

# *The* CATHOLIC TIMES

THE DIOCESE OF COLUMBUS' INFORMATION SOURCE

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2025 was an active year for the diocese with ordinations to the priesthood and religious life, Jubilee Year of Hope pilgrimages and a new diocesan pastoral council that will advise the bishop going forward, Page 3



# SEEK26 set to open in Columbus on New Year's Day

By Meredith Keller  
The Catholic Times

SEEK26 is a few days away. The Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS)'s annual conference will kick off Thursday, Jan. 1, 2026 at the Columbus Convention Center and run through Monday, Jan. 5.

This year's theme, "To the Heights," is inspired by St. Pier Giorgio Frassati. "The higher we go, the better we shall hear the voice of Christ," he said. St. Pier Giorgio is the patron of youth, students, mountaineers and Catholic Action.

SEEK26 attendees will have a variety of opportunities, including participating in concurrent, impact and keynote sessions.

Bishop Earl Fernandes and his brother, Dr. Ashley Fernandes, M.D., Ph.D., will be among SEEK26 speakers.

Bishop Fernandes was installed as the 13th bishop of Columbus in May 2022. The diocese's shepherd, who holds a doctorate in moral theology from the Alphoncian Academy in Rome, is set to address SEEK26 attendees.

His brother, Ashley, will also speak during the conference. His talk will explore the philosophy of the person, contrasting a materialist worldview with a transcendent Christian understanding. The Catholic physician will explore a Christian perspective in medicine, daily life and vocations.

Matt Fradd of the "Pints with Aquinas" podcast and Sister Josephine Garrett, CSFN, a Sister of the Holy Family of Nazareth, will be the opening keynote speakers at SEEK26, speaking from 7:30 to 8:45 p.m., Jan. 1.

Dr. Edward Sri, co-founder of FOCUS, and Father Chase Hilgenbrinck, vocation

director for the Diocese of Peoria, Illinois, will serve as keynote speakers the second night of the conference, speaking from 7:15 to 8:30 p.m.

Father Mike Schmitz will head the third evening of SEEK26. The host of Ascension's "Bible in a Year" podcast and Sister Mary Grace, S.V., of the Sisters of Life religious order will speak from 7:15 to 8:30 p.m.

The fourth evening includes keynotes from Curtis Martin, founder of FOCUS, and Arthur Brooks, *New York Times* bestselling author of "From Strength to Strength: Finding Success, Happiness and Deep Purpose in the Second Half of Life," speaking from 7:15 to 8:30 p.m.

Two keynotes will be held the final day of the conference. Lisa Cotter, author of "Reveal the Gift: Living the Feminine Genius," and Pete Burak, vice president at Renewal Ministries, dedicated to renewal and evangelization in the Church, will speak from 9 to 10:15 a.m.

The SEEK26 keynote speakers have a variety of backgrounds.

Fradd has written several books, including "Does God Exist? A Socratic Dialogue on the Five Ways of Thomas Aquinas." He holds a degree in philosophy from Holy Apostles College & Seminary, in Cromwell, Connecticut, and was awarded an honorary doctorate.

Sister Josephine graduated from the University of Dallas with a bachelor's degree in political philosophy. For 10 years, she was vice president of Bank of America's Home Loans division. A convert, she entered the Church in 2005 and professed final vows as a Sister of the Holy Family of Nazareth in 2020.

Sri hosts a weekly podcast, "All Things Catholic." He serves as FOCUS' senior vice president of apostolic outreach and is a speaker and author of several books.

Before serving in diocesan vocations, Father Hilgenbrinck was a campus chaplain at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Campaign's Newman Center. A former professional soccer player, he spent four years playing in Chile and later in the United States with Major League Soccer's New England Revolution. He was ordained a priest in 2014.

Father Schmitz serves as director of youth and young adult ministry for the Diocese of Duluth, Minnesota, and as chaplain at the University of Minnesota-Duluth's Newman Center. He preaches to thousands nationally and has appeared in programs for youth and young adults by Ascension Press and videos for Ascension Presents.

A native of Sydney, Australia, Sister Mary Grace professed final vows in 2023 with the Sisters of Life, a religious community founded in 1991 that follows the Augustinian rule. She has served vulnerable pregnant women and their unborn children, individuals wounded by abortion and as her order's coordinator of the evangelization mission in the Bronx, New York, and Denver.

Martin founded FOCUS in 1998. He and his wife, Michaelann, were awarded the Benemerenti Medal by Pope St. John Paul II in 2004 for their service to the Church. In 2011, Pope Benedict XVI appointed Martin as a consultant to the director of the New Evangelization.

An author and professor at Harvard University, Brooks also contributes to *The Atlantic*, is an international speaker and former president of global think tank American Enterprise Institute.

Cotter, her husband and four children have been a FOCUS missionary family for more than 10 years. Her work has been featured by media outlets including Ascension Presents, Eternal Word Television Network and Formed.

Burak, a graduate of Franciscan University of Steubenville and Sacred Heart



## Upcoming Feast Days

- |       |   |
|-------|---|
| 12-28 | The Holy Family                           |
| 12-28 | The Holy Innocents                        |
| 12-31 | St. Sylvester I                           |
| 1-1   | Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God |
| 1-1   | World Day of Peace                        |
| 1-3   | The Most Holy Name of Jesus               |
| 1-4   | The Epiphany of the Lord                  |
| 1-5   | St. John Neumann                          |
| 1-11  | The Baptism of the Lord                   |



All You Holy Men *and* Women,  
*Ora Pro Nobis*

## Times rolls out new website

The *Catholic Times* launched a new website on Tuesday, Dec. 9.

The new site, found at [www.catholic-timescolumbus.org](http://www.catholic-timescolumbus.org), includes upgrades to make it more user friendly and accessible.

Among the features are enhanced display capabilities for the local articles, columns, advertisements and photos from around the diocese that continue to be the focus of the Times' coverage. Contributors to *The Catholic Times* remain human and do not use A.I. to compose their articles.

New to the website are articles from Vatican News and Catholic News Agency that provide global and national perspectives on the Catholic Church.

Visitors to the site will also see more local photo galleries and videos from major events in the diocese over the next few months.

The print version of the newspaper will continue to be accessible on the new website for users who do not receive home delivery but prefer to read the paper online. The archived editions can be found in the About the Catholic Times section.

Existing or new print subscribers are still encouraged to make payments on the website using the Subscribe Now button.

The Diocese of Columbus' new website can be found at [www.columbuscatholic.org](http://www.columbuscatholic.org).

The  
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Bishop Earl Fernandes joins pilgrims from the Diocese of Columbus in Washington for the national March for Life in January.



Bishop Earl Fernandes distributes Holy Communion while celebrating an Ash Wednesday Mass for students at the Ohio Union on Ohio State University campus. *File photos*



Bishop Earl Fernandes washes the feet of incarcerated men at Pickaway Correctional Institution on Holy Thursday for the third consecutive year.

## 2025 was a year of progress for diocese

### From staff reports *The Catholic Times*

The Diocese of Columbus made significant progress in 2025 in many areas related to Bishop Earl Fernandes' four pastoral priorities of vocations, evangelization, education and social outreach.

The start of the new year will bring a major evangelization effort to Columbus as the Fellowship of Catholic University Students, a nationwide apostolate with branches at Ohio State University and elsewhere in the diocese, brings its annual SEEK conference to the city's convention center from Thursday to Monday, Jan. 1-5.

The event will draw thousands of students from across the United States to encounter Christ and celebrate the Catholic faith through talks, breakout sessions, worship and opportunities for confession, Eucharistic Adoration and Mass.

Its theme, "To the Heights," is inspired by the recently canonized St. Pier Giorgio Frassati and his enthusiasm for mountain climbing. He urged young people to pursue holiness, service and a life fully alive in Christ.

In June, the Diocese of Columbus began a time of pastoral planning around Bishop Fernandes' four pastoral priorities of Evangelization, Vocations, Catholic Education and Formation, and Social Outreach. The diocese partnered with Catholic Leadership Institute (CLI) to help give structure to the feedback it was hoping to solicit and began by inviting the faithful to participate in an open-ended online survey. Just under 2,000 surveys were submitted from 22 of the 23 counties that make up the diocese. About 40 individual interviews and 18 focus groups were also conducted in order for the widest possible perspectives on the bishop's priorities for the diocese. From Nov. 26 to Jan. 6, the faithful were also invited to participate in the Disciple Maker Index (DMI), administered by CLI in order to reflect on where they are on their journey of discipleship, and to assist parish leadership to make data-driven decisions to help parishioners grow in their faith.

Ongoing pastoral planning is important to any diocese to ensure the needs of the faithful are known and addressed. There can be many end results to any diocesan pastoral plan. In this case, the result the curial offices hope to achieve is to

formulate measurable goals around these four pastoral priorities.

In Bishop Fernandes' annual address to the Catholic Men's Luncheon Club in November, he said the diocese has 43 seminarians this year, up from 17 in 2022. He expects as many as 50 young men to be in formation for the priesthood this next year.

He attributed the growth in vocations to diocesan programs where high school and college students can talk to young priests, seminarians and religious sisters about the call to serve God in religious life.

These include Andrew dinners for young men and Marian evenings for young women; live-in weekends at the Pontifical College Josephinum; Melchizedek Project meetings that include talks about vocations; and outreach at the Columbus St. Thomas More Newman Center near Ohio State University campus.

Nine young men from the diocese were admitted in the fall to seminaries. Five of them are studying at Mount St. Mary's Seminary & School of Theology in Cincinnati and the other four are at the Josephinum.

Bishop Fernandes ordained Fathers Kevin Girardi, Joseph Rolwing and Sam Severance as the diocese's newest priests on May 17 at Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church. Their first assignments sent them respectively to St. Paul, Columbus-Powell St. Peter St. Joan of Arc and Hilliard St. Brendan the Navigator churches.

Deacons from the diocese traveled to Rome for the Jubilee of Deacons in February. Deacon Bryan Inderhees was ordained to the diaconate on Feb. 23 at St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican. He was one of 23 men from eight nations ordained at a Mass that day, which was attended by the deacons from the diocese and concluded a Jubilee of Deacons from Feb. 21 to 23 as part of the Church's 2025 Jubilee Year. He is serving at Columbus St. Agatha Church.

Bishop Fernandes ordained Deacon Zachary Goodchild to the diaconate for the diocese on May 3 at Worthington St. Michael the Archangel Church.

Also ordained at the time were Deacons Adrian Kyambadde and Wynand Ssenkusu of the Diocese of Lugazi, Uganda, and Godfrey Sebiky of the Diocese of Kiyinda-Mityana, Uganda. All four are studying at the Josephinum and anticipate being ordained to the priesthood in May 2026.

More priests are needed to serve a Catholic population in the diocese that has grown to about 505,000 individuals in recent years as people from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds have come to central and southern Ohio. Because of their presence, 17 sites offer Masses in Spanish in the diocese and Mass is celebrated regularly in more than 15 languages other than English and Spanish and in the Roman Catholic, Maronite, Melkite, Byzantine, Syro-Malabar and Eritrean Ge'ez rites of the Church.

The work of the diocese's 94 active and 49 retired priests has been augmented greatly by the availability of missionary priests. The diocese currently has 48 priests from 15 religious orders serving at many of its 81 parishes in 23 counties. Their presence enabled the diocese to reduce the number of parish closings during the past three years from the 32 recommended through the Real Presence Real Future initiative to 16.

Heath St. Leonard Church held its final Mass on Feb. 2 and its boundaries were added to those of Newark St. Francis de Sales Church. The former church building is being repurposed by the Newark parish and Catholic Social Services to serve as an outreach center.

A decree for the merger of the congregations of Pickerington St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish and Columbus Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal Church was issued in late June, with Bishop Fernandes saying the church of Our Lady would remain open but no longer serve as a weekly worship site.

A new location for St. John's Hermitage, a place of respite for priests, deacons and seminarians, was opened in June in Mount Vernon, replacing the original hermitage in rural Scioto County that was open for about 10 years. That land was sold to help finance the new site, whose central Ohio location will make it more convenient for priests throughout the state.

The new hermitage is in a large house that was home to a family of seven. Its size will allow its use by several occupants at a time.

In October, the establishment of a disaster response plan was announced to help parishes, schools and organizations mobilize people and resources in cases of natural or man-made disaster. It includes a Spirit of Hope Disaster Relief Fund to



Bishop Earl Fernandes participates in the ribbon cutting for the Catholic Social Services' Our Lady of Guadalupe Center expansion. *File photo*

which donations may be made at any time. The fund was started with \$75,000 from the diocesan Office of Catholic Charities.

The plan is not a reaction to specific events or an effort to increase safety. Diocesan safety guidelines and protocols already were in existence before the fund was started. In announcing the fund, it was noted that 43 events within the diocese in the past 60 years have led to federal disaster declarations.

Deacon Dave Bezusko of Marysville Our Lady of Lourdes Church became diocesan director of Catholic Charities at the beginning of the year, succeeding Mark Huddy, who had held the position for 31 years. Deacon Bezusko worked for United Way organizations in Logan and Union counties for 22 years.

Other diocesan evangelization and outreach activities in 2025 included the opening in June of the expanded Catholic Social Services Our Lady of Guadalupe Center on Columbus' west side.

The center has almost 12,000 square feet of space – three times the size of its former location – and provides services, including nutrition and food, workforce training, housing navigation, case management, support for new mothers, emergency assistance, a small business incubator, language assistance and English as a Second Language classes, and health resources. This location is the center's fifth in 25 years since it began from the back of



## YEAR IN REVIEW: 2025 was a year of progress for diocese, *Continued from Page 3*

a van.

The bishop said in his luncheon club talk that the diocese's 11 high schools and 39 elementary schools are at 90 percent capacity. Schools on the west side of Columbus, he pointed out, have large numbers of Latino students.

In addition, new schools are in the works, including Ave Maria Academy at St. Peter St. Joan of Arc parish. Each high school in the diocese now has a priest in service to the students and staff, and religious sisters are also working in education at several schools.

Cristo Rey Columbus High School announced plans to add a middle school to its existing school. The plan will begin with admission of 25 to 30 sixth-grade students this fall and continue with the addition of seventh and eighth grades in each of the following two academic years. Middle school and high school students will be in the same building but have separate spaces and schedules.

The Chesterton Academy of St. Benedict, a high school near St. Michael, was designated by the diocese as an independent school, allowing it to work with the diocesan Office of Catholic Schools to receive a state charter while remaining faithful to its Catholic identity.

Bishop Fernandes announced in late June that the diocese will allow students who are about 9 or 10 years old, in the fourth and fifth grades, to receive the sacrament of Confirmation, lowering the age of eligibility for the sacrament by about three years. The change will take place during a four-year period in one or two deaneries at a time and be completed by the spring of 2029.

The bishop approved the change after more than a year of consultation among diocesan officials and parish and school personnel.

"A primary reason for their support of this proposal was the unanimous concern of families not raising their children in the Catholic faith, and the need to resuscitate the Catholic identity of our children through the power of the Holy Spirit," he said.

"Children need to be exposed to the awe and wonder of God at a much earlier age and recognize their inherent value and worth as a child of God. ... The Church does not advocate or teach that once a child receives the sacrament of Confirmation, he has graduated from the Catholic Church and is no longer required to practice the Catholic faith."

In his announcement of the change, the bishop also said a proposal to transition the order of the sacraments of initiation (baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation) for children, with a child first being baptized and then being confirmed before receiving the sacrament of the Holy Eucharist at the age of reason, "will be a continual topic of discussion and discernment over the next several years." Such a policy is in effect in some American dioceses.

The diocesan pastoral council, an advisory panel to the bishop, was reorganized in September. It now includes 22 members representing the diocese's geographic and multicultural diversity. Members include lay faithful, clergy and consecrated religious sisters.

The diocese introduced a digital map in September which specified boundaries for every parish for the first time. This allows

people new to an area to know with certainty the identity of their territorial parish and will clarify such things as schools' geographical boundaries and which parish is responsible for pastoral care of any future facilities such as nursing homes or hospitals.

Msgr. Mark Hammond, pastor of Mount Vernon St. Vincent de Paul and Danville St. Luke churches, was named a monsignor by the late Pope Francis in April in recognition of his long and dedicated service to the Church and its people. He joined 10 other currently active or retired priests of the diocese in receiving the honor.

Msgr. David R. Funk, 76, died on Jan. 8, a few months after celebrating the 50th anniversary of his ordination to the priesthood. He served as pastor at Portsmouth Holy Redeemer, Columbus St. Agatha and Reynoldsburg St. Pius X churches.

Father Francis M. Stanton, 90, died on Oct. 29. He had been a priest for 65 years and 5 months and, with Msgr. John Dreese, was the senior priest of the Diocese of Columbus in terms of years of service.

He was commissioned in the chaplain corps of the U.S. Navy in 1967 and served in that position for 22 years at sites around the world. In the diocese, he was associate pastor at seven churches, administrator at Wheelersburg St. Peter in Chains Church and pastor at Crooksville Church of the Atonement.

Father M. Edmund Hussey, 92, died on Aug. 21. He was a priest of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati for 67 years who retired in 1998, moved to Columbus to be closer to family members and served for many years as senior associate pastor at Columbus St. Agatha Church.

Brother Michael F. Brinkman, 92, who served at the former Salesian Boys and Girls Club in Columbus, died on Feb. 18. He was program director at the club in 1991 and 1992 and returned there in 2001 as a staff member until the club closed in 2008.

Deacon Jack W. Elam, 86, died on April 23. He was ordained to the diaconate by Bishop Emeritus James Griffin in 1992 and served as a deacon at Newark Blessed Sacrament and St. Francis de Sales churches until retiring from active ministry in 2007.

Religious sisters who died in late 2024 and 2025 and had served in or were natives of the Diocese of Columbus, or who were living in the diocese at the time of their deaths, were: Sister Mary Claire Kirkpatrick, OP, 85, Dec. 10, 2024; Sister Marie Gressel, OSF, 93, Jan. 3; Sister June Engelbrecht, OP, 85, Jan. 25; Sister M. Alice Metzger, OSF, 94, March 7; Sister Joan Marie Harper, CDP, 87, March 10; Sister Dolores Ann Pfeiffer, OP, 95, April 10; Sister Mary Ann Connolly, OP, 92, May 28; Sister Marita Charley, OP, 96, May 30; Sister Rose Marie Deibel, SNDdeN, 96, June 17; Sister Maura Fortkort, OSF, 93, June 21; Sister Bernardita Abeyta, OP, 70, June 21; Sister Louis Mary Passeri, OP, 92, June 22; Sister Rose Zuber, SNDdeN, 96, June 27; Sister Colleen Gallagher, OP, 94, July 21; Sister Bernice Weilbacher, SNDdeN, 99, July 23; Sister Lucianna Derus, OSF, 91, Sept. 3; Sister Joan McGough, OP, 90, Oct. 10; Sister Barbara Rose Kolesar, OP, 85, Nov. 11; Sister Verone Leeman, OSF, 86, Nov. 18; Sister Jean Phillipson, OSF, 99, Dec. 4; and Sister Edith Roahrig, OP, 95, Dec. 17.



