

The CATHOLIC TIMES

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Fish fry time

With Ash Wednesday quickly approaching, it's time to roll out the annual Fish Fry Guide that lists the various opportunities at parishes and schools around the diocese for meatless meals on Fridays and other days of the week, Pages 10-11



Lenten activities

In addition to the annual Fish Fry Guide, a list of special prayer services, retreats and speaker series at parishes throughout the diocese will help the faithful find chances to deepen their Lenten observance, Page 13



Married ... with sisters

Young married couples in the diocese are finding support in living out the sacrament through gatherings with the Bridgettine Sisters at their convent in Columbus, Page 16



Diocese goes to March for Life

Bishop Earl Fernandes joined students and pilgrims from around the diocese in prayer and witness at the annual March for Life last month in Washington, D.C., Pages 3-4

Religious gather on World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life

The World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life, traditionally observed by the Church on Feb. 2, was celebrated in diocesan parishes the weekend of Jan. 31 and Feb. 1 this year.

Bishop Earl Fernandes presided at a 5:15 p.m. Sunday Mass at Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral on Feb. 1. Nearly 20 priests serving in the Columbus diocese concelebrated with the bishop.

The Mass was preceded by a Holy Hour for Peace in the Cathedral that included Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

Mass was followed by a dinner reception in the cathedral undercroft. Consecrated religious sisters celebrating a jubilee year were recognized during the reception.

Sister Ave Maria Hayes, a Dominican Sister of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist and second grade teacher at Worthington St. Michael the Archangel School, celebrated 25 years in her vocation.

Sixteen consecrated religious belonging to the Dominican Sisters of Peace were honored as jubilarians.

Sisters Miriam Hazy and Bernadine Robinson celebrated 80 years.

Recognized for her 75 years was Sister Mary Edmund Gibson, and celebrating 70 years in order, Sisters Joan Arceneaux, Barbara Catalano and Christine McManus.

Five consecrated religious celebrated 65 years: Sisters Judith McManus, Mary Dominic Savio Estorge, Mary Ignatius Rizario, Maria Ciriello and Marguerite Chandler.

Sisters Jeanne Conrad, Janice Bachman and Rebecca Nolan celebrated 65 years. Celebrating 50 years in the order were Sisters Anne Lythgoe and Carol Ann May.

In addition to the Dominican Sisters of Mary, Mother of the Eucharist and the Dominican Sisters of Peace, several religious orders of women were present for Mass:

Order of the Most Holy Savior of St. Bridget (Bridgettine Sisters); Daughters of Mary Help of Christians (Salesian Sisters);



A Holy Hour for Peace preceded Mass on Sunday, Feb. 1 at St. Joseph Cathedral.
Photos courtesy Sarah Lightle



Bishop Earl Fernandes and concelebrating priests leave the altar at the end of a Mass recognizing the World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life on Sunday, Feb. 1 at St. Joseph Cathedral.



Religious sisters attend a Mass celebrating the World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life on Sunday, Feb. 1 at St. Joseph Cathedral.



Bishop Earl Fernandes leads the prayers during a Holy Hour for Peace on Sunday, Feb. 1 at St. Joseph Cathedral.

Clergy at Mass, in addition to diocesan priests, represented various religious orders: Order of Friars Minor Capuchin (OFM Cap.); Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy (O. de M.); Heralds of Good News (HGN); Apostles of Jesus (AJ); Vallambrosian Benedictine Order (OSB); Congregation of Clerics Regular {Theatine Fathers - CR}; Fathers of Mercy (CPM); Society of the Catholic Apostolate (Pallottine Fathers - SAC); and the Order of Preachers (OP).

The World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life was instituted by Pope St. John Paul II in 1997 for men and women in the vocation. The celebration coincides with the feast of the Presentation of the Lord on Feb. 2, also known as Candlemas, in which candles used in churches are blessed.

The World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life was transferred to Sunday to highlight the gift of consecrated people for the Church.

Relic of St. Carlo Acutis to be displayed in diocese

A relic of the recently canonized St. Carlo Acutis will be displayed for veneration at sites in Columbus, Lancaster, Westerville, Hilliard and Worthington from Friday, Feb. 13 to Wednesday, Feb. 18, which is Ash Wednesday.

St. Carlo, who died of leukemia in 2006 at age 15, was canonized on Sept. 7, 2025. He was known for his deep faith and his use of modern technology to share his beliefs. He created a groundbreaking website to catalog Eucharistic miracles around the world, earning him the nickname "the patron saint of the internet."

Stops for his relic will include the Villas of St. Therese; the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe, Star of the New Evangelization; St. Joseph Cathedral and the St. Thomas More Newman Center in Columbus; the Southeast Correctional Institution and the Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption

in Lancaster; and Westerville St. Paul the Apostle, Hilliard St. Brendan the Navigator and Worthington St. Michael the Archangel churches.

The relic will arrive at the Villas of St. Therese, 5253 E. Broad St., around 9 a.m. Friday, Feb. 13. A Mass, veneration, rosary, visits and lunch are scheduled until noon, when it will be transported to the Our Lady of Guadalupe shrine, 154 E. Patterson Ave., where it will arrive at 1 p.m. Confessions are scheduled there at 4:30 p.m., followed by a Mass in English at 5:30, recitation of the rosary and a Mass in Spanish at 7. It will remain after Mass in the shrine's Adoration chapel until 6:45 a.m. Saturday, Feb. 14.

It then will be taken to Lancaster for veneration at the Southeast Correctional Institution from 8:30 to 10:05 a.m. and at the Basilica of St. Mary from noon to 6 p.m.

The relic will be at the cathedral, 212 E.

Broad St., on Sunday, Feb. 15. Confessions will be heard from 9:15 to 10 a.m. and there will be Masses at 10:30 a.m. and 12:30 and 5:15 p.m.

On the following day, the relic will be at St. Paul Chuch, 313 N. State St. Mass at 8:15 a.m. will be followed by veneration from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m., with confessions available throughout the day and recitation of a decade of the rosary every two hours. There will be a Holy Hour, reflection and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at 7.

The relic will come to St. Brendan, 4475 Dublin Road, on Tuesday, Feb. 17, where there will be a school Mass at 8:45 a.m. and veneration at 10:30, followed by veneration. It will be transported to St. Michael Church, 5750 N. High St., for public veneration at 1 p.m., a retreat for religious sisters at the Our Lady of Victory convent at 5:30 and resumption of public veneration from

7 to 10 p.m. It will be in the church's Adoration chapel overnight.

On Ash Wednesday, it will arrive at the Newman Center, 64 W. Lane Ave., at 11:30 a.m., with Masses and distribution of ashes at noon, 5:45 p.m. with Bishop Earl Fernandes, and 8 p.m. The relic will be in the center's chapel throughout the day until 9 p.m. or whenever students leave for the evening. There also will be a display in the center's social hall of information on Eucharistic miracles.

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Diocese of Columbus

Diocesan students, pilgrims participate in March for Life

By Hannah Heil
Catholic Times Reporter

WASHINGTON — As residents of the nation's capital prepared to hunker down for a major winter storm, thousands of people from across the country came to the city in droves, determined to participate in the 53rd annual March for Life on Friday, Jan. 23.

