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RITE OF ELECTION

St. Joseph Cathedral was standing room only on Sunday, Feb. 25 at the annual Rite of Election for individuals from around the diocese preparing to receive the sacraments and enter the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil, Page 10



GUADALUPE SUMMIT

More than 450 students from schools and parishes in the diocese came together for the fifth annual Guadalupe Youth Summit organized by the diocese's Office of Hispanic Ministry on Thursday, Feb. 22 at the Ohio Expo Center, Page 9

Catholic Social Services elevates Reyes to new leadership position

By **Hannah Heil**
Catholic Times Reporter

Catholic Social Services (CSS) is expanding its leadership team by creating the role of vice president of community engagement, the organization announced Feb. 26.

The leadership role is a new initiative for CSS aimed at bolstering volunteer participation throughout central and southern Ohio. CSS is an organization motivated by faith that seeks to help poor and vulnerable seniors and families reach their potential.

CSS announced that Ramona Reyes, who currently serves as director of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Center, located on Columbus' west side, has been appointed to lead the new effort. She will assume the role April 1.

"I am deeply honored and humbled to accept the role of vice president of community engagement at Catholic Social Services," she said. "Guided by the values of compassion and service, I am committed to fostering meaningful connections within our community and advancing the mission of Our Lady of Guadalupe."

In her new leadership role, Reyes will seek to inspire deeper volunteer engagement. She will continue to serve as director of the Our Lady of Guadalupe Center.

She said the new initiative is an extension of what CSS currently does in its mission of serving families and seniors. The leadership role is intended to support the work of the entire organization, not only the Our Lady of Guadalupe Center.

Reyes said CSS is searching for a 20,000 square foot facility on the west side of Columbus to house the volunteer center.

Ideally, she said, CSS would like for the Our Lady of Guadalupe Center to be on one side of the facility and the volunteer center on the other side, but she said the centers might need to be individual units.

By creating a volunteer center and expanding the leadership team, Reyes said, CSS is seeking to create a language of volunteerism that matches their mission of serving seniors and families in

need and connecting neighbors with one another.

"Just like the Parable of the Good Samaritan, when faced with a neighbor in need, we hear Jesus say, 'Go and do likewise,'" said S. Kelley Henderson, president and CEO of CSS. "Our impact has grown tremendously through Catholic Social Services' Our Lady of Guadalupe Center under Reyes' leadership. She is the best person to lead this key effort for us."

CSS will begin scouting out volunteer opportunities. In the first couple of months, Reyes said, the organization will focus on groups from parishes, schools and organizations to volunteer. Eventually, there might be volunteer-from-home opportunities for individuals who want to volunteer but cannot come in or do not belong to a large group.

The community engagement role is targeted at connecting the community that wants to serve with those who are in need of service. Reyes said she does not believe there is a void, but rather, an opportunity to expand.

"We've seen young people do acts of kindness and volunteerism; we've seen seniors do acts of kindness and volunteerism," Reyes said. "How wonderful would it be if we all came together, where we may see 50 people – 100 people – being guided to do one mission, which is helping our neighbor."

Reyes said a great encounter occurs when CSS can match a neighbor in need with programming and somebody who is willing to serve. She said it also brings hope to the neighbor in need.

"I think it's a dual hope," Reyes said. "Sometimes people are looking for that volunteer opportunity to have an impact and be present for an individual that's in need. That really makes the need and the impact come together."

Because every community is different, she said, services are geared toward the community's particular needs. CSS is currently discussing how the new initiative will look based on the community they serve, Reyes said.

"It's really a more expansive look at what it means to be a volunteer in the communities that we serve and how we can all become neighbors helping neighbors," she said.



Ramona Reyes speaks to the students attending the Guadalupe Youth Summit on Feb. 22. *CT photo by Ken Snow*

Volunteer opportunities could include supporting CSS' Stay the Course program by creating educational kits

for students going to college, supporting veterans by creating hospitality kits to celebrate their service to the country and other initiatives focused on supporting families and seniors in need.

Reyes said the first on-site volunteer event will likely take place in the fourth quarter (October – December 2024) this year.

She said it will take time to grow the organization's volunteerism department. The initiative will be a "gradual launch" as CSS builds relationships in the community and explores opportunities that will match their mission with that of community partners, such as schools, parishes and organizations, who want to serve.

CSS created hashtags to share information and connect. Hashtags include #ServeAsNeighbors, #NeighborsServingNeighbors and #CSSserves, as well as #ServirComoVecinos (serve as neighbors) in Spanish.

Potential volunteers and organizations are encouraged to reach out and contact CSS at ServeAsNeighbors@ColsCSS.org. A new phone number, 614-857-1232, will be added that is specific to the department.

CSS serves more than 10,000 individuals annually. Their mission is supported by volunteers helping seniors find connections, guiding families to a brighter future and assisting young adults transitioning to the workforce.

The Our Lady of Guadalupe Center combats poverty among the local immigrant Hispanic community. The center offers services including a food pantry, English as a Second Language classes and health screenings.

Bishop to lead walking stations downtown, Good Friday service at Cathedral

Bishop Earl Fernandes will lead a walking Way of the Cross through downtown Columbus on Friday, March 29.

A procession will begin at 2 p.m., followed by a Good Friday service at St. Joseph Cathedral, 212 E. Broad St., that will conclude at 4 p.m.

The route, which will start on the Ca-

thedral steps, has five scheduled stops downtown. Each stop will include readings, music and poetry.

The Way of the Cross is organized by the lay ecclesial movement Communion and Liberation.

For more information, contact Alessandro Scotti at ando.scotti@gmail.com.



Front page photo

MEN'S CONFERENCE

The 27th annual Columbus Catholic Men's Conference drew a crowd of 2,400 from the diocese and beyond to Kasich Hall at the Ohio Expo Center on Saturday, Feb. 24 for a day of spiritual renewal, reconciliation and prayer.

CT photo by Ken Snow

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Father Burke Masters delivers the first keynote address at the Columbus Catholic Men's Conference on Feb. 24.



Conference speaker John Edwards passionately tells the story of his faith journey during his talk.



Chris Stefanick gives a rousing presentation in the afternoon.
CT photos by Ken Snow

Speakers encourage conference attendees to become real men of God

Men are facing an identity crisis in the world today and they need to do something about it, the speakers at the 27th Columbus Catholic Men's Conference told a crowd of 2,410 gathered Saturday, Feb. 24 in Kasich Hall at the Ohio Expo Center.

Father Blake Masters, John Edwards and Chris Stefanick stressed the importance of men being leaders in their faith and family lives and Bishop Earl Fernandes emphasized the conference theme, "The Eucharist: Go Deeper" in his homily at the conference-ending Mass.

"This world, as men, has never needed you more or wanted you less," Stefanick said to laughter, alluding to the cultural condemnation of the word masculinity as inherently toxic in modern-day society.

Early morning snow that blanketed the slippery roads in central Ohio did not deter those who came from 88 parishes in the diocese, the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and the Dioceses of Cleveland, Youngstown, Toledo and Steubenville from attending the annual event. The chairs in the cavernous building were filled with fathers and sons, grandfathers, uncles, relatives, friends and fellow parishioners ranging in age from young boys to the elderly.

An attentive audience listened to the three speakers and was given the opportunity to witness a Eucharistic procession led by Bishop Fernandes, adore Christ in the Blessed Sacrament, go to confession to 49 priests on hand and attend the Mass celebrated by Bishop Fernandes that included nine other priests and seven deacons.

Eucharistic Adoration was available throughout the day in a second-floor room in the hall, as was a second-class relic for veneration of St. Padre Pio, the 20th century Italian priest who suffered



Men's conference attendees stand and applaud a speaker at the conference.

CT photo by Ken Snow

the stigmata. Also on hand were 10 vendors and representatives from 52 faith organizations.

Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church and its 100-plus volunteers, served as the host parish for the conference. Sunbury St. John Neumann Church provided the music during the day. The men's schola from Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral, directed by Dr. Richard Fitzgerald, led the singing at Mass.

The morning speakers, Father Masters and Edwards, encouraged the men to strive to live sacramental lives. Edwards, in particular, recounted the struggles in his life with addiction and how he found reconciliation through faith and the sacraments.

Following his talk and the Eucharistic procession and adoration, men formed two lines on each side of the center that stretched hundreds of feet while waiting to seek reconciliation with the Lord through the sacrament of penance af-

ter hearing the powerful words of the speakers.

"As I travel, I hear things about confession all the time," Edwards said. "No, I don't do that. I'm good."

"I'll ask why and they'll say something like, 'I don't want God to know what I've done,'" he continued, eliciting chuckles from the crowd. "So you're Adam and Eve, and hiding in the bushes too."

"Don't play hide and seek with God. He wins."

He later added, "Fellas, God doesn't care about what you've done. He cares about what you have the potential to do."

Edwards, 45, knows what it's like to hide from God. He hid his sins of addictions to drugs, pornography and selfishness from his family and employer for years.

The Catholic convert, who lives in Memphis, Tennessee, is the founder of Pew Ministries Inc., a non-profit with

a mission of bring Christ to the person in the pews. Edwards also serves as the co-founder of Virtual Catholic Conference LLC and is a speaker and evangelist who hosts the Just a Guy in the Pew podcast.

In addition, he helps start and revitalize parish men's ministries across the country. He noted that more than 86 percent of parishes in the United States do not have any spiritual programs strictly for men.

To facilitate the formation of men's groups in central Ohio, Edwards will return on Saturday, April 13 to present one of his workshops at the Catholic Men's Ministry leadership summit at Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church.

His story and message resonate with men largely because it's so genuine and real. It's one of falling from grace and ultimately redeeming himself after his clandestine behavior was exposed in humiliating fashion.

As a young man, Edwards attended Episcopal schools and said he never was that popular except during basketball season (he stands 6 feet 8) because he loved to evangelize about his faith.

In high school, he began working for NAPA Auto Parts, the same company that employed his father for 45 years, and continued there loading trucks while attending the University of Memphis.

Lonely and searching for community, he became involved with some college guys in a fraternity. To fit in, he started drinking and doing drugs. He was introduced to cocaine for the first time and quickly became hooked.

At that point, he stopped going to church and bombed out of school, but he managed to move up at his job and became a successful salesman making



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Bishop provides anointing directives

Dear Readers,

I depart from my usual answering of your questions in this column in order to speak to you about a recent letter that Bishop Earl Fernandes sent to all the priests of the Diocese of Columbus.

Concerns about the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick were brought to the attention of the bishop. Every bishop has the responsibility of making sure that all the sacraments are properly administered for the good of the faithful and the integrity of the Catholic Church. The bishop wanted to address the concerns brought to him and to clarify the discipline of the administration of the sacrament of anointing. A similar directive had been sent to Columbus priests in 2006.

With Bishop Fernandes' encouragement, I want to share with you the essential parts of the letter that the bishop wrote to the priests.

The bishop writes: "Grateful for your priestly service, I also wanted to address some issues that have been brought to my attention with respect to the administration of the sacraments. On February 3, 2024, the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith issued a document *Gestis verbisque*, which largely deals with the matter and the form of the sacraments. I encourage all of you to read it, and I remind you not to deviate from the prescribed matter and form of the sacraments, so that the risk of invalidity does not emerge."

"I direct that every priest in the Diocese of Columbus is to faithfully adhere to the Code of Canon Law (CIC) and all liturgical instructions and rubrics issued by the Holy See, namely Pastoral Care of the Sick (PCS) and the General Introduction of Pastoral Care of the Sick (GIPCS), the Interdicasterial document *Ecclesiae de mysterio* (13 August 1997, art. 9), the Instruction on Prayers for Healing of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith (14 September 2000), and the Doctrinal Note on the Minister of the Sacrament from the same Congregation (11 February 2005).

"All priests are to observe carefully the following directives and to avoid abuses. The directives are:

1. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick was instituted to give the sick person the graces to bear his or her burden in union with the suffering of Christ, both for one's own salvation and for the good of the entire church.

2. Canon Law and the Ritual stipulate that the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is for those who, having reached the age of reason, are in danger of death, whether as a result of illness or old age (c. 1004). Those who do not meet these criteria, such as infants, young children prior to the age of reason, and those who lack a serious illness that places them in danger of death, are not to receive the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. This includes even those who, though undergoing elective surgery, are not seriously ill. The administration of anesthesia does not constitute a grave illness.