Bishop Earl Fernandes interacts with a child after celebrating a Mass for Latinos at St. Joseph Cathedral as part of the Church's Jubilee Year.



Bishop Earl Fernandes and Sister Antionette Cedrone, FMA, the bishop's delegate for religious, recognize anniversaries of consecrated religious sisters serving in the diocese.



Deacon Bryan Inderhees is ordained to the diaconate at St. Peter's Basilica in Rome.



Msgr. Mark Hammond is named a monsignor by the late Pope Francis.



Father Tesfaye Petros Botachew celebrates at a multicultural night hosted by Reynoldsburg St. Pius X.



Bishop Earl Fernandes, joined by Father Paul J. Keller, OP, director for the Office of Divine Worship, blesses a life-size Nativity set outside of St. Joseph Cathedral in November in anticipation of the Advent liturgical season. *File photos*



The St. Andrew Kim Taegon Korean Catholic community gathers for Mass in September at their new home, Columbus St. Anthony Church.



# Evangelization and catechesis: “Heart speaking to the heart”

By Dr. Marlon De La Torre

Senior Director, Office of  
Evangelization and Catechesis

The great Doctor of the Church and patron of the Diocese of Columbus, St. Francis de Sales, reminds us that “heart speaks to the heart.” The premise behind this statement is that our first priority as evangelists and catechists is to seek a conversion of heart by recognizing the dignity of a person as a child of God.

A visible matrimony exists between the proclamation of the Gospel and the profession and articulation of the Creed. It is through the Word of God and the Creed that we can witness, speak and teach from the heart of Jesus Christ to anyone who will listen.

The “Catechism of the Catholic Church” (CCC) tells us that our efforts to reveal the Gospel of Jesus Christ and demonstrate how to actively live the Word of God must revolve around a love that is unending (CCC 25). Coupled with a genuine intent to immerse the family into a life of prayer, discernment and ultimately a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ, our journey would possess no Christian identity without these facets of faith.

Over the last two and a half years, the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis has undertaken the task of addressing both the evangelization and catechetical needs of the diocese through an approach of the “heart speaking to the heart.”

The ministerial areas guided by this renewed approach: whole family catechesis and vocations; renewed marriage preparation and formation for engaged couples; marriage as a second catechumenate; Natural Family Planning (NFP); sacramental preparation; Order of Christian Initiation for Adults (OCIA); youth, Hispanic and multicultural ministry; and diocesan-wide catechetical formation and education.

The approach of “heart speaking to the heart” has yielded positive results in our efforts to evangelize and catechize both the parish staff and the laity in the Diocese of Columbus.

The implementation of the “Revised Mandated Diocesan Marriage Preparation Process” has formed more than 427 couples to date, with positive and fruitful consensus as to the effectiveness of the process, especially in the area of NFP.

More than 40 mentor couples have been trained in the “Fully Engaged” sponsor couple process. Bishop Fernandes provided a keynote presentation for all diocesan mentor couples advocating for the importance of faithful sponsor couples.

The first Together In Holiness conference was held at Gahanna St. Matthew the Apostle, with 90+ couples attending as part of our “marriage as a second catechumenate initiative” and NFP. We expect these numbers to increase in 2026 and beyond.

The implementation of a “whole family catechetical approach” to parish formation of the family has experienced significant growth in the area of parent formation and parents renewing their role as the primary religious educators of their children.

New catechetical resources, including parish elementary religious education curriculum, approved textbook resource list, revised parish toolkit, Evangelization Summit and catechist formation through the newly established St. Francis De Sales Institute, will provide the necessary formation and instruction for all catechists for years to come.

The development of a new “Diocesan OCIA formation process” in conjunction with implementation of new OCIA guidelines (2024) has resulted in the formation of more than 100 catechists in the area of OCIA, plus clergy, deacons and religious. A new, yearly mystagogical retreat was developed to provide further

formation and accompaniment to the neophytes.

The implementation of the new “Diocesan Sacrament of Confirmation Process” from eighth to fourth grade this past year will serve as an important catalyst in the continued focus of forming both families and students in the Catholic faith for years to come.

In the area of youth ministry, the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis now serves as the diocesan point of contact and formation for Totus Tuus, which has grown exponentially over the last two years, with new parishes being added every year to meet demand.

Hispanic ministry continues to experience significant growth in the areas of family and youth catechesis through the Guadalupe Youth Summit, with more than 500 teens served last year alone and five young men answering the call to discern a vocation to the priesthood. A new “Diocesan Quinceañera Policy” was developed to renew a proper focus on the Quinceañera celebration in honor of Christ and the Blessed Mother.

The Office of Missions has experienced positive growth in the coordination of more than 45 mission appeals and 20 missionary priests, increasing our ability to donate to our brothers and sisters in need throughout the world.

The institution of the new Office of Multicultural Ministry, formerly the Office of Ethnic Ministry, has successfully ministered to 17 distinct communities, incorporating their rich cultural heritage within the diocese. Initiatives of the new office include development of the Multicultural Ministry Council and an annual Pentecost Multicultural Mass.

In the coming year, we look forward to hiring a new associate director for youth ministry and development of a formal evangelization and catechetical process for youth and youth leaders.

As we continue to grow and expand our ministerial outreach to the faithful

of the diocese, let us continue to keep each other in prayer in our efforts to foster an atmosphere of joyful eagerness within our families and parish communities to know and embrace Jesus Christ in our lives.

As we anticipate the birth of our Lord and embrace a new year, I leave you with the following quote from St. Francis de Sales: “Do not look forward to what may happen tomorrow; the same everlasting Father who cares for you today will take care of you tomorrow and every day. Either He will shield you from suffering, or He will give you unfailing strength to bear it.

“Be at peace, then; put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginations, and say continually: The Lord is my strength and shield; my heart has trusted in Him, and I am helped. He is not only with me, but in me, and I, in Him.”



Bishop Earl Fernandes speaks at the Evangelization Summit at Ohio Dominican University. Photo courtesy Aaron Christy

## The value of generosity

By Kevin Lowry

Diocesan Chief Finance Officer

One of my grandkids just turned 7.

A singular personality, the little tyke came home from school recently and proclaimed to my daughter and her husband that they had talked about “the olden days” at school that day. When exactly were the olden days, his parents wanted to know?

The ‘80s.

The poor kid couldn’t understand why this elicited such an overwrought response from his parents, one of whom was born in the olden days, and the other barely missed. As a child of the ‘60s, I wonder how his teacher would characterize my era. Late Jurassic period, perhaps?

The episode caused me to think back to what I was up to during the olden days.

Happily, I have many memories of my own grandfather back then. When I was a kid, Grandpa was my hero. He was one of those gracious people who would focus every conversation on you, as if you were the most important person on earth.

We spent many hours together talking,

playing games, fishing and trap shooting. (There’s something deeply satisfying about blowing a clay pigeon to smithereens with a shotgun). Joyful memories abound.

Among my grandfather’s enduring attributes was his generosity.

He used to pay me for any sort of task that he could dream up. Grandpa knew that he would get great value from my diligent efforts – partly because I was after the money, but mostly because I loved him.

Do you know who else is generous? You are.

My grandfather did some boxing in college. He might have said that people within the Diocese of Columbus are punching above their weight class. In particular, one area that jumped out recently is second collections.

There are a couple dozen second collections per year, and they’re incredibly important. They provide assistance to a wide variety of ministries:

- Retirement fund for religious
- Diocesan charities
- St. Vincent de Paul Society
- Propagation of the faith
- Black and Indian missions
- Catholic Relief Services

- Holy Father’s Peter’s Pence
- Church in Latin America
- Solidarity fund for the Church in Africa
- World Mission Sunday

This list isn’t exhaustive, but illustrates the breadth of impactful causes – literally spanning the globe – that we support. You support.

Your contribution makes a difference, whether it’s saying “thank you” to priests and religious, helping them to age with dignity, feeding the hungry, assisting when disaster strikes or proclaiming the Gospel worldwide in word and deed.

Back in the olden days, when my super-cute wife and I were married, it wasn’t easy to contribute to second collections – sometimes, even the first. We had more kids than money for years (although that strategy eventually paid off in the form of grandkids).

There were definitely times along our journey when contributing was easier, and other times, quite a bit tougher. That might be the case with you as well, and that’s OK.

Remember the story of the widow’s mite? It’s not the amount that matters; it’s generosity of heart that we’re all called to cultivate.

If you’re interested in joining the second collection success story in the diocese, I invite you to consider using one of the electronic giving platforms provided by your parish. It’s not the only way to give, but it allows each of us to be intentional about our giving.

Most of my colleagues at the diocese think I’m nuts because I actually like budgeting. I know, it’s kind of strange.

Yet, budgeting and intentionality in our spending helps us to allocate resources in line with our faith and situation in life.

It’s good for the Church since it provides much-needed funds for diverse and important ministries. It’s also good for us, helping achieve greater detachment from things of this world and cultivate generosity that reflects the love of God.

Contemplate the phrase “ocean of mercy” for a while. It’s sheer divine generosity!

Whether you were around in the “olden days” or not, thank you for your generosity. You are making a difference in our community – and in our world.

May the Lord bless our collective efforts.





*Together in Mission we can do great things for the people of the Diocese of Columbus.*

The Diocese of Columbus has been able to evangelize, educate, nurture, and support the needs of our 23 county diocese because of your support of The Appeal.

**Thank you for your gift to The 2025 Appeal.**

**It's not too late to give or support another parish's goal for The 2025 Appeal.**

**Diocesan Goal: \$8,000,000**

**Pledged to Diocese\*: \$7,718,655**

*\*Pledges as of 12/16/25; parishes in red have met goal*

**Parish, City**

Christ the King Church, Columbus	\$112,312.84	\$82,417.00
Church of the Ascension, Johnstown	\$48,505.72	\$69,403.72
Church of the Blessed Sacrament, Newark	\$99,415.50	\$144,503.00
Church of the Holy Trinity, Zoar	\$31,873.32	\$28,047.50
Church of the Resurrection, New Albany	\$297,549.35	\$187,146.00
Community of St Joseph and Holy Cross Church, Cols.	\$61,733.03	\$69,776.00
Divine Mercy, Zaleski	\$40,219.41	\$40,235.00
Holy Family Church, Columbus	\$82,346.72	\$63,590.12
Holy Spirit Church, Columbus	\$41,622.34	\$83,816.00
Holy Trinity - St. Joseph, Somerset	\$36,830.92	\$32,685.00
Immaculate Conception Church, Dennison	\$69,634.80	\$61,035.00
Immaculate Conception Church, Columbus	\$181,385.64	\$221,192.00
Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Canal W.	\$90,706.55	\$96,055.55
Our Lady of Guadalupe, Columbus	\$33,353.16	\$39,517.00
Our Lady of Lourdes Church, Marysville	\$100,071.03	\$154,871.00
Our Lady of Mount Carmel Church, Buckeye Lake	\$38,736.77	\$89,146.00
Our Lady of Peace Church, Columbus	\$109,916.58	\$115,369.00
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, Grove City	\$185,819.03	\$291,769.00
Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal, Columbus	\$42,290.92	\$24,382.72
Our Lady of Victory Church, Columbus	\$67,250.20	\$85,705.00
Our Lady Queen of the Apostle, Chillicothe	\$87,530.55	\$102,833.68
Our Lady the Immaculate Conception, Kenton	\$28,987.66	\$49,665.00
Sacred Heart Church, Columbus	\$17,252.31	\$24,711.31
Sacred Heart Church, Coshocton	\$51,570.62	\$39,884.74
Sacred Heart Church, New Philadelphia	\$83,750.09	\$71,316.00
Sacred Hearts Church, Cardington	\$20,791.48	\$54,693.45
Seton Parish, Pickerington	\$200,469.29	\$200,725.00
St Agatha Church, Columbus	\$152,699.58	\$213,954.00
St Agnes Church, Columbus	\$16,580.53	\$18,058.00
St Aloysius Church, Columbus	\$20,552.65	\$21,380.00
St Andrew Church, Columbus	\$227,602.84	\$260,044.80
St Andrew Kim Taegon Korean Community, Cols.	\$12,160.71	\$0.00
St Ann - St Mary Church, Dresden	\$21,708.57	\$26,265.00
St Bernadette Church, Lancaster	\$90,335.11	\$104,490.76
St Brendan the Navigator, Hilliard	\$330,767.59	\$312,545.73
St Brigid of Kildare Church, Dublin	\$365,171.03	\$392,793.73
St Catharine Church, Columbus	\$139,689.09	\$185,170.00
St Cecilia Church, Columbus	\$118,979.21	\$147,657.31
St Christopher Church, Columbus	\$59,369.17	\$72,501.17

**Parish, City**

St Colman of Cloyne Church, Washington CH	\$39,512.65	\$91,816.79
St Dominic Church, Columbus	\$27,991.59	\$35,800.00
St Edward the Confessor Church, Granville	\$111,705.14	\$157,891.62
St Francis de Sales Church, Newark	\$219,798.86	\$274,176.08
St Francis of Assisi Church, Columbus	\$30,480.64	\$33,060.01
St James the Less Church, Columbus	\$68,824.70	\$60,472.25
St John Church, Logan	\$43,105.56	\$98,072.30
St John Neumann Church, Sunbury	\$285,976.93	\$388,525.51
St John Paul II Scioto Catholic, Portsmouth	\$117,873.07	\$129,308.07
St John the Baptist Church, Columbus	\$37,327.04	\$55,927.04
St. John the Baptist Parish, Mount Vernon	\$97,764.41	\$196,330.00
St Joseph Church, Circleville	\$50,052.18	\$58,041.00
St Joseph Church, Dover	\$78,446.98	\$75,470.00
St Joseph Church, Plain City	\$44,961.26	\$61,749.34
St. Josephine Bakhita Parish, Columbus	\$116,770.15	\$123,265.00
St Margaret of Cortona Church, Columbus	\$67,368.57	\$138,005.02
St Mary - Mother of God, Columbus	\$90,374.19	\$135,169.42
St Mary Church, Delaware	\$182,627.66	\$185,278.80
St Mary Church, Marion	\$93,058.07	\$323,499.65
St Mary Magdalene Church, Columbus	\$35,675.78	\$34,171.78
St Mary of the Assumption Parish, Lancaster	\$160,813.48	\$254,215.70
St Matthew the Apostle Church, Gahanna	\$280,739.33	\$357,999.56
St Michael Church, Worthington	\$158,245.94	\$378,750.19
St Nicholas Church, Zanesville	\$76,521.86	\$51,884.00
St Patrick Church, Columbus	\$171,619.43	\$160,606.00
St Patrick Church, Junction City	\$19,776.90	\$16,060.00
St Patrick Church, London	\$46,970.98	\$53,361.00
St Paul the Apostle Church, Westerville	\$509,031.12	\$583,374.52
St Peter Church, Millersburg	\$14,544.43	\$11,391.44
St Peter St Joan of Arc Parish, Powell	\$425,383.19	\$591,656.40
St Pius X Church, Reynoldsburg	\$166,773.26	\$110,004.00
St Rose of Lima Church, New Lexington	\$39,240.64	\$26,405.00
St Stephen the Martyr Church, Columbus	\$49,773.42	\$87,540.40
St Thomas Aquinas Church, Zanesville	\$64,726.28	\$48,220.00
St Thomas the Apostle Church, Columbus	\$21,670.25	\$22,957.00
St Timothy Church, Columbus	\$97,859.12	\$98,035.00
Sts Augustine & Gabriel Church, Columbus	\$26,746.60	\$29,915.00
Sts Simon & Jude Church, West Jefferson	\$62,326.45	\$99,215.00



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# Faith, excellence define Catholic schools of diocese in 2025

By Office of Catholic Schools

Catholic schools in the Diocese of Columbus marked a notable year in 2025 with historic enrollment, strong academic results, campus expansion, and renewed emphasis on Catholic identity and mission.

## Enrollment Reaches 20-Year High

With more families choosing Catholic education for their children, enrollment continues to be on the rise. Across the diocese, schools welcomed nearly 17,500 students, the highest total since the early 2000s. Most notably, high school enrollment rose by approximately four percent to nearly 5,000 students, a level reached only twice in the past 45 years.

Several high schools' multi-year gains have contributed to this progress. Since 2022, enrollment at St. Charles Preparatory School has grown by 33%, Tuscarawas Central Catholic by 13%, Bishop Hartley by 12%, Fisher Catholic by 8%, and Bishop Watterson by 6%. Enrollment growth was particularly strong in Tuscarawas and Licking counties, and preschool enrollment also reached a historic high. Furthermore, in many schools, enrollment growth has reached the building capacity.

Earlier this fall, Bishop Fernandes recognized the Chesterton Academy of St. Benedict as an independent Catholic school within the diocese, bringing the total number of Our Catholic Schools to 50. Additionally, St. Bernadette School in Lancaster added seventh grade this academic year, and plans currently are moving forward to open a new middle school at Cristo Rey Columbus and a new elementary school called Ave Maria Academy at St. Peter St. Joan of Arc Parish for the 2026-27 academic year. To better meet the needs of student populations, Our Catholic Schools were blessed to welcome more than 20 new school administrators this fall, many of whom are filling positions created by the increased enrollment.

## Academic and faith formation

Academic achievement remained a key strength in 2025. Ninety-five percent of schools reported average or high growth in reading, and diocesan students surpassed Ohio public school averages in reading



Father Timothy Lynch, pastor at Columbus St. Mary, Mother of God Church, hands a traditional gift to a St. Mary School student at the start of the school year. *File photo*

proficiency. These gains were supported by continued professional development for educators and renewed attention to the tradition of Catholic liberal arts education. The class of 2025 reflected these efforts, with more than 1,100 graduates earning more than \$170 million in college scholarships and performing more than 81,000 service hours in their communities.

More importantly – and the reason Our Catholic Schools exist – is the continued emphasis on faith formation as a core dimension of education. More than 300 students traveled to Washington, D.C., for the March for Life in January, representing each of the diocese's 11 high schools, and, in October, the second annual all-school rosary united all of our students in prayer, highlighting the shared identity of Catholic schools across central and southern Ohio.

