for Pope Benedict.

A portrait, surrounded by poinsettias, was displayed on the west side of the main altar in memory of Benedict, who served as pope from 2005 to 2013 before he retired to a life of prayer.

In a 20-minute homily, Bishop Fernandes expanded upon the letter he penned to the diocese (see Page 2 in this issue) shortly after Pope Benedict XVI’s departure from the earth was announced early Dec. 31.

Near the beginning of his sermon, the bishop recalled his father having him and his brothers read as teenagers – and try to understand as best they could – the writings of then-Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger from the Communio, a theological journal for Catholics.

Years later, when Bishop Fernandes was contemplating his vocation to the priesthood at a discernment house in Rome for which then-Cardinal Ratzinger served as the cardinal protector, he found himself participating in a summer hike in Austria with several other priests in a group that included the future pope.

“They were walking a path that was very tight and narrow, and it had rained the day before and looked very slippery,” Bishop Fernandes remembered. When they came to a fork, “the cardinal turned and said, ‘Which way should I go?’”

One priest said go right. The other said turn left.

“And the cardinal laughed and walked straight ahead,” Bishop Fernandes said. “This is how Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI, was. He walked in the path of truth, in the light of truth.”

In the first reading from the Acts of the Apostles at the Mass, Peter said, “In truth, I see that God shows no partiality.”

“In Greek, this means that God won’t take a bribe, he shows no preference between the rich and the poor as such. He can’t be bought,” the bishop said.

“This is how Joseph Ratzinger lived. He was not concerned about human respect but about the truth.”

“When he came out on the balcony as Pope Benedict XVI (in 2005), he spoke of himself as a simple, humble worker in the vineyard of the Lord.”

Bishop Fernandes went on to note that the former pope wrote three volumes on Jesus of Nazareth, which the bishop called for the faithful to follow Benedict’s example and become co-workers for the truth, “not to care what people think of us to bear witness.”

As a young priest, Bishop Fernandes was studying in Rome at the time of Pope John Paul II’s death in April 2005. He explained the impact there of losing the saintly pontiff.

“We all wondered: How can we move forward?” Bishop Fernandes said. “And I remember the papal funeral, and somehow someone had to be the adult in the room. And it was then-Cardinal Ratzinger, who gave beautiful homilies and then helped the College of Cardinals gather themselves and to discern God’s will.”

“Cardinal Ratzinger, then the prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, had planned to stay on in Rome to help with the transition after John Paul II’s death and then return to his native Germany to live out his days writing and praying.”

During the interim before a new pope was selected, Cardinal Ratzinger spoke about the maturity that Christians must display in practicing their faith and the need to avoid being swayed in one direction or the other.

“He spoke about the dictatorship of relativism,” Bishop Fernandes shared. “And at the end of the talk St. Peter’s Basilica broke out in applause, and I began to think he might be elected, but it was just a thought.”

“But this idea of a dictatorship of relativism was important because it had to do with genuine truth, and if we are all subject to the whims of this passing world, the whims of political power, then everyone must be vulnerable.”

“And here we had this meek and mild man, gentle like someone’s grandfather ... someone who was willing to stand up for the truth and defend it.”

And it came to pass that Cardinal Ratzinger was elected Pope Benedict on April 19, 2005.

“It was with much delight that he appeared on St. Peter’s balcony. There I was in St. Peter’s Square in the piazza, and I knew I would never really see him again or speak to him again, but I was happy because we had a pope.”

Benedict had spent much of his priestly life as a defender of the faith. In the 1960s, he attended the Second Vatican Council as a theological adviser and years later would be a key contributor to the Catechism of the Catholic Church that was promulgated in 1992.

“If we were to do Pope Benedict honor, it would be to take our stand with Christ so as to live with him no matter how much the cost, even if we have to suffer,” Bishop Fernandes said. “And he did suffer, not only from his enemies and his detractors, but physically.”

Benedict cited his lack of physical strength when he announced in Latin on Feb. 11, 2013, that he was resigning, becoming the first pope to do so in nearly 600 years.

“He offered his suffering for the good of the Church, and he suffered in silence,” Bishop Fernandes said.

As the prefect for the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith and later as pope, Benedict defended the truths of the faith even when he was called too dogmatic and countercultural.

“Rather, he would say that when the Church says no to something, we are saying yes to something else,” Bishop Fernandes said. “When we say no to abortion or attacks on human life, we say yes to the goodness of life.”

Bishop Fernandes went on to say Benedict viewed the Church as young and alive, and he encouraged young people who are sometimes afraid of Christ taking away their freedom for following Him that He will instead give them everything.

“It was his faith in Jesus Christ that allowed him to resign for the good of the Church,” the bishop said.

“That takes humility and courage that comes from confidence that in Christ everything will be OK.”

“I’m sure that Joseph Ratzinger would have preferred to return to his native Germany to write his books and to live out his life in prayer. God had something else in mind. And so, he laid down his life for the good of the Church.

“He spent nearly 10 years in silent prayer. We do not know where we would be or the Church would be without his prayers.”

Bishop Fernandes mentioned Benedict XVI’s first encyclical, Deus Caritas Est, which stated in the first paragraph that “being a Christian is not the result of an ethical choice or a lofty idea but the result of an encounter with an event or a person who opens up new horizons and gives our life a decisive direction.”

“Joseph Ratzinger, Pope Benedict XVI, once said that there is no enemy but only an encounter. Now we can help him encounter God as he makes his final pilgrimage to the heavenly homeland to be his destiny.”

“Christ was his life, and Christ is our life.”
Local reactions to the death of Benedict XVI

The Catholic Times has compiled reactions and reflections from throughout the diocese on the death and legacy of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

The retired pontiff died Dec. 31 in Rome at age 95 and was laid to rest on Jan. 5 after a simple funeral at the Vatican.

The former Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger was elected pope in 2005 and resigned in 2013. The German native and theologian had served under Pope St. John Paul II as the prefect for the Congregations for the Doctrine of the Faith until succeeding John Paul.

The following are remembrances of Pope Benedict XVI:

Father Stephen Alcott, OP Pastor, Columbus St. Patrick Church I attended World Youth Day in Cologne (Germany) in 2005 as a young priest along with a group from our parish in Cincinnati. Pope Benedict had just become pope. I, like so many, knew that he was a great writer, but his pastoral side was wonderfully revealed in his preaching and presence at this World Youth Day which had been planned by his predecessor, Pope John Paul II.

Because the relics of the Magi are kept at the Cologne Cathedral, Pope Benedict wove the theme of pilgrimage and seeking Christ throughout his preaching and addresses. One of his reflections that he shared with a group of seminarians in Cologne has stuck with me over the years: "Why did the Magi set off from afar to go to Bethlehem? The answer has to do with the mystery of the 'star' which they saw 'in the East' and which they recognized as the star of the 'King of the Jews,' that is to say, the sign of the birth of the Messiah (Matthew 2:2). So, their journey was inspired by a powerful hope, strengthened and guided by the star, which led them towards the King of the Jews, towards the kingship of God himself. This is the meaning behind our journey: to serve the kingship of God in the world.

"The Magi set out because of a deep desire which prompted them to leave everything and begin a journey. It was as though they had always been waiting for that star. It was as if the journey had always been a part of their destiny and was finally about to begin.

"Dear friends, this is the mystery of God’s call, the mystery of vocation. It is part of the life of every Christian, but it is particularly evident in those whom Christ asks to leave everything in order to follow him more closely.” (Address to seminarians, Aug. 19, 2005: bit.ly/3CIMEM)

Especially during this Christmas season, all we can reflect on our vocations as a pilgrimage to see the face of Christ, how each vocation is, like the star of the Magi, an attractive, captivating light shining in the darkness but still quiet and unobtrusive: It has to be followed willingly.

I am also a fan of his writing. I did my Licentiate in Sacred Theology degree with a concentration in Scripture and remember that for all of Pope St. John Paul II’s papal writings, he wrote very little on Sacred Scripture.

When Benedict XVI became pope, he wrote the Jesus of Nazareth trilogy of books, which I thought was wonderful: He was able to be more free and personal in sharing his reflections on Christ in the Gospels than he would have been in a papal encyclical letter or other papal document, and they remain a great model to me of combining our Catholic faith and theology with a serious intellectual engagement of the Gospel texts.

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EDITORS REFLECTIONS

God had other ideas for him, and it’s through this lens that one of Benedict’s famous quotes summarizes our mission in the Christian life: “The world offers you comfort. But you were not made for comfort. You were made for greatness.”

Benedict XVI knew the truths of the Catholic faith as well as anyone — Pope John Paul II put him in charge of overseeing the publication of the Catechism of the Catholic Church in 1992 — and defended them no matter the cost to his personal reputation.

That’s really the legacy he leaves and the example that we, as Catholics, should strive to follow.

We must be ready to lay down our lives for the Lord and our faith. We must know and defend the truths of our Catholic faith at all costs without fear that our careers or reputations might be damaged — even if it means offending family members or co-workers.

Benedict undoubtedly heard his detractors criticize his rejection of married priests and women’s ordination, his staunch defense of the unborn and traditional marriage, and his denunciation of artificial contraception and relations outside marriage. He was maligned for some of the things he said and did, including handling of clergy sex abuse cases. All of that ultimately drained his energy, but media portrayals are not always based on reality.

One of his significant achievements was to allow the Traditional Latin Mass to be more widely celebrated. That decision also drew criticism and last year was all but rescinded by his successor in a move that reportedly saddened Benedict, said his longtime personal secretary, Archbishop Georg Ganswein, after the former pope’s death.

But our hope now is that this holy man after his de-
Local woman, priest recall Mass with Pope Benedict XVI

Ginger West just knew she had to be at Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral on Monday, Jan. 2 for a Requiem Mass celebrated by Bishop Earl Fernandes in memory of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI.

After the former pontiff died at age 95 on Saturday, Dec. 31 in Rome, and she heard later that day that Bishop Fernandes would offer a special Mass to honor Benedict XVI on Jan. 2, she immediately flashed back to the exact date 10 years earlier.

On Jan. 2, 2013, she attended a Mass with then-Pope Benedict as the celebrant at the Vatican along with two grandchildren plus third-year theology seminarians from the Pontifical College Josephinum and Father Eugene Morris, then-director of sacred liturgy and an assistant professor of sacred theology at the Josephinum.

West, a devout local Catholic who is an active supporter of the Josephinum and vocations to religious life, couldn't help but notice the significance of the dates exactly 10 years apart.