Men, women and children of all ages, some in strollers and others in wheelchairs, gathered at the National Mall, a few blocks from Pennsylvania Avenue, around noon Friday as they geared up to march the streets of Washington.

Students and staff from 10 of the Columbus diocese's Catholic schools joined thousands in the national capital. Adorned in school colors and waving flags, they brought their school spirit to the streets and marched for the unalienable right to life.

"It is a gift that we were able to participate in the March for Life and to help protect the dignity of each human life through the work of our office," said Father Bob Penhallurick, director of the diocesan Office of Pro-Life Activities.

"We hope that the joyful witness of those who march will help inspire others to see life as a gift that is to be received and cherished rather than something that is a burden to be discarded."

The 2026 March for Life, "Life is a Gift," focused on rediscovering beauty, joy and goodness inherent in every human life. The theme was chosen amid ongoing debates on abortion drug usage and state-level expansion of abortion policies.

A pre-march rally on the National Mall featured Vice President J.D. Vance, a practicing Catholic from Ohio and father of four children, the youngest of whom is a preborn baby boy.

"Let me just say, my friends, that we have to be clear: We cannot be neutral. Our country cannot be indifferent about whether its next generations live or die," the vice president said.

"We march today because you have an answer to this question about what kind of civilization we are and about what kind of civilization we are going to become in the future."

Several of the Columbus diocese's



The Diocese of Columbus is well represented at the March for Life on Friday, Jan. 23.

Photos courtesy Sarah Lightle

schools joined Bishop Earl Fernandes the morning of Jan. 23 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception before the march.

The bishop celebrated a morning Mass for pilgrims from the Dioceses of Columbus; Toledo; and Rockville Centre, New York, on Long Island; and the Archdioceses of Cincinnati and St. Louis. Hundreds of students, clergy and consecrated religious filled the pews of the crypt church in the basilica's lower level, many standing along the crypt walls and sitting on the floor.

As the faithful prepared to evangelize lawmakers, judges and government officials by traversing the capital city streets later that day, Bishop Fernandes recognized that opposition to life dates back millennia.

"There are always forces that want to extinguish life, take someone's brother's life," he acknowledged. "The pharaoh slaughtered the Hebrew children. Herod sought to destroy the Christ Child."

The bishop commended the congregation for coming to Washington to support life.

"It is one thing to come to the nation's capital and see beautiful buildings and see images of history," he reflected. "It's another thing to come as a pilgrim, saying, 'I'm in need of ongoing conversion.'"



Brother Anthony Essien, OFM, CAP, chaplain at Columbus Bishop Hartley High School, joins the March for Life in Washington, D.C.

He encouraged students and faithful to "be with Jesus." Doing so, the bishop explained, means being with Christ in the unborn child, a worried and anxious mother, and society's most vulnerable individuals.

Father Tom Gardner, a priest of the Columbus diocese and pastor at Newark St. Francis de Sales Church, concelebrated Mass with Bishop Fernandes and participated in this year's march.

"As a priest, it's really important for me to help show my support for the most vulnerable in society and also to be here with the young people that are from Newark Catholic High School," he said.

"It's so important for the next generation to really take up that mantle of supporting those who are most vulnerable in society. They are both the present and the future of the pro-life movement."

Trends point to an ideological shift among younger generations. A recent survey from the Public Religion Research Institute found a 12 percent rise in members of Gen Z (born from 1997 to 2012) who identify as pro-life, increasing from 28 percent to 40 percent.

Data compiled by the Charlotte Lozier Institute found that 45 percent of Gen Z supports limiting abortion after the first trimester. That number was 35 percent in



Bishop Earl Fernandes interacts with students from Columbus Bishop Ready High School at the March for Life on Jan. 23 in Washington, D.C.

2020.

Aaron Schaefer, 20, a seminarian of the Columbus diocese studying at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, said knowing that he is "not alone" was particularly striking at this year's March for Life.

"Sometimes we feel like we can be alone in a fight, but that it's, actually, in a sense, working. We're moving forward. We're changing the culture one person at a time," he said.

"It's important for the future of the Church to show that we still haven't moved away from our traditional teaching. Pope Paul VI's 'Humanae Vitae' ('Of Human Life' (1968) encyclical letter) is still very much alive."

Diocesan seminarian Kevin Negaga, 26, iterated that he was "moved by the numbers of people who have shown up for the march."

"It really speaks about the future of the Church," he said, "because once we protect the life of the unborn, we're also protecting the future of the Church."

"It's quite a pleasure for me to also be here and join other pilgrims in this journey celebrating life."

Students find March to be 'life changing'

multi-day pilgrimage to the nation's capital for the country's 53rd annual March for Life on Friday, Jan. 23.

The first march was held Jan. 22, 1974, a year after the U.S. Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade (1973) decision that declared a constitutional right to abortion. Every year since, faithful across the country have congregated in the nation's capital to demonstrate unwavering support for life.

The national event drew youth from various dioceses. The young were eager to demonstrate their pro-life beliefs, including many from the Columbus diocese.

In the hours leading up to the march, diocesan students gathered in school groups near the National Mall, preparing to head down Constitution Avenue. Many held signs and waved school flags as they anticipated making their way to the U.S. Supreme Court building.

Being pro-life as a teenager undoubtedly has its difficulties.

In Ohio, youth are growing up in a state that voted to legalize abortion through all nine months of pregnancy. While state law fails to protect all life, several diocesan students emphasized their full support.

"I wanted to come on the march, one, because I've never been in D.C., but also,



Students from Columbus St. Francis DeSales High School participate in the March for Life.



Columbus Bishop Hartley High School students show their support for life. Photos/ Sarah Lightle

we have to respect it," she acknowledged, "but we're taught as Catholics to respect all human life."

By Hannah Heil
Catholic Times Reporter

WASHINGTON — Kelly Reyes Morales, 18, a senior at Cristo Rey Columbus High School, might have traveled to the annual March for Life last month to support others' lives, but the trip ended up changing her own.

It was Reyes Morales' first year participating in the annual march. She expressed hopes that it is not her last.

"The experience is definitely life changing," she said.

"Visiting the shrine of St. John Paul II and visiting the Basilica of the Immaculate Conception ... I feel like it definitely has enhanced my personal Catholic faith. I feel like everything has definitely changed me as a person, and I hope that, with this journey, I continue on in my Catholic faith."

"Being here with a few of my students from school ... helps me connect with them and with God more. This whole thing has brought us closer, and that's one thing that I'm very grateful for."

More than 100 students from the Columbus diocese's Catholic schools made a

more importantly, because I respect human life," said Samantha Spearman, 18, a senior at Newark Catholic High School.

She made the pilgrimage with several of her classmates.

"Everyone has their own opinion, and

See STUDENTS, Page 5

Bishop celebrates Mass for students before March

By Hannah Heil
Catholic Times Reporter

WASHINGTON — More than 100 students from the diocese's Catholic schools gathered in the nation's capital on Thursday, Jan. 22 for a Mass celebrated by Bishop Earl Fernandes at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine ahead of the annual March for Life.

Students from eight diocesan high schools and a grade school were represented, including Columbus Bishop Hartley, Bishop Ready, Bishop Watterson, Cristo Rey Columbus, St. Charles Preparatory, St. Francis DeSales, Lancaster Fisher Catholic and Newark Catholic high schools and Worthington St. Michael the Archangel School.