## Capacity challenges spur construction

Enrollment growth – with many schools operating at over 90% capacity and the majority managing waiting lists – continues to present capacity challenges, sparking studies and planning for school capital expansion projects.



Bishop Earl Fernandes blesses the new Columbus St. Charles Preparatory School's Brotherhood Center on Aug. 22. *File photo*

Several projects were completed this year, including the renovation of the St. Pius X Chapel at Bishop Watterson High School, the addition of the Brotherhood Center at St. Charles Preparatory School, a new middle school addition at Holy Trinity School in Somerset, and a new, larger chapel at Tuscarawas Central Catholic Jr./Sr. High School. This fall, Bishop Hartley High School completed the construction of a Marian grotto in its school courtyard, adding a beautiful, dedicated prayer space in nature for students.

Additional capital projects across the diocese will continue to unfold at schools throughout the diocese in the coming year, part of a broader effort to ensure they have the necessary facilities to continue serving families for years to come.

## Increasing access to Catholic education

Affordability remained a priority for Our Catholic Schools through scholarship initiatives and long-term planning. The Emmaus Road Scholarship Fund recorded record revenue at the end of 2024 which, in turn, provided over \$4 million in scholarships to students this academic year. Since its introduction in December

2021, overall revenue to the scholarship fund has increased nearly 7,000 percent, generating need-based scholarships for more than 6,500 students.

Ensuring Catholic education is accessible to families across all income levels will carry into 2026 and beyond.

## Achievement beyond the classroom

High schools across the diocese also enjoyed strong athletic results this year. Bishop Watterson High School earned multiple state championships, including a back-to-back title in football, as well as titles in men's soccer, women's cross country, men's lacrosse, and men's wrestling. St. Charles Preparatory secured back-to-back championships in water polo, while Newark Catholic, Portsmouth Notre Dame, and St. Francis de Sales also earned state titles in women's volleyball, softball and women's lacrosse, respectively. Many individual athletes also were recognized with state and regional honors.

## Jubilee pilgrimage highlights mission

The 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope served as a spiritual focal point for many educators. This fall, school administrators and members of the Office of Catholic Schools traveled to Rome with Bishop Earl K. Fernandes for the Jubilee for the World of Education. The pilgrimage included an audience and Mass with Pope Leo centered on vocation, unity, and mission in Catholic schooling, in addition to guided and behind-the-scenes tours of the major basilicas and other religious sites throughout the Eternal City.

Participants described the trip as a moment of renewal, emphasizing that Catholic education is rooted in the life, history, and mission of the Church.

## Looking ahead

As 2025 concludes and sights turn to 2026, Our Catholic Schools of the Diocese of Columbus enter the new year with momentum guided by the Church's call to form young people in faith, knowledge, and service.

# Jesus is trending: top diocesan social media posts of 2025

By Sarah Lightle

Office of Communications

Social media – the never-ending love-hate relationship of a tool that's ingrained itself into our daily life. It's fascinating to me, watching how the modes of communication and marketing have shifted from the physical to the digital landscape. We're truly witnessing a changing of an age, and as a diocesan Catholic communicator, my role in the Curial Office of Communications is to track how the modes of shifting communication can be harnessed to showcase the life of the Gospel.

The rise of social media has allowed communicators to study what news sticks, what trends take off, and ultimately what type of content shared captures the most attention. These insights reflect what is most prevalent on the minds and hearts of those following your platforms. As a resident Catholic communicator, I possess the opportunity to monitor the attention of those following our page, a majority of which are the lay faithful in the diocese. As I've tracked social media posts, analytics and trends over the last year, I can't help

but notice what followers react to, comment and share.

Two areas stand out when looking at the top posts across our channels for the last year: religious life and feast days.

Three of our top seven posts for Instagram, Facebook and YouTube have to do with those living out the vocation of religious life.

Among the posts are:  
Priest convocation = 76,000 views  
Bishop Earl Fernandes meeting Pope Leo XVI = 63,295 views

Priest passing away = 39,343 views  
Marian Gathering of religious women communities = 18,672 views

The many priest installations that took place throughout the fall ranked among the highest posts as well.

Why are we drawn to religious life? We are drawn to the life of Jesus Christ. Viewing those in religious life, whether it's the witness of priests or religious sisters, is viewing lives given totally to Jesus and His Church, and that captivates us.

Why? We are captivated by the Divine, whether we are aware of it or not. We are drawn by the transcendentals of truth, beauty and goodness, and religious life en-

compasses all of these into one, emanating the beauty of the Church and, ultimately, life with Jesus Christ. Seeing something so pure and holy as those living out a religious vocation, it speaks to our hearts because they are signs of the hope of heaven. They reflect what we are all striving for, to the point that they give their very lives to help others get there.

Why are we drawn to feast days? Saints attract. We need role models in the Catholic faith, those we can look to for intercession and aid because of their virtuous life. Saints were just like you and me, making daily efforts to follow where the Lord led them and to striving to grow in virtue. They are heaven's advocates for us as we progress through our earthly pilgrimage.

Notice a theme here? Purity and virtue running through the trends of what grabs our attention. Who happens to be the Creator of all things pure and virtuous? The Divine Creator Himself, our Lord. It's as though we were made to be like the Creator, and actually secretly desire to be. Subconsciously, our hearts are telling us and it's being executed through our actions on social media.

As a Church, we have a great opportunity

in front of us. Social media can be used as a prime way of evangelization. We are able to reach others in ways we've never been able to, especially those that need it the most. Catholic content is on the rise and millions are following. There is hope, and there is hope in the trends as well.

"In fact, the question is no longer whether to engage with the digital world, but how. Social media in particular is an environment where people interact, share experiences, and cultivate relationships unlike ever before," Dr. Paolo Ruffini, prefect for the Dicastery of Communication, wrote in *Towards Full Presence – A Pastoral Reflection on Engagement with Social Media*.

Engaging with social media as the Church has become less of an option, and more of a necessity. The world has a new way of encountering Christ in the digital landscape, and we must take advantage of it. Using the attractiveness of truth, beauty and goodness that our Church possesses, we need to capture the heart of the Gospel to stop the scroll of the lost sheep.

May the Lord bless us in the digital age!





The Appeal  
Together in Mission  
2025

*Together in Mission we can do great things for the people of the Diocese of Columbus.*

The Diocese of Columbus has been able to evangelize, educate, nurture, and support the needs of our 23 county diocese because of your support of The Appeal.

*Thank you for your gift to The 2025 Appeal.*

*It's not too late to give or support another parish's goal for The 2025 Appeal.*

Diocesan Goal: \$8,000,000

Pledged to Diocese\*: \$7,295,908

*\*Pledges as of 8/22/25*

EVANGELIZATION:

Reaching out to our communities and spreading the Good News



700 adults became Catholic last year, which has more than **tripled** in the past three years.

1,110 students now attend Mass at St. Thomas More Newman Center – a **38% increase** from last year.

255 engaged couples were assisted by **150** couples, priests, and deacons in their preparation for the sacrament of Marriage.

VOCATIONS:

Nurturing and supporting seminarians, priests, deacons, and religious men and women who are answering God's call



122 Deacons are serving the Diocese of Columbus, **9** ordained in 2024, **39** are in the stages of discernment, aspirancy, or candidacy.

40 men are in formation at **3** seminaries (Pontifical College Josephinum, Columbus; Mt. St. Mary's, Cincinnati; Pontifical North American College, Rome).

26 new men have discerned the priesthood in the last two years, with **5** being newly ordained, which more than doubled from the previous two years.

SOCIAL DOCTRINE:

Addressing the needs of the poor, the marginalized, and those suffering in our diocese



22,330 summer meals were served to families by St. Francis Evangelization Center (Vinton County). They also provided **10,386** individuals with a 6-day supply of food, and **4,550** individuals with clothing.

8,395 individuals were assisted with rent and utility assistance, hygiene supplies, medication assistance, COTA passes, and so much more by the Joint Organization for Inner-City Needs (JOIN).

23 counties across central Ohio have been served by **dozens** of mission partners who feed the hungry, cloth the naked, and serve the poor.



12 prison facilities in the diocese were served by diocesan staff that met the spiritual need of **hundreds** of prisoners.

EDUCATION & FAITH FORMATION:

Ensuring that our schools and religious formation programs provide the best foundation in faith and academics



30,175 elementary students are in parish youth catechesis programs.

50 schools throughout our diocese are served by dedicated staff who provide curricula and academics, licensure, government and program support.



18,000 students in Our Catholic Schools were provided crucial support including safety and security services.



1,834 high school students are in parish faith formation programs.



To give online, scan the QR code or visit [columbuscatholicgiving.org/appeal](https://columbuscatholicgiving.org/appeal)



A wonderful life

**By Jim Jackson**  
*Senior Director,  
Office of Advancement*

One of my all-time favorite Christmas movies is “It’s a Wonderful Life.” As the movie develops, the main character, George Bailey, feels like he doesn’t make a difference and it would be better if he had not been born.

Clarence, an angel, comes to shine a heavenly light for George. Although Clarence is an angel, he is not the miracle in the movie. The miracle is the people of Bedford Falls.

Recorded in the town ledger are the names, acts of kindness and giving of people in this small town. The people save both George and Bedford Falls. They responded to the needs and worked together and saved their town.

This same spirit lives in our work here in the Diocese of Columbus.

We have been able to evangelize, educate and nurture the needs of our parishes and our neighbors. Together, we continue to bring the Good News.

It takes prayer, hard work, sacrifices, time and continued generosity to make this happen. We see goodness in action just like the small town of Bedford Falls.

We have been blessed by sharing and learning how to be good neighbors. As disciples of Jesus Christ, we are responding to each other’s needs.

We grow stronger, more connected and committed through our four pillars: evangelization, vocations, social services, and education and faith formation.

Evangelization reaches out to our communities to spread the Good News.

Vocations nurture and support our seminarians, priests, deacons and religious men and women who answer God’s call.

Social services addresses the needs of the poor, marginalized and suffering in our diocese.

Education and faith formation ensures that our schools and religious formation programs provide the best foundation in faith and academics.

We are grateful to you for stepping forward as a benefactor. Year-to-date we are

approaching 15,000 gifts and commitments totaling \$7.7 million toward our Appeal 2025 goal of \$8 million.

I would like to give special recognition to members of our inner family, the Miter Society. We are grateful for your legacy of leadership and generosity. Year-to-date we are 3,400 members strong and account for more than 70 percent of total dollars raised through The Appeal.

If you are not yet a member, please accept my invitation to you to join. If you are currently a member, might this be the year to increase to the next gift level?

Together, we are strengthening the Diocese of Columbus for generations to come in responding to the needs of all.

As we head into this Christmas season of giving, we are very close to obtaining our goal of \$8 million. It is our challenge to secure the remaining \$300,000.

Your gift, large or small, is critical for our success in fulfilling our mission. Thank you in advance for your supportive and generous response to my request.

My Christmas prayer is to help us realize

awe and wonder in our lives, to help us grow in patience, faith and trust. May the wisdom that we receive deepen our reverence, and may true understanding move us to acts of charity, mercy and peace.

In closing, the words of the angel Clarence echo in my heart, “Strange, isn’t it? Each man’s life touches so many other lives. And when he isn’t around, he leaves an awful hole doesn’t he?”

In “It’s a Wonderful Life,” the miracle came when the community came together.

Your gift today helps create that same miracle for someone right here in our Diocese of Columbus.

We are privileged to walk alongside individuals, families, children, clergy and religious during their most challenging moments. Through your generosity, we provide Christ’s love where it is needed most: forming hearts in faith, charity and service.

To make a gift to The Appeal, visit [www.columbuscatholicgiving.org](http://www.columbuscatholicgiving.org), or call the Office of Advancement at 614-241-2550.

*Jim Jackson is the senior director for the diocese’s Office of Advancement.*

In the marriage case styled MATTHEW RICHARD PANEK and HEATHER YVONNE HENDERSON, the Tribunal of the Diocese of Columbus, Ohio is currently unaware of the present address of HEATHER YVONNE HENDERSON. The Tribunal herewith informs her of the case and invites her to contact JENNA M. COOPER, JCL, no later than – 15 JANUARY 2026, or call phone (614)241-2500 Extension 1509. Anyone who knows of the whereabouts of HEATHER YVONNE HENDERSON, is herewith asked to make this Citation known to her or to inform the Tribunal of her current address.

Given this **28 DECEMBER 2025**,

**JENNA M. COOPER, JCL**  
INSTRUCTING JUDGE

**MR. EDGAR VIDALES, J.D.**  
NOTARY

In the marriage case styled JAMIE CARSON WELLS and MIRANDA ASHLEY MINTURN, the Tribunal of the Diocese of Columbus, Ohio is currently unaware of the present address of MIRANDA ASHLEY MINTURN. The Tribunal herewith informs her of the case and invites her to contact JENNA M. COOPER, JCL, no later than – 15 JANUARY 2026, or call phone (614)241-2500 Extension 1509. Anyone who knows of the whereabouts of MIRANDA ASHLEY MINTURN, is herewith asked to make this Citation known to her or to inform the Tribunal of her current address.

Given this **28 DECEMBER 2025**,

**JENNA M. COOPER, JCL**  
INSTRUCTING JUDGE

**MR. EDGAR VIDALES, J.D.**  
NOTARY

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## Dublin family carries on New Year's tradition

By Hannah Heil

Catholic Times Reporter

Traditions can often provide a sense of stability in an ever-changing world. The Church's Sacred Tradition has endured for upward of 2,000 years.

Thomas and Evelyn Weitzel, students at Dublin St. Brigid of Kildare School, appreciate a tradition their family has maintained for centuries, typically celebrated around Christmas or New Year's Eve.

The tradition was inspired by their paternal side. Their father, Kevin, has grandparents from Austria and the former Czechoslovakia.

The family rings in the New Year with an old Slovak tradition: a "beige" dinner.

The dinner is so-called by the Weitzels because of its color. "It's all different colors of beige and brown," mother Stephanie joked, "but individually represents different things."

The traditional Slovakian meal includes mashed potatoes, bread, sauerkraut and pierogis.

The Weitzels begin the meal by dipping bread in honey. The bread, Stephanie explained, represents the Eucharist. The honey symbolizes a "sweet year" to come.

Sauerkraut – perhaps because it emphasizes the word "sour" – represents difficult moments in life.

The dinner also includes bobalki bread, a traditional Slovak dish consisting of yeast dough balls baked in the oven. The bread is covered with hot milk and sprinkled with poppy seeds.

Bobalki represents wealth and prosper-



Kevin Weitzel (left) assists his children Evelyn (center) and Thomas in making pierogis, part of the family's traditional New Year's Eve meal.

ity for the new year.

Pierogis, Stephanie added, are also part of the meal but simply because of tradition. The filled dumplings made of soft potato-based dough are not symbolic.

Celebrating the family's traditional dinner at the end of each year often serves as a reset.



Thomas enjoys his family's "beige dinner," a traditional Slovakian meal, with his grandparents in Cleveland. Photos courtesy Weitzel family

"It's a good reminder that this is what we're all here for and that we're going to celebrate for the rest of the year, always keeping the Eucharist and Jesus at the forefront of our minds when we start a meal," Stephanie said.

Thomas and Evelyn particularly appreciate the Slovak dishes.

"They love it because every year it's something for them to look forward to," their mother noted. "I think they always like that there is a special meaning behind the different foods."

Last year, the family's New Year's Eve tradition was featured by the City of Dub-

lin. Thomas, who is in eighth grade at St. Brigid of Kildare, participates in Dublin's Teen Buddy Program.

The program pairs teenagers with elderly individuals to foster belonging rather than isolation. Teens call their buddy each month, and they attend gatherings and events together.

The City of Dublin reached out to teenagers in the buddy program about an opportunity to feature their New Year's Eve traditions. Thomas was eager to share his.

He explained in a recorded video that he enjoys New Year's Eve – not from eagerness to begin the next year or to celebrate in a modern sense – because his family gathers to celebrate their heritage.

Little sister Evelyn, a sixth-grader at St. Brigid, was also featured.

"They had a fun time with it," Stephanie said of her children's experience while filming the segment, which was produced by the City of Dublin.

The Weitzels often celebrate Christmas Eve with the meal when visiting Kevin's parents in Cleveland.

Thomas and Evelyn's grandparents belong to an orthodox church. A group of women at the church make pierogis each Christmas.

"We always get the pierogis from them," Stephanie said. "The kids really enjoy having that from the older ladies as a tradition every year."

"My son is more the traditional type. He is very into the same thing – it makes him feel good every year – and Evelyn just enjoys the food a lot."

## Bambinelli Sunday provides opportunity to bless home Nativity's Baby Jesus



Father Michael Donovan, O.P., (above) parochial vicar at St. Patrick Church, celebrated Bambinelli Sunday on Dec. 14 after Mass by blessing figurines of Baby Jesus (below) that are put away until Christmas. Photos/St. Patrick Church

Bambinelli Sunday was celebrated by diocesan parishes in the weeks leading up to Christmas.

Columbus St. Patrick Church celebrated the tradition on the third Sunday of Advent, Dec. 14, and Johnstown Church of the Ascension and Columbus St. John the Baptist and Sacred Heart parishes on the following Sunday, Dec. 21.

Adults and children were invited to bring figurines of the Baby Jesus from their home Nativity sets to be blessed by their parish priest. As part of the tradition, families wrap the figurine after it is blessed and set aside until the Nativity of the Lord, when the Baby Jesus is then placed in the manger.

The tradition was instituted by Pope St. John Paul II. It is traditionally celebrated on the third Sunday of Advent, Gaudete (rejoice) Sunday.

Church of the Ascension postponed

Bambinelli Sunday to the following week due to inclement weather. It was the first year the parish celebrated Bambinelli Sunday.

Pastor Father P.J. Brandimarti said he hopes it becomes an annual tradition.

"It is a beautiful opportunity to allow the children of the parish to bring forth the Child Jesus, have (the figurines) blessed for the coming Christmas season," he noted.

The Johnstown pastor and Father Paul Marich, O.P. (Order of Preachers), pastor at St. Patrick in downtown Columbus, used a blessing composed by Pope Benedict XVI.

It was the first year Father Marich celebrated Bambinelli Sunday at his parish.

Faithful were invited to come forward to

the church's communion rail after Mass. The prayer of blessing was offered and figurines of Baby Jesus were sprinkled with holy water.

"The parishioners loved this opportunity," he said. "It was amazing to see figurines of the Baby Jesus in many shapes and sizes: big, tiny, porcelain, wood and plastic, new pieces and family heirlooms. What also amazed me is how this drew people across generations."