“They were so impressed with (Benedict),” she said. “We were able to get special seating in the audience, and it just was so special to be in his presence.

“I remember like it was yesterday, and so January 2 is a very important date to me.

“My grandchildren were very, very touched by (Benedict’s) words and by the pomp and circumstance of that beautiful, beautiful audience and all the different languages that were spoken.”

One of the seminarians who assisted at the Mass was Father Sean Dooley, now the pastor at Columbus Our Lady of Peace Church. He was joined by Father Vince Nguyen, now pastor at Columbus St. Mary, Mother of God and St. Ladjislas and Corpus Christi churches, and Father Cyrus Haddad, now pastor at Washington Court House St. Colman of Cloyne Church.

Father Dooley presented a reflection last week at his parish on his encounter with Benedict XVI before that Mass in 2013.

“In January of 2013, my seminary class was honored to serve Mass at St. Peter’s Basilica in Rome for Benedict XVI,” he said. “It was Epiphany, and four bishops were to be ordained at this liturgy.

“The night before, we were given a ‘pep talk’ by one of the priests. I remember his words: ‘Gentlemen, you are to be clean shaven, hair combed and your shoes polished.’ Gulp!

“The day arrived. The sun was rising over the domes. I felt like I was in a movie, walking toward St. Peter’s Basilica in my cassock. As soon as we arrived, we were taken into a room as some cardinals were vesting for Mass.

“Suddenly, an Augustinian friar approached us seminarians. He handed us some of the vestments for the pope. We were told to line up. I looked to the left and noticed I was standing next to Michelangelo’s Pieta!

“Then, one of the monks handed me the pallium. (The pallium is what the pope and archbishops wear to symbolize their authority.) The monk told me to go into the sacristy, and there stood Benedict, facing the crucifix and praying as he prepared for Mass. I remember he made a gesture of gratitude toward me. Crazy!

“I could tell that Benedict had not shaven his face that day! Come on! I had to shine my shoes!”

EDITOR, continued from Page 5

departure from this life will intercede for a world and a Church desperately in need of a moral beacon. We turn to Benedict and pray for his protection, particularly for a Catholic Church being pressured politically to conform to crazy secular ideology and increasingly vulnerable to misguided leadership.

Even though, as I look back on my long life, I can have great reason for fear and sorrow, I can have great reason for joy and hope of a new world that will touch souls now and forever.

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Visit our web site or scan the QR code to learn more!

*Ohio tax credit is limited up to $750 per person, or $1,500 if married filing jointly. Consult your tax advisor for guidance. The Emmaus Road Scholarship Fund is a certified scholarship granting organization in the state of Ohio.
The Joseph Ratzinger I knew for 35 years — first as prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, later as Pope Benedict XVI and then Pope Emeritus — was a brilliant, holy man who bore no resemblance to the caricature that was first created by his theological enemies and then set in media concrete.

The cartoon Ratzinger was a grim, relentless ecclesiastical inquisitor/enforcer, “God’s Rottweiler.”

The man I knew was a consummate gentleman with a gentle soul, a shy man who nonetheless had a robust sense of humor, and a Mozart lover who was fundamentally a happy person, not a sour crank.

It’s like taking John Paul II’s ‘Feminine Genius’ and giving it more depth. He really expanded, I think, on a lot of things that John Paul II brought up, but then he also had this beautiful Scripture academic side,” Cotter said.

“I think we all got a little starstruck with JPPII that we didn’t recognize the gift of Benedict. But I think his legacy is really going to start to come out. And as much good as he was doing here on earth, I’m really excited because I know he’s going to do infinitely more good work in heaven.”

By Sister John Paul Maher, OP

And for me, that was a great comfort.”

Lisa Cotter, another well-known Catholic speaker, said a letter Benedict wrote while a cardinal, “On Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World,” is her favorite of his many writings.

“It was something that spoke so directly to my heart as a woman, who’s a lay woman who’s married with children. It’s the way that he explained and gave us this beautiful teaching on how men and women work together. It’s like taking John Paul II’s ‘Feminine Genius’ and...”

The true Joseph Ratzinger

THE CATHOLIC DIFFERENCE

George Weigel

George Weigel is the Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C.

The Catholic Difference

The key to the true Joseph Ratzinger, and to his greatness, was the depth of his love for the Lord Jesus — a love refined by an extraordinary theological and exegetical intelligence, manifest in his trilogy, Jesus of Nazareth, which he regarded as the capstone of his lifelong scholarly project. In those books, more than six decades of learning were distilled into an account that he hoped would help others to come and love Jesus as he did. For as he insisted in so many variations on one great theme, “friendship with Jesus Christ” was the beginning, the sine qua non, of the Christian life. And fostering that friendship was the whole purpose of the Church.

The last of the monumental figures of 20th-century Catholicism has gone home to God, who will not fail to reward his good servant.

Seeking, receiving, hoping: inspiration from Benedict XVI

As we reflect on the life and writings of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, we can identify three themes that might be applied to our own call to follow Christ. Just as the late Holy Father did, we are called to seek the face of the Lord, to receive His love and to have hope in His faithfulness.

Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI sought the face of the Lord. This was evident in his manner of prayer and study and in the worship of the divine mysteries at Holy Mass and in Eucharistic Adoration. He described his three-volume work on the life of Christ as “solely an expression of my personal search for ‘the face of the Lord.’” (cf. Psalm 27:8) (Jesus of Nazareth: From the Baptism in the Jordan to the Transfiguration, 2007, p. xxiv)

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By Sister John Paul Maher, OP

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The joy of recognizing the Lord working in our lives never grows old. Every time this happens it is in His time – a hope revealed, a prayer answered in the gentlest and sweetest of ways. This Lord who parts the seas and created the stars in the heavens doesn’t just take a fleeting moment from His busy life to bless me, but rather His plan is intentional.

Our God has the generous heart of a father. I see this heart of a father work daily through my husband. He gives abundantly, serving every day because life with eight children and many special needs mandates a selfless type of giving.

More than the doing, I see the joy it brings him to bless our children. He is spontaneous, extravagant and zealous in his desire to love us, and this is just an earthly example of a father’s love. One can only stand in awe of the beauty of our heavenly Father’s love.

We recently hosted a family gathering that had my stomach in knots prior to the visit. Truth be told, I was almost relieved when a child came down sick that morning. I heard another cough, and a small voice whispered: There’s your reason to cancel.

I reached out to our guest explaining the situation. He responded with excitement to be coming and said he’d still like to visit. Anxiety filled my heart. I almost threw our whole morning into a tailspin because of my emotions.

I took a moment to pause and welcome the Lord into my moment of anxiety and worry. You can picture the “what ifs” boiling out of my thoughts into this silent prayer, and He nodded compassionately, smiled tenderly and held out His hand.

For me, that visual of the Lord holding out His hand in invitation is always the next step. It is quite literally a leap of faith, a surrender, and I find this necessary almost every day. Not every moment reaps a reward like this step, but each one molds me more closely to the heart of my Father in heaven.

Our guest arrived, and I still sit in awe of how lovely this visit was. There was healing and laughter. I watched our family run to the door to welcome, and hearts overflowed from the moment the door opened. Words that typically might come out harsh were softened before they left lips. Looks of wonder were shared across the room because there was a peaceful presence that was beyond what our family has experienced lately.

I realized this person was nervous, too, and that he had stepped out in faith, even though his faith might be a mustard seed. The Lord took that mustard seed, and this moment we were sharing was watering it.

I stood in the middle of the Lord working in my life, answering my prayers, healing so many wounds in this one visit. There are images of saints looking to heaven in awe and gratitude. But for me, in this miraculous moment, closing my eyes, I drew quickly into the arms of my Father and said thank you.

Silent tears of gratitude and joy, wonder and thanksgiving rolled down my face, and I watched myself and this person whom I almost pushed away in hurt and pain begin to heal. I’ve never felt a healing like this, a layer by layer, piece by piece awareness that this is a process, but we are not going to hurt each other while walking through it, a this-is-worth-it kind of healing.

I feel like Zachariah who was struck mute but filled with joy at the Lord’s gifts! So many texts and phone calls have been sent after this visit in wonder of how beautiful that time was. Requests were made to do it again soon.

As I sit here pondering the Father’s love, I am giddy with this gift – the gift of such a beautiful visit and the beginnings of healing, but more so, the gift of recognizing the Lord working abundantly in my life. I almost let my worry and hurt push this moment away.

Thank you, Jesus, for speaking to my heart and calming me. Your way is certainly not the path I dreamed I’d be walking at this point in my life. I’m so much more the person You created me to be by staying close to your heart.

Today, may we all take a moment to thank the Lord for working in our lives, for being present even when we don’t see Him and to reaffirm our trust and our surrender to His plan in our lives. With Mother Mary as our guide, may we walk forward with trust and wonder.

**To be pro-life, we must help pregnant/parenting women, families**

What is the Church’s role in this post-Dobbs political climate? First, we must keep supporting moms and their families. I believe the key to this is Walking with Moms in Need (WWMIN), the U.S. bishops’ nationwide initiative to assist pregnant and parenting women and their families.

We must continue providing real compassion for a woman who’s scared, isolated, anxious, under pressure and lonely. She needs our love and support.

One way to provide that is by telling her where she can find local help and resources. WWMIN asks parish leaders to inventory their local communities and parish resources. If a pregnant woman is given information about what’s going on inside of her and her options, and if she receives love, support and the assurance that we will walk with her, she will opt for life.

We must make it possible for women and their families to make real and effective choices to support life.

**ALL THAT WE HAVE**

MaryBeth Eberhard writes about marriage, life experiences of a large family and special needs. She attends Sunbury St. John Neumann Church.

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**FAITH IN ACTION | Erin Cordle**

Erin Cordle is associate director of the diocesan Office for Social Concerns.

That’s how we build the culture of life. Laws are important, and political advocacy is important. The public face of our pro-life efforts is important to help raise consciousness.

But in a bitterly polarized society, it is our accompaniment of, and support for, women and families in these situations that changes hearts and minds through love and compassion. This extends even beyond the birth of the child to ensure that moms and their babies continue to be supported and are OK.

We need better communications about the goals of WWMIN because we’re up against false narratives.

Pregnant/parenting moms in need are in our parishes and our neighborhoods. As Pope Francis reminds us, our parishes must be “islands of mercy in the midst of a sea of indifference.” We need to know how and where to reach women and families in spiritual, emotional, material or financial need.