Staff from Zanesville Bishop Rosecrans High School and Bishop Fenwick School were also present in anticipation of bringing students next year.

The bishop celebrated an early afternoon Mass for members of the diocese who traveled to Washington for the March for Life, set for Friday, Jan. 23.

He was joined by Fathers Bill Ferguson, a diocesan priest serving at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine; David Johnstone, chaplain at St. Francis DeSales; Michal Wojciak, chaplain at St. Charles Preparatory; Sesu Maria Crescensis Panguraj, parochial vicar at Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church; and Bob Penhallurick, director of the diocesan Office of Pro-Life Activities.

"It's important for ... us to be together as a diocese to offer Mass for the forgiveness of sins, of reparation for sin, but also to build up the Body of Christ and to strengthen young people with sacramental grace, so that they know that they can actually be witnesses," the bishop said.

"If you're a young person, you see a grave injustice, you want to do something about it, but you think, 'I'm alone; I'm the only one who thinks this way,' and so, to be in Washington, D.C. with tens of thousands of young people from around the country also bolsters young people."

Mass at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine, celebrated on the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of the Unborn, coin-

cided with the 53rd anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's Roe v. Wade (1973) decision that declared a constitutional right to abortion.

Although later overturned by the high court in 2022, abortion remains legal in most of the country's 50 states. Busloads of students, staff and faithful from the Columbus diocese made a pilgrimage to show their support for human life and the dignity of each person.

"As a Catholic school, we're coming to represent what actually the Catholic Church teaches, and I think it's a good way to grow community, especially within our school, and represent that we should be upholding life instead of destroying it," said Grant Bently, 14, a freshman at Columbus Bishop Watterson High School.

Kicking off the march with Mass the day before at the national shrine honoring Pope St. John Paul II was fitting.

The late pope (1920-2005), Bishop Fernandes noted, "was such a champion of life, not only of the unborn, but of the most vulnerable members of our society.

"It's important to awaken, in young people, their consciences to the reality of what happens to unborn children, to mothers — how they're both harmed by abortion," he added, "and to begin to build the culture of life and the civilization of love."

After Mass, many of the diocese's Catholic school students spent time exploring the Saint John Paul II National Shrine. The shrine offers a history of the Polish pope's life and pontificate, including relics, artifacts and video feed.

Benny Myers, a middle school religion teacher at Bishop Fenwick, was eager to attend the March for Life after converting to Catholicism in 2019.

He traveled from Zanesville to Washington to represent the grade school, hoping to bring several students with him next year.

"I teach my students the importance of human dignity, and I think this is one of the greatest ways that we can do that," he said of the impending march. "All life is valuable and has dignity and is valuable to God. This is the perfect opportunity."



Students and staff from diocesan schools attend a Mass at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine on Thursday, Jan. 22 in Washington, D.C., the day before the annual March for Life.



Priests from the diocese and Bishop Earl Fernandes prepare for the start of Mass.
Photos courtesy Sarah Lightle



Bishop Watterson High School freshman Grant Bently examines a display at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine in Washington, D.C.



Benny Myers, a middle school religion teacher at Zanesville Bishop Fenwick School, tours the Saint John Paul II National Shrine.



Jonathan Medaugh, a campus minister at Zanesville Bishop Rosecrans, prays in the chapel at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine.

Statehouse Adoration draws record numbers to pray for unborn

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament inside the Ohio Statehouse on Thursday, Jan. 22, the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of the Unborn, drew the largest number of Adorers to date.

More than 80 people visited Ohio's capitol building in downtown Columbus that day to pray before the Eucharistic Lord. Adoration was held from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Statehouse's Governor Thomas Worthington Center.

"It was encouraging to have so many Catholics from across Ohio commemorate the National Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of the Unborn by praying in the Ohio Statehouse before the Blessed Sacrament," said Brian Hickey, executive director at the Catholic Conference of Ohio. "Many traveled hours to pray with us."

"A continued presence in the Statehouse allows us to encounter and dialogue on the counter-cultural social doctrine of the Catholic Church, which can transform hearts and minds."

The event was organized by the conference, which lobbies on behalf of Ohio's Catholic bishops on matters of public policy. The organization hosts Adoration in the Governor Thomas Worthington Center at



Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament was held Jan. 22 at the Ohio Statehouse inside the Governor Thomas Worthington Center. Photo courtesy Catholic Conference of Ohio

the Statehouse about once a quarter.

The first Adoration of 2026 hosted by the conference enabled faithful unable to travel to Washington for the National March for Life, held Friday, Jan. 23, to unite spiritually from Columbus.

Catholics across the country were encouraged to observe a nationwide prayer

vigil from Jan. 22 to 23 to pray for an end to abortion and respect for all human life in post-Roe America.

"We are thankful for the Catholic Conference hosting Adoration at the Statehouse for the legal protection of unborn children," said Mary Kristof, associate director for the Columbus diocese's Office of Pro-

Life Activities

"Adoration especially reminds us that our life is a gift to be given back to God. We hope that our prayerful witness will remind legislators of their duty to establish a just society that protects children and helps families flourish."

The Catholic Conference of Ohio advocates for state laws that uphold the dignity of life in all stages and circumstances. The conference is currently advocating for the passage of Ohio House Bill 72, prohibiting state-funded death.

Ohio's Catholic bishops sent state legislators a letter in March 2025 urging them to prohibit all funding of intentional termination of human life: abortion, euthanasia and the death penalty.

"I encourage all to engage as faithful citizens and advocate for laws that abide by Church teachings," Hickey added.

The conference's next Adoration at the Ohio Statehouse is scheduled for Tuesday, June 2 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. in the Governor Thomas Worthington Center, 1 Capitol Square, Columbus.

To learn more or get involved, visit www.OhioCathConf.org.

Abortion healing leads to new apostolate

By Shannon Walker
For The Catholic Times

I never imagined there would be a single moment in my life that felt like everything fractured at once — my identity, my faith and my sense of worth to God. What I have come to understand is that abortion is rarely the true beginning of the story. It is often the visible wound that reveals years and years of invisible ones.

My decision did not look like freedom nor did it come from strength. It came from the fear of shaming my family even more than I had already with my bad decisions, and that now these choices have culminated in the unspeakable. You see, I hadn't shared with anyone the secrets of my hard times, and the profound lack of self-love and care that came from believing the lies I'd been telling myself, that I was not good enough, a huge disappointment and utterly unlovable. When shame becomes heavier than hope and fear louder than truth, choices are made from survival, not clarity. This was my reality and



Shannon Walker

the beginning of carefully hiding my shame; the cruel tactic of the enemy to keep me bound.

What followed my abortion was not relief but fragmentation — emotionally, spiritually and physically. Grief had no language; sorrow had no permission. The pain did not disappear because it was unspoken; it simply went underground, waiting to be healed ... for almost 30 years.

Whether a woman suppresses it or speaks it aloud, the experience leaves a mark on the soul that must be tended to and, for me, God called me to Catholicism. As I began learning about my Catholic faith and how personal it is, I knew that I

must make a confession ... and Jesus met me there, not with condemnation but with truth. In the sacrament of reconciliation, I encountered a mercy unknown before that began to dismantle the lies I had told myself for years. This is when I came to believe something that changed everything: I am not my sin or my worst decision. I am not beyond redemption. I am, and always had been, a beloved daughter of God.