Father Vince Nguyen, pastor at St. John the Baptist and Sacred Heart, celebrated Bambinelli at his parish churches. Faithful who attended Mass at the churches, both located in the Italian Village neighborhood, were invited to bring figurines of Baby Jesus to be blessed after Mass.



Father P.J. Brandimarti blesses figurines of the Baby Jesus on Dec. 21 at Johnstown Church of the Ascension. Photo/Church of the Ascension

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# Traveling to Tanzania: Six-hour Mass and white cassocks

By Christopher Dixon  
For The Catholic Times

At the Pontifical North American College, seminarians are encouraged to spend a summer experiencing the Universal Church away from the Diocese of Columbus. This summer, my brother seminarian, Michael Rhatican, opted for a parish experience in Ireland and a missionary-service-to-the-poor immersion in Calcutta, India. I chose to serve at a parish in Tanzania and the Camino Primitivo pilgrimage-hike in Spain.

I landed in Tanzania around sunset after a full day of travel from Rome and got my first (and only) glimpse of the peak of Mount Kilimanjaro. Upon arrival and the usual customs rituals, I exited the airport to find a parishioner who would drive me to the parish.

At this point, it was dark. We drove down the two-lane main road of the country with much construction and many bumps. Arriving at the parish near Mount Meru, I discovered that, in addition to the pastor, I would be living with a parochial vicar and diocesan seminarian.

During my first summer as a seminarian for the Diocese of Columbus, I served at (what is now) Chillicothe-Waverly Our Lady Queen of the Apostles parish with four different priests. The parochial vicar for most of my summer, Father Milton Kiocha, is a priest of the Apostles of Jesus from Tanzania.

During that summer, I found him to be a priest that, even when tired, was joyful and generous. He took me with him to the Chillicothe Correctional Institution for his last Mass, which was one of the most moving events for me during my time in sem-

inary.

He also offered to let him know if I ever wanted to go to Tanzania. Looking for something to do outside of the United States for a summer, I sent him a message. Within an hour he planned out my entire summer!

I was thankful to join him, Deacon Reed Hauser and other mission workers from the Columbus diocese in Father Kiocha's hometown near Moshi for a few days, even going on a safari in the Serengeti with some of the group. Natural beauty (and more than 100 different species of animals) was really a sight and experience of a lifetime.

A majority of my time was spent in a parish near Arusha: Saint Joseph, Husband of Mary. It has a large church-school complex, a mission church down an uncomfortably bumpy dirt road and more than 30 "small Christian communities," which are basically neighborhood groups of Catholics in remote places.

Mass was at 6:30 a.m. every morning, which many people walk to and from. Remember that main road I mentioned earlier? There are people walking alongside it through most of the country.

I must not fail to mention that I landed in Tanzania without knowing the language, food or culture. I learned a few phrases in Swahili and found out I do not, in fact, like all food but loved the culture. These joyful people, filled with faith, were a great witness.

On Corpus Christi Sunday, I went to the remote mission church with the pastor. Both the remote and main parish churches prepared altars for a Eucharistic procession meant to take place that day. They canceled additional Masses that Sunday at the main church so the entire community could cel-



Seminarian Christopher Dixon snaps a selfie with elephants on a safari during his summer serving in Tanzania.

Photos courtesy Christopher Dixon

brate the festivities together (as is ideal every Sunday).

This time of year was a rainy one. That did not stop the procession from taking place. Wearing my boots and white cassock (in places near the equator, cassocks can be white in color) we went into the rain and through the mud.

Another highlight of my time in Tanzania was the children of the parish.

In the village, most of the adults do not speak English, unless they are businessmen or work in tourism. However, many children know English and very much enjoy learning songs or the names of sacraments in English. (They also liked my beard and looking at themselves on my phone screen camera.)

Within parish boundaries were convents for two religious orders of women. Every opportunity to visit was a joy.

On Mondays, the entire parish (a few staff, priests and seminarians) is off. It was a great opportunity to travel to the main city of Arusha on public transit with my best friend for the summer, Alphonce, who will soon be ordained a deacon.

He shared his culture, food and city with



Christopher Dixon visits with a child at St. Joseph, Husband of Mary whose mother works in the parish's religious goods store.

me. I shared with him many things about America, even American fast-food companies Pizza Hut and Kentucky Fried Chicken – both of which he now likes.

Most impressive was 16 men who were ordained priests in a brand-new cathedral, which seats more than 2,000 people and was standing room only. The liturgy lasted more than six hours. (For comparison, Sunday Mass averages an hour-and-a-half to two hours.) It was complete with an entrance procession in which 200 seminarians (including myself) joined, an hour-long homily and several rounds of announcements.

What a joyous occasion!

I thank the people of Tanzania for their great hospitality during my time there. They taught me many practical things about being a priest, especially the importance of priestly fraternity, joy and hope.

*Tumsifu Yesu Kristu!*

Christopher Dixon is a diocesan seminarian studying at the Pontifical North American College in Rome.



Mission workers from the Diocese of Columbus gather with clergy in the Archdiocese of Arusha, Tanzania, while serving during the summer.



Alphonce, a seminarian of the Archdiocese of Arusha, and Christopher Dixon spent the summer together while Dixon served in the Tanzanian archdiocese.



Mount Meru is visible in the distance from St. Joseph, Husband of Mary parish, located in Tengeru, part of the Archdiocese of Arusha, Tanzania.

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**MAY 7<sup>TH</sup> - ST. PAUL, WESTERVILLE**

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6:15 PM MASS

**JUNE 4<sup>TH</sup> - TBD**

**JULY 2<sup>ND</sup> - TBD**



# Sisters of Life visit St. Pius X for evening of Adoration, prayer

By Tim Puet

For The Catholic Times

An evening of Eucharistic Adoration at Reynoldsburg St. Pius X Church on Thursday, Dec. 18 featured words of comfort and community from Sister Madeleine Carmel, SV, one of four members of the Sisters of Life congregation who were on hand to provide prayer and music of praise.

Sister Madeleine based her talk on the words of Isaiah 40:1-2 – “Comfort, comfort my people,” says your God. “Speak to the heart of Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her service has ended, that her guilt is expiated, that she has received from the hand of the Lord double for all her sins.”

“The key to experiencing the Lord’s comfort is to allow the gift of forgiveness of sin to penetrate us entirely,” she said. “God created us to live in joyful community. He placed a hunger in our hearts that makes us want to choose Him.”

Sister Madeleine said the first place many people are accustomed to hearing words of comfort is from their mothers when, as children, they are trembling in fear.

In Isaiah 40:1-2, she said, “I hear Isaiah speaking to people who are fearful and trembling and expecting God’s wrath. The Lord has been offended, yet He doesn’t lash out. God lets them see He has a greater point of view – a plan to set them free.

“What explains God’s tender response? He has one aim – community. He is in the Trinity a communion of love. Everything He does is with one aim – that of community.

“He offers forgiveness and a chance for reunion. We see this in Genesis in the story of Adam and Eve. Their sin brought division where there had been community. Immediately, we see God seeking reunion. He seeks them in love but they hide from Him.

“Human nature has been weakened, but God still chooses us. He loved you into being and can’t take His eyes off you, even at this moment. He has a marvelous plan for you that no one else can fulfill. No sin is beyond the reach of His mercy.

“He planted something in our hearts that guides us toward our destiny – a hunger. ... This is no ordinary hunger, but a deep hunger for happiness, fulfillment, community – a restless ache to belong, a hunger for permanent love.

“We try to fill that need in different ways but nothing seems to fully satisfy us,” Sister Madeleine said. “This is the wisdom of God, lest we wander too far or too long. We can’t ignore it. It won’t go away. It reminds us that we need something other than self

to keep us alive, and that something is to be in a face-to-face relationship with God.”

She reminded listeners that Christmas would be celebrated one week after the date of her talk. “In one week, our salvation comes to us in the person of Jesus Christ,” she said. “He has given us this season of Advent to lift our hungry hearts to Him. In return, you will be saved.”

Sister Madeleine lives in Phoenix with a community of Sisters of Life who serve women in need and visit the Arizona State University campus twice a week. She recalled that this past February, the sisters were donated a car that they nicknamed Lassie in honor of St. Scholastica.

“That car was one step from junk,” she said. She recalled struggling to get the sunroof open, then finding it wouldn’t close. She said that like Lassie, the sisters “putter along and are chipped” but fulfill their mission with God’s help.

She recalled the story of a woman the sisters had helped return to the Catholic Church and to whom they had given a toy bear inscribed with the phrase Jeremiah 29:11 – a Scripture verse which reads “for I know the plans I have for you.”

When the woman received the gift, Sister Madeleine said, “Her jaw dropped. She’d been hearing that same message over and over – first in her head, then on the radio, and now with this bear. God was calling out to her, comforting her. She has received from the Lord double blessing in response to any of her sins. That’s the gift of redemption – we receive not just double but a hundredfold.

“Sometimes we’re even a little scandalized at how abundantly grace-filled and merciful God is. Sometimes I go to confession and afterward, I feel I don’t deserve to have the joy that comes from receiving the sacrament. I never reject it. It just proves how powerful the Lord is. Every lost sheep is a cause for rejoicing, and you are that sheep.

“We’re nearing the end of Advent and the beginning of the Christmas season. I don’t know how many times you’ve gone through this time of year, but the birth of Jesus is always new. Are we ready for Him to lift the weight from our shoulders, the heaviness from our heart?” Sister Madeleine asked.

“Children love gifts. What greater gift is there than the inheritance of God’s kingdom? In the final week of Advent, let us become like children,” she said.

Sister Madeleine, along with Sister Mary Grace, Sister Esther Hope and Sister Avelina Joseph from her congregation were in Reynoldsburg as part of a weekend that



Sister Madeleine Carmel, SV, of the Sisters of Life congregation offers encouraging words of comfort and community during an evening of Eucharistic Adoration on Thursday, Dec. 18 at Reynoldsburg St. Pius X Church. Photos courtesy St. Pius X Church



Members of the Sisters of Life religious community gather outside Planned Parenthood on East Broad Street in Columbus to pray for the protection of human life. The sisters visited the Columbus area to participate in several weekend events before Christmas.

included a young adult conference from Friday to Sunday, Dec. 19 to 21 at the Damascus Catholic Mission Campus in Knox County and a Mass and Holy Hour on Saturday, Dec. 20 at Resurrection Parish in Lexington, Kentucky.

Sister Mary Grace will be one of the speakers at the annual Columbus Catholic Women’s Conference on Saturday, Feb. 21 in Columbus.

The Sisters of Life are a contemplative/active Catholic community of women religious who profess traditional vows of poverty, chastity and obedience and a fourth vow to protect and enhance the sacredness of human life.

The community was founded by Cardinal John O’Connor in New York in 1991 and serves in the Archdioceses of New York, Philadelphia, Denver, Phoenix, Washing-

ton and Toronto and the Dioceses of Albany, New York and Bridgeport, Connecticut.

Its missions include serving women who are vulnerable to abortion; hosting weekend retreats; evangelization; outreach to college students; and helping women who have suffered after abortion to encounter the mercy and healing of Jesus.

The evening of Adoration was part of a program titled Evenings with the Merciful Jesus that takes place at St. Pius X monthly, generally on the Wednesday or Thursday closest to the 22nd day of the month in honor of Jesus’ first appearance to St. Faustina Kowalska on Feb. 22, 1931. It includes prayer, music, Adoration and recitation of the Chaplet of Divine Mercy.

## Deacon candidates installed at Cathedral as lectors



Eight diaconate candidates (front row from left) Tom Brady, Josh Dziatkowicz, Clint Atkins, Brandon Bell, Rob Rodgers, Andy Whiteman, Ho Diep Bui and Shawn Miller were installed as lectors during a Mass at Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral on Sunday, Dec. 14, 2025. The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Earl Fernandes (back row, second from right), who was assisted at the altar by (back row from left) Deacons Dave Bezusko, director for Catholic Charities; Paul Zemanek, in service at Dublin St. Brigid of Kildare Church; and Stephen Petrill, director for the Office of the Diaconate. The men in formation for ordination to the Order of the Diaconate in the diocese pledged to serve faithfully in proclaiming



God’s Word. The Rite of Lector is one of several steps for men in formation for the diaconate. During the institution of lectors, candidates are officially entrusted with a responsibility to proclaim the Word of God in the liturgical assembly, with the exception of the Gospel, which is reserved for ordained deacons and priests. Instituted lectors are also entrusted with the instruction of children and adults in the faith and preparing the faithful to receive the sacraments. Instituted lectors are called to develop a deeper love of Scripture and given a responsibility in service of the faith rooted in the Word of God. Photos courtesy Office of Communications



## Churches celebrate candlelight Masses during Advent



Columbus Holy Family Church is illuminated by candles only as Bishop Earl Fernandes celebrates a Rorate Caeli Mass on Wednesday, Dec. 17.



Congregants hold candles during the Rorate Caeli Mass at Holy Family Church. Photos courtesy Sarah Lightle



Father Kevin Girardi incenses the candlelit altar at Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church during a Rorate Caeli Mass. Photo courtesy Andy Long



Children and families from Westerville St. Paul School participate in an early morning Rorate Caeli Mass. Photo courtesy Andy Long



A Rorate Caeli Mass is celebrated at Portsmouth St. John Paul II Scioto Catholic Parish. Photo courtesy St. John Paul II Parish



Candles give the altar at Worthington St. Michael the Archangel Church a heavenly glow for a Rorate Caeli Mass. Photo courtesy St. Michael Church

By Doug Bean  
Catholic Times Editor

In the pre-dawn hours during Advent, faithful Catholics braved frigid temperatures and early morning darkness to take part in one of the Church's beautiful Masses.

An ancient Advent tradition has experienced a revival in recent years.

A special votive Mass in honor of Our Lady, known as a Rorate Caeli Mass, has become popular among parishioners ranging from families with young children to seniors at parishes in various parts of the diocese.

The Masses are celebrated in darkness and only illuminated by candlelight. Candles surround the altar and the tabernacle while the people in the pews each hold a candle that penetrates the darkness. It ends with the rising sun shining through the windows of the church, a symbol of the Blessed Virgin Mary waiting for the birth of her son, the Christ Child.

The term Rorate comes from the Introit of the Mass in Latin, "Rorate, Caeli, desuper, et nubes pluant justum, aperiatur terra, et germinet Salvatorem," which is translated to "Drop down dew, ye heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain the just: let the earth be opened and bud forth a Savior." "Christ is the heavenly dew that gives new life to our souls" from Isaiah 45:8.

Bishop Earl Fernandes celebrated a Rorate Mass at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Dec. 17 at Columbus Holy Family Church. It was the second Mass of its kind at the parish, where one was offered a week earlier.

The silence in the dark church was only pierced by the words of the bishop during the Mass and the traditional Advent hymns and chants from the choir.

The Mass has become a tradition at Holy Family since it was started there by Father Stash Dailey, the parish's former pastor, in 2018.

Father Dailey brought the Rorate Mass

to his current parish, Worthington St. Michael the Archangel Church, which were celebrated on each Saturday in December during Advent.

Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church offered three Rorate Masses this year at its existing 6:30 a.m. daily liturgy on Dec. 3, 10 and 17.

Father Kevin Girardi, parochial vicar at St. Paul since July after his ordination to the priesthood in May, said he first encountered these Masses at Holy Family while he was a seminarian.

"It changed the way that I prayed throughout the Advent season," he said. "It drew me closer to Our Lady and prepared my heart to receive the true Light of the World, Jesus Christ, on Christmas.

"My desire was for the people of this parish to experience that same closeness to Our Lady in prayer throughout Advent."

Hundreds attended the three Rorate Masses at St. Paul, including families from St. Paul School who were invited to witness the splendor of the Mass and the beauty of the solemn hymns sung by the choir.

After each of the Masses, Father Girardi said he witnessed children and families gathered in the narthex enjoying a snack before heading off to work or school.

"The final week, the church was filled with the faithful holding their votive candles, preparing their hearts for the coming of the Christ Child, and drawing close to the Mother of God," he said.

Rorate Masses were also celebrated at Hilliard St. Brendan the Navigator Church by Father Sam Severance and at Columbus St. Peter/Powell St. Joan of Arc Parish by Father Joseph Rolwing, who were both ordained with Father Girardi in May.

Among the other parishes that offered these Masses were Washington Court House St. Colman of Cloyne, Portsmouth St. John Paul II Scioto Catholic Parish and Marion St. Mary Church.

## Community comes together at St. Agnes for Las Posadas

Bishop Earl Fernandes participated in the traditional observance of Las Posadas leading up to Christmas as the principal celebrant for a Mass on Saturday, Dec. 20 at Columbus St. Agnes Church.

Las Posadas, commemorated between Dec. 16 and 24, is popular in Latin American culture and in U.S. parishes with large Latino congregations. A novena is often part of Las Posadas.

After the Saturday evening Mass at St. Agnes, the bishop participated in a procession at the parish that reenacted the journey that Joseph and Mary made to Bethlehem, knocking on doors while trying to find a place to stay before giving birth to the baby Jesus. Unable to find lodging, the Holy Family was forced to settle for a stable, where the Christ Child was born.

Father Juan Fernando Bonilla, the pastor at St. Agnes and Columbus St. Mary Magdalene churches, celebrated Mass with the bishop and also joined the procession that included songs and prayers before ending with food, music and games. Joining the two parishes for Las Posadas were parishioners from Columbus St. Stephen the Martyr Church.

"We're trying to come together to cel-

brate as a community," Father Bonilla said. "We invited the bishop and other communities to join us as a big community – one family in the name of Jesus as a Catholic church."

Among the other parishes in the dioceses where Las Posadas took place were Columbus St. Cecilia, Columbus-Powell St. Peter St. Joan of Arc, Dover St. Joseph and London St. Patrick.



Bishop Earl Fernandes joins Las Posadas procession with images of Joseph and Mary at Columbus St. Agnes Church on Saturday, Dec. 20. Photos courtesy Andy Long



Las Posadas celebration at Columbus St. Agnes Church before Christmas included games and candy for children.



Traditional Hispanic music accompanies Las Posadas activities at Columbus St. Agnes Church.



## Parishes observe Our Lady of Guadalupe feast with special Masses

The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe was celebrated at various diocesan parishes on Friday, Dec. 12. Masses were offered in various parts of the 23-county diocese to honor the Blessed Virgin, who appeared to St. Juan Diego on Tepeyac Hill outside of Mexico City in 1531.

Columbus St. Thomas the Apostle Church was standing room only for Our Lady's feast day, with the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass celebrated by Bishop Earl Fernandes.

The primarily-Latino congregation also included Gov. Mike DeWine and Ohio's first lady, Fran DeWine, who are parishioners at St. Thomas.