A key strategy is to involve the active ministries in your parish/deanery. Prayer shawl/fiber crafting ministries could create comfort items; service clubs could offer to mow lawns, rake leaves, etc.; youth groups could coordinate drives for baby supplies. The list is limited only by our imaginations.

Ongoing bulletin/webpage announcements could raise awareness in your parish to pray for, donate to or volunteer at a support center. The parish as a whole could become more aware of needs and how they can support them through prayerful outreach and referrals.

Parishes decide their own ability to support individuals/families based on their resources and active ministries. Materials on the WWMIN website will support your efforts to raise awareness in your parishes (www.walkingwithmoms.com/). An introductory webinar is located at www.youtube.com/watch?v=6kOP-Gk3VqQ. New materials are added to the site on an ongoing basis.

WWMIN aims to help parishes and parishioners learn about needs and available resources. An emerging strategy for WWMIN is to work in parish clusters – no need to reinvent the wheel. One current option is to work on the resources inventory list identifying local support options. Then, each parish completes the parish-support section individually.

To connect your parish champion to a group, or for support in starting this ministry, send the contact information to me at the diocesan Office for Social Concerns at socmailbox@columbuscatholic.org. Also, you can call me at 614-241-2540.

The cornerstone of Catholic social teaching is the sacredness of human life and the dignity of the human person. I pray we all start this new year with a focus of living out Catholic social teaching with energy and renewed conviction.
Through God’s grace, we can practice faith, hope and charity

“The theological virtues dispose Christians to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity. They have God for their origin, their motive, and their object—God known by faith, God hoped in and loved for his own sake. There are three theological virtues: faith, hope, and charity. They inform all the moral (human) virtues and give life to them.” — Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) 1840/1841

Instances of the word “faith” in the Holy Bible number about 380 and eclipse hope and charity. The virtues must exist in you together or they are devoid of their true meaning. Once we are in heaven—as we hope—faith and hope will be truly realized; charity (love) remains.

In his book God or Nothing, Cardinal Robert Sarah writes, “Our life of faith most often walks in the night. The more faith has to confront trials, the stronger it becomes. Nights of faith always end with finding the little light of God.”

“Faith” is one of those words that gets tossed around, probably more than any other word. With our secular friends, faith seems often to be brought down to the lowest denominator and finds itself sparring with reason.

Christians might be thought of as having some sort of blindness or be irrational to have faith. Like it or not, faith is a necessary part of our human nature. We cannot function without faith. In every encounter, whether with a cashier or our spouse, we exhibit some level of faith, and it is not blind.

The difference is with God. Faith from him is supernatural. Meaning it is, and always will be, true. “It is certain,” as the Catechism says.

Pope St. John Paul II writes, “Faith and reason are like two wings on which the human spirit rises to the contemplation of truth; and God has placed in the human heart a desire to know the truth—in a word, to know himself—so that, by knowing and loving God, men and women may also come to the fullness of truth about themselves.” (Fides et Ratio)

On the Christian side, faith also gets brought down to the lowest denominator. All Christians will profess faith in Jesus as being their “Lord and Savior.” Anything beyond that, one wonders what the fuss is all about.

Why is supernatural faith denied or refused? God can be reasonably perceived. St. Paul writes, “For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made.” (Romans 1:19-20)

We read in CCC 154/155, “Believing is possible only by grace and the interior help of the Holy Spirit. But it is no less true that believing is an authentically human act. Trusting in God and cleaving to the truths he has revealed are contrary neither to human freedom nor to human reason. …

“In faith, the human intellect and will cooperate with divine grace, (as St. Thomas says,) ‘Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace.’”

If the existence of God is perceived just by walking out the door, and you, me and our fellow Christians have faith, why does the world push it away? There is the problem of evil, which is for another time. Could Christians be the fault?

The problem is, the Church split (like Israel), and subsequently the virtues of faith, hope and charity, while true from God, have been distorted, so there no longer is what people perceive as “one faith.”

With “once saved, always saved,” Christian hope has been achieved before heaven. Additionally, we really have not been the best stewards of our resources, so consequently our hope has been redirected to “saving the planet” through technology.

With charity (love), we have also reduced it to the lowest denominator. We have exchanged the creature for the creator. Love for neighbor (important), competes with, or has usurped, love for God (more important).

St. Thomas defines love as an act of the will: To love is to will the good of the other. If you think closely about this definition, “will” and “good” will have a massive spectrum of meaning and understanding.

Now return to the top of this article and reread the first paragraph. Keep this in mind when you exercise your faith, hope and charity, and you will be truly happy.
Bishop brings Christmas Mass to inmates in Chillicothe

Bishop Earl Fernandes celebrated two Christmas Masses for male inmates on Friday, Dec. 23 at the Chillicothe Correctional Institution.

The first Mass was offered for the general population in Sacred Heart Chapel and the second Mass was for Death Row inmates in the prison gym.

“We are about to celebrate the Nativity of the Lord and the true meaning of Christmas,” Bishop Fernandes said in his homily, “which is that God comes to save us from our sins and to give us eternal hope through Jesus Christ. …

“Christmas is a time when God draws close to us, wanting to embrace us with His joy and receive us in paradise, which to Him is in the human heart...

“Rejoice, rejoice! For Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, was sent by God the Father as an offering for us to prepare our return to Him in Heaven. Christ, who is the savior of all, was born for us. Rejoice, Rejoice!”

In Sacred Heart Chapel, approximately 75 inmates attended. Some of the men participated as lectors, altar servers and singers in the choir.

The Mass for death row inmates included six inmates.

The Chillicothe Correctional Institution is a minimum- to medium-security prison with a population of approximately 3,000. The majority of Ohio’s male death-row inmates were moved to the facility in late 2011 and early 2012.
Bishop celebrates Mass at Marysville prison

After a one-week weather delay, Bishop Earl Fernandes traveled to Marysville to celebrate a Mass for the Nativity of the Lord on Saturday, Dec. 31 at the Ohio Reformatory for Women (ORW).

The bishop was originally scheduled to visit the prison on Christmas Eve, but snow, wind and extreme cold that weekend forced the Mass to be postponed until New Year’s Eve morning.

The delay failed to dampen the enthusiasm of approximately 70 inmates and staff members who gathered in the recreation room that serves as a Catholic chapel to welcome Bishop Fernandes and attend the delayed Christmas Mass.

He was joined on the altar by Father Joseph Trapp, the chaplain at the prison and the pastor at Plain City St. Joseph Church.

Father Trapp proclaimed the Gospel while inmates served as lectors for the first two readings, led the Responsorial Psalm and provided music for the Mass.

Adriana Guitierrez Santana, one of the inmates who attends the regular weekly Mass celebrated by Father Trapp on Thursdays at ORW, called the bishop’s visit a “huge” blessing and an emotional experience for her.

“It means everything to me that the bishop came here and took the time to be with us, that we’re not forgotten,” she said. “He has a beautiful spirit, and it shows in his smile. And his saying the homily and the communion prayer in Spanish was tremendous! I feel so blessed today!”

Guitierrez Santana, who has been incarcerated at ORW for seven years, explained that she spoke little English when she arrived at the prison and that Father Trapp gave her a Bible and missal written in Spanish, her native language, which she said meant the world to her.

Over the years, she said, she became proficient in English and that Father Trapp has learned some Spanish.

In addition to the bishop speaking some Spanish during the Mass, a sign language interpreter assisted a deaf inmate.

Observers noted that many women were visibly moved during the Mass, and some shed tears.

The Dec. 31 Mass was celebrated just a few hours after the death in Rome of Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, who retired from the papacy in 2013 after being elected in 2005. He was age 95 when he passed into eternal life on the final day of 2022.

“Pope Benedict XVI, who departed from his earthly life this morning and goes now to be with the Father, said that ‘each and every one of us must realize we have proof of the Father’s love through His Son, Jesus Christ … and that God has a plan for each of us,’ Bishop Fernandes said in his homily.

“No one is lost because, saint and sinner alike, He is merciful and is for us always.

“Jesus holds His arms wide to us – in the manger and on the cross – and calls us to join Him in eternal life. God sent us His only begotten Son, Jesus, who is the Light of World and the Gift of Eternal Peace.”

The bishop continued with his message of hope, saying, “God has come to us and has given the gift of His Son, Jesus, which means the Lord is salvation. He has come to save His people from their sins and to bring peace to the world. He has not come in power and might, but as a tiny child. He did not reveal Himself first to the great and mighty. Rather, He showed His sacred face to His lowly mother, a handmaiden; to her spouse, Joseph, a simple carpenter; and to the shepherds when the angel appeared to them and bade them go to Bethlehem to see this great event and to announce great tidings of gladness and joy.”

At a reception after the Mass, Bishop Fernandes chatted with inmates and staff members and blessed religious sacramentals and individuals.

The visit to ORW was the first by a Columbus bishop in more than 20 years.
Order of Malta focuses on respect for life

By Charles Mifsud

In his September 2022 statement, *Building a Culture of Life in a Post-Roe World*, Archbishop William E. Lori, the archbishop of Baltimore and chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities said, “In a post-Roe world, Catholics must now work together … shift the paradigm to what Saint Pope John Paul II described as ‘radical solidarity,’ making the good of others our own good, including especially mothers, babies, (born and preborn), and families throughout the entire human lifespan. It is a call to friendship and compassion rooted in the truth that we are made to love our neighbor as ourselves.”

The Order of Malta has had this sentiment as its mission for more than 900 years, and respect for life is at the core of everything the order does.

Committed to upholding human dignity and caring for people in need, the Sovereign Order of Malta is one of the oldest religious orders in the Church. Its charism is the phrase *Tuitio Fidelis et Obsequium Pauperum*, which is Latin for “Defense of the Faith and Care for the Sick and Poor.”

The most direct way that members of the Order of Malta carry out their charism and show their respect for life is at their health clinic in Columbus. Founded in 2016, the Order of Malta Center of Care Clinic is a general care, free medical and dental clinic.

The clinic, staffed by members of the order, is located in one of the poorest areas in the state, with high unemployment and high infant mortality rates. It is located in the parish hall at Holy Rosary-St. John Church, above a soup kitchen and food pantry, providing free health care to any patient. The clinic does not bill insurance or Medicaid and is funded entirely from donations.