3. The Sacrament of the

SACRAMENTS 101

Father Paul Jerome Keller, OP, S.T.D.

Father Paul Jerome Keller, O.P., S.T.D., director of the diocese's Office of Divine Worship, is a priest of the Dominican Province of St. Joseph. His doctorate is from Rome in sacramental theology. He currently assists at Columbus St. Patrick Church.



Anointing of the Sick may not be administered to persons who are not seriously ill. It is an abuse and, therefore, forbidden to administer this Sacrament indiscriminately to people who enjoy fairly good health, whether they request it or someone requests it for them. The aged and infirm may be anointed on account of the danger of death or the beginning of the danger of death.

4. As the PCS (53) asserts: 'Some types of mental sickness are now classified as serious. Those who are judged to have a serious mental illness and now would be strengthened by the sacrament may be anointed. The anointing may be repeated in accordance with the conditions for other kinds of serious illness.'

5. It is not permissible to tell the faithful that they may receive the Sacrament simply if they feel they need healing, whether of body or mind or spirit. The Sacrament may not be administered broadly to all attending Masses of obligation, such as Sundays and Holy Days, such that virtually everyone in attendance is anointed. The appropriate sacraments for dealing with "interior woundedness" are the sacrament of penance and the Holy Eucharist.

6. Only a priest can validly administer the anointing of the sick (CIC c. 1003). Therefore, no deacons or lay persons may administer an anointing during the celebration of Anointing of the Sick, nor may deacons or lay person simulate the sacrament by the laying on of hands. In accord with *Ecclesiae de mysterio* (art. 9), 'In using sacramentals, the non-ordained faithful should

ensure that these are in no way regarded as sacraments whose administration is proper and exclusive to the Bishop and to the priest. Since they are not priests, in no instance may the non-ordained perform anointings either with the Oil of the Sick or any other oil.'

7. While it is permissible to celebrate the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick within Mass, these Masses are not to be referred to as so-called 'healing Masses,' particularly in light of the fact the Holy Eucharist is itself healing. Anointing within Mass is to be celebrated strictly according to the norms found in PCS, 131-134.

In particular:

a. priests are to ensure that those to be anointed have the opportunity to have their sins absolved in the Sacrament of Penance;

b. not all in attendance at Masses where the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick is celebrated are to be invited indiscriminately to be anointed but only those whose illness is of a serious nature and meet the requirements for reception of the sacrament;

c. all disciplinary norms concerning anointing are to be observed as well as norms for pastoral preparation and liturgical celebration (PCS 108);

d. 'the practice of indiscriminately anointing numbers of people on these occasions simply because they are [non-gravely] ill or have reached an advanced age is to be avoided' (PCS 108);

e. 'only those whose health is seriously impaired by sickness or old age are proper subjects for the sacrament' (PCS 108).

8. The Sacrament of Penance is required for the remission of the guilt (*reatus culpae*) of mortal sins that have not been previously remitted by valid absolution by a priest. The forgiving of sin in the Sacrament of Anointing refers primarily to the *reatus poenae*, the temporal punishment due to sin.

Only in the case of a Catholic who is gravely ill and unconscious, or is prevented by physical or moral circumstances, and is therefore unable to confess his sins, but who would have desired the sacraments (known as an interpretive intention), does the anointing carry with it the forgiveness of serious sins. However, should the person regain consciousness and a modicum of health, he is required to submit all mortal sins to the keys of the Sacrament of Penance.

9. An individual may be anointed more than once, even for the same severe illness as happens when the illness worsens or on account of the debilitations and further weakening of old age."

Please direct any questions to me at divineworship@columbuscatholic.org. I've already been asked about anointing before surgery and related questions. I will respond to them in my next column. Until then, God bless you!



A fresco depicts Jesus as the divine healer. Stock photo

“Gendered” nonsense is dangerous nonsense

Dean Acheson, U.S. secretary of state from 1949 until 1953, is buried in Washington’s Oak Hill Cemetery. When I read recently that Acheson’s 20th successor, Antony Blinken, had sent a cable subtitled “Gender Identity Best Practices” to American diplomats around the world, warning against “harmful, exclusionary messages” conveyed by the use of terms like “mother/father,” “son/daughter,” and “husband/wife,” I was tempted to visit Oak Hill to determine if Secretary’s Acheson’s mortal remains were spinning in his grave.

Acheson titled his brilliant 1969 memoir *Present at the Creation*, which he certainly was, as initiatives in which he played a key role, such as the Marshall Plan, NATO and the Japanese peace treaty became the international security architecture that underwrote communism’s defeat in the Cold War. Might Secretary Blinken riff on his distinguished predecessor and entitle his memoirs *Present at the Destruction*? Of what, you ask? Of what Acheson and others wrought.

Consider what was afoot in the world when Mr. Blinken dispatched that cable. Wars were raging in Ukraine and Gaza. Latin America was falling apart politically and economically, one result of which was an unprecedented migrant-and-refugee crisis on America’s southern border. Russia was building a space-based nuclear weapon that could eliminate America’s satellite-based communications network. Iranian proxies were creating mayhem throughout the Middle East and disrupting vital international commerce in the Red Sea. China continued its saber-rattling attempts to intimidate Taiwan. The crises of governance in sub-Saharan Africa were too numerous to count. The president of the United States couldn’t keep the presidents of Mexico and Egypt straight. The leading Republican candidate for the presidency was informing his adoring fans

THE CATHOLIC DIFFERENCE

George Weigel

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that he would tell Vladimir Putin to “do whatever the hell (he) wanted” to NATO allies not spending 2% of GDP on defense.

And amidst all that, the U.S. secretary of state thought it important to instruct his diplomats to “remain attuned to and supportive of shifts in pronouns” while substituting “you all” or “folks” for the potentially offensive “ladies and gentlemen”?

This is not just nonsense; it is dangerous nonsense. It is a distraction from the real work of diplomacy. It further erodes American credibility in the eyes of Vladimir Putin, Xi Jinping and the apocalyptic mullahs in Tehran, who may well conclude that a putative superpower obsessed with “fluid gender identity” will not pose an obstacle to their aggressive designs. It sends a signal of terminal unseriousness to the rest of the world. It offends what are often termed “traditional” nations and cultures, but which are in fact repositories of common sense.

From the point of view of the Catholic analyst of world affairs, for whom politics is always downstream from culture, this is what happens when what scholars call “expressive individualism” — self-absorption on steroids — displaces the biblical view of the human condition: That there are truths built into the world and into us, including the truth that we are male and female, distinct but complementary, ordered to com-

munion and fruitfulness. Ideas, as always, have consequences — and the desperately defective ideas of woke culture — the cult of the false trinity of Me, Myself, and I — have now corrupted American diplomacy, endangering both our country and the world.

As is typically the case with falsehood, the gender ideology now infesting the Department of State seeks to impose itself by bureaucratic power and personal intimidation. Thus, under Mr. Blinken, State has decreed a third gender “marker” on U.S. passports for those who don’t “identify” as male or female; appointed the first U.S. “Special Envoy to Advance the Human Rights of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer and Intersex (LGBTQ+) Persons;” and informed State Department personnel that those seeking promotion must “advance” DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, as wokesters understand those otherwise honorable terms). This is not quite the totalitarian future that George Orwell described as “a boot stamping on a human face — forever.” But it’s coercion in the name of falsehood, nonetheless.

A friend with a keen sense of history, returning from Rome to Washington via London last month, e-mailed me acerbically from a Heathrow lounge, saying he felt like he was going from Sodom to the Fall of Constantinople. I advised him to have another drink, not least because “Rome” is fixable. But Secretary Blinken’s cable suggests that the analogy between our American moment and the Fall of Constantinople isn’t completely far-fetched. And that new fall is not going to be arrested by either of two narcissistic, elderly presidential candidates who embody, rather than challenge, the culture of self-absorption that is killing America and impeding our capacity to help shape a better world.

Turn to the Lord and ask for an increase in faith

“Faith is not an idea but a life” -- Pope Benedict XVI in *“What is Christianity?: The Last Writings”*

St. Thomas Aquinas begins his Catechetical Instructions with a short exposition on faith. “What is faith?”

He writes, “The first thing that is necessary for every Christian is faith, without which no one is truly called a faithful Christian.”

St. Thomas takes nothing for granted.

He writes, “Faith brings about four good effects. The first is that through faith the soul is united to God, and by it there is between the soul and God a union akin to marriage. Indeed, it must be known that no one is acceptable before God unless he has faith.”

We often use analogies to understand difficult or higher truths. Consider how the high divorce rate and society “redefining” marriage is now weakening this analogy. How would a child whose parents are divorced accept the analogy?

Continuing, Aquinas writes, “The second effect of faith is that eternal life is already begun in us; for eternal life is nothing else than knowing God. This the Lord announced when He said: ‘This is eternal life, that they may know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent (John 17:3).’ This knowledge of God begins here through faith, but it is perfected in the future life when we shall know God as He is.”

Some of you may have participated in “The Rescue Project.” In it, Father John Riccardo observes/comments/notes that things are “messed up.” We can agree but not let it hold us back.

Jesus tells his apostles in John 16:33: “In the world you have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have over-

AQUINAS CORNER | Richard Arnold

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come the world.” Baptized? Yes, eternal life has begun ... have faith ... be of good cheer for Jesus has overcome the world!

Perfection in heaven will mean that faith is no longer needed, where we will be united with God in the most intimate way possible.

Aquinas writes, “The third good that comes from faith is that right direction which it gives to our present life. Faith teaches us all that is necessary to live a good life. It teaches us that there is one God who is the rewarder of good and the punisher of evil; that there is a life other than this one, and other like truths whereby we are attracted to live rightly and to avoid evil. ‘... the righteous shall live by his faith (Hab 2:4).’”

Is our faith “true?” Who defines “good?” God.

Thankfully, we can be assured that when St. Thomas refers to God as a “punisher of evil,” it is with a fatherly love to his children. But alas, today fatherhood is being diminished and ripped apart (like marriage), so to think of God as Father may engender thoughts of absent, distant, or violent ... someone to run from, not toward.

He writes, “The fourth effect of faith is that by it we overcome temptations: ‘(The holy ones) who through faith conquered kingdoms ... (Heb 11:33).’ We know that every temptation is either from the world or the flesh

or the devil. The devil would have us disobey God and not be subject to Him. This is removed by faith, since through it we know that He is the Lord of all things and must therefore be obeyed. ‘Your opponent the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. Resist him, firm in your faith (1 Peter 5:8-9) ... ‘The world tempts us either by attaching us to it in prosperity or by filling us with fear of adversity. But faith overcomes this in that we believe in a life to come better than this one, and hence we despise the riches of this world and we are not terrified in the face of adversity. ‘(A)nd this is the victory that overcomes the world, our faith. (1 John 5:4).’

“The flesh, however, tempts us by attracting us to the swiftly passing pleasures of this present life. But faith shows us that, if we cling to these things inordinately, we shall lose eternal joys. ‘In all circumstances, hold faith as a shield (Eph 6:16).’”

St. Thomas concludes the section saying, “We are more certain, therefore, in believing the things of faith than those things which can be seen, because God’s knowledge never deceives us, but the visible sense of man is often in error.”

Ponder that last clause. Recall, “the apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith!’” in Luke 17:5.

Use it or lose it. Frequent the sacraments. “To live, grow, and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith; it must be “working through charity,” abounding in hope, and rooted in the faith of the Church. (CCC 162).”

Lenten checkup: How are you doing so far?

In Pope Francis' first general audience, he shared, "(L)iving Holy Week, following Jesus means learning to come out of ourselves ... in order to go to meet others, to go towards the outskirts of existence, to be the first to take a step towards our brothers and our sisters, especially those who are the most distant, those who are forgotten ..."

Lent will lead to Holy Week before we know it. Mid-Lent is a great time to reflect on how we are taking steps toward loving God by supporting our families, communities and global family. How have our prayers, fasting and almsgiving enabled us to come out of ourselves and meet others who may have been forgotten by us and society?

During Holy Week, we'll remember that when Jesus was apprehended, his disciples fled. This story can be a reminder of attitudes we may still hold today. We are members of the same human family, but we can turn a blind eye to the suffering of our most vulnerable sisters and brothers. Jesus reminds us that what we do to the least among us we do to Him.