Mass began with an entrance procession headed by a banner with an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Matachines, a group of Latino dancers garbed in ethnic costumes, also processed into the church.

Fathers Brian Stacy, OFM Cap. (Order of Friars Minor Capuchin), pastor at Columbus Christ



Bishop Earl Fernandes gives his homily during Mass from the pulpit in front of a shrine dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

the King and St. Thomas, and Anthony Essien, OFP Cap., concelebrated. Bishop Fernandes was also assisted by Tom Phillips, a permanent deacon at the



The Medina family (from left), Mahana, Adriana, Juan and Juan Jr., stand in front of an Our Lady of Guadalupe shrine at St. Thomas the Apostle that the family built and gifted to the church.

parish.

St. Thomas featured a shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe near the church's sanctuary. The display was funded and designed



Faithful procession into St. Thomas the Apostle for Mass on Dec. 12, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, with a banner bearing her image.

CT photos by Ken Snow

by the Medina family. Juan, Adriana, Mahana and Juan Jr. Medina built the shrine as a gift for the parish.

The Mass concluded with a blessing from the bishop. A ple-

nary indulgence, or remission of temporal punishment due for sin – that applies to sins already forgiven – was also granted to the faithful.

## Bishop blesses Our Lady of Guadalupe mural at Cristo Rey Columbus on feast day



A mural of Our Lady of Guadalupe surrounded by roses is featured on the second floor of Cristo Rey Columbus High School.

Cristo Rey Columbus High School celebrated the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, patroness of the Americas, on Friday, Dec. 12 with a dedication and blessing of a mural made in her honor.

An Our Lady of Guadalupe mural was painted by Cristo Rey staff members and is located on the second floor of the building. The image was designed in an effort to incorporate more Catholic art into the school.

Several students joined the bishop and school chaplain, Father Joseph Thomas, who also serves as parochial vicar at Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral and Holy Cross Church, for the mural's dedication and blessing.

Several Marian apparitions are recognized by the Church that could compliment a school, such as Our Lady, Seat of Wisdom, but Cristo Rey discerned an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe to be most appropriate.

"For our school, which is quite culturally diverse, we wanted an image of Mary that would unite both culture and faith. Our Lady of Guadalupe is the perfect symbol of this and having her displayed in our school shows our students that they are embraced and loved," said Lynn Truitt, director of marketing at Cristo Rey.

The school has celebrated the feast of Our Lady for the past three years. The tradition began in 2023 with a procession and

Mass celebrated by Bishop Fernandes, who has continued to be part of the tradition each year.

The feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe was celebrated again this year following the mural dedication. Students processed with a statue of Our Lady to St. Joseph Cathedral, where the bishop celebrated a bilingual Mass.

The Cristo Rey community was accompanied by Matachines, musicians and dance troupe from St. Paul the Apostle parish in Norwalk, Ohio. Matachines blends medieval, early Spanish and pre-conquest Aztec dance traditions.



Bishop Earl Fernandes blesses a mural of Our Lady of Guadalupe on Dec. 12 at Cristo Rey Columbus High School, joined by students, the school's chaplain, Father Joseph Thomas, and campus ministry assistant Sister Castissima Masambo, CDNK (Sisters of Our Lady of Kilimanjaro).



Cristo Rey Columbus students and staff process to St. Joseph Cathedral with Matachines, musicians and dancers, for Mass on Friday, Dec. 12, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Photos courtesy Sarah Lightle



Cristo Rey Columbus High School students fill St. Joseph Cathedral for Mass celebrated by Bishop Earl Fernandes on the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe.



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# Bishop visits three prisons for Masses

Bishop Earl Fernandes brought a message of hope to the incarcerated at three correctional institutions in the diocese during the final weeks of the Jubilee Year of Hope.

The bishop visited Marion Correctional Institution on Friday, Dec. 12, the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, and Madison and London Correctional Institutions on Sunday, Dec. 14, a day designated as the Jubilee of Prisoners, to celebrate Mass, hear confessions and talk with the men at each location.

He was joined by Father Daniel Colby, the chaplain in Marion, and Deacon Zack Goodchild, a seminarian who will be ordained to the priesthood in May.

About three dozen men attended the Mass in the chapel.

Bishop Fernandes had requested that parishes in the diocese observe the Jubilee of Prisoners on Dec. 14 and pray for the incarcerated. He also asked the inmates to pray for those around the world who are persecuted for their faith and are unjustly imprisoned.

"You will never know the true power of your prayers," Bishop Fernandes told the men. "You can do a lot of good through your prayers."

"I'm so grateful for all of you. I tell you, I feel most like a priest when I'm with all of you."

Father Colby, the parochial vicar at Marion St. Mary and Cardington Sacred Hearts churches, returned two days later on Dec. 14 for the Jubilee of Prisoners to lead a Holy Hour and Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament. The following day, Dec. 15, the men were visited by missionaries from the Damascus Catholic Mission Campus located in Knox County.

"Thank you for just being you, for being disciples and trying to be faithful," Bishop Fernandes said. "This year, the theme of the Jubilee has been a pilgrimage of hope. And I'm hopeful for you. You give me hope that we're on the journey together toward the Father's house."

Ross, a server at Mass, said he was baptized by Bishop Fernandes on May 24.

"I've been incarcerated for 19 years and having spiritual nourishment is a blessing in itself," he said.

## Kairos Prison Ministry: God's special time

By Mike Myers  
For The Catholic Times

I never understood until eight years ago.

I've been blessed to be helping with Kairos Prison Ministry for the last eight years. I've learned that the Lord is wanting and willing to meet any of us on a mountaintop, in the muck at the bottom or anywhere in between.

I've had experiences witnessing and being part of God's most precious miracles through this unique and powerful ministry. These men and women are loved and forgiven by our Lord – just like all of us. But they need to be reminded – because it's easy to lose hope in prison. They are thrilled to hear that they are not forgotten – by us or the Lord.

George Prifti called Bishop Fernandes' visit an "absolute blessing."

"When the bishop comes in, you just feel the presence of the Catholic Church," he said.

He added that having access to the sacraments is "very important."

Two days later, approximately 18 men attended Sunday Mass with Bishop Fernandes celebrating at Madison Correctional. He was joined by Father Matt Morris, a chaplain there, and assisted by Deacon Mark O'Loughlin.

Seth Cummins, who held the bishop's crozier during Mass at Madison Correctional, said he was thrilled to be in the presence of the bishop.

"I've never felt so in touch with my spirituality since coming to the Catholic Church," said Cummins, who is scheduled to be confirmed and enter into full communion with the Church at Easter.

Mickey Murrill, a convert to the Catholic faith, received instructions while incarcerated at Madison Correctional and came into the Church at Easter 2023.

"God's been shining His light on me and I've been trying to be as active in the Church as I can," he said.

The bishop celebrated another Mass at nearby London Correctional the same day for about 27 individuals.

Among them was Alec Zurlinden of Cincinnati, who attends Mass, including Spanish language, as often as it is offered at London Correctional.

"Growing up Catholic and attending religion classes, a lot of what I did early on was just repetition and doing what my parents did without fully understanding why," he said. "But it wasn't until my arrest and incarceration a year and a half ago, and after doing a lot of soul searching as well as research about the Catholic faith, that I made it my own."

Taz Collins converted to the Catholic faith at age 18 (he's 30 now). He learned about the Catholic Church on his own and felt that was where he belonged.

"Having Bishop Fernandes come here to celebrate the Mass is an incredible thing," he said. "I think it's really a blessing that he comes and does this for all incarcerated people."

Statistics show that the return to prison rate for Kairos graduates is lower than non-Kairos participants. This shows positive long-term impact while saving taxpayers money.

Here are some testimonials from a Nov. 6-9 Kairos weekend:

"I was so lost. This weekend gave me courage and inspiration."

"This was a life-changing event and I give thanks to God."

Kairos needs volunteers. Prayerfully consider allowing it to become a ministry you get involved with.

For questions or to discuss the ministry, contact Mike Myers at 614-582-8204.



Bishop Earl Fernandes offers a plenary indulgence to the men at Madison Correctional Institution at the end of Mass with Deacon Mark O'Loughlin to his left and Father Matt Morris to his right.



Seth Cummins holds the bishop's crozier during Mass at Madison Correctional Institution on Sunday, Dec. 14. He will come into full communion with the Catholic Church at Easter.



The men pray after Communion at Madison Correctional. CT photos by Ken Snow



The men in the congregation make the sign of the cross at the end of Mass celebrated by Bishop Earl Fernandes at London Correctional Institution on Dec. 14. CT photos by Ken Snow



Taz Collins, a convert to the Catholic faith, prays during Mass at London Correctional.



Jason Balanik prays after receiving Communion. He has been incarcerated for six months.



Bishop Earl Fernandes shares a message of hope with the men during his homily at Marion Correctional Institution on Dec. 12.



Deacon Zack Goodchild, a seminarian, speaks with one of the men at Marion Correctional.



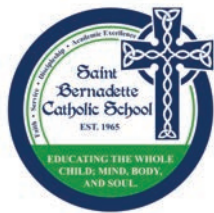
Bishop Earl Fernandes celebrates Mass at Marion Correctional on Dec. 12. Photos/Andy Long





# OPEN HOUSES

The Fisher Catholic Community of Schools invites you to our Winter 2026 open houses!



JAN. 25  
11am-1pm

**Saint Bernadette School**  
1325 Wheeling Road | Lancaster, Ohio 43130  
[www.stbernadetteschool.com](http://www.stbernadetteschool.com)



JAN. 25  
3pm-5pm

**Saint Mary School**  
309 E. Chestnut Street | Lancaster, Ohio 43130  
[www.saintmarylancaster.org](http://www.saintmarylancaster.org)



FEB. 1  
2pm-4pm

**Fisher Catholic High School**  
1803 Granville Pike | Lancaster, Ohio 43130  
[www.fishercatholic.org](http://www.fishercatholic.org)



# St. Joseph Montessori students' ornaments displayed outside White House

By Tim Puet  
For The Catholic Times

Thousands of tourists and residents of the nation's capital had a chance to see Christmas ornaments designed by the former eighth-grade class of Columbus St. Joseph Montessori School in the period leading up to and just after Christmas.

The 19 decorations, one for each class member plus one marked as anonymous, were the only ornaments on Ohio's tree that was one of 58 trees representing U.S. states and territories along the Pathway of Peace surrounding the National Christmas Tree outside the White House.

Students of one school from each of the 50 states, the District of Columbia and seven territories were chosen to decorate the tree representing their area with ornaments showing what makes their state beautiful.

"We learned of the ornament project late last April from one of our school parents who has a connection to the White House," Montessori art specialist Jodie Gollings said. "It wasn't a competition but an invitation."

"We enthusiastically accepted the opportunity because our eighth graders had just gotten back from a class trip to Washington earlier in the month and



Columbus St. Joseph Montessori School eighth-graders, who visited Washington, D.C. in October, learned when they returned that their ornaments were selected for Ohio's Christmas tree outside the White House, one of 58 trees representing states and territories. Photo/St. Joseph Montessori

were studying a unit in which the natural beauty of Ohio was the theme throughout their classes.

"Everything turned out to be a happy coincidence because the students had just gotten back from Washington, where they visited all the major monuments and the Capitol building. They weren't able to go inside the White House, but they got to see it and this gave them a vision of where

their tree would be.

"It really brought history to life and it gave added meaning to the students' final days at school."

St. Joseph Montessori has programs for students ranging from toddler through middle school. Gollings said the ornament designers now attend high schools throughout the Columbus area, most of them Catholic institutions.

The students took a month to create the ornaments, which centered around native Ohio plants and flowers.

The National Park Service provided an ornament template for the students. Gollings emphasized the importance of a cohesive visual element across all student pieces.

"To unify the designs, we chose to use the outline of Ohio as a background shape for each ornament," said Gollings, who is in her second year at the school after spending many years in advertising and marketing as a graphic designer. "We also studied historical botanical illustrations for inspiration."

Each student selected a native plant, created a detailed sketch and incorporated it into the shared design framework.

The tree has been displayed since the 103rd National Christmas Tree lighting ceremony took place on Thursday, Dec. 4 and will remain in place until Thursday, Jan. 1.

The ornaments and more information about the National Christmas Tree may be seen at [www.thenationaltree.org/ornaments/ohio](http://www.thenationaltree.org/ornaments/ohio).

## Ohio Catholic school leaders participate in summit

In December, staff from Ohio's six dioceses — the Archdiocese of Cincinnati and Dioceses of Columbus, Cleveland, Toledo, Youngstown and Steubenville, which represent more than 350 Catholic schools statewide — gathered for inter-diocesan meetings sponsored by the Catholic Conference of Ohio, the official voice of the Church on public policy in the state.

A two-day summit, held at Hilliard St. Brendan the Navigator Church, was designed to foster communion and collaboration to advance Catholic education across the state.

The annual meeting opened with Mass celebrated by Bishop Earl Fernandes, concelebrated by Father Sean Dooley, pastor at St. Brendan; Fathers Weldit Tesfazghi Abay and Sam Severance, parochial vicars at the parish; and Deacon Paul Ward, head of schools for the Steubenville diocese.

The second day of the summit featured keynote speakers, including Ohio's governor, and breakout discussions on topics relating to today's educational landscape.

Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine addressed the science of reading and best practices to teach reading to students of all abilities. Lt. Gov. Jim Tressel shared insights about the Team Tressel Fitness Challenge, a statewide initiative to support students' physical and mental wellbeing by developing life-long habits in fitness, nutrition and sleep.

Other speakers discussed issues specific to non-public schools, including representatives from the Ohio Department of Education and Workforce and members of the Alliance for Catholic Education at the University of Notre Dame.



Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine (top photo) and Lt. Gov. Jim Tressel speak to Catholic school staff members at an inter-diocesan summit in December at Hilliard St. Brendan the Navigator Church. Photos courtesy Ben Romaker

## Four Watterson football players named first-team All-Ohio

Drew Bellisari of state champion Columbus Bishop Watterson High School was chosen as co-offensive player of the year on the Division III All-Ohio team selected by the Ohio Prep Sports Media Association.

The senior quarterback was one of four Eagles given first-team honors. The others are senior offensive lineman Pete Eglitis, who like Bellisari was also a first-team member in 2024, and defensive lineman Michael Boyle and linebacker Ben Uhlenhake, both juniors.

Three more Watterson juniors — wide receiver-tight end Carter Bellisari (Drew's cousin), offensive lineman Davis Seaman and defensive back Nate Henderson — were awarded second-team honors.

Two other players from Columbus diocesan schools were named to first teams in their respective divisions. They are senior defensive lineman Frankie McAllister of Columbus St. Francis DeSales in Division II and senior defensive lineman Caden Delabar of Lancaster Fisher Catholic in Division VII.

DeSales quarterback RJ Day and wide receiver-tight end Dax Middleton were second-team selections and defensive lineman Jordan Karkhoff won third-team honors in Division II. All are juniors.

In Division III, Columbus Bishop Hartley had three players selected — junior Robert Lathon as second-team running back, senior Jake Beatty as a second-team offensive lineman and

senior Jay Zang as a third-team linebacker.

Besides Delabar, seven other diocesan players received All-Ohio honors in Division VII. They were Zanesville Bishop Rosecrans senior Hayden Perdue, second-team quarterback; Fisher Catholic junior Nick Harris, second-team offensive lineman; Fisher Catholic junior Sam Tencza, second-team linebacker; Newark Catholic junior Jaxon Holman, second-team running back; Newark Catholic junior Malone Hutchison and Portsmouth Notre Dame senior Luke Cassidy, third-team quarterback; and Rosecrans senior Coen Grandstaff, third team wide receiver-tight end.

## DeSales senior wins full scholarship

Columbus St. Francis DeSales High School senior Jeffre Peraza received a full college scholarship through QuestBridge National College Match, a college admission and scholarship process for high-achieving students from low-income backgrounds. The program awards high school seniors full four-year scholarships to 50 of the nation's best colleges. Peraza, who will attend the University of Notre Dame, shares his gifts through performing arts and in the classroom. He is a member of the St. Francis DeSales High School marching and concert band. He is involved in the fall play and spring musical. He joined the school engineering club this year to prepare for his future career. He said his proudest accomplishment was restarting St. Francis DeSales' Ronald McDonald House Charity Club, which serves parents of children treated at Nationwide Children's Hospital. Photo/DeSales



CONGRATULATIONS BISHOP WATTERSON  
CROSS COUNTRY TEAMS

GIRLS TEAM	BOYS TEAM
CCL CHAMPS	CCL CHAMPS
DISTRICT CHAMPS	DISTRICT CHAMPS
REGIONAL CHAMPS	REGIONAL CHAMPS
STATE CHAMPIONS	STATE 1ST CENTRAL OHIO

KAITLYN VAN ZANDT, KARINE BHOMICK, CAMPBELL RETZKE, CECILIA KELLER, BERKLEY LACOUNT, EMMA DRAB, LILI GLATZ, ALAINA FISHER, ADDI REINECK, SAMANTHA SCHMIESING JACK HANGEN, LUKE HOLLIS, BRADY SPEARS, NATHAN MONAHAN, MAX KOWALSKI, JACK STREB. JACK SPIERS, COLLIN RITTER, PATRICK MONAHAN

WE GOT THAT RING!  
DISTRICT, REGIONAL, STATE WAS AN EPIC RUN!  
OUR TEAM WAS ON FIRE, WE WERE SECOND TO NONE!  
NEXT YEAR WE'LL BE BACK, CUZ WE AIN'T DONE!  
LIKE THE CARPENTER'S SANG, "WE'VE ONLY JUST BEGUN"  
OUR NAME IS SWAG WHEN WE HIT THE STREET  
AND IT JUST GOT BETTER CUZ WE WON THE STATE MEET!  
IF TUPAC WERE HERE, YOU KNOW WHAT HE'D SING?  
BISHOP WATTERSON IS OUR HOUSE,  
AND WE GOT THAT RING!



Feast of the Holy Family Year A

# Healing the family: Follow St. Joseph’s fear of the Lord

Sirach 3:2-7, 12-14  
Psalm 128:1-2, 3, 4-5  
Colossians 3:12-21 or 3:12-17  
Matthew 2:13-15, 19-23

We just celebrated the birth of Jesus of Nazareth, who was born to bring salvation to humankind. The term salvation comes from the Latin *salus*, which literally means “health.”

Jesus’ mission was precisely to bring healing to all the wounds that humans suffer in their existence.