Doctors treat the sick and the poor, providing medical screenings (blood pressure, blood sugar/diabetes), podiatry, wound care, checkups and flu shots. Dentists are present to perform all routine dental procedures. In addition, many homeless men come to the clinic for basic supplies.

To fill this need, clinic volunteers hand out bags and backpacks filled with hygiene supplies, toiletries and socks. In the winter, hats, gloves and coats are also distributed.

Another important aspect of the Order of Malta’s respect for life is the Holy Family Hospital in Bethlehem. In the 1980s, Pope St. John Paul II entrusted management of this important hospital, located just steps from the Church of the Nativity, to the care of the order. Since 1990, more than 4,600 children have been born there every year, cared for by a staff of 200, including doctors, nurses, and midwives. It has recently passed the milestone of the 100,000th birth.

It is the only hospital in the area to have a neonatal intensive care unit for babies of fewer than 24 weeks’ gestation. In addition to the maternity wing, the hospital has a pharmacy, a laboratory, a training center and the Well Women clinic for the gynecologic women.

The facility also has a Mobile Medical Unit that assists remote communities and isolated villages in the desert surrounding Bethlehem. Every week the unit visits Bedouin villages that often lack water and electricity. For many women this is the only health care they have.

Dr. Richard J. Mena, KM, is a medical af- filiate director of obstetrics/gynecology and a 3rd class lay member of the order from Columbus. In October, he travelled to Bethlehem to visit the hospital.

“What really pleased me was the prenatal care provided by the outreach program to the Bedouin. We are taking the care to them,” he said. “I was also very pleased to see that the hospital maintains the medical standard of care of Europe and the United States, even with such a limited amount of equipment and supplies.

“This is a testament to the dedication of the physicians, staff, volunteers and donors who care for the mothers and babies in the town where our Savior was born.”

Another way members of the order carry out their commitment to respect life is by volunteering for pro-life organizations. Six members serve on the board for the Women’s Care Center of Columbus.

Founded in 1984, the Women’s Care Center serves more than 30,000 women annually at 34 centers in 12 states. It is the largest pregnancy center in the United States and came to Columbus in 2008. In 2021, 3,307 women made 14,467 visits to the center in Columbus, were given 2,850 ultrasounds, resulting in 2,037 babies saved.

Another lay member of the order from Columbus, Dr. Michael Parker, KM, has taken on a significant role.

“I have been involved with the Women’s Care Center as the medical adviser and board member since opening the doors here in Columbus. In this role, I advise the counselors on any medical questions related to counseling clients on complex preg-

nancy issues and standards for performing pregnancy testing and ultrasounds.

“Since 2020, I have also been involved in reviewing first trimester ultrasounds, so that all ultrasounds taken by our volunteer ultrasonographers have been reviewed by a physician, improving the quality of the ultrasounds performed and helping with the early diagnosis and referral of patients for early pregnancy loss and ectopic pregnancies.”

With the 2022 U.S. Supreme Court decision overturning Roe v. Wade, the need to help those women who would have aborted their babies in the past will expand dramatically. With the commitment to helping the sick and poor, the Order of Malta sees this as an opportunity to help people in need, at all stages of life.

To learn more about the Order of Malta, contact orderofmaltaOH@gmail.com, visit www.orderofmaltafederal.org, or find it on Facebook.

More important, pray that the Order of Malta can expand its services in 2023 and help more of the sick and poor, the homeless and working-poor families in Columbus.

Charles Mifsud, KM is a 3rd Class Lay Member of the Order of Malta who lives in Dublin.

God’s love, fellow people of conscience can fight abortion

By Beth Vanderkooi

This Jan. 22 will mark the 50th anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's infamous decision in Roe v. Wade, a decision that instantaneously imposed abortion through all nine months of pregnancy on every state and every American citizen. Since that time, it is estimated that 64 million abortions have occurred in the United States.

On June 24, 2022, after 49 heart-breaking years, the U.S. Supreme Court’s Dobbs decision overturned Roe and related precedent, returning authority over abortion to the states. It was a joyful day. It started repairing the damage done to our Constitution by the legal, scientific and moral errors of Roe v. Wade.

Dobbs undid Roe, but it did not undo the destruction wreaked by five decades of abortion-on-demand to our laws, our morality and our understanding of compassion. It did not liberate the unborn from threats of death at the hands of physicians, pharmaceuticals and parents. It did not rebuke the injustice and tyranny that flows when a person’s worth is determined by age, ability or utility.

With decisions related to abortion returned to the states, some have outlawed or restricted it, some have expanded and funded it and many are still making their way through political and legal processes.

In Ohio, a state that has benefitted from pro-life political leadership, we are in legal limbo. Our Heartbeat Law was in effect for a few months. In that time, abortions dramatically declined. Clinics were at the precipice of closing when pro-abortion legal challenges halted the law.

We believe Ohio’s Heartbeat Law will prevail in state courts and that legislators will enact more laws that protect children and mothers and strengthen and stabilize families. We can make abortion unthinkable, unnecessary and unlawful in Ohio.

But the wait is excruciating. Based on 2021 numbers, more than 400 children are aborted weekly in Ohio; 67 weekly in Columbus. Currently, those numbers are likely low.

The attacks are coming from every angle. The federal government is unleashing horrific policies. Within a few days, the Biden administration announced withdrawing conscience protections for health-care workers and others who decline to participate in abortion or other morally objectionable actions, announced that retail pharmacies will now be able to sell the abortion pill and announced that the Department of Justice would not pursue action against those who illegally mail abortion pills.

Well-funded abortion advocates have announced plans to amend Ohio’s Constitution to halt even modest protections for unborn children and the health and safety of pregnant women. It will take a massive grassroots effort and tens of millions of dollars to defeat. There is an unrelenting campaign to normalize abortion, promote misinformation and silence pro-life voices.

This is evil unleashed.

While we ultimately place our confidence and our hope in the knowledge that Christ has already conquered death and evil, including abortion, it is natural to feel discouraged or overwhelmed in
Ohio Right to Life works for statewide abortion ban

By Tim Puet
For The Catholic Times

The year that just ended was a victorious one for the pro-life cause because the U.S. Supreme Court’s Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization decision on June 24 returned control of abortion laws and regulations to the states.

Ohio Right to Life (ORTL) hopes to follow up on that success in the coming year by working with the state Legislature and expanding its efforts to engage the culture at large.

“Our major focus for 2023 will be continuing to work toward passage of the Human Life Protection Act, a state law which will ban all abortions from the moment of conception,” said Elizabeth Marbach, communications director for the statewide organization.

“Bringing a life into this world is never wrong, no matter the circumstance. Human beings have value, and every individual in their mother’s womb today is worthy of the right to life.”

The Dobbs ruling allowed what’s known as Ohio’s “heartbeat law” to go into effect immediately upon announcement of the Supreme Court decision. The law, which the Ohio Legislature had passed in 2019, banned doctors from preventing abortions until cardiac activity is detected, which is about six weeks into pregnancy.

But the law was in effect for fewer than three months because on Sept. 14, a Hamilton County Common Pleas Court judge issued a temporary restraining order banning its enforcement. He followed that in October with a preliminary injunction, putting the law on hold permanently while the courts consider whether it violates the state constitution.

Until a final decision on the injunction is made, probably by the Ohio Supreme Court, the state reverts to previous law that made abortion legal until 22 weeks into a pregnancy.

ORTL also is fighting plans by several pro-abortion groups who have said they hope to introduce a ballot initiative that would have voters decide whether to amend Ohio’s constitution to specifically permit abortion.

The language for such an initiative has not been released, but Physicians for Reproductive Rights, Planned Parenthood and the American Civil Liberties Union all have expressed support for the plan, which possibly could go before voters as soon as this November.

“Make no mistake, this will be an extreme abortion measure,” said Peter Range, ORTL chief executive officer.

“The group proposing this measure will talk about health care, but all they care about will be abortion on demand, which ends the life of an innocent human being.”

Some legislators have proposed a constitutional amendment that would make it more difficult for such voter-proposed amendments to be approved by imposing a requirement that they receive a 60 percent majority of votes, rather than the traditional 50 percent plus one. That proposal is likely to come before the Legislature early in this session.

Ohio is considered to have one of the nation’s most pro-life state legislatures, which for several years has expanded support for family friendly issues. The year 2022 was no exception, with lawmakers in late December approving amendments to House Bill 45, which will provide new funding for pro-life organizations and adoptive families.

The amendments provide $3 million for new programs and services for pregnancy resource centers. In addition, they make any adoptive family eligible for a grant of $10,000 for adopting a child, $15,000 for adopting a child or $20,000 for adopting a child with disabilities. HB45 was signed by Gov. Mike DeWine on Jan. 6 and goes into effect 90 days later.

“Securing this funding was our biggest legislative achievement in 2022,” Marbach said. “Increasing the amount available to them is monumental for adoptive families because it is so expensive to adopt, with the cost ranging from $30,000 to $50,000 per child.”

State Treasurer Robert Sprague’s Family Forward initiative, launched in 2021, is another effort to help Ohioans navigate the adoption process.

Family Forward provides financial relief through a linked deposit program administered by the treasurer’s office. Under the program, individuals or families seeking to adopt may be eligible for reduced-interest loans that can be used for qualified adoption expenses of as much as $50,000.

Qualified expenses include, but are not limited to, adoption agency expenses, court expenses and fees, expenses incurred on behalf of the birth mother, health and psychological examination fees, home studies and travel.

Marbach said Range is putting ORTL more into the public eye by going to nonpubic middle and high schools and presenting an in-depth look at the pro-life movement and its biblical and moral bases. “One of the most important aspects of the pro-life fight is sharing the truth,” she said. “We want to encourage churches and schools to invite Peter to visit them to state our case.”

ORTL sponsored its first statewide

‘Strong Fathers’ program builds men’s parenting skills

Across America, approximately 18.3 million children live without a father in the home, constituting about 1 in 4 U.S. children.

To encourage and support a man’s role in his family, the Women’s Care Center (WCC) in Columbus launched its “Strong Fathers” program in July 2022. The program offers a series of monthly classes with a new topic for each class, ranging from the “Importance of Fathers” to “Dealing with Anger.”

Six fathers from the Columbus St. Catherine Church community, ranging in age from 20 to 60, teach the classes. The WCC provides the curriculum; each volunteer instructor adds his personality and insight.

When the program began in July, Kristina Keiffer, WCC parenting instructor and program adviser, worried that the classroom would be empty. She said that, after so much time and preparation, she “prayed that God would send at least one father to class.”