Throughout salvation history, many have understood what it means to be merciful toward people who are suffering. Jesus himself shows this mercy by dying for all of us suffering from sin and death. The Stations of the Cross give us other examples: a bold woman moved by love who wipes His face, a bystander who helps carry the cross, the beloved disciple at the foot of the cross who promises to care for Jesus' mother as his own, and a wealthy man who offers his own new tomb to bury Jesus. All were forever transformed by their experiences.

These are unquestionable examples of the works of mercy – of hearts showing compassion to those in need. And that is what Jesus expects of us – that we offer our hands and hearts to others so that with Him we may enter into eternal life.

Lent is a time of preparation. As Catholics, our Lenten spiritual pillars are prayer, fasting and almsgiving that help guide us in daily reflections as we strive to deepen our relationship with God and neighbor – no matter where in the world that neighbor lives. Lent ultimately leads us to Easter and our hope of the resurrection. We are called to share that hope with every member of our local and global human family.

As we continue our Lenten journey to Easter, I challenge you to reflect on how your sacrifices and actions might draw you closer to God and transform another's

FAITH IN ACTION | Erin Cordle

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



life.

An annual, ready-made opportunity is Catholic Relief Services' Rice Bowl, which has been a staple on Catholic families' tables since 1975. Rice Bowl uses Jesus' teaching and Catholic Social Teaching (CST) to raise awareness about hunger and food insecurity in our own neighborhoods and around the world.

Like CST, Rice Bowl's foundational principle is the life and dignity of the human person. We are all made in God's image and likeness. This means that every human being has a special value, purpose and transcendent destiny. CST challenges us to care for each other so we can be the people God calls us to be and to live in communion with Him.

Rice Bowl also focuses on preferential option for the poor and vulnerable. This principle reinforces Jesus' teaching to give special care to those who are most in need. Jesus showed us time and again that our Christian duty is to listen closely to those who often go unheard and to help those who are the most vulnerable; for in doing so, we minister to Christ.

Our neighbors live across the street and the country, across oceans and hemispheres. As millions of God's children flee war, persecution and poverty, Pope Francis, Caritas Internationalis, Catholic Charities USA and Catholic Relief Services invite you to share their journeys by walking with them in prayer and support.

Remember that our diocese has a program that

uses our 25 percent of all Rice Bowl donations to support local soup kitchens and food pantries that usually don't qualify for grant money or civil support.

I pray for the grace we all need to realize that by sharing the cross of others we become servants of salvation. I also pray that your Lent be fruitful and I offer the following:

Holy God, be with us now as we meditate on your Son's journey to Calvary. Remind us that still, in this present day, many of your children continue that walk to Calvary, carrying heavy, difficult crosses. May we be Simon to those whose burdens are too heavy to be borne alone. May we be Veronica to those who need the touch of love and comfort. And may we, struggling with our own crosses, always remember your promises of justice, mercy and peace. Amen

We fast so that others may feast! For more information about CRS Rice Bowl, go to: www.crsricebowl.org or contact me at socmailbox@columbuscatholic.org.



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CHILD PROTECTION PLAN

It is the goal of the Diocese of Columbus to make the Church a place of safety: a place of prayer, ministry and comfort. Everyone who enters our churches, schools, or facilities must be confident in this. Not one child or young person should suffer from abuse while at Church. In order to assure the safety of our youth, the Diocese of Columbus has enacted a complete program of protection. As part of this program, the Diocese of Columbus will provide appropriate, just, and pastoral care for anyone who has suffered the crime of sexual abuse of a minor at the hands of diocesan clergy or church employees or volunteers. The Diocese of Columbus will report any and all allegations of abuse reported to it to the authorities and will cooperate fully with those authorities.

Help is available: The Diocese of Columbus wants to hear from anyone who has suffered. If you wish to report an allegation of abuse or need pastoral and/or clinical care in order to begin or continue the process of healing from sexual abuse as a child at the hands of a member of the clergy or a church employee or volunteer, simply call the diocesan Victims' Assistance Coordinator. You can find contact information at the bottom of this notice. If you wish to receive a copy of the diocesan complaint form or any of the diocesan policies and procedures, simply call the number below or visit the diocesan web site at www.columbuscatholic.org.

To contact the diocesan Victim's Assistance Coordinator, call:
LAURA LEWIS
614.224.2251 | helpisavailable@columbuscatholic.org

FOR LENT FOR LIFE

This Lent, commit to our local and global human families through daily **prayer**, weekly **fasting** and **almsgiving**. Pick up your CRS Rice Bowls today.

crsricebowl.org

Diocesan contact

Erin Cordle

socmailbox@columbuscatholic.org

614-241-2540

25% of all donations remain in the diocese to support local feeding programs. To date, nearly \$150,000 has helped diocesan supported feeding ministries.





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It costs **\$55,000** per year to educate and form a seminarian. The Diocese of Columbus has a **GOOD AND GROWING NEED** by virtue of **16 ADDITIONAL** young men interested in the priesthood. A contribution from you today will support this immediate need to fund future priests throughout our Diocese.



Columbus Bishop Watterson students Gabriel Lovely (left) and Julien Brandon participate in the Guadalupe Youth Summit on Thursday, Feb. 22 at the Ohio Expo Center.



Sister Guerline Joseph (left), a staff member at Columbus St. Francis de Sales High School, joins students attending the summit.
CT photos by Ken Snow

Over 450 Latino students attend Guadalupe Youth Summit

The diocese's Office of Hispanic Ministry welcomed more than 450 students to its fifth annual Guadalupe Youth Summit on Thursday, Feb. 22 with the theme of "Do Not Fear. Yo Estoy contigo" Isaiah 41:10.

Participants from the Catholic high schools in Columbus and youth groups from various parishes from our diocese including, Portsmouth, led by Father Michael Fulton and Sister Soledad Sauzameda, LIHM, attended the one-day event in Kasich Hall at the Ohio Expo Center.

The venue was moved this year to the space used by the Columbus Catholic men's and women's conferences in order to accommodate the growth of the summit, which was held during the week

between the men's and women's conferences.

Last year's summit was held at Ohio Dominican University.

The day's activities include small group sessions; a career and resource fair; music; a keynote address by Joel de Loera of the Diocese of Arlington, Virginia; Mass celebrated by Bishop Mark Bartosic of the Archdiocese of Chicago and priests of the Diocese of Columbus; and a panel discussion with Ramona Reyes, vice president of community engagement for the diocese's Catholic Social Services, Dr. Marlon De La Torre, senior director of the diocese's Office of Evangelization; and de Loera.

Many of the volunteers who assisted with the conference were young Latino

adults who attended World Youth Day last summer in Portugal with Father David Arroyo, diocesan vicar for Hispanic ministry.

"Overall, it was a day to share and grow in our faith and culture together," said Lisset Mendoza, the associate director of the diocese's Office of Hispanic Ministry. "Many of our students have not yet decided what their plans are for after high school graduation and we made sure to bring a vast variety of organizations and companies to our resource and career fair for them to look at potential opportunities. This also included five religious vocations offices, including our diocese."

Father Arroyo said, "The Eucharistic celebration had a great impact in all of the attendees. Most Reverend Bartosic spoke to the hearts of the students and shared that God chooses us for a mission just like he did with Simon Peter at the feast of the chair of Peter.

"Bishop said even with our faults and sins, our Lord invites us to continue the journey and through a short melody he transmitted the message that Jesus is calling us to change our names and lives.

"I told Jesus it would be all right if he changed my name."

De Loera, the director of Hispanic ministry for the Diocese of Arlington, encouraged the students to "be not afraid" in his presentation, using San Jose Sanchez del Rio as an example of courage and faith.

Referred to as "Joselito," the 14-year-old saint was put to death in 1928 during the Cristero War in Mexico when he refused to renounce his Catholic faith after being threatened by government officials who were trying to suppress the Catholic Church and religious freedom. He was canonized on Oct. 16, 2016.

The speaker encouraged them to become serious about their faith now, to open themselves to the graces and blessings bestowed on them from God, and not to wait until they are older. He cited recent Pew Research Center statistics that showed about 43 percent of all Hispanic adults in the United States identify as Catholic compared with 67 percent in 2010.

De Loera described his own struggles as a young man who became caught up in material pleasures, dropped out of high school, disregarded people and his faith, and ended up running with the wrong crowd.



Students, school staff members and volunteers pose for a group shot behind the presenters and organizers of the event in the foreground (from left) Father David Arroyo, diocesan vicar for Hispanic ministry; Dr. Marlon de la Torre, senior director for the Office of Evangelization; Joel de Loera, keynote speaker; Bishop Mark Andrew Bartosic, auxiliary bishop from the Archdiocese of Chicago; volunteer emcees Myra Gonzalez Huddlestone and Gabe Gessler, and Lisset Mendoza, director of the Office of Hispanic Ministry.



Dr. Marlon De La Torre (left), Ramona Reyes of Catholic Social Services and keynote speaker Joel de Loera take part in a panel discussion.



Bishop Mark Andrew Bartosic of the Archdiocese of Chicago offers a blessing at Mass.
CT photos by Ken Snow

Rite of Election participants fill Cathedral

A standing room only crowd filled Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral on Sunday, Feb. 25 for the diocese's annual Rite of Election.

Catechumens of various ages from parishes around the diocese had their names entered into the Book of the Elect as they prepare to receive the sacraments of initiation, baptism, confirmation, and Holy Communion, in the Catholic Church on Holy Saturday during the Easter Vigil Mass at their respective parishes.

After the names are entered into the book, catechumens are declared by the bishop to be the elect. Each of the elect have a sponsor who supports him/her during the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults (formerly known as the Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults) instructional formation process.

Candidates, who also will become members of the Church at the Easter Vigil, are already baptized and were recognized in their respective parishes on the First Sunday of Lent. They will be receiving the sacrament of confirmation and make their First Communion on Holy Saturday night at the Easter Vigil.

The Rite of Election bilingual ceremony included processional and recessional hymns, prayers, Scripture readings, presentation of the catechumens, invitation and enrollment of the names, and the act of election.

Bishop Earl Fernandes offered a homily in both Spanish and English with a large number of Latinos in attendance.

Reflecting on the Gospel reading describing Jesus' transfiguration, Bishop Fernandes said, "We are sometimes faced with two temptations, especially when we come to church. To say, with Simon Peter, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here.'"

The first temptation is that "sometimes we say, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here for 45 minutes to an hour, depending on how long the bishop or the priest preaches,' and we check the box, 'I have fulfilled



Deacon Dave Bezusko of Marysville Our Lady of Lourdes Church places a page with names from the parish into the Book of the Elect. *CT photos by Ken Snow*



Celeste Einco (left) and Skyler Stamper (right) with their sponsors attend the Rite of Election at St. Joseph Cathedral. Einco and Stamper are coming into the Church at Columbus Christ the King at Easter.

my obligation.' But we are not transformed by the encounter with the Lord.

"The second temptation is like we can look outside in our world and see how much poverty there is, how much violence there is, how much war there is, how much terrible loneliness there is. We can look even within our own families and see conflict, division, dysfunction, and we could say, 'Lord, it is good for us to be here, because we're not out there,' as if church was an escape from the reality of our life.

"Our problems will never go away, but we must confront our problems with the faith in Jesus Christ. We must confront the darkness with the Light that comes from Christ."

The mystery of the transfiguration offered an exterior manifestation to Jesus' disciples the splendor of things to come at His resurrection, the bishop said, "an interior light in those dark moments of life when we do not know what to do, when we

are without a job, when we are faced with suffering with the loss of a loved one."

Scripture instructs the faithful that Christ provides the words of everlasting life and He is the light shining in the darkness, "and so through holy baptism you will be enlightened with the light of faith," Bishop Fernandes said.

"You will be given new life in Him through these waters and be made a new creation. Your hearts will be filled with the grace of the Holy Spirit with whom you will be sealed in confirmation. He will be poured into your hearts and you will become His temple.

"And the Holy Spirit is the Consoler, Who also teaches us how to pray when we do not know how to pray as we ought, and Who gives us strength in moments of weakness to confront our challenges."