Today’s liturgical celebration aims at showing how Jesus’ healing begins in the most essential of all human communities: “The family is the original cell of social life. It is the natural society in which husband and wife are called to give themselves in love and in the gift of life.... The family is the community in which, from childhood, one can learn moral values, begin to honor God and make good use of freedom” (Catechism of the Catholic Church 2207).

The opening chapters of the Bible in the Book of Genesis present a series of events that show how badly human relations were affected by what is known as Original Sin.

We read that, as soon as that happened, division was introduced between Adam and Eve, then Cain killed Abel, and the following chapters present an increasing amount of evil. All this shows how God’s original



## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Father Ervens Mengelle, IVE, SSL

*Father Ervens Mengelle, IVE, SSL, is an Assistant Professor of Scripture and Dean of Men in the School of Theology at the Pontifical College Josephinum. He holds a licentiate in biblical exegesis from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome with further biblical studies at the Toronto School of Theology.*

project, described in Genesis chapters 1 and 2, was harmed, although it was not fully destroyed.

A theological expression states that “grace perfects nature.” It does not supplant or change it, but heals and elevates it.

Jesus’ salvific action, then, begins by healing the essential community among human beings. The first and second readings speak about virtues that are lived in Jewish homes (Sirach) and Gentile ones (Colossians).

The first one comes from a book alter-

natively named *Ecclesiasticus*, meaning “book of the Church,” and was used in the first centuries as a manual for education in Christian families (hence, the name.)

The second one, while describing virtues that belong to the natural dimension and the Gentile world as well, makes clear that the center of a Christian family is the Lord Jesus, through Whom we are to give thanks (eucharistein in Greek) to the Father.

The key element for those virtues to be lived is manifested by St. Joseph’s attitude to follow God’s indication – and by the explicit mention of the disposition that comes to be the foundation of the entire structure.

The responsorial Psalm explicitly states, “blessed is the one who fears the Lord.” We need to make sure we understand the biblical language.

At first glance, the term “fear” might raise in us some idea of terror, dread and anxiety, more connected to the idea of threat and power (which St. Joseph experienced in going back to the Holy Land: “He was afraid” (Matthew 2:22)).

In reality, “fear of God” is a sapiential concept, meaning it belongs to the realm of wisdom literature (Hebrew, *chokmah*, and Greek, *sophia*.) It is a disposition of the soul rooted in reason and harmony.

The term “fear of God” is used 12 times in Sirach chapter 1, setting the foundation for the entire book. It is hinted at in Psalm 1 (“blessed is the one who ... follows the law

of the Lord”), providing a reading cue for the entire collection.

It belongs to the literary genre of Genesis. A very insightful commentary on the Book of Genesis – that deals with issues regarding human relationships in a masterful way – written by Jewish philosopher Leo Kass is poignantly titled “The Beginning of Wisdom.”

Hence, there are a host of elements that need to be conjured up when we read the expression “fear of God.”

Sister Elisabeth-Paul Labat, OSB (Order of St. Benedict) beautifully summarizes the basis of the concept, especially evident during the Christmas season: “We have, after all, the certainty that God is love, that all his ways are, as the psalmist said, mercy and truth, that his pleasure, far from being arbitrary, is tender and wise, and that this infinite tenderness and wisdom of God are also infinitely powerful” (The Presence of God).

The requirement for all members of a family, and for the husband and father in a special way, is that they fear the Lord.

This means that especially husbands and fathers learn God’s project for humankind, and learn the dispositions and virtues they must cultivate to make it happen. St. Paul summarizes it in a masterful sentence: “Over all, put on love, which is the bond of perfection” (Colossians 3:14).

Epiphany of the Lord Year A

# Searching for a sign

Isaiah 60:1-6  
Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 10-11, 12-13  
Ephesians 3:2-3a, 5-6  
Matthew 2:1-12

“When Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, in the days of King Herod, behold, magi from the east arrived in Jerusalem, saying, ‘Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We saw his star at its rising and have come to do him homage.’” (Mt 2:1)

The Magi are filled with longing for the infinite, and so they gaze at the stars. They do not spend their lives staring at their feet, self-absorbed, confined by earthly horizons. They are not plodding ahead in resignation or lamentation.

They lift their heads high and search for signs. They see a star, brighter than all others, and this sign makes them set out on a journey. The sign leads them to Jerusalem and Bethlehem.

It is our duty to seek the signs of the Lord’s presence in everyday life, following the example of the Magi. They teach us how to rediscover the ever-present Epiphany, the ever-present Lord revealing himself to us. Searching for the signs of his presence, we discover the real meaning of life.



## SCRIPTURE READINGS

Father Robert Jager, Ph.D

*Father Robert Jager, Ph.D., is pastor of Columbus St. John Chrysostom Byzantine Catholic Church.*

Searching means not to remain closed in narrow confines of earthly things, thirsting for wealth and worldly comforts only, which are here today but gone tomorrow. If we waste our time, holding our heads bowed, as hostages of our own regrets, weaknesses and failures, we will truly lose the light and taste of life.

Which signs should we look for?

There are many other signs of the Lord’s

presence. These three are the easiest to recognize. They become a fount of hope and courage.

First, it is the created nature itself: in the beauty of the world, in the harmony of valleys and mountains, of forests and lakes, in the order we see in it. In all of these, we can recognize the reflection of the Creator.

St. Paul reminds us “for what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made” (Rom 1:19-20). Raising our eyes above our daily concerns helps us to see more than is visible!

Second, contemplating the Church, we might be caught in awe. The Church is still here after 2000 years, often marked by inner divisions, failures of her representatives and sinfulness of Christians. The words of Jesus came true: “I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock, I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it” (Mt 16:18).

The Greek *ekklesia* is translated as “church.” Literally it means “the called one.” In other words, the church – *ekklesia* – is the

community of those whom the Lord called out of this world to form his new people.

The Church is his work and not human endeavor. Therefore, it still stands, though some individual Christians, clergy included, may fall and be lost. It is in this community that the Lord transforms powerfully the human hearts.

Experiences of the Lord’s presence in confession, Eucharist or in the worshipping community are signs that he is truly alive! Vatican II rightly teaches that the “Church is the sign and instrument both of a very closely knit union with God and of the unity of the whole human race” (Lumen Gentium, I.1).

Finally, it is our own sins and failures that are signs of his presence! How? The Fathers of the Desert encourage us to reflect on our weaknesses.

What happened and how? Why? What did I desire before engaging in this particular act? What did I gain? Was there more peace and joy in my heart?

When repented and confessed, what was the state of my heart? When did I have more

See SCRIPTURE, Page 21

## THE WEEKDAY BIBLE READINGS

<b>12-29/1-3</b>	<b>THURSDAY</b>	<b>1-5/1-10</b>	Mark 6:45-52
<b>MONDAY</b>	Numbers 6:22-27	<b>MONDAY</b>	<b>THURSDAY</b>
1 John 2:3-11	Psalm 67:2-3,5,6,8	1 John 3:22-4:6	1 John 4:19-5:4
Psalm 96:1-2a,2b-3,5-6	Galatians 4:4-7	Psalm 2:7bc-8,10-12a	Psalm 72:1-2,14,15bc,17
Luke 2:22-35	Luke 2:16-21	Matthew 4:12-17,23-25	Luke 4:14-22
<b>TUESDAY</b>	<b>FRIDAY</b>	<b>TUESDAY</b>	<b>FRIDAY</b>
1 John 2:12-17	1 John 2:22-28	1 John 4:7-10	1 John 5:5-13
Psalm 96:7-8a,8b-9,10	Psalm 98:1,2-3ab,3cd-4	Psalm 72:1-2,3-4,7-8	Psalm 147:12-13,14-15,19-20
Luke 2:36-40	John 1:19-28	Mark 6:34-44	Luke 5:12-16
<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	<b>SATURDAY</b>	<b>WEDNESDAY</b>	<b>SATURDAY</b>
1 John 2:18-21	1 John 2:29-3:6	1 John 4:11-18	1 John 5:14-21
Psalm 96:1-2,11-12,13	Psalm 98:1,3cd-4,5-6	Psalm 72:1-2,10,12-13	Psalm 149:1-2,3-4,5-6a,9b
John 1:1-18	John 1:29-34		John 3:22-30

## DIOCESAN WEEKLY RADIO AND TELEVISION: Mass Schedule: Weeks of December 28 and January 4

**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](http://www.stgabrielradio.com) and diocesan website, [www.columbuscatholic.org](http://www.columbuscatholic.org).

Mass from St. Francis de Sales Seminary, Milwaukee, at 7:30 and 10 a.m. on WWHO-TV (the CW), Channel 53, Columbus. Mass with the Passionist Fathers at 10:30 a.m. on WHIZ-TV, Channel 18, Zanesville. 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 Breezeline 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 DirecTV 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](http://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](http://www.stgabrielradio.com) and diocesan website, [www.columbuscatholic.org](http://www.columbuscatholic.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](http://www.stannstmary.org)); Delaware St. Mary ([www.delawarestmary.org](http://www.delawarestmary.org)); Sunbury St. John Neumann ([www.saint-johnsunbury.org](http://www.saint-johnsunbury.org)); and Columbus Immaculate Conception ([www.iccols.org](http://www.iccols.org)). Check your parish website for additional information.

We pray the propers for the Christmas Season (Dec. 28-Jan. 1), and Weeks I and II of the Liturgy of the Hours



Solemnity of Mary, Holy Mother of God Year A

# Embracing our role like Mary, Mother of God

Numbers 6:22-27  
Psalm 67:2-3, 5, 6, 8  
Galatians 4:4-7  
Luke 2:16-21

The Marian title that encompasses all the other titles and prerogatives of Our Lady is *Theotokos*, meaning, “God-bearer.”

Although other titles offer insights into the role of Mary in the acceptance and sharing of salvation in cooperation with Jesus, her Son – the Savior of the world – the title “Holy Mother of God” gives us the greatest possible insight into what God has entrusted to her.

Mother is a title of relationship. The primary relationship of Mary is to her Divine Son, the Word Made Flesh, the Eternal Son of the Father.

To call her “Mother” is to acknowledge that God has given Himself to us through Jesus. Mary is the mother of the One Divine Person, the Son of the Father.

By the power of the Holy Spirit, she opened herself to receive the very Life of God in her womb. This made her fruitful in both a spiritual and earthly sense.

Jesus is the fruit of her womb in the fullness of His Person, which is Divine. He is the Son of the Father.

Jesus shares with us all that He receives from His Father. He also shares with us the relationship He has with the one who conceived Him in her womb and who gave birth to Him in the world.

She is holy because He has claimed her fully for Himself. She is Mother of God “because by the Holy Spirit He was incarnate of the Virgin Mary and became man.”

The Divine Son became human through a woman by the Holy Spirit. Paul reminds the Galatians, “When the fullness of time had come, God sent his Son, born of a woman, born under the law, to ransom those under the law, so that we might receive adoption.”

The holiness of Mary herself was received as a gift. She cooperated with the Holy Spirit in the begetting of the Son of God among us.

Celebrating her, we are simply acknowledging what God has done in and through her. Contemplating the action of God in Mary, we also begin to experience the invitation that is offered to us.

Mary watched and heard all that took place



## SCRIPTURE READINGS

### Father Timothy Hayes

Father Timothy M. Hayes is pastor of St. Edward The Confessor, Granville.

surrounding the birth of her Son: the annunciation by the Archangel Gabriel to herself, the quickening of John in his mother’s womb – this son of Elizabeth and Zechariah responding to the Divine Presence in Mary’s womb as she greeted Elizabeth, the message of the angels reported by the shepherds on the day of His birth.

Scripture tells us that “Mary kept all these things, reflecting on them in her heart” (Luke 2:19).

Mary accepted her role lovingly. We also are called to respond with love, embracing the role that God has designed for us. Learning to say our own, “yes” to God, we gradually open our minds, our hearts and our lives to the God Who has made us.

The Holy Trinity dwells in us as in a temple. We are able to continue His Presence in the world.

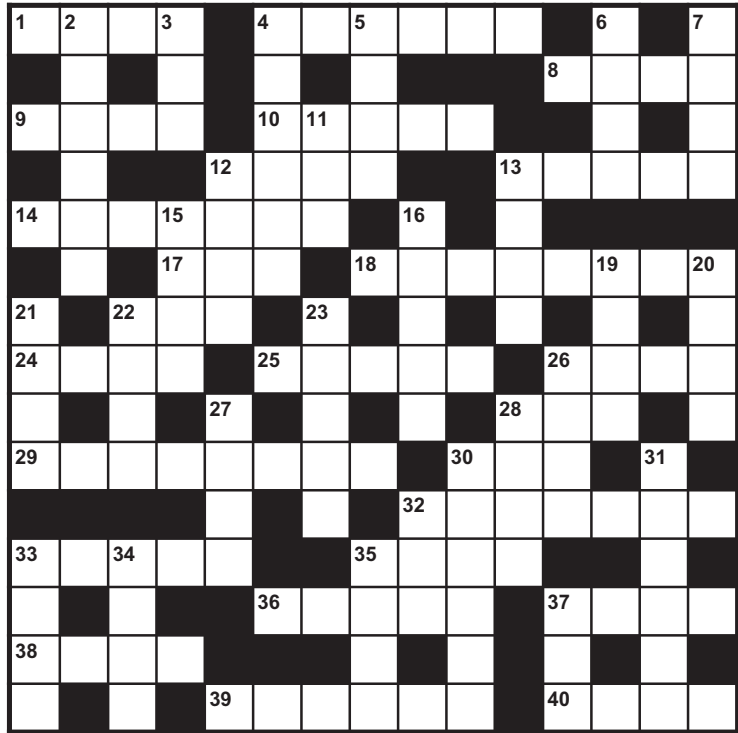
Since Jan. 1, the Octave of Christmas and the Solemnity of Mary, begins the civil year, the Church also invites us to observe it as a day of prayer for peace.

Peace does not mean only a cessation of war. It means fullness of being, living in the love that is incarnate among us.

As we begin this New Year, may we bring God’s peace to our families and to the world. May God bless us in his mercy!

“The LORD bless you and keep you! The LORD let his face shine upon you and be gracious to you! The LORD look upon you kindly and give you peace!” (Numbers 6: 24-26)

## CATHOLIC CROSSWORD



www.wordgamesforcatholics.com

### ACROSS

- 1 Archdiocese in Peru  
4 Ad \_\_\_, official visit by a bishop to the pope every 5 years  
8 It was written in three languages (abbr.)  
9 “...do not let your left \_\_\_ know ...” (Mt 6:3)  
10 Biblical tooth action?  
12 French Christmas  
13 Exodus infestation  
14 St. John the \_\_\_  
17 He gave Hannah words of comfort  
18 Ecclesiastical belt  
22 A mark of the Church  
24 Catholic actress, Bonnie, of “Cheaper by the Dozen” fame  
25 Catholic actor, Tony \_\_\_  
26 \_\_\_ of David  
28 “\_\_\_ gratias”  
29 Saint who founded an order of monks  
30 \_\_\_ culpa  
32 What Mary was  
33 Pax et \_\_\_ (Franciscan motto)  
35 Adjective for “Reverend”  
36 Mother-in-law of Ruth  
37 “...and the truth will set you \_\_\_” (Jn 8:32)  
38 Sacred Roman \_\_\_  
39 “\_\_\_ corda”  
40 “...the infant leaped in her \_\_\_” (Lk 1:41)

### DOWN

- 2 One of the prophets  
3 “Can any of you by worrying \_\_\_ a single mo-

- ment to your life-span?” (Mt 6:27)  
4 Catholic performer of “Dracula” fame  
5 Jesus shared this with his apostles the night before he died  
6 \_\_\_ Domini  
7 “\_\_\_ Irae”  
11 Tool of trade for Peter and Andrew  
12 River Moses turned to blood  
13 Moses’ was radiant after he spoke with the Lord  
15 Housing for the patriarchs  
16 Catholic Hungarian composer and pianist who took minor orders  
19 “\_\_\_ to us a child is born”  
20 Book before Nehemiah  
21 Evil king of Israel  
22 Second son of Judah  
23 The Feast of the Annunciation is the 25th of this month  
26 The \_\_\_ of Confession  
27 First of all  
28 “Amen, I say to you, this very night before the cock crows, you will \_\_\_ me three times.” (Mt 26:34)  
30 Sister of Aaron  
31 According to Proverbs, a gracious woman gets this  
32 Rev’s alma mater  
33 “...the world’s foundations lay \_\_\_” (2 Sam 22:16)  
34 The Archdiocese of Utrecht is here (abbr.)  
35 Members of orders take these  
37 “Many are invited, but \_\_\_ are chosen” (Mt 22:14)

## SCRIPTURE: Searching for a sign, Continued from Page 20

peace? Sinning or repenting?

The Fathers taught that failure was not only inevitable but necessary for growth.

Abba Ammonas stated that the narrow and hard way required constant self-examination and the recognition of one’s own sinfulness. The Fathers encouraged daily reflection on one’s failings, urging individuals to question themselves constantly to discover where they fall short, so that they would not be overwhelmed by fear at the time of death.

The goal was not to achieve perfection but to cultivate a pure heart through constant awareness of one’s imperfections. The Fathers also taught that failure in one’s spiritual life was not a sign of God’s absence but an invitation to deeper humility. Above all, the awareness of one’s failures and delusions that follow them shows us clearly the mercy of the Lord.

Mark the Monk says, “despite falling into so many

evil ways and often willingly slipping into sin, the soul was not rightfully handed over to destruction and death, but instead, the long suffering and benevolent Master, overlooking its sins, protected it, awaiting its conversion. The soul recalls that, when it willingly enslaved itself to its enemies and to evil spirits on account of the passions, God continually supported it, watching over the soul and providing for it in every way” (Mark the Monk, “Letter to Nicholas,” 2.3).

In the words of Pope Benedict XVI: “When true hope is lacking, happiness is sought in drunkenness, in the superfluous, in excesses, and we ruin ourselves and the world. ... For this reason, we need people who nourish great hope, and thus, have great courage – the courage of the Magi, who made a long journey following a star and were able to kneel before a Child and offer him their precious gifts” (Homily, Jan. 6, 2008).

## Words of Wisdom

by Pat Battaglia, aka Dr. Fun

Draw a path from letter to letter to spell the words given in capital letters that completes the wisdom statement. Move one square at a time, up, down, right, left or diagonally until all letters are used once. Ignore any black squares.