“Five minutes before class started, the first father showed up,” she recalled. “I had tears coming down my face. Then, one after another kept coming. At the end, 13 men showed up for our very first class.” Since then, the classes have continued to grow.

Because a child’s biological father isn’t always involved, the “Strong Fathers” program is open to any male figure in a child’s life; grandfathers, uncles and cousins have attended the classes.

“I’ve been surprised by the depth of the conversations,” Keiffer said. “I thought that it would be great to have men come and hang out and have community with other men, but it has been so much more than that. We have had men leave in tears. One of the instructors pointed out that men have wounds, too.”

WCC’s female clients have said that they have seen a change in their parenting partnership with the baby’s father in terms of discipline, structure and communication. They also said that the

“Strong Fathers” program has become a comfortable place for participants to talk about things that they normally wouldn’t discuss with other men.

In October 2022, The Catholic Foundation approved a $3,000 grant for the program, so the WCC can provide a meal at every class and a gift for the fathers to take home to the children in their care.

And, in summer 2023, WCC will host an outing so that the male program participants, their children and the instructors’ families can spend time together.

Following are quotes from “Strong Fathers” instructors about the program:

“What a joy and a privilege it is for me to help mentor the dads in the WCC ‘Strong Fathers’ program. These men want to be virtuous fathers who invest in their children’s lives with love, mercy and appropriate discipline. They truly are answering God's call to greatness!” – Matt

“It was a tremendous blessing to work alongside these men who are seeking to better the lives of their children by investing in learning and growing as fathers. Witnessing their desire and effort encouraged me a great deal in my own vocation. I pray they took away as much good from participating in the ‘Strong Fathers’ program as I did in helping to facilitate it.” – Nick

“Strong Fathers” is a platform perfectly suited to remind men who they were created to be, while working to equip them to go back into their families and live it out. This is beautiful work I am grateful to be a part of.” – Eric

“I feel very fortunate to be a part of the ‘Strong Fathers’ program. Unfortunately, a lot of men don’t have other men to talk to about fatherhood. It’s easy to feel like maybe you’re the only one struggling to balance family, work and life’s other demands, which can make it that much harder to take a breath, prioritize and be the best man you can be.”

“Our society doesn’t always encourage men to be good fathers, when that is one of the things the world needs the most. By encouraging the men in the program to answer that call, I have no doubt that these fathers can (and will) make a huge impact in the lives of their families and the community.” – Erik

The WCC is grateful for support from the Columbus community, which has enabled the center to stretch its services to the whole family. Through “Strong Fathers,” the mission is for every man to recognize that it’s never too late to start being a strong father. Investment in children at any age can be life-changing.
January is Sanctity of Human Life Month, a time to focus on the value of every human life.

On Jan. 22, Pregnancy Decision Health Centers (PDHC) will celebrate 42 years of rescuing lives and impacting generations, one heartbeat at a time. PDHC opened the doors to its first pregnancy resource center on Jan. 22, 1981, on the eighth anniversary of the historic 1973 Roe v. Wade decision by the U.S. Supreme Court that legalized abortion in the United States.

On June 24, 2022, the court overturned Roe, which meant decisions regarding abortion laws and regulations were sent back to the individual states. In Ohio, this meant the Heartbeat Law went into effect, banning abortions in Ohio after a heartbeat is detected.

Not long after, on Sept. 14, 2022, the Heartbeat Law was placed on indefinite hold by a Hamilton County judge, making abortion legal again through 22 weeks of pregnancy, and pending litigation continues.

Through it all, PDHC stands as a beacon of hope for women who need compassionate care and support when faced with an unexpected pregnancy. Practical resources and life-affirming options are provided through a 24-hour hotline, pregnancy tests, ultrasounds, abortion pill reversal services, pregnancy and parenting education, much-needed baby items and outreach to a network of community support and resources.

In 2022, PDHC impacted more than 2,500 individuals in its Pregnancy Resource Centers and more than 44,000 contacts on its hotline. PDHC was blessed with five new 3D ultrasound machines for new moms to see and hear their baby's heartbeat. This resulted in 896 life decisions last year.

PDHC helped new moms who had taken the first set of the abortion pill, regret their decision and wanted a second chance to save the life of their baby. PDHC witnessed the birth of healthy babies born after successful abortion pill reversal services.

One woman thought she wanted an abortion and took the first set of abortion pills but immediately regretted it. “I cried and wanted to stop the process,” she said. “I found the Abortion Pill Reversal (APR) hotline and was connected to PDHC. They gave me so much hope and encouragement. They prayed for me and my pregnancy and told me they would be there every step of the way.

“They prescribed me progesterone and monitored my pregnancy every week for the first month. I went to prenatal appointments with my regular doctor. Nine months later I birthed a beautiful and healthy baby girl. None of this could have been possible without PDHC, and I am forever grateful for this team.”

PDHC empowered 66 new moms and 166 new dads through more than 9,500 online and nearly 1,000 in-person parenting education classes, along with more than 3,100 material aid visits provided through its Family Empowerment Center.

“PDHC has been very supportive of me throughout my pregnancy, and for that I am grateful,” a PDHC mom said. “They supported me spiritually, physically and emotionally. They taught me how to take care of my baby through prenatal classes. My journey has been a beautiful one, and I am thankful to God to be a part of the PDHC family.”

PDHC touched the hearts and minds of more than 3,500 students in Franklin and Fairfield counties with healthy choice education in 37 middle and high schools. One student said, “You really got me thinking of my own relationship and how I can set better boundaries.” Another student said, “I think it is so amazing that you teach this and go around to different schools to make teens think. Thanks again!”

PDHC also helped 170 individuals on their healing journey through abortion recovery (AR) programs and services.

“I found AR support 100% helpful,” an Abortion Recovery participant said.

Heartbeat International fielding more requests

By Tim Puet
For The Catholic Times

The year just past was full of change for Columbus-based Heartbeat International, the world’s largest network of pro-life pregnancy resource centers.

The U.S. Supreme Court on June 24 in its Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization case required the federal government to return control of abortion-related laws and regulations to the states.

This resulted in an increase in requests for Heartbeat’s help in finding clinics, resource centers, maternity homes and adoption agencies to provide support for women facing crisis pregnancy situations in more than 90 nations.

Heartbeat serves more than 1.5 million people annually and helps about 300,000 pregnant mothers decide against having an abortion each year, said Andrea Trudden, Heartbeat vice president of communications and marketing. She said the more than 3,000 pregnancy help organizations linked to the Heartbeat network performed nearly 250,000 ultrasounds last year.

The Dobbs ruling also led to protests, many of them led by a pro-abortion group known as Jane’s Revenge, at more than 75 pregnancy centers and other pro-life organizations, as well as about a dozen churches. More than 30 sustained physical damage, which included fires being set at the offices of pro-life organizations in Madison, Wisconsin, and Gresham, Oregon.

“We were prepared for the verbal attacks which began in May, when the anticipated Dobbs decision was leaked to the media,” Trudden said. “We weren’t anticipating the violence that targeted pro-life organizations and the cyberattacks involving people trying to take down some of those groups through online hacking.

“Heartbeat is continuing to serve pregnancy health ministries by working with our affiliates to make their locations more secure. We understand the U.S. Department of Justice is looking into possible actions against those responsible in instances where physical damage occurred, but no action has been taken so far.”

The year for Heartbeat also was notable because its national headquarters moved from Upper Arlington to a larger location at 8405 Pulsar Place, just off Polaris Parkway and near Interstate 71. “It’s a larger area than we had before, with lots more open space, all of which is needed as our 24/7 call center continues to expand and we serve as the base for calls to the Abortion Pill Rescue Network,” Trudden said.

“We share the building with the Ohio regional campus of Southeastern University, a Florida-based Christian college which shares our goals. We’re part of a faith-filled atmosphere throughout the day, and that’s important to us, because we’ve always tried to be located in a space surrounded by like-minded organizations. Our previous offices were in the former Tree of Life Ministries building in Upper Arlington.”

Heartbeat is one of the nation’s oldest pro-life organizations, with a history that began before the U.S. Supreme Court in 1973 issued its Roe v. Wade decision – an abortion ban that remained in effect throughout the United States until the Dobbs ruling overturned it.

Practically from the moment the decision was announced, “God’s people stepped up in every area of life in our society and worked unceasingly to fight the abortion juggernaut and overturn...”
Pro-abortion groups seek guarantee in Ohio Constitution

By Beth Vanderkooi

On Dec. 12, which happens to be the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, two different groups announced different efforts to guarantee abortion in the Ohio Constitution. This is a big deal, and pro-life people and people of faith need to take notice.

Many are confused as to the status of abortion in Ohio right now. In late June, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a decision in Dobbs that overturned Roe v. Wade and returned abortion laws to the states. Some states have responded by expanding and funding efforts, some have not changed their laws and some restricted or banned abortion further.

In Ohio, things are in legal limbo. In the immediate aftermath of the Dobbs decision, Ohio’s Heartbeat Law, enacted in 2019, went immediately into effect. This banned most abortions after about six weeks of pregnancy. The Heartbeat Law was in effect for about two months, saving an estimated 3,000 lives, when a group of abortion advocates filed a lawsuit in a Hamilton County court alleging that Ohio’s Constitution protects abortion as a right.

The court they went to has historically been friendly to abortion, and its judge granted first a temporary and then a permanent injunction—blocking enforcement of the Heartbeat Law. With the Heartbeat Law blocked, abortion is generally legal in Ohio until the point of viability (about 23 weeks), with various legal exceptions that permit abortion further on in pregnancy.

The fate of the Heartbeat Law is expected to work through the legal system for several months and will ultimately be decided by the Ohio Supreme Court. In 2021, just over 20,000 Ohio babies were aborted. We can probably expect similar to slightly higher numbers for 2022 when they are published. Although thousands of babies were spared in the two-month reprieve, in the months since, we’ve seen increased abortions due not only to the economy but also an uptick in abortions from out of state.

Even though their legal challenge of Ohio’s Heartbeat Law rests on the fanciful idea that abortion is guaranteed by the Ohio Constitution, abortion advocates are not taking any chances and have been vocalizing for months now their plan to pursue an abortion amendment to guarantee abortion a place in the Ohio Constitution.