Jesus commanded his apostles to go out and make disciples of all nations, "and so the Holy Church listens to the words and carries them out, and will carry out

this commandment over you who will be blessed to be joined to the family of God."

Just as Christ breathed on the disciples and told them to receive the Holy Spirit, "You will receive the Holy Spirit in baptism and be sealed with Him in confirmation," Bishop Fernandes said.

At the Last Supper on the night before Jesus was betrayed, He instructed the apostles to "do this in memory of Me" when He instituted both the priesthood and the Eucharist. "And you will receive Jesus in His Body and Blood, His soul and divinity," the bishop told the elect.

"Yes, the presence of Christ exists in His Church. And God is calling you, choosing you, to be members of His Church," Bishop Fernandes said. "This is my Beloved Son, listen to Him.

"And I suppose if Jesus were here today, He would say to each of you, 'Take courage. Finish the race. Know that I am with you. And, one more thing, I love you and you are mine.'"

Mother, daughters look forward to receiving Jesus in the Eucharist

By Ken Snow
For The Catholic Times

In 2007, Darlene Lyles and her three daughters moved from Virginia to Columbus. And it wasn't long after the move that they began looking for a church to attend. "Church shoppin'," as she describes it.

Lyles had grown up in a Baptist family but never felt connected to her church community.

"I was raised up a Baptist, but I never got baptized," she said. "With the Baptists, they play the music so loud you feel like bustin' out of your chair. That wasn't for me."

So, for a lengthy period, Lyles' faith journey remained quietly on hold.

Later, in the 2010s, Lyles occasionally attended Masses at Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral and Columbus Holy Cross

Church. She's not exactly sure what drew her to the Catholic Church, but she felt more at home there than in most other denominations. This continued, on and off, for a few years.

Still, as she describes it, "Though the Catholic faith was tuggin' at me, at the cathedral and Holy Cross I was not feelin' it. For me, personally, the Spirit was not fully present."

The other Catholic church she and her daughters attended, Columbus Holy Rosary-St. John, was closer to where she lives and as it turned out was more to her liking. Although the call to be churchd was strong, Lyles felt torn about which one to join.

Lyles recounts her thoughts as "OK, let me stay home and just relax and not try to think which church I should go to. I had just about given up, but then I said, 'Jesus, show me the way. Which church? Give

me a sign that I know.' And that's what He did."

This occurred sometime in 2021.

"So He gave me a dream in which I saw some details of the front of a church, but I wasn't quite sure which church," she recalled.

Later that day, she asked one of her daughters to accompany her on a short walk from their home and, when they reached Holy Rosary-St. John, Lyles said, "I had to look up and then I said, 'OK, now I've got you. That's the green wraparound on each of the (twin) spires and there's the green crosses at the very tip tops that was in the dream.'"

After that, Lyles and her daughters began attending Masses regularly at Holy Rosary-St. John. They found the congregation to be warm and inviting and said,



Darlene Lyles will enter the Catholic Church at Columbus Holy Rosary-St. John Church.

CT photo by Ken Snow

See MOTHER, Page 11

Church search ends after finding ‘everything I had ever wanted’

By Hannah Heil

Catholic Times Reporter

Although it was 9:30 p.m., Stephanie Coleman remembered the night of Aug. 27, 2023 clear as day.

It was her first time at Gahanna St. Matthew the Apostle Catholic Church. She stopped by the church earlier that evening to attend a class about becoming Catholic, which she saw advertised on the parish website.

Coleman, who is a social worker serving homeless youth in Columbus, at the time could be considered somewhat curious about the Catholic faith, but she said she had no intention of converting. All of that changed the moment she left the church later that evening.

“I remember walking out of that first session like on fire,” she said. “I was ecstatic. It was 9:30, almost 10, time to go to bed, and I could have run a marathon. I felt amazing because I felt like I had found something. I didn’t know what it was, but I knew that I had found something.”

Coleman did not know it, but she was attending the first Order of Christian Initiation for Adults (OCIA) class for adults preparing to receive the sacraments of initiation in the Catholic Church at Easter.

She said she simply wanted to know more about Catholicism. The first OCIA class covered the curriculum and core beliefs of the Catholic faith, she said, and she was quite surprised by what she learned.

“It was everything that I had ever wanted to hear in a religious institution ever,” Coleman said.

“It was, ‘We’re going to study. We’re going to go back to the beginning. We’re going to understand what our faith is. We’re going to understand what God wants from us. We value Scripture and Tradition and prayer, and Jesus Christ — the Holy Trinity.’”

Coleman, who is from Columbus, was baptized at age 12 at Eastland Christian Church in Columbus. She attended various Protestant churches growing up.

Her family attended Christmas and Easter services at a Southern Baptist church. In high school, she participated in a Baptist church youth group.

Coleman has a grandmother who was Methodist and a grandfather who was



Stephanie Coleman CT photo by Ken Snow

raised Catholic. Her grandparents left their faiths and stopped going to church for several years. When they began attending services again, they went to a Southern Baptist church.

Prior to her first OCIA class, Coleman and her friends attended Protestant churches. Coleman said she stopped going to church because she was discouraged.

“We just weren’t finding what we needed in church, so we started a Bible study, but we’ve been going through a lot of Paul’s letters, and he’s essentially telling all these churches a lot about what’s going on today,” she said.

“Nothing’s really changed honestly. He’s telling people, ‘You need to get along. You need to be of one mind. You need to stop fighting. You need to stop bickering, and we need to be love.’”

At Bible study one evening, the group discussed inspired texts and debated whether divine inspiration ceased after the Bible was written. Coleman said the conversation led to a discussion about the “lost books of the Bible,” and she discovered that the Catholic Bible has seven additional books.

Coleman downloaded the Catholic Bible on her phone that night and began delving into the books. She first read the Book of Tobit, which is removed from Protestant Bibles, and said it was an answered prayer.

The book is about a righteous Jew, To-

bit, who is blind and in exile in Nineveh, and Sarah, a young woman in Media who lost seven husbands, each killed on his wedding night by a demon. God sends the angel Raphael, in disguise, to help them. Tobit’s son, Tobias, goes with Raphael to Media, binds the demon and marries Sarah.

“It was quite beautiful to me because that’s what I had been struggling with for the longest time anyway,” she said of her history with relationships. “If you build it for Him and you just do it by faith, it doesn’t need to make sense and He’ll bless you, so it was beautiful, and that’s all I needed to hear.”

While familiarizing herself with the Catholic Bible, Coleman had a conversation with her brother and his fiancée later that same week, which led her a step closer to the Catholic Church.

At dinner one evening, her brother’s fiancée, who comes from a Catholic family, brought up how their wedding Mass would go. She was under the impression that her fiancé and his family were Catholic. She was surprised when Coleman revealed that they were not.

Coleman said her brother did not recognize the difference between Christian and Catholic, so he told his fiancée that they were Catholic. Learning this was false, the bride-to-be realized there would be implications for her wedding Mass.

Coleman, trying to ease the situation, said she would find out what it takes to become Catholic with her brother before the wedding.

“I said, ‘I’m going to look into what it’s going to take to be Catholic,’ she said. “‘We’re going to figure this out, and you want to be Catholic? I’ll do it with you’ because, I didn’t tell them, but I was already looking into it. I was already reading the Catholic Bible.”

Coleman’s work colleague mentioned that he attended a wedding at St. Matthew, and her brother’s fiancée’s family lived in the Gahanna area and attended Mass there. So, when Coleman learned the church was offering a class on Catholicism that Sunday, she decided to check it out.

“I went inside twice,” she recounted. “It was under construction at the time, so all the lights were turned off, and there were statues, and it was a little eerie to be hon-

est. I didn’t know where I was going.

“Some things were locked, and there was no sign of a human being anywhere, and so, then I finally walk outside, and I see this older couple walking up, and I decide to wait and follow them in.”

Unbeknownst to the couple, they led Coleman downstairs to a room that changed the trajectory of her life. After the first class, Coleman began a nine-month journey into full communion with the Catholic Church, which will culminate at the Easter Vigil this year.

“I am happy with how our candidates and catechumens are entering into the season of Lent to prepare for the Easter sacraments,” said Father Ted Sill, the pastor of St. Matthew. “They are an inspiration to our entire parish.”

“I am blessed to have a great director, Jen Cabe, and her team of volunteers who are so committed to helping them in their journey.”

Coleman’s journey through OCIA transformed several of her previous ways of thinking and beliefs, including her idea of marriage.

Prior to OCIA, she had vowed never to get married because every marriage she knew ended in divorce, was violent or aggressive and did not glorify God, she said. Learning about the sacrament of marriage in OCIA and witnessing it lived out in the Catholic Church changed her heart.

“We had a week where we went over the Catholic family and marriage, and it was describing Catholic family in a way where, to me, it sounded like an absolute unicorn,” she said. “It was this fictitious mystical animal that didn’t exist.”

“I wouldn’t have believed this to be true if I hadn’t started meeting Catholic families that were inviting me into their homes as I was getting to understand this faith more — people were inviting me into their homes and teaching me about their family and talking to me about their Catholic history.”

“I was getting invited to these places with these Catholic families, and I was seeing what I had read in (OCIA) on the paper come to life.”

Coleman was invited to attend Mass with Catholics, including one of her colleagues’ families, as well as families at St.

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“They actually treat you like family. And my oldest daughter, Virginia, said, ‘You know what? I like that church.’”

Asked what it was that made her feel she should become Catholic, Lyles said, “Basically, when I asked God to get that for me — ‘cause I was undecided what religion I wanted to be — He pointed me in the right direction. So I said, ‘If He wants me to be this religion, then cool, I don’t have no problem.’”

“So when I first got there, I listened. I

said, ‘You know what? There’s the church where we need to be because Father Ramon (Owera, the pastor) explained what it’s all about.’ So I said, ‘Cool.’”

Early in September 2023, Father Owera asked Lyles if she would like to enroll in OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) and she responded with a resounding “Yes!” She was eager to learn the Catechism of the Catholic Church knowing that, at the Easter Vigil in 2024, she would be baptized, confirmed and

then receive her first Holy Communion.

Not only Darlene, but her two oldest daughters, Virginia (28) and Carmel (22), enrolled in OCIA as well and will be entering into full communion with the Catholic Church alongside their mother this Easter.

“Yes, my daughters and I, we’re going to be baptized and finally be able to consume the Body and Blood of Christ! One of my daughters has a disability — she’s autistic — so I had to explain it to her, and she’s all about being baptized. He got

us on the right path!”

Lyles’ final comment on her long and convoluted faith journey was, “If you’re on a path similar to mine, go to a quiet place in your heart and ask Jesus what He wants you to do, and then listen. The answer might not come right away, and it might not appear the way you’d expect it, but it will come eventually. And when it does, you’ll know. So, do what God tells you to do, because He’s not finished with you.”

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\$200,000 annually by age 24. He met and married his wife, Angela, became Catholic, and they were blessed with a child. All the while, he was hiding his drinking and drug habit.

One day, he received a call from his mother. He went to see her and his father at a clinic in Memphis. Edwards learned that she had a heart condition and cancer, which had spread when she opted to be treated for the heart issue while forgoing chemotherapy.

Sadly, his mother passed away. Devastated by her death, Edwards said he went off the rails at that point and told God that he hated him for taking his mom.

That led to more drinking and drugs, which he hid from his wife, who was pregnant with twins. He feared that his habits would be exposed, but he didn't stop, even though his wife was dealing with a high-risk pregnancy. He also developed a habit of watching pornography.

After returning from a successful business trip to Mississippi, he decided to score some cocaine from his dealer in Memphis to celebrate. But this time, his luck ran out. Drug Enforcement Agency agents pulled up behind his car, found cocaine in his pocket and arrested him on a felony possession charge.

Edwards was thrown in jail and thought his life was over. The shameful life he had hidden all of these years was finally exposed.

He tried to explain to his wife what had happened. She told him she wouldn't divorce him because of the vows of marriage she had taken as a Catholic, but she said he couldn't come home to live with her or the children. And so he went to stay with his father in Mississippi.

At his trial, Edwards pleaded guilty to felony drug possession and was placed on probation. He made the decision to enter a 30-day outpatient rehab that would require his father to drive him four hours a day to the facility for treatment.

While sitting in the rehab facility, his wife walked in unannounced and told him she couldn't let him go through the rehab alone. She allowed him to return to their home, where one of his three-year-old daughters had asked at one point if her daddy was still alive.