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PRAY FOR OUR DEAD

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St. Catharine of Siena Church, Columbus

**BARNHART, Joyce, 87, Oct. 15**  
Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Lancaster

**BENNETT, Alma, 91, Oct. 31**  
Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Lancaster

**BURLEY, Brent E., 52, Nov. 3**  
Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Lancaster

**CALLAHAN, Jane (Holzapfel), 81, Dec. 10**  
Our Lady of Peace Church, Columbus

**DARFUS, James, 91, Aug. 17**  
Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Lancaster

**DORSEY, Norma J. (Hooker), 83, Dec. 10**  
Immaculate Conception Church, Dennison

**FINNERAN, Patrick J., 90, Dec. 6**  
St. Brendan the Navigator Church, Hilliard

**FOLEY, Kathleen F. (Fisher), 87, Dec. 4**  
St. Mary Magdalene Church, Columbus

**FINCK, Sherie (Shumaker), 69, Dec. 4**  
St. Patrick Church, Junction City

**FINCK, Wilma L. (Howell), 82, Dec. 1**  
St. Patrick Church, Junction City

**FRERIKS, David J., 72, Dec. 9**  
Church of the Atonement, Crooksville

**HANLEY, Nancy, 86, Nov. 11**  
Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Lancaster

**HINTZ, Lou A., 82, Sept. 4**  
Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Lancaster

**HUNTER, Sheila F. (Wheatley), 78, Dec. 5**  
St. Matthew the Apostle Church, Gahanna

**INSKEEP, William M. Jr., 78, Dec. 14**  
St. Andrew Church, Columbus

**JACKSON, John J., 77, Dec. 12**  
St. Francis of Assisi Church, Columbus

**JOYCE, Cailin M., 19, Dec. 4**  
St. Thomas More Newman Center at Ohio State University, Columbus

**KAZLAUSKY, Annette M., 61, Dec. 12**  
St. Mary, Mother of God Church, Columbus

**KILBARGER, Russell F., 93, Aug. 10**  
Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Lancaster

**KING, Mary R. (Savage) "Birdie," 96, Dec. 4**  
St. Rose of Lima Church, New Lexington

**KLAUSING, Sandra S., 81, Sept. 10**  
Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Lancaster

**KOEHLER, Glenna F., 86, Dec. 13**  
Our Lady of Victory Church, Columbus

**KONKLER, Mary Kay, 88, Nov. 21**  
Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Lancaster

**LAUVRAY, Ina Marie, 83, Dec. 8**  
Sacred Heart Church, Coshocton

**LEWIS, Rita (Welch), 93, Nov. 26**  
St. Peter St. Joan of Arc Parish, Columbus-Powell

**LISTON, Joseph F., 80, Dec. 10**  
St. Mary Magdalene Church, Columbus

**MARINACCI, Nicholas, 87, Sept. 27**  
Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Lancaster

**NELSON, Charles L. "Skeeter," 79, Nov. 30**  
St. Simon & Jude Church, West Jefferson

**PAGE, Dr. Jean-Maurice, 75, Nov. 23**  
St. Simon & Jude Church, West Jefferson

**PASSARELLA, Michael T., 88, Nov. 13**  
St. Agatha Church, Columbus

**POSS, Nancy Margaret, 84, Nov. 25**  
St. Peter St. Joan of Arc Parish, Columbus-Powell

**RICE, Joseph P., 81, Nov. 7**  
Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Lancaster

**ROBERTS, Alice M. (Hayden), 83, Nov. 30**  
St. Cecilia Church, Columbus

**ROBISON, James K., 95, Oct. 26**  
Resurrection Cemetery Chapel, Lewis Center

**SCHMELZER, Martin, 94, Aug. 25**  
Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Lancaster

**SCHOETTNER, Marie E. (Schulte), 97, Nov. 27**  
Our Lady of Victory Church, Columbus

**SCHWENDIMAN, Rodney, 73, Dec. 3**  
St. Joseph Church, Dover

**SEVERS, Susan (Bateman), 58, Nov. 26**  
St. Joseph Cathedral, Columbus

**SULLIVAN, Elsie, D., 76, July 30**  
Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Lancaster

**THORP Sr., Floyd, 79, Dec. 6**  
Church of the Atonement, Crooksville

**WEHRLE, Audrey J., 93, Aug. 18**  
Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Lancaster

Sister Jean Phillipson, OSF

Funeral Mass for Sister Jean Phillipson, OSF, 99, who died Thursday, Dec. 4, was celebrated Tuesday, Dec. 9 at the Holy Family Convent Chapel in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Burial was at the sisters' cemetery.

She was born on March 20, 1926 in Steubenville to Harry and Eva (Fonow) Phillipson.

She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from Holy Family College in Manitowoc. She entered the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity in 1951 and professed her vows in 1953, taking the name Sister Mary Roger.

She was a tutor at Zanesville St. Nicholas School from 1968 to 1980 and helped with various tasks at the Good Samaritan Medical Center in Zanesville from 1995 to 1999. She also was a teacher at schools in Wisconsin and the Diocese of Steubenville. For several years, she lived at the St. Francis Convent in Manitowoc, where she was a member of her community's prayer apostolate. She had been a resident of the St. Rita Health Center in Manitowoc since 2014.

She was preceded in death by her parents; a brother, Robert; and sisters, Barbara Phillipson and Shirley Huscroft. She is survived by a sister, Ruth Koran, and nieces and nephews.

Sister Edith Roahrig, OP

Funeral Mass for Sister Edith Roahrig, 95, who died Wednesday, Dec. 17 at the Mohun Health Care Center, was celebrated Tuesday, Dec. 23 at the Motherhouse of the Dominican Sisters of Peace. Burial was at St. Joseph Cemetery, Columbus.

She was born in Coshocton on Dec. 28, 1929 to Stephen and Elizabeth (Treaner) Roahrig.

She earned a Bachelor's degree in education from Ohio Dominican College (now Ohio Dominican University) in 1962

and a Master's degree in elementary education from Duquesne University in 1975.

She entered the congregation of the Dominican Sisters of St. Mary of the Springs (now the Dominican Sisters of Peace) in 1949 and professed her vows on July 9, 1950, taking the name Sister Simeon.

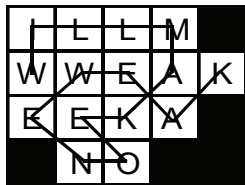
In the Diocese of Columbus, she taught at Columbus Holy Name (1958-1962), Columbus Christ the King (1962-1965) and Newark St. Francis (1974-1980) schools and performed a variety of roles at the Motherhouse from 1994 to 2022, when she became a resident of the Mohun center.

She also was a teacher at schools in Pennsylvania, Michigan and the Diocese of Steubenville and worked at St. George Hospital in Cincinnati.

She was preceded in death by her parents; a brother, Eugene, and sisters, Gertrude Amore, Helen Bordenkircher, Eileen Lahna and Alice Mulford. She is survived by many nieces and nephews.

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# For whom should Masses be offered?

Dear Father,

**Is it okay to have a Mass offered for someone who is still living? If so, is it better to have Masses offered for the living or for the dead?**

-Harry

Dear Harry,

Having a Mass offered, which entails asking a priest to celebrate a Mass for a specific intention, is a venerable form of prayer in the Catholic Church, reaching back to the earliest centuries.

Christ our Lord, when he established the Eucharistic sacrifice at the Last Supper on Holy Thursday, wanted the fruits of his sacrifice to be available in all the ages to come after his death and resurrection. "Do this in memory of me," he said.

At the Last Supper, Christ prayed for all persons of all times. It is the most powerful prayer in the world, and we have the opportunity to participate in it every day.

We receive the spiritual fruits of the Mass when we are physically and mentally present at Mass. Still, we can also receive them when we are legitimately prevented from attending Mass.

Of course, we are obliged to worship through the Mass weekly and on certain holy days, but even on days when we are not required to attend Mass, we can and should avail ourselves of the fruits of the Mass. This is called a "spiritual communion," and it is simply asking God fervently to be united with him in the Eucharist.

We can also ask the priest to offer the Mass for a particular intention, such as the peaceful repose of a loved one's soul. At every Mass the priest asks God for special graces for a host of people, living and deceased. The priest also offers the Mass for particular intentions recommended to him.

When a priest offers the Mass for the intention someone has asked him to pray for, the priest makes that person's intention his own.

We do this all the time when we offer prayers because someone has asked us to pray for someone or something. When the priest does this, he brings that intention to the most powerful prayer of the Eucharistic sacrifice.

Not only do many ask for Masses to be offered for deceased persons, but quite a few people also ask for the Mass to be prayed for someone who is living.

These Mass requests include praying for the restoration of health or for the conversion from sin, for the end to social evils like abortion and euthanasia, for the success of good deeds or to know one's vocation, thanksgiving for blessings received or the healing of relationships, and so much more.

The graces of the Mass are infinite and most powerful. Even so, the disposition of the person for whom the Mass is offered plays a part.

God does not force his divine grace on any soul. On the other hand, such influential love can penetrate hardened hearts and change lives. It is amazing that even the most inveterate sinner can change his mind and turn away from sin with the help of God's grace.

The only thing that stops the human will from changing is death. At the moment of death, when the soul is separated from the body, no more decisions can be made.

In this sense, we can see why a Mass offered for someone living in this world can have a greater effect than one offered for someone who has passed into the next life.

Praying for the souls in purgatory is essential because they can no longer help themselves. We owe it in charity to pray for the faithful departed so that their purification might be complete and they



## 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.*

see the Lord face-to-face.

A Mass offered for someone in this life provides graces that help him to change, to grow in holiness, to leave aside evil habits, to live for God.

How many incarcerated persons have experienced conversion on account of a Mass offered for him or her? How many deathbed conversions have taken place because a relative or friend had Masses offered for that person?

Masses help not only those who have left the straight and narrow path; they are essential for those whose feet need steadying on the rough path to heaven (Matthew 7:13-14).

It is good to have Masses offered for loved ones so that they may grow in virtue and holiness, to deal with the trials of life they face, to remain strong in the face of temptation and that their zeal for heaven might grow stronger each day. That includes having Masses offered for priests and religious.

Father Basil Cole, O.P. (Order of

Preachers) says that "one Mass offered for anyone living will have a greater efficacy for that person because in this life all are capable of freely cooperating with any grace, and the graces of a Mass may even change the direction of someone's life, including one's own."

It might be the case, however, that the person for whom we are praying, especially by having Mass offered for that individual, is not ready for the grace. Years – or dozens of years – might go by before the particular grace of the Mass is accepted. That's why, Father Cole says, we "must take a long-term view of supplications for loved ones still on earth."

A story is told of a widow who met St. John Vianney as she was leaving his church. She was distressed because her husband had committed suicide by jumping off a bridge.

As the lady was leaving, St. John Vianney came to speak with her and said, "he is saved." Imagine the lady's disbelief.

The priest leaned toward her and said firmly, "I tell you that he is saved. He is in purgatory, and you must pray for him. Between the parapet of the bridge and the water he had time to make an act of repentance."

"It is the Blessed Virgin who obtained this grace for him. Remember the shrine to Mary in your room? Sometimes your husband, although irreligious, united himself to your prayer. That merited repentance and the supreme pardon for him."

If such can happen as a result of our daily prayer and good example, how much more the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass bestowing infinite graces!

Questions about the sacraments should be sent to [sacraments101@columbuscatholic.org](mailto:sacraments101@columbuscatholic.org).

## Living well in the new year

By Tony Rossi

*The Christophers*

At this point, the gifts have all been opened, and the joy (and maybe chaos) of Christmas day has passed. That means our minds have turned toward the coming new year and any resolutions for improving ourselves that we may have in mind. (But remember that Christmas lasts until the Feast of the Epiphany, so keep your lights on and decorations up.)

If you're still pondering resolutions, there are some thoughts from a recently republished classic Christopher News Note to consider. Its title is "How Do You Define Success?" and it looks to a famous quote by author Robert Louis Stevenson for inspiration. He wrote, "That person is a success who has lived well, laughed often, and loved much; who has gained the respect of intelligent people and the love of children; who has filled a unique niche and accomplished his or her task; who leaves the world better than before, whether by a perfect poem or a rescued soul; who never lacked appreciation of the earth's beauty or failed to express it; who looked for the best in others and gave the best he or she had."

Stevenson reminds us that true self-improvement radiates outward to benefit the lives of others. Sometimes, it can be in small ways, such as with Franklin H. Smith of Brunswick, Georgia. He "lived well," finding contentment in his simple life as a cobbler who repaired the townfolks' shoes for 44 years. "It doesn't cost me anything to

be happy," said Smith, who always greeted each of his customers with a smile and a joke. Because of his positive approach to his job, his work felt satisfying because he enjoyed his craft and loved his neighbors.

On a larger scale, Joe Giron and Manuel Martinez decided to do something about the deterioration of Denver's Westside back in 1971. The unsafe living conditions compelled the men to set up an organization that would help minorities repair their homes with voluntary labor. Over the years, more than 1,000 homes were fixed by Brothers Redevelopment Inc. Additional projects to build and finance houses meant renewed vitality in the once decaying area. Giron said, "We made a commitment to deliver a product that the community needed, and we weren't going to stop until we did. We were set on helping our families, so why not help the entire neighborhood?"

For some people, living well means integrating their faith with their work. Officer Roger Behr of the Austin Police Department was paid to arrest criminals. Deacon Roger Behr gave his time to lead them in prayer. After he joined the diaconate, one of Officer Behr's duties was visiting the county jail. "When you come face to face with these people, you realize they're just another human being, just like me," he said. "They want to know that even though they have screwed up, they are still loved by God."

Belgium's Cardinal Désiré Mercier (1851-1926) once offered the following prayer on living a successful life: "Holy Spirit,

Soul of my soul, I adore Thee. Guide me, strengthen me, console me. Tell me what to do. Give me Thy orders, and I promise to submit to whatever You desire of me and to accept everything You allow to happen to me. Let me only know Thy will."

How can we better emulate God's will in the new year? By setting a goal to be as

loving, merciful and selfless as Jesus. Those are the benchmarks for a successful life in this world — and the next.

For free copies of the Christopher News Note HOW DO YOU DEFINE SUCCESS?, write: The Christophers, 264 West 40th Street, Room 603, New York, NY 10018; or e-mail: [mail@christophers.org](mailto:mail@christophers.org)



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# Reminiscing about Dickens and Scrooge, reflecting on redemption

Now that we are in the liturgical season of Christmas, I have found some of my thoughts turning to the classic novella "A Christmas Carol" by Charles Dickens. I've read Dickens' wonderful tale several times over the course of my life.

I was assigned the role of Fezziwig in the fourth-grade play based on "A Christmas Carol" by Sister Frances at Holy Family School back in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, more than 50 years ago.

I also have an especially fond memory of reading "A Christmas Carol" to my three daughters one year around Christmas when they were schoolchildren. And, of course, there's the many movie versions of this timeless classic that I've viewed.

Ebenezer Scrooge is the selfish and miserly curmudgeon who is the protagonist of Dickens' story. He experiences a profound change toward genuine goodness in his life one Christmas Eve with the help of the ghosts Jacob Marley and Christmas Past, Present and Future. It is, among other things, a wonderful tale of redemption and hope.

That is what Christmas is about: hope and the opportunity for redemption granted to us all because of our Lord Jesus Christ's incarnation. Every time we worship the Lord at Mass, I am reminded of this at the mingling of the water and wine when these words are said quietly by the priest or deacon: "By the mystery of this water and wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, Who humbled Himself to share in our humanity."

Jesus lying in a manger on that first Christmas is the Word made flesh, that mingling of His divinity with our humanity so that we in turn can share in His divinity. Our Catholic faith teaches us



## THE CHANCELLOR'S ARCHIVE Deacon Tom Berg Jr.

*Deacon Tom Berg Jr. has served the Diocese of Columbus as its Chancellor since 2012 and as a deacon at Columbus St. Andrew Church. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism and a master's degree in Catholic pastoral studies.*

that the Incarnation of Jesus Christ is the mystery wherein the divine Son of God, the eternal Word, assumed our human nature – true God and true Man – in one divine person who did not lo.

Jesus' incarnation made our salvation possible. It revealed the fullness of God's love for humanity, the Lord's desire to reconcile all people to God through Jesus' Passion, death and Resurrection. The "Word made flesh" united two distinct natures – divine and human – in the single divine person of Jesus, the Word.

Like Ebenezer Scrooge, all of us are on a journey through life and, we all hope, toward reconciliation and salvation – toward a destination similar to the joy that Scrooge found at the end of "A Christmas Carol."

Like Scrooge, if we are humble and honest with ourselves, we will admit we are flawed and in need of God's grace to

find our way toward salvation and eternal joy with God.

From what I learned about Dickens in school and through some recent reading on his life, I saw that he too was a flawed but dedicated person. His young life was difficult, including hard labor as a child in a factory when his father was in debtor's prison. He rose above such problems to become a renowned author by his 30s.

Dickens was driven by the rampant suffering of the poor in 1840s-England. His experiences throughout his life "convinced him that he needed to confront the problems of want and ignorance, which he personified in his Christmas tale as two horrifying children.

"These were the threats facing England, and they were being bred in the slums of the country's newly industrialized cities. Dickens could fight them, he decided" ("Why Charles Dickens wrote 'A Christmas Carol,'" J.E. Luebering).

Six weeks later, "A Christmas Carol" was finished.

I've read that Charles Dickens was a man of faith who sometimes erred in life, who was far from perfect but kept trying his best.

In his book "God and Charles Dickens: Recovering the Christian Voice of a Classic Author," Gary Colledge wrote, for the famous author, "Christianity was about imitating Jesus in the concrete realities of everyday life" (p. 17). Seeing these inspirations in the life of the great English author, it is easy to understand his motivations and hopes.

In our own lives, let's strive to be motivated in like fashion. When we see wrongs and injustices, may they motivate us to action, and may we then turn to our

faith.

May the incarnation of Jesus Christ, the One Whom the prophet Isaiah proclaimed Wonder Counselor, Prince of Peace and Father forever be a source of fire in our hearts, minds and souls. It is a grace we all need so very much to be true to the Lord and His ways.

At the end of "A Christmas Carol," Dickens wrote that Scrooge "became as good a friend, as good a master and as good a man as the good old city knew...." The Christmas season is indeed special, and it is right to celebrate this in the many beautiful ways we do.

All this glory is intertwined with a sense of humility as well.

Like Scrooge, let us be willing to be humbled before being exalted. Jesus began His time on Earth on a silent night in a small town.

His earthly throne that night was a wooden feeding trough – the manger, His royal court, a stable, and His comfort, swaddling clothes and straw rather than cushions and robes.

As we pass through Christmas these next couple of weeks, let us continue our celebrations and our joy.

Let us return to the silent and holy night of His birth. Let us continue to reflect on the baby Jesus and everything that His incarnation means to us. And then, let us actively live our faith, loving God and others the way Scrooge learned to do.

I could not put it any better than Charles Dickens at the end of "A Christmas Carol": "And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God bless us every one!"