I began to see that forgiveness is allowing Jesus Christ to enter my deepest places of pain and declare that sin does not have the final word — He does. His forgiveness of me began to restore my identity and reordered what shame has distorted. It did not erase responsibility, but it was transforming guilt into grace and grief into my mission.

As healing unfolded, the Lord began to show me that what the enemy intended for destruction, He could redeem for good. Humbly, the call to help other women was emerging, but I felt the heaviness of my pride and the fear that if anyone

ever knew what I had done, that I would be robbed of the carefully crafted "Shannon" I had created ...

Restored by His grace, I could no longer make decisions out of fear or shame and that if I truly believed I was forgiven, I would have to trust in God's divine will for my life. Letting go meant risking the defenses I had built to survive. It meant allowing God to love me where I actually am, not where I pretended to be. Genesis 50:20

Now, I help with a new apostolate, Second Fire, where women who have found healing from post-abortive trauma help other women find God's healing and mercy. Second Fire is where God reveals the truth of our identity, despite our sins, with clarity and compassion. Women are accompanied in their healing journey through Bible studies, prayer and friendship, with the hope that the experience will culminate in a restored identity and renewed purpose for every woman.

For more information about Second Fire, please email healing@secondfire.org.

Supporting growing families with Sunflower Ministries

By Victoria Tucker
Ministry Leader
and Jessie Estrada
Women's Health Coach (NBC-HWC)

In the fall of 2024, the Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish in Canal Winchester started Sunflower Ministries, which is a pro-life ministry dedicated to protecting the unborn and supporting families through compassionate action. We host events centered around prayer, service, and education, and encourage our parishioners to join us in our efforts to stand up for the right to life.

Our prayer-oriented events, such as Adoration in the name of the unborn, help us fulfill the mission to respect the dignity of life and God's perfect creation within our hearts. Service is at the core of our ministry and allows us to provide aid to those in our community who need it, such as pregnancy centers and mothers in need. This has occurred in the form of baby blanket making for a local pregnancy center, diaper drives and other similar activities that are engaging and rooted in serving the community.

Our educational events support evangelization by explaining Church teaching

on topics around respecting life. Through movie viewings and book reviews, we have equipped ourselves with knowledge and real-life examples of how to defend the pro-life stance firmly but with kindness, even in controversial environments. The incorporation of all of these efforts have guided us to create a program that directly supports growing families within our own church.

Driven by this need as well as the pews continuously filling with families, we launched our Sunflower Storks program. This program provides prayerful and practical support to families at our parish welcoming a new child, whether through birth, adoption, foster care or other sacred ways. Generous volunteers act as "storks" to families who are signed up.

The storks pray for the family during pregnancy and offer adoration or dedicated rosaries. Upon arrival of the child, the stork drops off a basket of tangible support, such as diapers, wipes, and clothes, as well as a fresh meal. The stork stays connected with the family afterward to provide any assistance needed with baptism or returning to Mass with a new baby. Lastly, the family receives a check-in a few months later to ensure they are still supported after the initial adjustment.

Since August 2025, this initiative has welcomed six new babies into the parish!

Unfortunately, in this space, miscarriage is a heartbreak reality. Our church has supported two families through the loss of their children in this short time span. The need for growth is evident. We must recognize this tragedy with the same passion we have to protect life, calling us to expand our support systems with grace, love and understanding.

Miscarriage is often spoken of quietly, if at all. Loved ones may feel that they don't know the "right" thing to say, leading to silence. For many women, though, this loss of their child is the beginning of a profound, lingering sorrow. Grief after miscarriage is not a sign of weak faith. Like Mary at the foot of the cross, women can hold sorrow and hope together, grieving while remaining rooted in faith. As Catholics, supporting women after miscarriage is not optional. Our belief in the dignity of every human life calls us to walk with these women and support them in their healing.

The loss of a child in a miscarriage is especially painful when the life was so brief and often unseen to the world. As Catholics, we believe that life begins at conception. By acknowledging this truth,

we demonstrate to women that we see their pain and will lovingly support them. Too often, miscarriage is met with silence and well-meaning regards meant to move women past their grief. This silence can be isolating and mistakenly communicate to women that their grief is unimportant. Yet scripture reminds us that when one member suffers, all suffer together.

Simple, compassionate actions to support women after loss can make a significant difference. This may look like: offering sincere condolences, praying both for and with women and their families, and sitting with women and allowing space for tears. More tangible support may look like: bringing a meal, remembering due dates and anniversaries to send a card or message, and connecting women with trusted clergy and resources for further support.

If we value the sanctity of life, we must also honor the weight of its loss and support mothers through the heartbreak of miscarriage. Communities that choose presence over silence reflect Christ's passion, ensuring no woman feels that she must carry her sorrow alone.

STUDENTS: Find March to be 'life changing', Continued from Page 3

Supporting life, even as a Catholic school student, can be challenging.

Maggie Fouts, 18, a senior at Columbus Bishop Hartley High School, was encouraged by the number of youth at the March for Life. She noted that supporting life as a young person is not always popular.

"At our school, it's kind of hard to find people who support this, but seeing all these people, especially so many young people come, gives a lot of hope for the future generation," she said.

"I'm really blessed to be here. This is my fourth year coming, to speak for the people who don't have a voice and the most vulnerable, and also for the mothers who feel like they don't have any other choice but to abort their children, that they do."

Data from the Charlotte Lozier Institute released last year affirmed that nearly 70 percent of abortions are coerced or un-

wanted. About 60 percent of women, the study found, would prefer to give birth with sufficient support.

A 2023 analysis published by Cureus noted that six-in-10 women attributed their abortion decision to high levels of pressure from partners, family members and circumstances.

"Seeing this in the world, it makes me think more about how I'm grateful that God gave me this day, life ... being able to come here and support the children who couldn't talk," reflected Joel Valverde, 17, a junior at Columbus Bishop Ready High School.

Opportunities to spend time in prayer in Washington for the March for Life was a positive experience for several students.

Bishop Earl Fernandes celebrated Masses during the pilgrimage at the Saint John Paul II National Shrine on Jan. 22,

the national Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of the Unborn, and in the underground crypt church at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception on Jan. 23 ahead of the march.

Students had opportunities to explore the shrines, including chapels, relics and holy art.

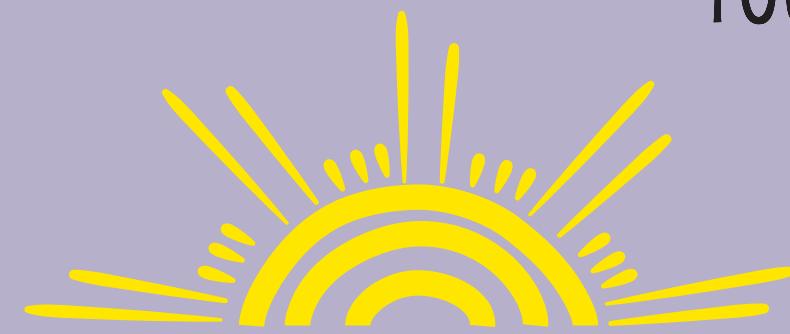
Diocesan Masses with Bishop Fernandes were a highlight. Several diocesan seminarians, clergy and consecrated religious were present.