The shame made him want to hide from the world, but one day he found himself going to Mass for the first time in years. Even though he had become Catholic before marriage, he had never taken the faith seriously. Then, at that Mass, the priest invited him to receive Communion.

"He just looks at me and says, 'This is the body of Christ.' And he laid (the host) in my hands and it was like lightning shot all through my body. It's the first time I ever believed it was Him."

After Mass, the priest led Edwards to



Bishop Earl Fernandes raises the host during the afternoon Mass at the Columbus Catholic Men's Conference while surrounded by priests, deacons and servers.



Bishop Earl Fernandes processes to the altar with the Blessed Sacrament for Eucharistic Adoration at the conference. *CT photos by Ken Snow*

the confessional, where he poured out his sins. The priest told him to return to confession every Friday.

"It saved my life," Edwards said.

The sacraments strengthened him enough to take the lead in forming a parish men's ministry. At the first get-together, many of the men realized while sharing their own stories that they were experiencing the same issues as other men.

"Every man in that room stood up that day and talked about how broken they were," Edwards recalled. "That's the day God showed me the power of vulnerability in a man's life."

He found strength in a passage from the Second Letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians: "My grace is sufficient for you. For my power is made perfect in weakness."

At Saturday's conference, he cautioned the men to become vulnerable and not to go through life without acknowledging weaknesses. He told them

that the Evil One will have no power over them after going to confession.

"The most manly thing you could do is to be honest with God and the people in your life about where you are," Edwards said.

The men's group back home, which has been meeting for the past eight years, was the launching point for his ministry of helping others who might be struggling or need support.

"I want to go around the country to start many more groups where men can be real, where they can take off the masks or whatever they can to come to the mercy of God," he said.

"People say that you can't change -- and they're right," he continued. "But you can do all things through Christ who strengthens you. We're all beloved sons, but we're also called to be faithful friends of God ..."

"God doesn't care about what you've done. He cares about what you have the potential to do. ... What he cares about

is when you haven't repented because it has the potential to separate you from God forever. ...

"We have to get over this notion that it's punishment or anything else. Go lay down your burdens. Go lay down your pain. Go get your mercy. It's the most important thing you can do today other than receiving the Eucharist."

Father Masters, 57, wearing a Cubs jacket in rival Cincinnati Reds territory, shared a conversion story that is similar to Edwards' in some aspects but different in other ways, most notably his spiritual journey from being an unchurched Protestant as a young boy to a Catholic priest.

A significant portion of Father Masters' life has been linked with baseball and he used metaphors from the sport to describe his experience.

As Major League Baseball players participate in spring training in Florida and Arizona to prepare for the 2024 season, "they go back to the basics," Father Masters said. "They're practicing bunting, running, hitting, fielding as if they were just starting over like Little Leaguers. Their goals may be to make the all-star team, winning the World Series and ultimately individually make it to the Hall of Fame.

"Very similar to us as Catholics, right? Every year we go back to the basics of prayer, fasting, almsgiving. And we are preparing for this long season ahead, if you will. ... And our ultimate goal, of course, is to be in God's heavenly Hall of Fame to be with the Lord Jesus for all eternity. ... You and I are called to be holy. You and I are called to be saints."

Father Masters grew up in the Chicago area, the youngest of three boys. His mother was Baptist and his father was raised in the United Church of Christ. He said the family prayed before bed, but that was the extent of their spiritual life.

His life started to change when his parents decided to send him to a Catholic high school, where he encountered priests and religious sisters for the first time. He also experienced the beauty of the Mass there.

At first, he couldn't understand why the students so reverently received what he perceived as a small piece of bread. As a junior, he went on a retreat and a visiting priest inadvertently gave him Holy Communion at Mass.

"That moment, that accident, changed my life," he said. "It was so powerful that I knew instinctively that this is the body of Christ."

He went home to tell his parents that he wanted to become Catholic. After taking religious instructions during his junior and senior years, he was baptized and received his first official Holy Communion in May 1985.

A standout baseball player in high

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school, Masters received a scholarship to play for Mississippi State University, where he experienced success on the diamond as an infielder and played on a team that reached the College World Series.

While in college, he said he learned an important lesson that today he calls “relationship, identity and mission.”

“We start with a relationship with God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit,” he explained. “From there, He reveals to us our identity as a beloved child of God, and then we have a mission, in that order. But so often we get it backwards.

“We start with our mission. From there, we get our identity and then if we have time we fit in a relationship with God. So, when I ask a man who are you, how do men normally respond? Their career, right? What’s the problem with that? Do you ever have a bad day at work? Do you ever switch jobs? Do you ever retire?”

“Have you ever seen a professional athlete when they retire? They spiral out of control. It’s because they don’t know who they are. They’ve so identified themselves with their career. Now that their career is done, they’re saying, ‘Who am I?’ And they start to grasp for things in this world.

“And we know nothing in this world can fill that infinite void in our hearts. Only God can, and so I learned this the hard way. My mission was to be a baseball player. My identity was I’m a baseball player. And when I had time, I fit in a relationship with God.”

After college, Father Masters had a brief stint playing in the minor leagues. He then went to work as an actuary but didn’t like sitting at a desk and decided to pursue a career in sports, taking a job with a minor league baseball team in the Chicago area while doing everything from sweeping the grandstands to wearing the mascot’s costume. His new goal was to one day become the general manager of the Cubs.

After a few years, he landed a job with the MLB’s Miami Marlins and also began dating a young Catholic woman who took him for the first time in his life to Eucharistic Adoration, where she taught him how to pray and listen to the Lord. About three months later, he began to hear an inner voice in his heart calling him to become a priest.

He entered seminary in 1997 and never looked back, saying the breakup was difficult but that he’d never felt happier. Ironically, a friend later asked him if he could start dating Father Masters’ former girlfriend. The two of them ended up marrying and the priest celebrated their wedding and baptized their children.

At the end of Father Masters’ first year in seminary, his mother was diagnosed with lung cancer. He went home to help

and in July 1998 she collapsed and died in her son’s arms. He was angry at God but later learned at her wake that she had told others while her son was in college that she wouldn’t be surprised if he became a priest one day.

“I believe God has called me from being a Protestant baseball player to a Catholic priest to help Catholics realize the key is that you have in the sacraments, especially in the Eucharist,” he said.

“Who cares who wins a World Series or a Super Bowl? I mean, we care, but in the big picture, what does it really mean? What really matters is a relationship with Christ. What really matters is preparing ourselves for eternity.”

Ordained in 2002, Father Masters has served as a parochial vicar, vocations director and director of evangelization for the Diocese of Joliet. He recently became pastor of St. Isaac Jogues Church in Hinsdale, Illinois, while continuing to serve as a chaplain for the Cubs.

On Sunday mornings when the Cubs are playing at home during the season, he celebrates Mass at Wrigley Field.

“You might have a \$20 million ballplayer sitting next to somebody who sells popcorn at the game,” he said. “In God’s eyes, is there any difference? He doesn’t care how much money we make. He doesn’t care about our job titles. Those details are important, but ultimately we’re all the same.”

Father Masters did realize a lifelong dream to be on a major league field in 2016 while the Cubs were in spring training. Then-manager Joe Maddon, who led the franchise to its first World Series title since 1908 later that year, asked Father Masters if he wanted to suit up in uniform for a practice.

The next day, he was on the field with the Cubs players. Standing in the outfield, tears started to run down his face.

“I went back to that seven-year-old boy who said I’m going to be on that field someday and it was like God was saying this was your dream to be a major league baseball player but now you’re living my dream as a priest,” said Masters, who authored a book, “Grand Slam for God,” that came out in August. He also offers a daily scripture reflection on a YouTube channel and a written blog.

“My experience with God is we cannot outdo God’s generosity,” Father Masters said. “He multiplies it, purifies it and gives it back to us in ways that we never thought possible. It’s the same thing that happens at every Mass.

“I want to encourage you and challenge you to be generous with the gifts that God has given. These gifts are not meant for you alone. They’re meant for the greater good of society.”

At the closing Mass, Bishop Fernandes reflected on the conference’s “The Eucharist: Go Deeper” theme. In July, a



Long lines form for confession during the lunch hour at the conference.



Shawn Miskovich, a member of Sunbury St. John Neumann Church, prays during Adoration.



Brad Pierron serves as the master of ceremonies. CT photos by Ken Snow

three-year National Eucharistic Revival initiated by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops will culminate in a National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis.

“In our first reading today (Deuteronomy 26:16-19), you’ve heard the Lord through Moses inviting people to go deeper to observe the laws and statutes with their whole heart and with all their strength,” the bishop said. “And God promised His blessings if they would heed His voice and hearken to His commandments.

“But do we do it? We who have been given the gift of faith through baptism, we who have been sealed with the Holy Spirit at confirmation. We will have time and time again been nourished with the Holy Eucharist, we who have been for-

given our sins and strengthened in reconciliation.

“Do we actually hearken to the Lord’s voice and keep His commandments and observe the statutes and decrees with our whole heart and strength? Do we go deeper, living lives consistent with the Eucharistic mystery?”

After Mass, speakers for next year’s conference, which will take place on Saturday, Feb. 22, were announced as Deacon Harold Burke-Sivers, a well-known speaker and evangelist; Dr. Ray Guarendi, a popular Catholic psychologist, speaker and EWTN radio host; and Mark Hartfiel, vice president of Paradisus Dei (Paradise of God), a worldwide apostolate dedicated to marriage and family life.

Organ improvisations on Stations to take place at cathedral

By Tim Puet

For The Catholic Times

Dr. Richard K. Fitzgerald knows how his coming program of organ improvisations on the Stations of the Cross is likely to start, but what happens after that will in part be up to the audience.

“Every improvisation is music created specifically for the time and place where it’s happening and the people who are listening,” Fitzgerald said. “It provides a

very interactive connection between the improviser and the audience. I may not be able to see their faces but I can sense how they’re responding to the first part of the improvisation and extemporize from that.

“The bones are there and you build a structure from that. It’s the same kind of thing a stand-up comic might do – ‘reading the room’ and adjusting.”

The free program will take place at 3 p.m. Sunday, March 17 in Columbus St.

Joseph Cathedral, 212 E. Broad St. Fitzgerald has been the cathedral’s music director for nine years and this will be his third straight year of improvising on the Stations.

“With improvisation, every program is different, so anyone who has been to either of the first two will be hearing something new. Nothing is written down. I have some ideas to explore with each station, but there’s plenty of room for spontaneity and expanding on those pa-

rameters in the moment,” he said.

“For instance, the first station, Jesus is condemned to death, is likely to incorporate familiar Lenten hymns such as ‘O Sacred Head,’ ‘Were You There?’ ‘When I Survey the Wondrous Cross’ and ‘What Wondrous Love is This?’”

“Every organ is different, and one of the features of this 2006 Fritts Grand Gallery mechanical-action organ is the way

See ORGAN, Page 15



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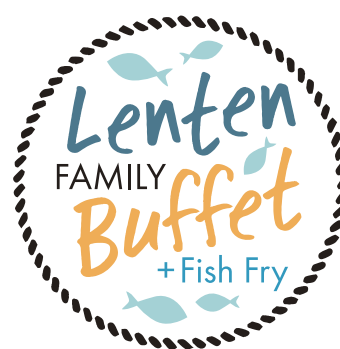
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Dominican sister takes final vows

Sister Phuong Thuy Vu, OP made a perpetual profession of vows with the Dominican Sisters of Peace on Jan. 28 at the congregation's Columbus Motherhouse.

The ceremony included a Mass celebrated by Father Anthony Quyet Nguyen and rite of religious profession. During the rite, Sister Patricia Twohill, OP, the congregation's prioress, received Sister Phuong's perpetual vows.

The Mass and ceremony included readings and songs in Vietnamese and English and a liturgical dance.

"A highlight of the day was when I heard the congregation praying for me," Sister Phuong said. "I felt their love and acceptance. It was extremely moving to become part of this community and experience everyone's support as I walked

forward as Sister Phuong Thuy Vu, OP."

Sister Phuong, who is originally from Vietnam, currently ministers at the Springs Learning Center, a literacy center for adults, in New Haven, Connecticut. She previously served at St. Mary Dominican High School in New Orleans.