The first announcement was made by a new group called Ohio Physicians for Reproductive Rights, which has formed a ballot group called the Protect Ohio Choice coalition. That group announced its intention to place a ballot amendment on the Nov. 7, 2023, ballot. Shortly thereafter, a group of establishment abortion proponents rushed to announce that they, too, have an effort, under the name “Ohioans for Reproductive Freedom.” Initial information suggested that the group planned to place its issue on the 2024 ballot, although updated reports indicate that they are considering both 2023 and 2024.

Neither group has circulated exact language, but each emphasized that its proposals will prioritize abortion access without interference and/or identify abortion as a fundamental right in Ohio. This is code for unrestricted abortion through all nine months of pregnancy, funded by taxpayers, and enshrined in the Ohio Constitution.

Some previously circulated language along with what we’ve seen in states such as Michigan suggest that it could include provisions that seek to silence or penalize pregnancy help centers and expand the concept of “reproductive rights” to include fertility treatments as well as gender-affirming mandates.

Coupled with recent announcements by the Biden administration to roll back or eliminate rights of conscience for churches, faith-based institutions such as hospitals and schools and medical providers in areas, this is very serious.

In many ways, this is no surprise. For months, pro-abortion advocates have said that this is their plan, and we have been taking them at their word. We have been working to form a coalition to defeat this extreme abortion agenda in Ohio.

Big abortion’s efforts will be seeded with multimillion-dollar donations from out-of-state special interests, far-left social engineers and highly partisan political interests. It is reasonable to estimate that they will spend $50 million in their efforts, and that to be competitive in a campaign against them we will need to raise a similar amount of money.

On a personal note, before I came to Greater Columbus Right to Life, I worked as a lobbyist and legislative staffer and on numerous local and statewide political campaigns. In that time, I led or had a leadership role with three different amendments to the Ohio Constitution—first to draft proposed resolutions to place the issue on the ballot and then on the campaigns to pass the amendments. All three passed with significant portions of the vote. I also worked on a team to defeat an initiated constitutional amendment, an effort that kept the issue off the ballot.

First, know that I will be taking every bit of that experience to this fight. We can win, and Ohio can be the first state to defeat big abortion’s attempts to buy itself into our Constitution. But we need to know what we are facing. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus warns that He is sending the disciples out as sheep among the wolves. “Be as wise as serpents and innocent as doves.”

To win, we need every one of us to become engaged early in the process. That means joining our response team and supporting our efforts financially (visit gcrtl.org/stop).

We also need you to join us in prayer and fasting. Specifically, I need you to pray that we are unified as a movement, that we are disciplined in our efforts and that we remember that while every one of us needs to commit our best to defeating this great evil, it is God Who ultimately is in control and Who guides our path. Mindful of the timing of their announcements, I suggest we do this under the patronage of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Beth Vanderkooi is the executive director of Greater Columbus Right to Life.

LIFE, continued from Page 13

Rally for Life at the Statehouse this past October, the U.S. bishops’ Respect Life Month, and about 2,000 people from throughout Ohio attended. Marbach said another rally will take place this October. The annual Statehouse remembrance event in January on the anniversary of the Supreme Court’s Roe v. Wade decision, which the Dobbs ruling overturned, also will continue.

“Ohio is in a really good place legislatively to maintain its strong pro-life efforts,” Marbach said. “All the state’s major officials elected this past November are pro-life, so is the state Supreme Court, and there are pro-life supermajorities in the Ohio House and Senate. Some states were not as successful in electing pro-life candidates in November, but we were very fortunate.

“All of this gives huge encouragement to our organization’s work to strategize and engage and change the culture. A half-century after Roe v. Wade, the tide has turned, and we are poised and determined to really end abortion.”
Second Sunday in Ordinary Time Year A

God’s call is for all

Isaiah 49:3, 5–6
Psalm 40:2, 4, 7–8, 9, 10
1 Corinthians 1:10–13; 1 John 1:29–34

Many things that we cannot understand as we experience them become clear only after extended thought. Life can sort out what is essential. When we allow the “wisdom of age” to influence how we see the world, there are two results:

First, if we have a sense of humor, we can laugh at ourselves. We can see that we are no longer bound by the frustrations of the past because we have learned that they did pass, and we might wonder why they upset us.

Second, the size of our world changes dramatically. We see that our world has been very small and that “the real world” – God’s world – is incredibly large.

God says to His servant: “You are my servant, Israel, through whom I show my glory.” And He continues: “It is too little ... for you to be my servant, ... I will make you a light to the nations, that my salvation may reach to the ends of the earth.”

What God’s people experience is never just for them. What God’s servants do for God is intended for a broader purpose. God allows His followers to see only a small portion of what He intends for them. When the people have become truly responsive to God’s will, they are invited to learn more of the mind and heart of God.

As we enter into Ordinary Time, we meet John the Baptist pointing out Jesus as the Lamb of God, the One on Whom God’s Spirit rests. John admits that He did not recognize Jesus for Who He is until He put together his own call and what God suggested he would see.

It is the Spirit of Jesus at work in Him and in those who are called to follow Him Who accomplish the purpose God intends. Prophecy can open to us some understanding of the shape of our salvation. But only a response like that of John’s – acceptance of the surprise element – can bring about the full testimony we are to give.

Paul sends his greetings to the Christian community at Corinth, reminding them that the call to holiness is universal, as he addresses himself to those who “stand as we experience them become mirror of the stories told in Scripture. We believe. We live. Our lives make known to those around us what God of Israel accomplishes among His servants.”

We ourselves stand in the very world that is called to salvation and holiness. Human beings are not meant to be divided and sorted by the limits that we put on one another. We must recognize those who are related to us by sharing the call and those destined to be one with us in the gift of salvation through the many resources available to us, we are confronted just as the first generation of disciples with a call to respond. Jesus penetrates our minds and hearts as we hear His word proclaimed in the Liturgy of the Word and in the prayer of the Church, the Liturgy of the Hours. What is required of us is a decision. Will we follow where He leads?

The word of God presented in the Scriptures can become prayer. Our hearts are centered by the words of the psalm: “One thing I ask of the LORD: this I seek: to dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, that I may gaze on the loveliness of the LORD and contemplate his temple.” When we ask one thing of the Lord, we are ready to “leave our nets” and to follow.

Faith is enriched by the words and deeds presented to us in the Scriptures. When we become convinced that the will of God made known to us offers more than we could ask or imagine, we can proclaim: “I believe that I shall see the bounty of the LORD in the land of the living.”

Our lives then become a living mirror of the stories told in Scripture. We believe. We live. Our lives make known to those around us what God offers to His followers.

At a time when the world seeks a clear witness of Christian life, the word of God serves to allow that to happen wherever souls are willing to respond. St. Paul invites us to a witness of unity: “I urge you, brothers and sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree in what you say, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be united in the same mind and in the same purpose.”

The Catholic Church invites all to read and pray and to deepen knowledge of Jesus and His ways through the Scriptures. Each of us, every family can take the Bible home in so many ways. Be creative as you seek to live the Sunday of the Word of God. Let the word of God dwell in you!
the truth about the human person, the truth about man’s nature and vocation. Perhaps you can say that John Paul II defended the dignity of the human person from a personalistic, anthropological perspective (see his works Person and Act, Love and Responsibility and the Theology of the Body), whereas Benedict did so from a theological and Christological one (see his work Introduction to Christianity). But the distinction is not clear-cut.

While John Paul II speaks of the transcendence of the human person, Benedict emphasizes human existence as existence “from” and “for.” These are just two distinct aspects of the same reality, as both popes agree in considering love the fundamental dimension of the human person.

I suppose we could speak of differences (between John Paul and Benedict) in the area of emphasis. For example, Benedict spoke more on the Christian liturgy (see, for instance, his The Spirit of the Liturgy). But I wish to note the difference in their writing style.

Pope Benedict’s style is straightforward, almost childlike, though extremely profound. His writings are a joy to read. John Paul II wrote in a more complex, complicated style that attempts to keep in mind each presented insight as his argument progresses. Reading his works is challenging but very rewarding, leading you deeper into the mystery of life.

Perhaps the writing style shows us best the difference between the German theologian and the Polish philosopher and poet. Nonetheless, when I read works by both popes, I have a sense of encountering the thought of a saint.

I think (Pope Benedict’s) work in fundamental theology (every Catholic should read his book Introduction to Christianity), ecclesiology (read Called to Communion), liturgy (read The Spirit of the Liturgy), Christology (read his books on Jesus Christ), and eschatology (read Eschatology) has already left a lasting and transformative mark on the faith of the Church and Christian theology.

Pope Benedict proposes a more profound understanding of who man is and the cross, that is, that it is impossible to understand man without God—the God who gives himself to man in Jesus Christ. In his Introduction to Christianity, he says, “The Cross is revelation. It reveals who God is and who man is.” (pp. 222-23)

Incidentally, this is exactly what John Paul II says in his encyclical Redemptor Hominis (aa. 9-10), speaking on the divine and human dimensions of the mystery of the Redemption.

I think that his resignation shows Benedict’s spirit of sacrifice. It shows that he placed the good of the Church higher than his own. It shows that the Church is not the private property of the pope, but that the pope is the servant of the Church (servus servorum Dei). This, of course, does not mean that every pope should resign but that resignation from the papacy can be a prudent decision under certain circumstances.

I use the teaching of Pope Benedict in several of my classes, both core and elective. I use his writings in the following courses: “Fundamental Theology,” “Trinity,” “Ecclesiology,” and “Catholic Response to Secularization and Liberalism.” I also teach a course fully devoted to his thought, titled “The Thought of Joseph Ratzinger.”

However, I must modestly admit that I know the thought of John Paul II more than that of Benedict, though I love them both. I am a translator of John Paul II’s works (such as Person and Act and Related Essays and Love and Responsi-
Sister Mary Justin Fadden, OP

Funeral Mass for Sister Mary Justin Fadden, OP, 95, who died Monday, Dec. 26, 2022 at the Mohun Health Care Center in Columbus, was celebrated Friday, Jan. 6 at the Motherhouse of the Dominican Sisters of Peace. Burial was at St. Joseph Cemetery, Columbus.

She was born Sarah Fadden on Oct. 23, 1927 in Scranton, Pennsylvania to Thomas Travis and Mary McDowell. She entered the congregation of the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine de’ Ricci (now the Dominican Sisters of Peace) in 1950 and professed her vows on Feb. 13, 1953. She served on the staff of retreat centers in Pennsylvania, Ohio and New York for most of her nearly 70 years in the congregation. She was a driver at the sisters’ Oxford, Michigan Motherhouse from 2013 to 2019, when she entered a life of prayer and service at the Columbus Motherhouse.