"There's something so beautiful about the Mass," said Camille Hoffman, 18, a senior at Bishop Hartley High School. "You see all the people who are there who believe in life and believe in Jesus, and it's just really empowering."

"That group of people, you don't see it a lot, but seeing us all come together, it kind of gives a hope for the future."



Diocesan schools attending the March for Life include Newark Catholic. Photo/Sarah Lightle



LOOK TO HIM AND BE RADIANT

Psalm 34:6

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FR. JOHN LOCOCO



Sr. MARY GRACE



RACHEL MUHA



MASS CELEBRANT:
BISHOP FERNANDES



EMCEE: JEN RICE



MUSIC: MEREDITH JOY KELLER



for more information and to register, visit:
www.columbuscatholicwomen.com



Our Lady of Peace celebrates turning 80 with Mass

To commemorate the 80th anniversary of Columbus Our Lady of Peace Church's founding, Bishop Earl Fernandes celebrated a Mass for Peace on Saturday, Jan. 24.

Established in 1946 by Bishop Michael Ready only months after the end of World War II, Our Lady of Peace has served generations of the faithful as a neighborhood parish that includes the Clintonville area in north Columbus.

The Saturday evening Mass was offered as both a call for peace throughout the world and to recognize the parish's service to the community for 80 years.

"The Church is the presence of Christ in the human reality," Bishop Fernandes said in his homily. "And you, Our Lady of Peace Parish, you are the presence of Christ right here in these neighborhoods ... to bring hope, to bring forgiveness, to show mercy, to bring God's love to others."

The church is located at the corner of Dominion Boulevard and North High Street on land that was sold to Ansel Phinney in 1855 and still was known as the Phinney farm when it was purchased by the diocese from Benjamin and Emma Patterson in 1946.

Its first Sunday Masses were in a funeral home and in the former Beechwold Theatre, with weekday Masses in the home of Father George Foley, the founding pastor who served the parish for 19 years until his death in 1965. Separate surplus barracks from a closed Army depot in Marion served as the first permanent church and school buildings and were moved to the parish property in 1946 and 1947, respectively.

Our Lady of Peace School is located behind the church and offers Catholic education for children from kindergarten through eighth grade.

The school building in use today was dedicated in 1952, and a combined church and gymnasium connected to it was added the following year. The current church, which included a rectory, offices and meet-



Bishop Earl Fernandes offers the homily at Columbus Our Lady of Peace Church at a Mass celebrated for peace and for the parish's 80th anniversary. Behind him on the wall is an icon of Our Lady of Peace that was created and installed by parishioner Jerry Ulibarri.

ing rooms, was dedicated in 1967. The diamond-shaped building has a spire rising 110 feet, making it a North High landmark.

The school gym is named for Msgr. Kenneth Grimes, the parish's pastor from 1986 to 2006, the longest tenure of any of its pastors.

Also on the parish grounds is a convent that has been home to four members of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary (FIH) since 2022. The convent originally was used by the Dominican Sisters of St. Mary of the Springs (later Dominican Sisters of Peace) when they taught and assisted at the school.

Father Anthony Raj Bellamkonda Irudayam, appointed the parish's pastor last year; Father Sean Dooley, a former pastor; and Father Pete Gideon, a former parish administrator, concelebrated the Mass with Bishop Fernandes on Jan. 24 hours before a severe winter storm hit Ohio. They were



The children's choir at Our Lady of Peace Church sings at a Mass on Saturday, Jan. 24 celebrating the 80th anniversary of the parish's founding. CT photos by Ken Snow

assisted at the altar by Deacons Lou Griffith and Geoffrey Fortkamp.

Five years earlier, Bishop Robert Brennan, who led the Diocese of Columbus before being appointed to shepherd the Diocese of Brooklyn, New York, had come to Our Lady of Peace in January 2021 to offer a 75th anniversary Mass while Father Dooley was OLP's pastor.

Distinctive features in the church's main sanctuary are its original "Lamb of God" cross that was restored in 2011 by parishioner Jerry Ulibarri, who added rays of light and panels depicting "living water." He also created murals of St. Joseph and the Virgin Mary, which mirror images found elsewhere in the church.

"Jesus had a mother who is the Queen of Peace," Bishop Fernandes said. "May Our Lady, Queen of Peace, watch over you and inspire you to proclaim the kingdom with an unarmed and disarming beauty so that others might no longer have to dwell in



Parishioners solemnly participate in the Mass on Jan. 24 recognizing Columbus Our Lady of Peace Church's 80th anniversary.

darkness and in the shadow of death but might walk in the path of life."

For more information about the church, go to its website at www.olp-parish.org.

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Fish fry season begins with St. Joan of Arc prepping for 30th year

By Tim Puet
For The Catholic Times

Lent begins on Ash Wednesday, Feb. 18. That means it's time for fish fries or other meatless meals on Fridays at about 40 parishes around the diocese.

The events have grown in popularity as a way of helping Catholics observe the Church's rules regarding abstinence from meat on the Fridays of Lent. In addition, they provide an opportunity for Catholic and non-Catholic residents of parish neighborhoods to get together for food and fellowship.

One of the longest-running fish fries in the Diocese of Columbus is at Powell St. Joan of Arc Church, where the Knights of Columbus began serving fish dinners in 1997, making this the 30th year for the event.

Tony Natarian, deputy grand knight of Knights Council 10765 who holds the title of fish fry captain, said more than 6,000 people attended the dinners last year at his parish over the course of the six weeks they were offered. There is no fish fry on Good Friday at most diocesan parishes.

He's expecting larger crowds this year now that St. Joan of Arc and nearby Columbus St. Peter Church have become a single parish with two locations as part of the diocese's Real Presence Real Future restructuring effort. This fall, Ave Maria Academy, the first new parish school in the diocese in decades, will open at the McEwan Center at St. Peter.

"Council 10765 is looking forward to growing together with St. Peter St. Joan of Arc as Ave Maria Academy opens," he said. "Our parish will be undergoing changes to support this new and exciting growth."

"We are serving more customers than ever while operating from the social hall at St. Joan of Arc, where we now use just about every available space in the parish complex except the sanctuary," Natarian said. "We have a lot of engineers, information technology, sales and finance people in the council. They've used their business backgrounds to help build efficiency into every aspect of the fish fry while maintaining the quality and experience our customers appreciate every year."

Also helping with the dinners are members of K of C Council 11216 at St. Peter Church and San Pedro Consejo 18195, established for Spanish-speaking members of the parish, plus volunteers from many other parish organizations.

"From the beginning of the fish fries until the COVID pandemic, we usually had it set up where volunteers from different organizations would come in on different weeks — the Knights women's group one week, the men's club another week, the choir, the Parish School of Religion and so forth. Members of that group would get a free meal on their week," Natarian said.

"COVID broke down the silos in which different groups would consider themselves as mainly members of that group rather than of the broader parish community. That turned out to be a good thing, because as people from different organizations began doing things together, they realized the strength of the whole community."

"There weren't many other events that

allowed people from all the groups at St. Joan of Arc to come together at one place and for people from other parishes and non-Catholics to see what we were doing. The parish festival was one, our craft fair was another. These were great tools for evangelization on an informal basis. With the merger, they're likely to be more significant in that way."