She spent her candidacy at the New Haven House of Welcome and attended the Collaborative Dominican Novitiate in St. Louis. She entered the Dominican Sisters of Peace as a candidate in 2016.

"I have remained peaceful and calm about my decision to dedicate my life to God as part of the Dominican Sisters of Peace," she said. "I have been preparing to take my final vows for the last eight years. I believe in the Dominican spirit and have been living the vows of pov-

erty, chastity and obedience. The rite of perpetual vows made my commitment a public occasion in front of God, family, friends and community."

Sister Phuong received a bachelor of science degree in chemical engineering from the Illinois Institute of Technology. She is also versed in catechesis and accounting.

"Sister Phuong is a woman of quiet and abiding faith with a deep love of Dominican life and mission," Sister Patricia said.

"She has been a blessing to God's people through her various ministries, and I am eager to watch her grow as she continues her vowed life."

The Dominican Sisters of Peace, members of the Order of Preachers, are vowed Catholic women striving to live the Gospel of Christ through service and peacemaking. They are present in 22 states, Nigeria and Peru, and they serve in education, healthcare, spirituality, pastoral care, prison ministry and the arts.

ORGAN, continued from Page 14

the stops can be pulled in and out very slowly, creating a very eerie effect that provides the kind of groaning, moaning sounds that vividly depict the agony and horror of Christ's crucifixion," he said.

"Part of what inspired me to do my first improvisation on the Stations three years

ago and to continue the programs is the hope that it will deepen the listeners' personal faith and enable people to see the Stations from a different perspective, preparing them for Easter. Like all sacred music, its ultimate purpose is the glory of God and the salvation of souls."

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Claver Ladies Auxiliary donates baby items

The Knights of Peter Claver Ladies Auxiliary Court 298 donated 150 layettes to the Christ Child Society of Columbus in February. Court members donate baby clothes and care items each year to present to the Christ Child Society, which provides the layettes for mothers in need. Presenting the donation to Christ Child Society representative Laura Caldwell (center) are Vice Grand Lady Mary Galloway (left) and Grand Lady Lanell Wade. *Photo courtesy Knights of Peter Claver Ladies Auxiliary*



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LOCAL NEWS AND EVENTS

Columbus St. Patrick to host Aquinas events, day of recollection

The Dominican friars of Columbus St. Patrick Church, 280 N. Grant Ave., will be hosting two events in honor of the 750th anniversary of the death of St. Thomas Aquinas.

A sung Mass in the Dominican Rite will be celebrated at 11 a.m. Saturday, March 9, the Feast of St. Thomas Aquinas.

The church's inaugural Aquinas lecture will be delivered at 7 p.m. Tuesday, March 12 in Aquinas Hall by Father Reginald Lynch, OP, assistant professor of dogmatic and historical theology at the Dominican House of Studies in Washington. He will speak about Aquinas' writings on the Mass as a sacrifice in the writings of the Angelic Doctor.

The church also will be the site of a day of recollection with the topic "Eucharist: Sign and Sacrament" from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. Saturday, April 6.

The speakers will be Father Gregory Pine, OP and Father Bonaventure Chapman, OP, known for their work with the Magnificat prayer guide, Pints with Aquinas, Catholic Classics, The Thomistic Institute and the "Godsplaining" podcast.

For more information on that event, go to www.godsplaining.org

The two March events are part of the triple jubilee in honor of the 700th anniversary of St. Thomas's canonization (2023), the 750th anniversary of his death (2024) and the 800th anniversary of his birth (2025).

The faithful may gain a plenary indulgence until Jan. 28, 2025 by making a pilgrimage to a holy place connected with the Dominican order and devoutly taking part in the jubilee ceremonies or devoting a suitable time to pious recollection, concluding with the Lord's Prayer, the Creed and invocations of the Blessed Virgin Mary and St. Thomas Aquinas.

Any church, shrine or chapel entrusted to the Dominicans can meet the requirements for the pilgrimage. In the Diocese of Columbus, these include Columbus St. Patrick and Somerset St. Joseph and Holy Trinity churches. The Dominican Sisters of Peace, the Dominican Sisters of the Immaculate Conception Province, and the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist administer various apostolates throughout the diocese.

Mother Cabrini letters back in print

A book of 17 letters by St. Frances Xavier Cabrini, the first American citizen to become a saint, is being made available by Columbus-based Catholic Treehouse after being out of print for 80 years.

Letters From the Travels of St. Frances Cabrini includes the content from the original book and adds photographs, artwork, prayers and other material.

The letters were written to members

of the order she founded, the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart, as Mother Cabrini embarked on her calling "to communicate the love of Jesus to those who do not know Him or have forgotten Him."

They were written on the deck of steamships as she crossed the Atlantic, enduring seasickness and storms and dodging icebergs. They also cover her adventures in the mountains of South America on the back of a donkey as she established new missions there, as well as descriptions of the American West from Colorado to California.

Mother Cabrini, who also is the subject of a just-released movie, wanted to have her order sent to China as missionaries, but Pope Leo XIII asked her to go to the United States instead to help the nation's immigrant population.

She and six other members of the order arrived in New York in 1889 and she spent the rest of her life in the Americas. She died in Chicago in 1917 at age 67 and was canonized in 1946.

The 363-page paperback costs \$19.99 and may be purchased from Catholic Treehouse's website at www.catholic-treehouse.com or on Amazon. A Kindle version is available for \$3.99 on Kindle Unlimited.

Father Smith to lead pilgrimage

Father Stephen Smith, pastor of the Johnstown Church of the Ascension, will lead a 10-day pilgrimage to Catholic sites in Ireland from Monday, Aug. 19 to Thursday, Aug. 29.

The fully escorted motor coach tour will include stops in Galway, Dublin, Killarney and the Aran Islands, with the pilgrims viewing the Book of Kells and sites including Kylemore Abbey, the Knock shrine, Blarney Castle, St. Kevin's Monastery, Trinity College, the Cliffs of Mohr, the Ring of Kerry, many castles and the beautiful countryside.

The cost is \$3,587 plus airfare. For more information, contact Father Smith at frsmith@johnstownascension.org or Greg Kuns of Pinnacle Pilgrimages at mrgwkuns@yahoo.com.

Father Keller will be cruise chaplain

Father Paul Keller, OP, of Columbus St. Patrick Priory, director of the diocesan Office of Worship and Catholic Times columnist, will be the chaplain for a cruise to Catholic sites in Canada and New England from Saturday, June 28 to Saturday, July 6, sponsored by Catholic Answers.

Passengers on the Holland America Line cruise ship the MS Valendam will travel the St. Lawrence Seaway, stopping at Montreal, Quebec City and other sites and concluding in Boston. Daily Mass and confessions will be available.

Talks by Father Keller and others will

explore the origins of the Catholic faith in North America, beginning with the Jesuit martyrs and St. Kateri Tekakwitha. There also will be presentations on the involved question of the Church during the American Revolution, a relationship that grew more volatile as the nation matured.

The cost ranges from \$1,987 to \$5,988 per person (double occupancy) depending on the type of cabin or stateroom. For more information, go to www.catholicanswercruise.com.

Serra Club lists essay winners

The Serra Club of Columbus has awarded \$1,000 in tuition assistance to a diocesan high school for the 2024-25 school year to each of 10 eighth-grade boys whose essays were judged the most promising in the club's inaugural priestly vocation essay contest.

All eighth-grade boys in diocesan schools were challenged to write an essay of 500 words or less on whether they thought God was calling them to the priesthood.

Three recipients are from the combined Columbus St. Anthony/Our Lady of Peace School. They are Brandon Hernandez, Daniel Tibua-Mensah and Julien McElroy. Recipients from Worthington St. Michael School are Joseph Bogue and Robert Wickham. Other recipients and their schools are Kolbe Krezczkowski, Columbus St. Andrew; Paul Thomas, Grove City Our Lady of Perpetual Help; Samuel Rogers, Columbus Immaculate Conception; Sebastien Vidal Lopez, Columbus St. Cecilia; and Thomas Dury, Columbus St. Agatha.

The club will sponsor the contest in the fall of 2024 for the next class of boys and looks forward to having submissions from every eighth-grade class in the diocese.

'Catholics at the Capitol' planned

The Catholic Conference of Ohio is planning a "Catholics at the Capitol" program for Tuesday, April 9 from 9:15 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. at the Ohio Statehouse.

Catholics from across Ohio are invited to meet with elected officials and advocate for policies that respect life, focus on the poor and vulnerable and recognize families as the central social institution of society. The event is free and lunch will be provided.

The registration deadline is Monday, April 1. To register, go to <https://www.votervoices.net/OHCATHOLIC/Events/7714/Register>.

Dominican Sisters of Peace to host vocations retreat

The Dominican Sisters of Peace will host a "Come and See" retreat at the Our Lady of the Elms Motherhouse, 1230 W.

Market St., Akron, from Friday to Sunday, March 15 to 17.

The program is for Catholic women ages 18 to 45 contemplating consecrated religious life. Its theme is "What do you want of me, Lord?" and it will give participants the chance to experience life as a sister firsthand.

Women in attendance will observe and interact with Dominican Sisters of Peace from Akron, Columbus and around the nation. Each participant will be paired with a sister as a spiritual guide during the retreat.

In the first part of the program, those involved will delve into the stages, tools and practical implications of discernment. In part two, participants will explore the meaning of a sister's vows and how they are put into practice in daily life.

Since the retreat will be during Lent, it will include the Stations of the Cross, along with time for prayer and Mass, reflections, group discussions and more.

The cost of room and board is covered for attendees and some scholarship money is available for traveling purposes, granted according to need. The Dominican Sisters of Peace have seven women in formation for consecrated religious life.

To register, visit the sisters' website, www.oppeace.org, or contact Sister June Fitzgerald at (570) 336-3991 or June.Fitzgerald@oppeace.org.

Vocal training workshop set for April

The spring diocesan vocal training workshop will take place from 10:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at Hilliard St. Brendan the Navigator Church, 4475 Dublin Road.

Participants in the voice lesson-style workshop will work on strengthening vocal skills with exercises, new repertoire and a chance to practice chant singing. To make a reservation, email Dawn Beckman at rtbdb@aol.com.

Shepherd's Corner needs help

The Shepherd's Corner Ecological Center, a ministry of the Dominican Sisters of Peace, is looking for volunteers who will help turn hayfields into a thriving, biologically diverse ecosystem to help reduce pollution.

A program that will include digging holes in the morning and planting in the afternoon will take place from 9 a.m. to noon and 12:30 to 3:30 p.m. Saturday, April 20. Participants should be 16 and older. Minors should be accompanied by an adult.

For more information, go to www.shepherdscorner.org or call (614) 866-4302.

Shepherd's Corner is located at 987 N. Waggoner Road, Blacklick. This program is being made possible through a grant from The Columbus Foundation.

Fourth Sunday of Lent, Year B

Have faith and trust in God even in painful moments

2 Chronicles 36:14-16, 19-23
Psalm 137:1-2, 3, 4-5, 6
Ephesians 2:4-10
John 3:14-21

God is faithful, even when we are not. For every happening of our earthly existence, God has a greater plan. We cannot generally see this while we are in it. But when we look back with an attitude of openness, we see that God is trustworthy. He does not fail us. Even in times of great distress, when it seems that God has forgotten us, He is with us. The pain we experience is not the end of the story.

St. John of the Cross, the great Discalced Carmelite saint, reminds us that "pain is in proportion to the need for purification." When we experience suffering, the problem is not the suffering itself. Rather, it is how we choose to respond to it. The Servant of God, Archbishop Fulton Sheen, once commented that the problem with the world is not that there is so much suffering, but that so few people know how to use it. When God allows us to experience loss, grief, failure, and a host of other disappointments in this life, we ought not to despair. God is still God and He always takes the long view.

God's people as it is made known to us in the Scriptures does not experience a glorious history of growth and development. Rather, it is a cycle of promise and failure, faithful response and infidelity to the call. The Chosen People are not without troubles. Their foibles continue to be evident. Yet, God is ever faithful. He makes use of all that happens in their relationship with Him to educate them and us in His ways, always inviting us to grow in our

Fifth Sunday of Lent, Year B

God extends invitation to build a relationship with him

Jeremiah 31:31-34
Psalm 51:3-4, 12-13, 14-15
Hebrews 5:7-9
John 12:20-33

New life comes from a renewed experience of relationship. When we are made one with others by such relationships, we learn more about ourselves and we grow. It is not that we become something different. Rather, we delve more deeply into our own identity. A friend in the seminary years ago made a comment that has stayed with me, and I see it as a great mystical truth: "People never change. They only become more themselves."