# Lessons from the Christmas gospels

The Roman Missal provides four distinct Mass texts for the celebration of the Nativity of the Lord: the "Vigil Mass," the "Mass During the Night," the "Mass at Dawn," and the "Mass During the Day." The gospel readings for these Christmas Masses teach important lessons at Christmas 2025.

The Vigil Mass gospel, Matthew 1:1-25, includes the evangelist's "genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" and concludes with the story of Joseph's angelic vision and his decision to bend his will to the divine plan and accept the pregnant Mary as his wife, "for it is through the Holy Spirit that this child has been conceived in her" — the child "who will save his people from their sins." By naming Jesus as "the Christ" and by firmly locating Jesus within the history of the Jewish people — "...the total number of generations from Abraham to David is fourteen generations; from David to the Babylonian exile, fourteen generations; from the Babylonian exile to the Christ, fourteen generations" — the evangelist underscores that Jesus of Nazareth makes no sense unless he is understood as what he understood himself to be and what his first followers understood him to be: the fulfillment of the messianic hope borne by the Jewish people throughout the first stages of salvation history.

Today, when the toxic fumes of antisemitism are poisoning public life and seem to be influencing far too many young Catholics (especially young men), the gospel of the Christmas Vigil Mass teaches the crucial lesson understood by faithful Christians since the heresy of Marcion was condemned 1,881 years ago: Jesus was of



## THE CATHOLIC DIFFERENCE George Weigel

*George Weigel is the Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C. George Weigel's column 'The Catholic Difference' is syndicated by the Denver Catholic, the official publication of the Archdiocese of Denver.*

Abraham's stock and Christianity cannot be severed from its Jewish roots without fatally compromising the structure of the faith.

The Mass During the Night and the Mass at Dawn draw their gospel readings from Luke's infancy narrative (Luke 2:1-14 and Luke 2:15-20), which, thanks in part to Georg Friedrich Handel's *Messiah*, has become the paradigmatic telling of the Christmas story. If Matthew's genealogy locates Jesus within the history of the People of Israel, the Lucan gospel at the Mass During the Night positions the Jewish Messiah within the broad sweep of world history: "In those days, a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that the whole

world should be enrolled. This was the first enrollment, when Quirinius was governor of Syria. So all went to be enrolled, each to his own town. And Joseph too went up from Galilee from the town of Nazareth to Judea, to the city of David that is called Bethlehem, because he was of the house and family of David, to be enrolled with Mary, his wife, who was with child." There are two important lessons here.

The first is that salvation history is unfolding inside world history, and in fact gives world history its true meaning. History is not random; history is going somewhere — toward the fulfillment of the Creator's purposes. And at the end of history, the Creator is going to get what the Creator intended from the beginning: the New Jerusalem of Revelation 21:2, the eternal fulfillment of the "city of David" in the time beyond time that is life within the light and love of the thrice-holy God.

The second lesson is that God works gently, even mysteriously, through the characters and events of world history

to achieve the divine purpose. Tallying up his tax base in this "first enrollment," Caesar Augustus had no idea that he was arranging for the Promised One to be born, as was prophesied, in the city of David. But so it happened: a lesson in the challenge of reading

the signs of the times, reiterated during the Mass at Dawn when the first witnesses to the messianic birth are not the great and the good but the lowly shepherds.

The gospel for the Mass during Christmas Day offers us the densest, yet most lyrical, theology in the New Testament: the Prologue to John's Gospel (John 1:1-18), in which the Jewish messiah who redeems all of history is identified with the "Word," the second Person of the Trinity, "through whom 'all things came to be.'" The lesson here? In an increasingly irrational world, we must hold fast to the biblical claim that God impressed a rationality into the world and into us: truths that we can know by revelation and reason; truths that map out the path of righteous living; truths that pave the royal road to sanctification and beatitude.

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# Embryo adoption: An open question?

When it comes to the plight of the hundreds of thousands of IVF embryos frozen in the U.S. and elsewhere, it is often claimed that the Catholic Church has never definitively addressed the liceity, or moral allowability, of “embryo transfer” (also known as embryo rescue or embryo adoption).

I recently had the chance to participate in a public debate on this topic in Indianapolis. I argued that the Magisterium of the Catholic Church has, in fact, settled this question. If we scrutinize the two major teaching documents of the Church dealing with this issue, the immorality of the practice of embryo transfer becomes clear.

The 2008 document entitled *Dignitas Personae* states: “The proposal that these embryos could be put at the disposal of infertile couples as a treatment for infertility is not ethically acceptable” (19). It identifies a specific situation, namely, attempting to treat a couple’s infertility by embryo transfer, as being always immoral.

The document then goes on to point out that these moral objections extend beyond this single case, so that the same set of concerns will apply in other instances where embryo transfer might be proposed or considered:

“It has also been proposed, solely in order to allow human beings to be born who are otherwise condemned to destruction, that there could be a form of ‘prenatal adoption.’ This proposal, praiseworthy with regard to the intention of respecting and defending human life, presents however various problems not dissimilar to those mentioned above.”



## MAKING SENSE OUT OF BIOETHICS

Father Tad Pacholczyk

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This passage reveals that even when we face the stark prospect of the outright killing of frozen human embryos (“otherwise condemned to destruction”), this does not allow us to bypass or ignore the substantive moral objections inherent in embryo transfer proposals.

The final section of the passage concludes with a forceful and unambiguous assertion: “All things considered, it needs to be recognized that the thousands of abandoned embryos represent a situation of injustice which in fact cannot be resolved.”

Despite the tragedy of the countless embryonic humans “frozen in time” (with thousands more each day being added to the stockpiles), *Dignitas*

*Personae* rejects the practice of embryo adoption.

A second, older Church document released in 1987 and entitled *Donum Vitae* references the “absurd fate” to which human embryos have been exposed by freezing them, and then notes that there is “no possibility of their being offered safe means of survival which can be licitly pursued” (5). Hence, it would seem even as far back as the late 80s, a negative judgment had already been made by the teaching authority of the Church regarding the question of embryo adoption.

In addition to there being no morally permissible means of a path to survival for these embryos, *Donum Vitae* declares the basic human right of every person “to be conceived and to be born within marriage and from marriage.” For embryos to be “born from marriage” points also to the moral significance of the circumstances of our gestation.

Interestingly, *Donum Vitae* repetitively employs the phrase, “IVF and ET” (in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer). This conjoined phrase appears a remarkable 16 times throughout the document as it seeks to explain the ethical concerns surrounding assisted reproductive technologies.

The deliberate inclusion of “ET” points to the fact that it is not merely the “in vitro” or “extracorporeal conception” aspect that renders the procedure immoral but also that the ET step itself violates sound ethics.

In other words, it seems that a double moral evil can be identified in each instance of in vitro fertilization and embryo transfer:

(1) The manufacture of human beings in glassware, outside-the-body (and outside-the-marital-act); and

(2) The importation/implantation of an outside-the-body generated embryo into the uterus.

Number two, of course, would constitute an action largely synonymous with “embryo adoption” or “embryo rescue.”

Taken together, these documents point to the fact that transferring a stranger’s embryo into one’s wife violates the inner structure of marital fruitfulness.

Based on these texts, we can also begin to grasp how embryo transfer, even motivated with the best of intentions, nevertheless involves a form of “pirating” the wife’s body for designs that are not proper to its intrinsic order within marriage. *Dignitas Personae* also compares embryo adoption with “any form of surrogate motherhood,” which the Church teaches to be morally unacceptable.

Couples who have done IVF and ended up with frozen children face an excruciatingly difficult situation as they try to figure out what to do with their “leftover” embryonic offspring. I offered some possible approaches to this situation in a previous article (see <https://tinyurl.com/4eua5j5p>).

So it is clearly problematic to assert that embryo adoption remains an “open question” for Catholics. Close scrutiny of key magisterial texts and reflection upon the explanations provided by those documents indicate that the practice of embryo transfer involves fundamentally unethical actions.

# An anniversary in Ordinary Time

Many of my deepest childhood memories are the timeless ones about family traditions, school events, summer vacations, late 1970s fashions, my cat and adventures with friends. Along with these, I remember the significant place of the American Bicentennial in my earliest memories.

I remember our family mailbox filled with literature from leaders of our National Parks announcing all the ways in which they would celebrate the nation’s 200th birthday. I remember television shows celebrating this event and, closer to home, an all-grade-school pageant with each class focused on a different decade of American history. (Yes, my suffragette costume is still stored somewhere in my home.)

I remember going out to Long Island with my parents and siblings where the “Freedom Train” was visiting on its national tour, bringing treasures from the Smithsonian Museums cross-country to be widely enjoyed.

I remember stores, restaurants and gas stations giving away commemorative buttons, glasses and other memorabilia for many months before the big day, while special stamps and coins were issued for collection.

This was not a one-day event! The years leading up to the Bicentennial were filled with reminders of what a remarkable milestone this was.

We are now merely one year from the nation’s 250th anniversary – a quarter of a millennium since the Declaration



## ON ORDINARY TIMES

Lucia A. Silecchia

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of Independence was signed, declaring that these United States “are, and of right, ought to be free and independent.” Yet, I have heard so very little about this occasion so rapidly approaching and, seemingly, so little noticed.

I know that there is a formal U.S. Semiquincentennial Commission, a website that announces various state plans, and academic conferences exploring the meaning of this clumsily dubbed “semiquincentennial” year.

Nevertheless, this occasion is not permeating popular culture as it did in the days of my early childhood. Those who are now the same age as I was in 1976 are unlikely to look back and see

this milestone as a defining event in their childhoods.

That saddens me.

Some may say these more muted celebrations are due to the nation’s political divisions. Yet, the exuberant bicentennial celebrations came in the aftermath of the turbulent, violent 1960s, the heartbreak of the Vietnam War and the scandal of Watergate.

Some might say this milestone is not worthy of celebration because of moral failings in our history. Yet, with clear eyes and honest hearts, we still have much to celebrate and for which we owe our ancestors a debt of gratitude that we cannot repay, except by bequeathing to those who follow us a union more perfect.

In “America the Beautiful” we sing “God mend thine every flaw.” This prayer of love can rightly be said for all the imperfect people and institutions we can still cherish and honor.

Some might say it is more important to celebrate all the ways in which we are unique and different rather than emphasize what unites us. Yet, in every loving family, the unique diversity of each member should not conflict with honoring all that unites the family and draws them together. Such should also be true of a nation.

Six months remain before we celebrate the 250th anniversary of the land that I love. I hope that in this limited time before July 4, 2026 we can prayerfully consider how we might recapture a taste of the awe I knew in 1976.

I think the signers of the Declaration of Independence gave us a roadmap for doing so. They ended their Declaration by promising, “for the support of this Declaration, with a firm reliance on the protection of divine providence, we mutually pledge to each other our lives, our fortunes and our sacred honor.”

Today, as we prepare to celebrate, reliance on God is for us, as for the signers, our starting point. Thus, prayer for our nation should be the foundation for all our preparations for our semiquincentennial.

Only then may we have the strength to pledge three things to our ancestors, our contemporaries and the generations who will inherit this nation from us.

First, we can pledge to them that our lives will be lived in ways that will continue to build up our nation not merely in strength but in goodness.

Second, we can pledge to them that we will be good stewards of the fortunes – the opportunities, freedoms, natural resources and so many other treasures – we are blessed to have in our nation.

Third, we can pledge to them our sacred honor to preserve, with courage, service, sacrifice and love, the very best ideals for which our nation was founded so long ago.

It may be too late for the multi-year celebration that punctuated a momentous time in my childhood. But it is not too late to prayerfully enter our nation’s 250th year and celebrate the extraordinary anniversary coming soon to our ordinary time.



# The peace of meeting our baby in paradise

By Emma King

For The Catholic Times

In November, my husband and I found out that we were expecting baby number five. Within just a few days of finding out about the pregnancy, we agreed that, if this baby were a boy, we liked the name Dismas, the name attributed to the “good thief” crucified with Christ.

Our devotion to St. Dismas has grown over the last few years. We both love that Dismas was able to see Christ as Lord in the midst of his greatest suffering and trust that he could still ask for Christ’s mercy.

He trusted that Our Lord’s mercy was still available to him; it wasn’t “too late” and he wasn’t “too far gone.” But, what’s more, as is always the case, is what we learn of Christ through this brief interlude in the gospels.

Dismas is the only person canonized directly by Christ while still alive. It’s notable that the only words Christ speaks to Dismas are, “Amen, I say

to you, today you will be with Me in paradise.”

He promises that Dismas is going to go to heaven but doesn’t remove Dismas’ suffering. Christ enters into Dismas’ suffering with him (or is already suffering with Dismas when Dismas thinks to call out to Him).

Literally by Dismas’ side, enduring the same treatment, Christ shows us that He will not rid us of our suffering when we cry out to Him, but He will enter into it with us.

As with Dismas, Christ gives us the hope to endure what suffering comes our way. And, if we’re honest, we can acknowledge that Christ was already there, suffering along with us, before we even thought to cry out to Him.

These reflections were especially fitting when, one month later, four days before Gaudete Sunday, we found out that we had lost baby Dismas. Approaching “rejoice Sunday” and the week of joy in Advent, I have been struck by the fact that the week of joy is preceded by the weeks of hope and peace.

Joy only comes when we place our hope in Christ and allow the peace of our Lord’s perfect plan to work in our lives. Joy is still available to us in the midst of great suffering because we know that Christ is by our side in it.

What joy Dismas must have felt at Christ’s assurance that he would be with Him in paradise! Only in this assurance is joy a possibility.

It is fitting that the final week of Advent following joy is love. All hope, peace and joy come from and culminate in the greatest love ever known: the love of a Father who loves His people so much that He came to experience humanity with us.

We know, shortly before Christ’s interaction with Dismas on the cross, He wrestled with abandonment to the Lord’s plan (“Let this cup pass from Me...”).

So, while we wrestle with our own abandonment to the Lord’s providence, while we mourn the loss of Dismas and all the life we desired to live with him, we also rest in peace and hope. Christ gave our Dismas the same promise as

his namesake: today baby Dismas is with Him in paradise.

We trust that both the St. Dismas of the gospels and our baby, Dismas King, are praying for our family. We look forward with hope – and a little bit of peace – to the joy of welcoming the King of Love into our home this Christmas.

May God bless you abundantly in the coming year.

*Emma King graduated cum laude from Hillsdale College with a degree in philosophy. She worked for Students for Life of America, the Catholic Church running college ministry at Hillsdale and as a Natural Family Planning Creighton Model practitioner. She was a columnist for Ignitum Today and a contributing author at Catholic Exchange for many years. She and her husband have four children with them and one in heaven. They live in Westerville, where Emma is a stay-at-home mom and spends most of her day wrangling their children and their very lively Australian shepherd.*

## Mini mirrors and New Year’s

Recently I was sitting with our almost one-year-old daughter when our 3-year-old son pretended to make a phone call with the TV remote. He often mimics daily life behaviors that he sees around him.

He will pretend to call Grandma or Grandpa. He will “play emails” or say he is going to the grocery store.

On this occasion, he said he was calling our pastor on the phone and proceeded to ask me if we had cucumbers, so he could tell our priest if we did or not. This is especially funny because he does not like cucumbers, but, in his little imaginative way, he must think that our pastor does (or that we should get them if we are expecting company).

Our children are sponges. We hear this all the time as we are raising children. This becomes more and more evident with time.

There are times that my husband, Brad, and I sit and look at each other and ask, “Did you teach him that?” Thankfully, these are usually sweet moments where we see that our son is absorbing the good in the world around him.

This imitation that we see is present in our faith lives as well. As parents, we are the primary educators of the faith for our children. Day by day they learn what a life of faith looks like.

Lately, we have been working on



### LOADS OF LAUNDRY AND LOVE

Rachel Romantic

*Rachel Romantic is a wife and mom of two who loves to spend time with her family and make memories together outside in the garden. She is also the Communications Coordinator at New Albany Church of the Resurrection.*

making the sign of the cross. While our son had a general idea, we still need to take the lead in helping him learn it correctly so that it becomes a firmer, lasting habit.

Even as adults, sometimes we need to take time to reestablish or change our own habits. Just like we want our son to make the sign of the cross correctly, sometimes we too need to look at our own lives and consider where our habits might need attention or renewal.

Whether you make New Year’s

resolutions or not, there is something nice about opening a new paper calendar and being able to throw the old one away. It is a clean slate – not only on paper, but mentally and spiritually as well.

While any time of the year is a good time to draw closer to the Lord – and we shouldn’t wait for the “ideal time” – we can still take advantage of the New Year’s spirit and make changes for ourselves and our families. I encourage you to consider what that might look like for you and your family.

Perhaps it means praying before all meals. For others, it might be receiving the sacrament of reconciliation quarterly. For some, maybe this coming year is time to recommit to attending Mass every Sunday.

All of these can be challenging no matter our phase of life.

The Lord sees our efforts and wants to draw into a deeper relationship with us and our children. Making changes in our daily spiritual lives is not always easy, but it is necessary for our sake and especially for those entrusted to us.

Our children watch what we do and mirror it back to us. We as parents are especially called to examine our lives of

faith and look for those opportunities to grow.

We are called to live our lives in the Lord. Jesus says, “Abide in me, and I, in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I, in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing” (John 15:4–5).

It might be difficult to hear that we can do nothing apart from the Lord. There is also comfort in knowing that we do not have to figure everything out on our own.

With all of this, let us enter the new year seeking the Lord and striving to remain in Him. Let this be a time to reflect on how the Lord might be calling us to more, and allow Him to shape us.

Our souls need it and our children need to see it. If we hope for them to live lives of faith, they depend on us to show them how.

Call it a New Year’s resolution, but whatever it is, let it be visible to your children. You might not know what they are absorbing, but let what they absorb from you be a mirror.

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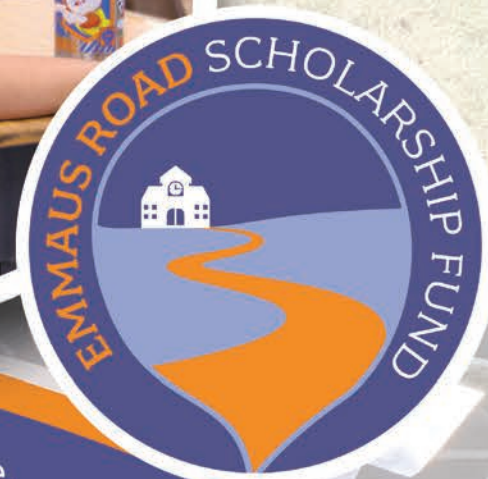
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