The fish fries will take place this year from 5 to 7 p.m. on Feb. 20 and 27 and March 6, 13, 20 and 27 at St. Joan of Arc, 10700 Liberty Road. The menu will include battered fish or baked fish, coleslaw, green beans, macaroni and cheese and french fries. Natarian said there has been little change in the menu over the years except for a few years when baked potatoes were offered.

"Nothing fancy because we know what people like," Natarian said. "Most of what we have is supplied by Lipari Foods, an independent distributor where one of our parishioners is an executive. None of it comes straight from a box or can. We add our own touches to everything. Last year, we served about 6,000 pounds of fish and a literal ton — 2,000 pounds — of mac and cheese."

Once expenses are covered, all the money made at the fish fries goes to the Knights' charitable work. Natarian said that last year his council donated to about 40 organizations, including parish service groups, programs for religious vocations, food pantries, Special Olympics and other activities for the developmentally disabled and a scholarship program.

Fish is available on an "all you care to eat" basis and prices are \$15 for people from ages 18 to 64, \$10 for children from ages 10 to 17 and \$14 for senior citizens or takeout orders. Children age 9 and younger eat free.

Prices when the fish fry began were \$7.50 per person, with a \$1 off published coupon available, \$3.50 for children and a maximum of \$20 per family, said Steve Molick, who organized the 1997 dinners.

"I was grand knight in 1995-1996 when we were one of the top three councils in the state and I wanted to get a fish fry started then," he said. "I grew up in the Cleveland area where lots of parishes had fish fries or soup or spaghetti suppers on Fridays, but it hadn't caught on that much here."

"I had to lay out a business plan for Father Thomas Bender, who was pastor at St. Joan of Arc then, because the parish didn't have the facilities. There was no social hall, just a kitchen and a sink."

"The Knights who liked the idea of a fish fry figured we could do anything if we put our heads together and that's how it went. One of our brother Knights worked at the Kroger store in Powell and he said he could get an old Pepsi trailer for us and that's where we based things. We got a stove for oven-baked fish, put a couple burners on top, converted them so they could use propane and borrowed a couple of fryers for french fries and fried fish. With no social hall, we used religious education classrooms for seating," he said.

"I'm not sure about the first week, but I have records that say we served 385 the second week and we kept growing."

"I had four goals in mind. One of them was building community among the parish organizations. Back then, the best way to do that was having a different group volunteer each week. The other



Knights of Columbus Council 10765 members are responsible for coordinating the annual fish fries at Columbus-Powell St. Peter St. Joan of Arc Parish. Photos courtesy Tony Natarian



Volunteers pray before serving the first customer of the evening at the St. Peter St. Joan of Arc Parish fish fry.



The kitchen crew prepares the food at the St. Peter St. Joan of Arc annual fish fry.

goals were reducing the parish debt, increasing awareness of the parish Lenten services (we timed the fish fry so that it would end when Stations of the Cross started, so people didn't have an excuse not to attend Stations); and keeping things simple.

"We've had many people volunteer each year from the start. One of the early volunteers was Tony Natarian's father, Mike."

"I've been involved with the fish fry every year since the first," Tony Natarian said. "I started waiting tables when I was a kid, then went to kitchen work and kept going up from there. Even when I went to college at Bowling Green, I stayed involved by being a customer."

"Steve's original goals are pretty much the ones we have today. Provide a good product and the people will come and everyone will benefit in ways beyond enjoying a meal."



Knights of Columbus members make sure the dessert table is well stocked at the St. Peter St. Joan of Arc fish fry.

FIND a FISH FRY or LENTEN DINNER

The following is a list of fish fries and Lenten dinners compiled by *The Catholic Times* from information supplied by parishes and schools in the diocese. Check parish or school websites for additional information about menus, times, dates and cancellations due to weather or other factors.

COLUMBUS NORTH

OUR LADY OF VICTORY CHURCH
1559 Roxbury Road, Columbus
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 4:30-7 p.m.

OUR LADY OF VICTORY CHURCH
1559 Roxbury Road, Columbus (Parish Life Center)
Soup Supper and Apologetics
Wednesdays, 2/25-3/18, 6 p.m.

ST. JOAN OF ARC CHURCH
10700 Liberty Road, Powell
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 5-7 p.m.
Stations of the Cross, 7:15 p.m. at St. Joan of Arc (English); noon, 7:30 p.m. at St. Peter Church (Spanish)

ST. BRENDAN CHURCH
4475 Dublin Road, Hilliard (school)
Fridays 2/20, 2/27, 3/13-3/27, 5-7 p.m.

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI CHURCH
386 Bottles Ave., Columbus 43215
Pasta Dinner
Saturday, 2/14, noon-7 p.m.
Lenten Soup Suppers
Mondays, 2/23-3/23, 6 p.m.

ST. MARGARET OF CORTONA
1600 N. Hague Ave., Columbus
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 5-7:30 p.m.

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION CHURCH
414 E. North Broadway, Columbus (Marian Hall)
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 5-7:30 p.m.

ST. MICHAEL THE ARCHANGEL CHURCH
5750 N. High St., Worthington
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 5-7:30 p.m.

CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION
6300 E. Dublin-Granville Road, New Albany (Ministry Center)
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 4:30-7 p.m.
Lunch, 11 a.m.-1:30 p.m.

ST. JOSEPHINE BAKHITA PARISH
6077 Sharon Woods Blvd., Columbus
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 5-7 p.m.

ST. JOHN NEUMANN CHURCH
9633 E. State Route 37, Sunbury (Faith and Family Center)
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 4-7 p.m.

ST. PAUL THE APOSTLE CHURCH
313 N. State St., Westerville (Miller Hall)

Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 5-7:30 p.m.

ST. ANDREW CHURCH
1899 McCoy Road, Columbus (Nugent Parish Hall)
Fridays, 2/20, 3/13, 3/27, 4:30-7:30 p.m.

ST. TIMOTHY CHURCH
1033 Thomas Lane, Columbus
Pasta dinner
Sunday, 3/1, noon-6:30 p.m. followed by Stations of the Cross

COLUMBUS EAST

HOLY SPIRIT CHURCH
4383 E. Broad St., Columbus
Fridays, 2/27, 3/13, 3/27, 5:30-7:30 p.m.

ST. ELIZABETH ANN SETON PARISH
600 Hill Road N., Pickerington (Activity Center)
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 4:30-7 p.m.

ST. CATHARINE CHURCH
500 S. Gould Road, Columbus
Fridays, 2/20, 3/6, 3/20, 5-7:30 p.m.

ST. MATTHEW THE APOSTLE CHURCH
807 Havens Corners Road, Gahanna
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 4:30-7 p.m.