Mary E. “Molly” Landrine

Funeral Mass for Mary E. “Molly” Landrine, 76, who died Tuesday, Dec. 20, 2022 at Kettering (Ohio) Hospital, was celebrated Thursday, Dec. 29, 2022 at Columbus St. Patrick Church. Burial was at Resurrection Cemetery, Lewis Center.

She was born on May 28, 1946 to the late Bertrand and Margaret Landrine. She was a graduate of Columbus St. Thomas the Apostle School, Columbus St. Mary of the Springs Academy and St. Mary of the Springs College (now Ohio Dominican University).

She spent about 10 years as a teacher at various elementary schools, including Columbus St. Thomas.

In 1976, she received a Master of Science degree in logistics management and began a career with the military, settling in the Dayton area and working for the Air Force at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base, retiring in 2007.

Survivors include brothers Michael (Ann) and Patrick (Jean).
The new year is the next chapter in your book just waiting to be written. Take the time to map out what you really want in retirement. Maybe you’re interested in picking up a new hobby or spending more time with the family, but a key consideration is finding peace of mind by planning properly for long-term care costs.

Many people don’t think about long-term health-care services until they are a necessity. In America, someone who is 65 years old has a 70% chance of needing long-term care. This can include assistance with performing everyday tasks such as eating or bathing, medication management, palliative care and skilled nursing.

There are ways to prepare for long-term care costs that will save you and your loved ones from the aggravation of seeking a solution under pressure.

**Thinking about care**

When considering long-term care, it’s impossible to plan to the last detail; however, it is crucial to have some ideas. It’s normal to think that you or your loved one can live alone without assistance throughout aging, but that is rare. Almost everyone at one point needs help.

Here are things to consider:

- **Advance directive**: If you or your loved one loses the ability to speak, there should be a trusted person who can carry out your or your loved one’s wishes. If not, your health-care proxy can step in to advocate for you.
- **Housing options**: Many people never think about having to leave their homes, but sometimes moving to a senior care community is the safest or most practical choice. Explore your local options and list the top characteristics you’d want in a community.
- **Medicaid and government programs**: Long-term care costs might be covered through government programs. One example is Medicaid, the largest payer toward long-term care services. Medicaid assists certain low-income groups or those with limited assets in paying medical and long-term care bills.

**Making plans**

The best route to prepare for long-term care costs is to start saving. This will offer greater flexibility when looking into senior care communities and long-term options.

You should also look into:

- **Long-term care insurance**: It is designed to cover some long-term care costs. Depending on the policy, it can pay for an assisted living facility, care at home or nursing home care.
- **Life insurance**: It can also help pay for long-term care. Some policies might allow participants to borrow/withdraw money or allow people with terminal illnesses to access death benefits early.

**Finding advice**

When planning for long-term care, it is important to find a financial professional you can trust. Several organizations can assist in connecting you and your loved ones with appropriate resources.

Here are professionals who can help you develop a long-term care plan:

- **Financial planners**: They assess every aspect of your and your loved one’s finances. This can include evaluating investments, savings and retirement and estate planning.
- **Investment advisers**: They focus on managing your or your loved one’s investments.
- **Insurance agents**: They help you or your loved one examine options for life insurance, annuities and long-term care insurance.

If you or a loved one could benefit from long-term care, consider reaching out to Mother Angela McCrory Manor and the Villas at Saint Therese in Columbus. They offer memory care in both assisted and skilled nursing settings along with long-term care, independent living and assisted living.

To learn more, visit www.carmeliteseniorliving.org/love or call (614) 729-6608.

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Eagle Scout projects benefit St. Brendan church and school

By Tim Puet
For The Catholic Times

Nine Hilliard St. Brendan Church parishioners who are members of Scouts BSA Troops 859 and 148 have spent hundreds of hours of their own time and recruited others to assist them in completing projects to benefit their parish and school while also enabling them to earn the rank of Eagle Scout, the highest honor in Scouting.

They are among 28 Scouts from St. Brendan Church who have earned Eagle rank since 2019. Nineteen of them are from Troop 859, which is sponsored by Scioto Ridge United Methodist Church, and Troop 814, sponsored by Hilliard United Methodist Church, and Troop 148, sponsored by Hilliard United Methodist Church, and Troop 814, sponsored by Scioto Ridge United Methodist Church.

St. Brendan’s other Eagles are from Troop 148, sponsored by Hilliard United Methodist Church, and Troop 814, sponsored by Scioto Ridge United Methodist Church.

Young men (and since 2018, young women) can be members of a Scout troop from age 10 until they become 18, so they have eight years to become Eagles, but it takes most recipients until close to their 18th birthday to achieve the honor because of the effort involved.

“I love celebrating 18th birthdays with Scouts, which I’ve done many times,” said Rick Vah, who is in his third year as Troop 859 scoutmaster. “There’s lots of paperwork involved, and that’s generally what keeps Eagle projects from being completed until the last minute.”

Before becoming Eagles, Scouts must attain six lower ranks – Scout, Tenderfoot, Second Class, First Class, Star Scout and Life Scout – by earning merit badges for various activities. An Eagle Scout also must be a troop officer for at least six months and complete a project of benefit to the community.

Eagle Scouts must have earned at least 21 merit badges, including 13 in required fields. The Scouts BSA national office says only about 6 percent of the nation’s 1.2 million Scouts reach Eagle status. This makes Troop 859’s record in recent years especially remarkable, because it currently has 24 members and is the home of 10 recent Eagle Scouts, several of whom have “aged out” of Scouting since becoming Eagles.

“We don’t push Scouts to become Eagles,” Vah said, “Our Eagles wanted to earn their rank because they saw that our church had a lot of things they could do as part of the recent expansion which unified the church and school into one building. Others saw areas at Battelle Darby Creek Metro Park, where we do a lot of our camping, and at other parks where they could fill needs.

“We are fortunate to have a group of Scouts who are enthusiastic about being leaders, as well as younger Scouts who want to follow their example and take their turn at leading when the time comes and get good feedback from the older ones. Our accomplishments don’t have anything to do with anything I did, but with what they did.”

The first Scout to achieve Eagle rank recently for work he did at St. Brendan Church was Zane Torbert, who had his Eagle court of honor on July 29, 2021. His project involved landscaping and wall repair at Wellnitz Hall, named for the parish’s first pastor, Father Michael Wellnitz. The building was completed in 1957 and included the parish’s first worship space, located in the basement, with a rectory upstairs.

It was converted into meeting rooms and office space after the current church was built in 1981. The most recent parish expansion in 2020 moved the offices to Wellnitz Hall also was the site of several other projects. Paul Roginski of Troop 859 renovated the hall’s storage space, painted walls, built shelves and labeled storage space. Troop 859 member Keegan Meloun built storage shelves, and Easton Kernosky of Troop 148 repaired the patio next to the building, in addition to doing landscaping and installing a garden box and two benches.

“I was one of the guys who celebrated my birthday with the scoutmaster,” Roginski said. “There weren’t any real issues involved with what I did. It was just a question of timing, with delays caused by COVID. I converted a couple of old bathrooms into storage spaces, patched holes in the walls and used plywood for the storage. Deacon Jim kept me on track by asking how the project was going.

“The intensive part of what I did on the patio was working with pavers which were about 1 ¼ inches thick,” Kernosky said. “I got some leftovers from contractors, which helped. It also was important to reset all the paving to even everything.

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Father Timothy Hayes' funeral homily for Father Ronald J. Aubry

Someone commented that Father Ron said that when he got to the pearly gates, he would stand in the line of folks who wanted to ask the Almighty a lot of questions before entering. We have all heard of people who are making a list of such questions, and perhaps we ourselves have some right now we would like to get a hint about before we are ready to embrace all that is offered.

When I heard that Father Ron had died, I sent up a secret prayer to him that I would like to have just a glimpse of what he now is able to see.

The response I got, if it was a response from Father Ron, was a night of tossing and turning and a hint that I might end up being the homilist for his funeral. When that was confirmed the next day, I had another restless night, but just before midnight on the day after he died, I awoke with a clear idea of the Gospel that should be used for his funeral.

Within a short time, still before midnight, I discerned the other two readings that should be used for his funeral. I awoke with a clear idea of the Gospel fore midnight on the day after he died, and turning and a hint that I might end up being the homilist for his funeral.

When that was confirmed the next day, I had another restless night, but just before midnight on the day after he died, I awoke with a clear idea of the Gospel that should be used for his funeral.

Once, Father Ron was preaching and suddenly, in the middle of his own homily, he expressed out loud with incredible exasperation, "I've just forgotten the point I was going to make!" With that, he sat down. Or maybe he went on to make another point that came to mind. It does not matter which. He carried us with him.

At a Teens Encounter Christ reunion Mass once, Father Ron got so caught up in the consecration that immediately after, he led the congregation in the recitation of the Our Father. As the congregation, a bit surprised, went ahead with him, realizing that something was off, he turned to me quietly and whispered, "Do whatever is needed to be sure this Mass is valid."

I finished the Eucharistic Prayer by myself in time to join in with the sign of peace. Father Ron carried us forward.

Travel to the Holy Land with a group of pilgrims in 2018 organized by Father Ron was also an amazing experience. We had a group of folks who covered all the age groups. Father Ron and I were in the middle. We marveled together at the land of Jesus and the Scriptures. Father Ron's experience a few years before his death was on a sabbatical made this a poignant time.

He opened to all of us what it meant to invite him to open a restaurant here. Travel to the Holy Land with a group of pilgrims in 2018 organized by Father Ron was also an amazing experience. We had a group of folks who covered all the age groups. Father Ron and I were in the middle. We marveled together at the land of Jesus and the Scriptures. Father Ron's experience a few years before his death was on a sabbatical made this a poignant time.

He opened to all of us what it meant to be at the Shaare Zedek "Gates of Justice" Hospital in Jerusalem while addressing his new diagnosis of leukemia. He arranged for us to see the Chagall windows of the patriarchs at the Hadassah Hospital in Ein Karem, the town of John the Baptist. Father Ron always saw beauty and wanted to share it.

Many others who have known Father Ron since his younger years will have stories to tell. They will be stories that describe his creativity; his passion for beauty, his love of Scripture and so many other things that might surprise you. The gift of God in him was strong. He wrote and directed plays. He composed songs. He tried to make Scripture come alive for many.