Jeremiah 31 presents God's promise of a new relationship with his people. The new covenant is an invitation to the people of God who have been in a broken relationship with God due to their infidelity to hope for a new experience. God promises to make them capable of living in a

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Father Timothy Hayes

Rev. Timothy M. Hayes is the pastor of Granville St. Edward the Confessor Church.



understanding of what is promised.

Jesus uses the example of the lifting up of the bronze serpent in the desert to reveal to Nicodemus that He Himself would be lifted up as the way to receive salvation and eternal life. Jesus speaks to Nicodemus, who comes to Him by night, what have become the most quoted words of the Gospel: "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life." The gift of the Son is the fulfillment of the promise offered to the people of God through the ages.

In our time, these words are so often used to proclaim the Gospel, but unfortunately, they are followed immediately by a condemnation of the world and of those who are being told about God's love for the world. It is incredibly important never to take any words of the Scripture out of their context; otherwise, we misunderstand and misrepresent them.

The very next verse shows the real contrast between what is offered and how we should respond: "For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him." We fail to accept the real promise of salvation if we give in to the temptation to judge the world and condemn it right away. God wants all of us to see, to behold for ourselves the depth of His Love and to open our eyes and our hearts to the realization that salvation is truly offered to us.

right relationship with him, a relationship that includes a new heart.

The new covenant will be intimate and personal, offering a way of connecting with God unique to each soul: "I will place my law within them and write it upon their hearts; I will be their God, and they shall be my people. No longer will they have need to teach their friends and relatives how to know the Lord. All, from least to greatest, shall know me, says the Lord, for I will forgive their evildeed and remember their sin no more."

The Gospel takes up the theme of the Fifth Sunday of Advent, new life. Jesus shares with His disciples the paradoxical truth: Suffering and death lead to glory and eternal life. "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Amen, amen, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit. Whoever loves his life

THE WEEKDAY BIBLE READINGS

3/11-3/16 MONDAY	THURSDAY	3/18-3/23 MONDAY	THURSDAY
Isaiah 65:17-21 Psalm 30:2,4-6,11-12a,13b John 4:43-54	Exodus 32:7-14 Psalm 106:19-23 John 5:31-47	Daniel 13:1-9,15-17,19-30,33-62 Psalm 23:1-6 John 8:1-11	Genesis 17:3-9 Psalm 105:4-9 John 8:51-59
TUESDAY	FRIDAY	TUESDAY	FRIDAY
Ezekiel 47:1-9,12 Psalm 46:2-3,5-6,8-9 John 5:1-16	Wisdom 2:1a,12-22 Psalm 34:17-21,23 John 7:1-2,10,25-30	2 Samuel 7:4-5a,12, 14a,16 Psalm 89:2-5,27,29 Matthew 1:16,18-21,24a or Luke 2:41-51a	Jeremiah 20:10-13 Psalm 18:2-7 John 10:31-42
WEDNESDAY	SATURDAY	WEDNESDAY	SATURDAY
Isaiah 49:8-15 Psalm 145:8-9,13c-14,17-18 John 5:17-30	Jeremiah 11:18-20 Psalm 7:2-3,9b-12 John 7:40-53	Daniel 3:14-20,91-92,95 Daniel 3:52-56 (Ps) John 8:31-42	Ezekiel 37:21-28 Jeremiah 31:10-13 (Ps) John 11:45-56

DIOCESAN WEEKLY RADIO AND TELEVISION

Mass Schedule: Weeks of March 10 and March 17, 2024

SUNDAY MASS

10:30am Mass from Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral on St. Gabriel Radio AM820, Columbus, FM88.3, Portsmouth, and FM106.7, Athens., and at www.stgabrielradio.com and diocesan website, www.columbus-catholic.org.

Mass with the Passionist Fathers at 7:30 a.m. on WWHO-TV (the CW), Channel 53, Columbus and 10:30 a.m. on WHIZ-TV, Channel 18, Zanesville. Mass from St. Francis de Sales Seminary, Milwaukee, at 10 a.m. on WWHO-TV. Check local cable system for cable channel listing.

Mass from Our Lady of the Angels Monastery, Birmingham, Ala., at 8 a.m. on EWTN (Spectrum Channel 385, Insight Channel 382, or Breeze-line Channel 378). (Encores at noon, 7 p.m., and midnight).

Mass from the Archdiocese of Milwaukee at 6:30 a.m. on ION TV (AT&T U-verse Channel 195, Dish Network Channel 250, or DirectTV Channel 305).

Mass from Massillon St. Mary Church at 10:30 a.m. on WILB Radio (AM 1060, FM 94.5 and 89.5). Canton, heard in Tuscarawas, Holmes, and Coshocton counties.

DAILY MASS

8 a.m., Our Lady of the Angels Monastery in Birmingham, Ala. (Encores at noon, 7 p.m. and midnight). See EWTN above; and on I-Lifetv (Channel 113, Ada, Logan, Millersburg, Murray City, Washington C.H.; Channel 125, Marion, Newark, Newcomerstown and New Philadelphia; Channel 207, Zanesville); 8 p.m., St. Gabriel Radio (AM 820), Columbus, and at www.stgabrielradio.com.

12:05 p.m. weekdays, 8 a.m. Saturdays, Mass from Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral on St. Gabriel Radio (AM 820), Columbus, and at www.stgabrielradio.com and diocesan website, www.columbus-catholic.org. (Saturdays on radio only).

Videos of Masses are available at any time on the internet at these and many other parish websites: Mattingly Settlement St. Mary (www.stannstmary.org); Columbus St. Patrick (www.stpatrickcolumbus.org); Delaware St. Mary (www.delawarestmary.org); Sunbury St. John Neumann (www.saintjohnsunbury.org); and Columbus Immaculate Conception (www.iccols.org). Check your parish website for additional information.

WE PRAY THE SEASONAL PROPERS FOR WEEKS IV AND I OF THE LITURGY OF THE HOURS

The exiles in Babylon pray, remembering that God was with them in Jerusalem. "Let my tongue be silenced, if I ever forget you!" Cyrus the Persian is himself called by name as the "messiah" who offers the Chosen People the opportunity to return from exile and to rebuild their Temple: "Thus says Cyrus, king of Persia: All the kingdoms of the earth the Lord, the God of heaven, has given to me, and he has also charged me to

build him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever, therefore, among you belongs to any part of his people, let him go up, and may his God be with him!"

There is a contrast between the world's way of thinking and God's way of thinking. Because it is so loved, the world receives the offer of salvation and eternal life through us. May we have eyes that see, and beholding God, may we share His love with the world.

loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life."

The themes of thirst, light and life that have been highlighted over the past few weeks now come together to move us to a realization of who Jesus is as the one who fulfills our longings, the one who heals our blindness and enables us to see clearly what God is doing, and the one who offers his own life so as to take us with him into the mystery of eternity. Next week, we will plunge into Holy Week and the full celebration of the "flow" of these themes in the passion, death and resurrection of the Lord.

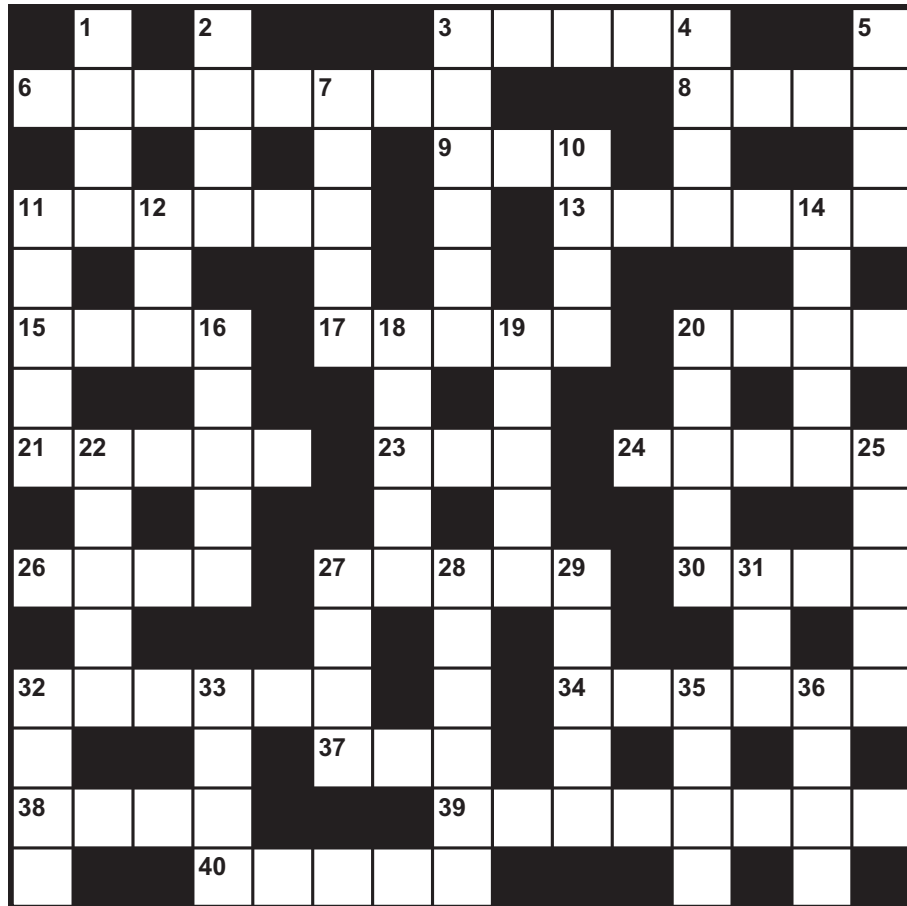
The mystery of the passion of the Lord is an invitation to us to allow God to plunge us into Christ Himself. The new covenant will be accomplished in his blood. The glorification of the Son of Man, Jesus, is the gift to humanity of salvation through the willingness of this one man to give his life for us. He is the grain

of wheat that falls and dies and produces much fruit.

The Diocese of Columbus offers two special events as holy week begins: Monday evening, Confessions offered in parishes throughout the diocese so that any who have not yet approached the sacrament of reconciliation may do so. Tuesday afternoon, the Chrism Mass at which the priests renew their commitment and the holy oils to be used in the next year in the celebration of the sacraments. Parishes will celebrate the Sacred Triduum: Holy Thursday, the Mass of the Lord's Supper; Good Friday, the memorial of the Passion of the Lord, Holy Saturday, the Solemn Vigil of Easter, and Easter Sunday, the Masses of the Resurrection of the Lord.

As the season of Lent comes to its close, we now experience the "high holy days" of our Catholic faith. May we open our hearts to the grace that is offered, praying "Create a clean heart in me, O God."

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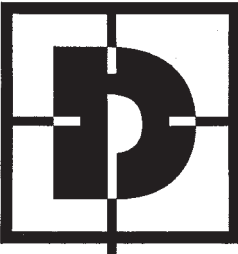
ACROSS

- 3 Country in which Mother Teresa founded her order
- 6 Knights of ___
- 8 Gift bearers
- 9 Eve beginner
- 11 The Infant of Prague, for one
- 13 Commandment that forbids bearing false witness
- 15 "...___ this day be at my side..."
- 17 "___ Regina"
- 20 St. ___ Diego
- 21 Greatest king of Israel
- 23 Abner's father (2 Sam 2:8)
- 24 Brother of Ishmael
- 26 Calais monastic
- 27 Lent markers
- 30 Holy ___ Society
- 32 Service book
- 34 Wood of Noah's Ark
- 37 ___ Father
- 38 Nickname of Catholic composer Haydn
- 39 Protection or liberation from the power of the devil
- 40 Spiritual program

DOWN

- 1 Baptismal basin
- 2 One of the seven deadly sins
- 3 Another name for Jacob
- 4 Jesuits' motto (abbr.)
- 5 What Andrew and Peter did for a living
- 7 "___ us, O Lord..."
- 10 Sydney's first archbishop, John ___ Polding
- 11 One of two names in a Catholic book publishing company
- 12 Start of a hymn to Mary
- 14 Symbol on the papal flag
- 16 "I will ___ up a righteous branch for David" (Jer 23:5)
- 18 "___ Dei"
- 19 Biblical division
- 20 He housed Paul and Silas in Thessalonica
- 22 ___ Press, monastic publisher?
- 25 Second word in the name of a Parisian basilica
- 27 Catholic songwriter Guthrie
- 28 Biblical language
- 29 Third of IHS
- 31 Palm product
- 32 One of the three theological virtues
- 33 Describes an occasion of sin
- 35 One of St. Columba's converts
- 36 Nod, vis-à-vis Eden

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by Pat Battaglia, aka Dr. Fun

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A	V	E	H	

WHO GAVE HIS ALL TO YOU

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SEARCH, continued from Page 11

Matthew. She was amazed that people who did not know her would welcome her into their family.