See FISH FRY, Page 11

WWW.BESTFISHFRY.com
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Feb. 20, 27 March 6, 13, 20, 27
Stations of the Cross
7:15pm St. Joan of Arc
12pm, 7:30pm St. Peter
SPANISH

5-7pm | ST. JOAN OF ARC | Powell
KNIGHTS OF COLUMBUS COUNCIL 10765



February 20 & 27,
March 6, 13, 20 & 27

CHURCH OF THE RESURRECTION

6300 E. Dublin-Granville Rd.
New Albany, OH 43054
614-855-1400

For more information, to pre-order
drive-thru meals and to view the full
menu use the QR code or visit:
www.cotrna.org



LUNCH
11am to 1:30pm
Drive-thru & carry-out:
3-piece fish, fries, coleslaw
OR Veggie Lo Mein | \$14

DINNER
4:30pm to 7:00pm
Dine-in & carry-out:
Adult dine-in | \$16
Senior dine-in | \$14
Kids (4-10) dine-in | \$10

Drive-thru:
3-piece fish, fries, coleslaw
OR Veggie Lo Mein | \$14

Knights of Columbus
Council 10941

**FISH FRY
DINNERS**
St. Josephine Bakhita
Parish and School

6077 Sharon Woods Blvd.
Columbus, OH 43229
(614) 891-0150

Dinner served from
5:00-7:00PM
Carryout available
Stations of the Cross begin at **7pm**.
All are invited!

Pricing Tiers:
2 piece fish dinner (or 10 shrimp) for \$12
1 piece fish dinner (or 6 shrimp) for \$10
Grilled cheese dinner for \$7

All dinners are served with 2 sides, and
8 different side options are available.
Drinks, Hawaiian roll, and a dessert are
also included with every dinner.

Family pricing for those dining in
is capped at **\$50 per family**.



St. Josephine Bakhita
PARISH & SCHOOL

St. Margaret of Cortona
1600 N. Hague Ave. • 614-279-1690

Fried ocean perch or baked cod dinner with
choice of two: french fries, baked potato,
Sweet potato, macaroni & cheese, cole slaw, or
applesauce. Roll & butter & **FREE DRINK & HOMEMADE DESSERT INCLUDED!**

FRIDAYS DURING LENT
FEBRUARY 20 - MARCH 27 | 4:30 - 7:30 PM

- \$17.00 Adults
- \$16.00 Seniors
- \$40.00 Families
- \$7.00 Children (10 & under)
- \$5.00 Beer
- Free (3 & under)
- Carry-outs, seconds, & adult beverages available

**BEST FISH FRY
DINNER IN TOWN!**

FIND a FISH FRY or LENTEN DINNER

Continued from Page 10

ST. PIUS X CHURCH
1051 S. Waggoner Road, Reynoldsburg (Parish Center)
Fridays, 2/20, 3/6, 3/20, 5-7:30 p.m.

ST. PIUS X CHURCH
1051 S. Waggoner Road, Reynoldsburg (Parish Center)
Soup Suppers
Mondays, 2/23-3/30, 6-8 p.m.

COLUMBUS WEST

OUR LADY OF PERPETUAL HELP CHURCH
3752 Broadway, Grove City (Parish Life Center)
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 4:30-7:30 p.m.

SS. SIMON AND JUDE CHURCH
9350 High Free Pike, West Jefferson Lenten Pasta Dinners
Fridays, 3/6, 3/20, 3/27, 5-7 p.m.

ST. CECILIA CHURCH
434 Norton Road, Columbus
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 5-7:30 p.m.

ST. JOSEPH CHURCH
670 W. Main St., Plain City
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 5:30-8 p.m.

ST. PATRICK CHURCH
226 Elm St., London (School)
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 4:30-7:30 p.m.

OUTSIDE METRO COLUMBUS

ST. MARY CHURCH
66 E. William St., Delaware (Commons)
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 5-7 p.m.

ST. MARY CHURCH
1232 E. Center St., Marion (K of C Hall)
Fridays, 2/13-3/27, 5-7:30 p.m.

ST. PETER CHURCH
379 S. Crawford St., Millersburg
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 4-7 p.m.

SACRED HEART CHURCH
320 Fair Ave. NE, New Philadelphia (Kathy Hamilton Hall)
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 4-7 p.m.

CHURCH OF THE ASCENSION
555 S. Main St., Johnstown
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 4:30-7 p.m.

ST. EDWARD THE CONFESSOR
785 Newark Road, Granville
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 4-7 p.m.

ST. EDWARD THE CONFESSOR
785 Newark Road, Granville
Soup Suppers
Tuesdays, 2/24-3/24, 6-7 p.m. followed by Stations of the Cross

CHURCH OF THE HOLY TRINITY
1835 Dover-Zoar Road, Bolivar
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 4-7 p.m.

SACRED HEART SCHOOL
39 Burt Ave., Coshocton
Date and time TBD

ST. JOHN PAUL II SCIOTO CATHOLIC PARISH
2167 Lick Run Lyra Road, Wheelersburg (St. Peter campus)
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 5-8 p.m.
Saturdays, 2/28, 3/14, 3/28 after 6 p.m.
Mass

SACRED HEARTS CHURCH
4680 U.S. Highway 42, Cardington
Friday, 3/20, 4:30-7 p.m.

ST. COLMAN OF CLOYNE CHURCH
219 S. North St., Washington Court House
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

BISHOP FLAGET SCHOOL
285 W. Water St., Chillicothe (St. Peter Parish Hall)
Dates and times TBD

HOLY TRINITY SCHOOL
225 S. Columbus St., Somerset
Dates and times TBD

ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST PARISH
St. Luke Community Center, 7 W. Rambo St., Danville
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 5-7 p.m.

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES CHURCH
45 Granville St., Newark
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 4-7 p.m.

ST. ANN & ST. MARY PARISH
311 Chestnut St., Dresden (Parish Hall)
Friday, 3/20, 5 p.m.

BASILICA OF ST. MARY OF THE ASSUMPTION
132 S. High St., Lancaster
Soup and Psalms
Wednesdays, 2/25-3/25 after 6 p.m.
Mass

ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST CHURCH
351 North Market St., Logan
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 4:30-7 p.m.

NEWARK CATHOLIC HIGH SCHOOL
1 Green Wave Dr., Newark (Cafeteria)
Fridays, 2/20-3/20, 5-7 p.m.

ST. JOSEPH CHURCH
134 W. Mound St., Circleville
Fridays, 2/20, 3/13, 4:30-6:30 p.m.

OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL CHURCH
5133 Walnut Rd. SE, Buckeye Lake
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 4:30-7 p.m.

ST. JOSEPH CHURCH
308 N. Elm St., Sugar Grove
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 5 p.m., followed by Stations of the Cross at 7 p.m.

OUR LADY OF LOURDES CHURCH
1033 W. Fifth St., Marysville (Parish Life Center)
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 5-7 p.m.

ST. NICHOLAS CHURCH
275 Sunrise Dr., Zanesville
Fridays, 2/20-3/27, 4:30-7 p.m.

SAINT FRANCIS PASTA DINNER

Save the Date – February 14, 2026

12:00 Noon – 7:00 p.m.

Entertainment: Nacho Street Band – Balloons by Joe – Capital Accordion Band, King Avenue Honky Tonk – The Stromboleros – The Bierhalle Band

Adults – \$12 Children under 10 – \$5

All meals include: Pasta, sauce, meatballs, salad, rolls and spumoni ice cream. Also available will be vegetarian and gluten-free options.

Carryout available.

50/50 tickets and Raffle items will be available

Bake Sale will be back!

2 Liter bottles of soda with mystery gift card (\$10, \$15 or \$25) attached sold for \$10 each

An evening of entertainment

Let family and friends know. Success depends on all of us!