The favorite memory for some is that he always had a pooh as companion – his friends Chase and Jedidiah, who predeceased him, and his last pup, Jethro. (Even though some of the names sound biblical, they were not. Jedidiah, God's name for Solomon, was taken from the son of a friend, and Jethro had his name not from the father-in-law of Moses but from Jethro of The Beverly Hillbillies.)

Father Ron's real claim to fame was that his mother was Dorothy the schoolteacher, who raised her two sons, and that his brother was John, who was personally responsible for bringing Wendy's to Millersburg by writing to Dave Thomas to invite him to open a restaurant here.

All who know Ron will have to admit that he carried throughout his life the heart of a child. To most, Father Ron's love See AUBRY, Page 22
out and eliminate high spots.”

Kernosky’s twin brother, Hayden, also of Troop 148, led a group that built an octagonal pit in the St. Brendan School playground for gaga ball, which is described as a kinder, gentler version of dodgeball. Gaga ball involves throwing a soft foam ball and trying to hit someone below the knees, with the winner being the last person not hit. Any number of people can play, and there are no restrictions on the size of the ball.

Triplets Thomas, Grant and John Rice performed different projects. Grant replaced boards on a railing, stained the railing and a fence protecting the parish’s heating, ventilating and air conditioning unit and built benches and trellises for the DiPietro Garden, named for Father Rodric DiPietro, pastor at St. Brendan from 2001 until his death in 2011.

“Most of the job was done during the summer, and I got it done in September,” Grant said. “Plants in the garden were growing in big pots. Having the trellises enables the plants to climb and makes the garden more attractive.”

John Rice cleared overgrowth, replaced fence pickets and power washed an area around Wellnitz Hall and a statue of St. Francis of Assisi and stained a fence. “The overgrowth, mostly ivy, was pretty disgusting,” he said. “It took from June to August to get it cleared. During that time, I uncovered about 20 boards which needed replaced, and that work was done. Now the ivy is growing back again, so this project will continue as one of constant maintenance.”

Thomas Rice led a crew that built a shrine for a statue of St. Sharbel Makhluf, which was donated to the parish by someone of Lebanese descent and is made of resin. St. Sharbel, who was 70 when he died in 1898, was a Maronite monk and priest from Lebanon. During his life, he gained a wide reputation for holiness and for his ability to unite Christians and Muslims. He was canonized in 1977.

The three Rice brothers are sophomores at Columbus St. Charles Preparatory School. The Kernosky twins are juniors at Columbus Bishop Ready High School. Scout Graham Houser is a fan of LEGO building blocks and collected 53,000 of them, which he donated to the parish school. “I have a brother who’s an Eagle Scout, and I wanted to one-up him by doing something big and bold,” he said. I asked Mr. (Walt) O’Dell (Vah’s predecessor as scoutmaster) about it, and he knew I liked LEGOS, so he suggested something LEGO-related.

“I was going to send the blocks to a school in Kenya, but then COVID hit, so I decided to keep them closer to home.” The blocks have been separated by age and grade level and are being used by all the school’s classes from kindergarten to eighth grade for STEM-related projects. COVID also delayed Tyler Engram in his efforts to place tent pads and hammock posts at campsites on the back-packing trail in Battelle Darby Creek Park. “I anticipated the project would take four months, and it took about 10,” he said. “In that period, the cost of lumber for the project went from $350 to $750 because of the pandemic.” Engram is now a sophomore at Capital University.

Other Troop 859 members who have performed Catholic-related Eagle projects include Layne Smith, who led construction of a patio for use at fish fries at London St. Patrick Church; Joseph Hite, whose crew repaired and replaced structures at Columbus Bishop Watterson High School; and Jack Whetstone, leader of a group building picnic tables and food storage shelves at Catholic Social Services’ Our Lady of Guadalupe Center in Columbus.

Alex Myron’s project involved expanding outdoor seating and building a picnic table for use of the congregation at Atonement Lutheran Church in Columbus, where a friend’s father is the pastor. “It’s a smaller church, and they appreciated having Scouts from another church help them,” he said. “They have a large field where kids play soccer and other games, and now there’s a place for them to sit and watch.”

The Eagle project for Andrew Fleming of Troop 814 was building a tower at Prairie Oaks Metro Park for the chimney swifts that fly through the area as part of their annual migration. He said the tower took two months to plan and one month to build, with the help of 13 people who put in a total of 150 hours on the project. Other Troop 859 members who have become Eagle Scouts since September 2020 are Nathan Jamison, Vincent Cutrell, Gregory McGuire, Smith, Trevor Tarlton, Hite, Timothy Goenker, Malik Tarazi and Jahari Henry. Other Troop 814 members from St. Brendan who earned Eagle rank during that time were Nathan Ashbrook, Michael Bruggeman, Donald Search, Mark DeLeo, Kevin Bray and Jonah Halbisen.

Deacon Morris said Troop 859 was founded around 1993 or 1994, with Jim Dvorsky serving as scoutmaster for its first 10 years and Vic Ferdinand holding the same position from 2010 to 2017, when O’Dell succeeded him. Since its founding, about 40 of its members have become Eagles.

Deacon Morris would like to have those Eagles gather for a reunion twice a year to encourage other Scouts to follow their path. Eagle Scouts from the parish are invited to get in touch with him at deaconmorris@stbrendans.net.

Hilliard St. Brendan Church parishioners have donated their time as members of Troops 859 and 148 to working on projects to benefit the parish and the school, helping them earn the rank of Eagle Scout.

Photos courtesy Hilliard Boy Scout Troops 859 and 148.
Catholic Conference of Ohio has new director

Brian Hickey was appointed as executive director of the Catholic Conference of Ohio (CCO), effective Jan. 3, by the conference’s board of directors.

He replaces Jerry Freewalt, who resigned from the position in December to return to his former post as director of the Office for Social Concerns of the Diocese of Columbus.

Hickey has been the CCO’s associate director for social concerns since December 2021.

During his tenure there, Hickey has lobbied with state legislators on behalf of the conference, which is the voice of Ohio’s Catholic bishops on matters of public policy, in collaboration with diocesan directors of social service, Respect Life, and social action programs.

He previously was associate director of the Office for Human Dignity in the Diocese of Joliet, Illinois.

He also has worked for Caritas, an international Catholic relief agency, in the Democratic Republic of Congo, teaching in a classroom and assisting migrant and refugee children with humanitarian aid.

Additionally, he taught English literature and leadership in a Palestinian high school in the West Bank through the Jerusalem School of Bethlehem. As an intern for the Fellowship of Christian Athletes, he provided mentoring and life coaching to young men in Zambia and South Africa. He also has worked as a consultant to Catholic Relief Services.

He has a Bachelor’s degree in business management from Valparaiso University and a Master’s degree in global affairs, specializing in Catholic social teaching and public policy, from the University of Notre Dame.

“Brian’s diverse background in ministry and the professionalism he has displayed while working for the conference make him an outstanding choice for the executive director position,” the bishops said in an announcement last week.

Hickey is a native of Toledo, Ohio, and the son of Michael and Linda Hickey. He is married to Kelli Hickey and has two children in elementary school.

Hickey has been a member of the Knights of Columbus since 1987 and a member of the Catholic Men’s Fellowship since 1990.

He also has been a volunteer at Heartbeat of Columbus, a pregnancy resource center, since 1992.

“Brian’s virtual background in ministry and the professionalism he has displayed while working for the conference make him an outstanding choice for the executive director position,” the bishops said.

The CCO is the voice of the Catholic bishops of Ohio on matters of public policy and social concerns.

The conference’s other activities for the year include a Roe Remembrance in the Ohio Statehouse on March 21 followed by a Life Celebration Mass on March 22.

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Tickets are available for Newark Catholic’s Cinderella

Newark Catholic High School’s drama department will present Rodgers & Hammerstein’s Cinderella at 7:30 p.m. Friday, Jan. 27 and Saturday, Jan. 28 in the school’s auditorium, 1 Green Wave Drive.

Tickets are $15 each for the school’s winter drama production and can be purchased by calling the school office at 740-344-3594.

Catholic Renewal announces 2023 schedule

The Columbus Catholic Renewal’s first event for 2023 will be a day of equipping from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, Jan. 21 at the Columbus Church of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, 5225 Refugee Road.

The program will include a talk on holiness by Father Patrick Toner, as well as talks on healing, intercessory prayer and prophetic activation, updates from the renewal and an enthronement of the Sacred Heart. No registration is required.

The renewal also will sponsor citywide praise and adoration programs on Feb. 4, April 29, July 22 and Nov. 18, all Saturdays, from 9 a.m. to noon at the same location.

Its other activities for the year include a concert by Ark and the Dove Sisters on Saturday, March 18 at a time and place to be determined; a Pentecost Mass with Bishop Earl Fernandes on Sunday, May 28 at Grove City Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church and a healing Mass on Wednesday, Sept. 13 at Sunbury St. John Neumann Church.

For more information, go to www.ccrcolumbus.org.

Respect Life events to be held Jan. 23 in diocese

The Diocese of Columbus’ annual Respect Life Mass will take place at 10:30 a.m. Monday, Jan. 23 at Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral.

The Mass will be streamed on St. Gabriel Radio (820 AM in central Ohio, 88.3 FM in southern Ohio) and livestreamed on the diocesan YouTube channel.

At 12:05 p.m., Greater Columbus Right to Life (GCRTL) will sponsor the annual Roe Remembrance in the Ohio Statehouse Arrium. GCRTL said those who wish to attend the event are being asked for the first time to register in advance by visiting gcrtl.org/roe or calling the GCRTL office at (614) 445-8508. Limited onsite registration will be available.

The national March for Life is scheduled for Friday, Jan. 20 in Washington, D.C.
Light Shines in the Darkness

COLUMBUS CATHOLIC WOMEN’S CONFERENCE

February 18, 2023
8:00 AM to 4:30 PM
Ohio Expo Center

www.columbuscatholicwomen.com

Register Today!

Danielle Bean
Fr. Michael Denk
Fr. Rob Galea
Paula Umana
Mass Celebrant: Bishop Earl Fernandes
Music By: Hannah Schaefer
Emcee: Debbie Georgianni

The 26th Annual CATHOLIC MEN’S CONFERENCE

February 25, 2023
Kasich Hall | Ohio Expo Ctr

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John Sablan
Deacon Charlie Echeverry

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