She said it was beautiful to witness them help each other to be holy, build one another up and spouses help each other achieve salvation. She understood how Christ designed marriage, and she saw the sacrament in a new light.

"It started a healing process that I'm still working through just because of where I've come from, but it's this hopeful healing process that the life that I thought was meant for me doesn't need to be meant for me," she said.

"It could be something that does glorify God, and it can be something beautiful and uplifting and supportive and encouraging to other people. It doesn't have to be the trauma and the craziness that I've come from."

She discovered parallels between Scripture's description of the bride and bridegroom and how it is lived out in each Catholic family, the domestic church.

Coleman appreciated and welcomed the unity of the Catholic Church. While various Catholic churches are located throughout the world, they are united and celebrate the same sacrifice.

"That was part of the reason why I was struggling so much in the Protestant churches because I would go to these churches and I wouldn't see Christ anywhere," Coleman said. "There wasn't any uniformity. There wasn't this centralized goal of wanting to glorify or worship God; it was something else depending on where you went.

"Through these families and going through the classes, it's starting to make me see ... the verbiage that's used in the Scriptures for the bride and the bridegroom from the beginning all the way to the end and see the structure of how God wants the family to be."

Coleman began attending Mass the week after starting OCIA. She described

her first Mass as a "stimulus overload."

Once she became more familiar with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, Coleman said she could understand what was happening. She said she found in the Mass what she had been searching for.

It was when "I got to watch what was happening in Mass and actually see it and pay attention to it and observe it where it clicked," she said. "This entire time I've been looking for God in the church. I've been looking for Christ, and He's been here the whole time, so it was beautiful."

Coleman was emotional, she said, watching Christ offer Himself as a sacrifice on the altar. She said that reinforced the "magnitude" of Christ's sacrifice and that it is the "linchpin of history."

Coleman said she believes many Protestants are struggling and seeking to find truth, but a negative view of the Catholic Church prevents them from discovering it. Her journey through OCIA heightened her sense of a need for unity among Christians.

The disconnect between "the Catholic tradition and the Protestant world needs to end," Coleman said, or there needs to be "some type of resolution." She said truth is found in the Catholic Church.

"The Catholic faith has their beliefs from the beginning, and it will not change no matter where you go," she said. "For that to be so universal, in contrast to all the differences and the division that's out there and the lack of truth, and the fact that even in the midst of a church on every corner people are still struggling with truth, that just kind of seals it for me.

"You can put a building up anywhere you want to, but if what people are teaching isn't true, if it isn't Christ, then it will never matter."



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PRAY FOR OUR DEAD

BOCH, Cindy, 77, Feb. 15
St. Bernadette Church, Lancaster

CARPICO, Cynthia M. (Pawlowski), 87, of Gahanna, Feb. 12
St. Agnes Church, Mingo Junction

FRACASSO, Kathleen A., 79, Feb. 23
Church of the Ascension, Johnstown

KANDEL MORRISON, Sharon (Hutton), 79, Feb. 20
St. Bernadette Church, Lancaster

KILBARGER, Marjorie (Anderson), 95, Feb. 21
St. Colman of Cloyne Church, Washington Court House

LEWIS, George M., 86, Feb. 18
St. Joseph Church, Sugar Grove

McCAGUE, Robert, 80, Feb. 17
Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Lancaster

McKOWN, Betty (Bigler), 97, Feb. 27
St. Brendan Church, Hilliard

RADER, Dorothy (Trott), 98, Feb. 27
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, Grove City

SIMPSON, Katherine, 40, Feb. 25
St. Joseph Cathedral, Columbus

SOUCH-O'NEIL, Norma J. (DiPaolo), 92, Feb. 26
Immaculate Conception Church, Columbus

VINGLE, John J., 86, Feb. 25
St. Pius X Church, Reynoldsburg

Deacon Craig A. Smith

Funeral Mass for Deacon Craig A. Smith, 64, who died Monday, Feb. 19, was celebrated Tuesday, Feb. 27 at Columbus St. Elizabeth Church. Burial was at Resurrection Cemetery, Lewis Center.

He was born on July 13, 1959 to the late Robert and Marcia Smith, was a 1977 graduate of Columbus Northland High School and received a Bachelor's degree in political science from Ohio State University in 1981 and his juris doctorate from the university in 1984.

He was ordained a deacon by Bishop Frederick Campbell on Jan. 29, 2005 and served his home parish, Columbus St. Anthony Church, until its closing in October 2023, when he was assigned to Columbus St. Elizabeth and St. Matthias churches. He was a St. Anthony parishioner from its founding in 1963 until its closing and

served as parish administrator pro tem in 2008.

He also had been a procurator/advocate on the Diocesan Marriage Tribunal since 2011.

He was a junior partner of the Columbus law firm of GambleHartshorn LLC before becoming in-house counsel for Interim HealthCare, and was a drummer in a 15-piece band and a small combo from high school through law school and beyond. He also was a fourth-degree member of the Knights of Columbus, a member of Sertoma and the Elks and past president of the Franklin County Young Republicans.

Survivors include his wife, Lori (Gillard); son, Nathaniel; daughter, Jennifer; and brothers, Robert (Anne); Doug and Kirk (Wendy).

Sister Irene Eckerman, OP

Funeral Mass for Sister Irene Eckerman, OP, 95, who died Tuesday, Feb. 20 at the Mohun Health Care Center, was celebrated Friday, March 1 at the Motherhouse of the Dominican Sisters of Peace. Burial will be at a later date in Holy Cross Cemetery, Akron.

She was born Lucille Eckerman on Nov. 16, 1928 in Akron to Felix and Catherine

(Steinbach) Eckerman.

She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in education from St. John's College in Cleveland in 1956 and completed post-graduate studies at Kent State University and Siena Heights College in Adrian, Michigan.

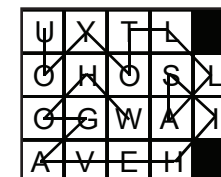
She entered the congregation of the Dominican Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (now the Dominican Sisters of Peace) on Sept. 8, 1945 and professed her vows on April 13, 1948.

She was a teacher at schools in Akron, Alliance and Barberton, a pastoral associate in Phoenix and a religious education director in Tempe, Arizona.

She was preceded in death by her parents; brothers, Divine Word Missionary Father Felix Eckerman, SVD, and Joseph; and sisters, Victoria Foley and Cecelia Barich. She is survived by sisters Mary Kay Goodley and Terry Falter.

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St. Charles finishes third in state swimming championships

Columbus St. Charles Preparatory School's formidable swimming team claimed third place in the OHSAA Division I state championships on Saturday, Feb. 24 behind perennial power Cincinnati St. Xavier and Upper Arlington.

The Cardinals, led by individual champions Austin Carpenter and Jake Lloyd, finished with 205 points, only 24 points behind runner-up Upper Arlington. St. Xavier extended its dominance in the sport, racking up 302 points to win its 44th state title.

St. Charles, coached by Kyle Goodrich, improved significantly on last year's 12th-place finish in the state meet at C.T. Branin Natatorium in Canton. It was the school's best finish since also taking third in 2017.

Carpenter, a sophomore, won the 100-yard breaststroke in a time of 51.31 seconds and Lloyd, a sophomore, took first in the 50 freestyle in 20.28.

Carpenter and Lloyd also swam on St. Charles' winning 200 medley relay team with juniors Wyatt Julian and Andrew Zarick.

Carpenter (1:36.21) narrowly missed a third gold medal, touching the wall .08



Columbus St. Charles Preparatory School swimmers finished third in the OHSAA Division I boys state championships on Feb. 24 in Canton. Pictured are (from left) assistant coach Nick McKinley, Ayden Fortney, Jonathan Malouf, Bradley King, Jake Lloyd, Wyatt Julian, Andrew Zarick, Austin Carpenter and head coach Kyle Goodrich. *Photo courtesy St. Charles Preparatory School*

of a second behind St. Xavier's Thackston McMullan (1:36.13) in the 200 freestyle immediately after swimming a leg on St. Charles' 200 medley relay.

Lloyd and Carpenter also took home silver medals as part of the runner-up 200 freestyle relay team (1:21.55) that

included Zarick and sophomore Brad King. St. Xavier won the event by .25 of a second.

Julian added three top-seven finishes in the 100 backstroke (fourth), 100 butterfly (seventh) and 400 freestyle relay (seventh). Other members of the 400

free relay were Zarick, King and sophomore Jonathan Malouf.

Lloyd and King secured fifth and 10th, respectively, in the 100 freestyle and sophomore Ayden Fortney took 15th in the 500 freestyle.

In the Division II boys meet, Columbus St. Francis DeSales and Columbus Bishop Watterson tied for 33rd with 24 points each.

Watterson junior Jacob Rider placed fourth in the 100 backstroke and ninth in the 200 freestyle. DeSales sophomore Luke DeFrancisco was fourth in the 200 individual medley and ninth in the 100 backstroke.

In the Division II girls competition, Newark Catholic compiled 23 points for 29th place and Columbus Bishop Hartley tied for 43rd with nine points.

Newark Catholic junior Isabella Pribonic took fifth in the 100 breaststroke and ninth in the 200 individual medley. Hartley's 200 medley relay team of junior Ava Dyer, sophomores Skylar Richards and Claire Bahlmann and senior Allie Gunsorek was 13th and Dyer added a 16th-place result in the 100 backstroke.

Dover St. Joseph holds Eucharistic procession



The young people of Dover St. Joseph Church's family faith formation wrapped up their four-week SEEK! adventure program by participating in an outdoor Eucharistic Procession with Father Jimmy Hatfield, the parish pastor, on Sunday, Feb. 25. The procession was followed by Eucharistic Adoration with their families and the program closed with Benediction.

Photo courtesy St. Joseph Church

Father Black installed as St. Brigid pastor

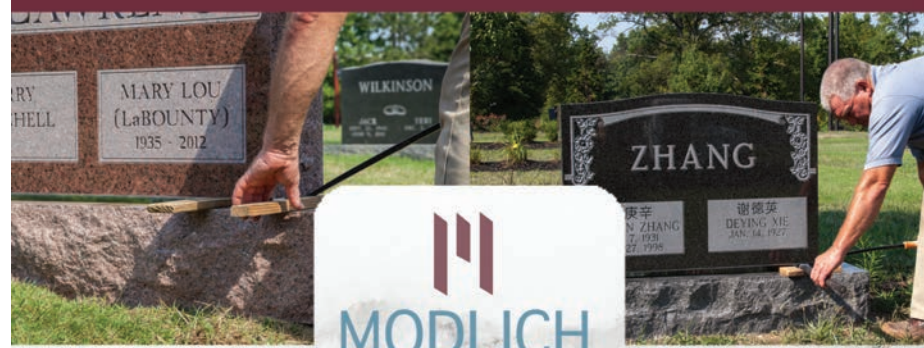


Bishop Earl Fernandes witnesses Father James Black make an Oath of Fidelity and a Profession of Faith while Deacon Frank Iannarino (left) serves as master of ceremonies during the Installation of a Pastor on Sunday, Feb. 25 at Dublin St. Brigid of Kildare Church. Behind them are (from left) Father Tim Lynch, the parish's parochial vicar who concelebrated the Mass; Deacon Paul Zemanek; Deacon Steve Petrill and Deacon Don Poirier. *Photo courtesy St. Brigid of Kildare Church*



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- Colossians 3:17

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