Divine perspective on Valentine's Day

By Fr. Ed Dougherty, M.M.
The Christophers' Board of Directors

sacrifices. Seen through this lens, we understand the need for a patient, forgiving and caring approach with those we love. These are things that enable relationships to grow and flourish, and these are things we should practice regularly so we know how to employ them when our love is put to the test.

It is only in challenges that we are able to prove ourselves, and it is a beautiful thing to look for opportunities in life to prove our love. In fact, we prove our love for God by loving others. As St. Paul says, "Love never ends," showing us that the surest way to enter into relationship with God and the things of eternity is to love.

What an amazing invitation God makes to us to pour ourselves out in sacrificial ways in loving relationships. To follow in Christ's footsteps is to care for others even when they are at their worst. It is to help another when they are sick, to give to another when they are in need, and to forgive when we have been wronged.

These are the deepest aspects of love put to the test and proven through action. We are all called to this type of love, and walking this path prepares for the purest of actions in marital love. So let's all practice sacrificial love in a special way this year around Valentine's



Our Lady of Victory Catholic Church

1559 Roxbury Road, Columbus 43212
(Parish Life Center)

FISH FRY DINNERS

Fridays, 2/20 through 3/27 | 4:30 – 7:00 pm

Fresh Ocean Perch (fried);

Baked Potatoes, French Fries or Rice;

Salad or Cole Slaw; Complementary Beverages, Dessert included

\$18 Adults, \$10 Kids – Carryout available



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Parishes plan special events during Lent

The following is a list of special events for Lent planned in parishes of the Diocese of Columbus, as supplied to *The Catholic Times*:

Columbus Christ the King and St. Thomas the Apostle – Bilingual retreat for young adults, Saturday, March 7, Christ the King convent; parish mission with Franciscan Father Manuel Aviles, OFM Cap, Friday, March 20 (Spanish) 7 p.m., Saturday, March 21, 2:30 p.m. (English) and 7:30 p.m., (Spanish), all at Christ the King; Lenten retreat in Spanish, Saturday, March 28, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m., St. Thomas; Reconciliation service, Monday, March 30, 6 to 8 p.m., both churches; Living Stations of the Cross in Spanish, Friday, April 3, noon, Christ the King, 5 p.m., St. Thomas

Columbus Our Lady of Peace – Parish mission with Father Victor Moratin, CPM, of the Fathers of Mercy. Theme: “Return to the Merciful Father,” Monday and Tuesday, March 2 and 3, 6 p.m. Topics: Monday, “Jesus the Face of Mercy” with Holy Hour at 7; Tuesday, “God the Father of Mercies” with penance service at 7

Columbus St. Christopher – Eucharistic Adoration, Thursday, Feb. 19, 7 to 8 p.m.

Columbus St. Francis of Assisi – Soup suppers, Mondays, 6 p.m. Topics, Feb. 23, architecture of the church building, with Dr. John Davis, Ohio State University assistant professor of landscape architecture; March 2, parish organ, with Laurel Marazita and Paula Vasey; March 9, tour of the sacristy and other areas of the church, with Renee Morkassel; March 16, history and symbolism of the church's stained-glass windows, with Maryellen O'Shaughnessy; March 23, praying of the Stations of the Cross, with individual parishioners speaking on how the stations are reflected in their lives

Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral – Stations with improvised meditations by Dr.

Richard Fitzgerald, cathedral organist and music director, Sunday, March 22, 3 p.m.; Tenebrae service with the Cathedral Schola, designed to re-create the sense of betrayal, abandonment and agony related to Good Friday, Friday, April 3, 8 p.m.

Columbus St. Josephine Bakhita Parish at St. Elizabeth Church – Stations, Fridays, Feb. 27, March 6, 13, 20 and 27, 7 p.m., led by East African Swahili community Feb. 27 and Filipino community March 6 and 20; parish mission with Father John Judie of Louisville, Kentucky. Theme, “Our New Vision,” Monday to Wednesday, March 9 to 11, 7 p.m.; “Last Call” Reconciliation service, Wednesday, April 1, 4 p.m.; “Passion of the Christ” movie, Thursday, April 2, 9 p.m., followed by Night Prayer and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at 11:30; Living Stations, Friday, April 3, noon; Easter family program, Saturday, April 4, 9 a.m.; food basket blessing, Saturday, April 4, 11:30 a.m.

Columbus St. Mary German Village – Adoration and confessions, Tuesdays, Feb. 24 and March 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31, 5 to 6:15 p.m.; Stations, Fridays, Feb. 27 and March 6, 13, 20 and 27, 2 p.m. (with children), 6 p.m. (Spanish), 7 p.m. (English); Living Stations, Wednesday, April 1, 1:30 p.m.

Columbus/Powell St. Peter St. Joan of Arc – Veneration of relic of St. Pio of Pietrelcina, Monday, March 2 after 8:30 a.m. Mass, St. Joan of Arc; penance service, Monday, March 9, 7 to 9:30 p.m., St. Joan of Arc

Dublin St. Brigid of Kildare – Vespers, Sundays, Feb. 22 and March 1, 8, 15 and 22, 5 to 6 p.m.; One Step Forward family event, Tuesday, Feb. 24, 4:30 and 6 p.m.; soup suppers, Tuesdays, Feb. 24 and March 3, 10, 17 and 24, 6 p.m., followed by Stations at 7; Taize prayer service, Thursday, Feb. 26, 7 p.m.; Lenten prayer service and Vespers, Sunday, March 29, 5 to 7:30 p.m.; Tenebrae service, Friday, April 3, 7:30 p.m.; Easter food blessing, Saturday, April 4, noon; Easter egg hunt, Saturday, April 4, 1 p.m.

Marysville Our Lady of Lourdes – Prayer service, Sundays, Feb. 22 and March 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29, 5:30 p.m.; Bible study on St. Pe-

ter's life, Sundays, Feb. 22 and March 1, 8, 15 and 22, 6 to 7:30 p.m.; prayer service, Saturday, March 28, 7 p.m.; Stations Through Mary's Eyes, Friday, April 3, 3 p.m.; Tenebrae service, Friday, April 3, 8 p.m.

New Albany Church of the Resurrection – Stations, Fridays, Feb. 20 and 27 and March 13, 20 and 27, 7 p.m.; Children's Stations, Friday, March 6, 4:30 p.m.; parish mission on “Building a Culture of Prayer,” Sunday, March 8, 6:30 p.m. (youth night), Monday to Wednesday, March 9 to 11, 7 p.m.; “Last Call” Reconciliation service, Wednesday, April 1, 4 p.m.; “Passion of the Christ” movie, Thursday, April 2, 9 p.m., followed by Night Prayer and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament at 11:30; Living Stations, Friday, April 3, noon; Easter family program, Saturday, April 4, 9 a.m.; food basket blessing, Saturday, April 4, 11:30 a.m.

New Philadelphia Sacred Heart – Adoration and confessions, Mondays, Feb. 23 and March 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30, 5 p.m., followed by Evening Prayer, Stations of the Cross and Benediction from 6 to 7

Newark St. Francis de Sales – Mardi Gras dinner with talk by Father Thomas Blau, OP, on “What Are You Actually Hungry For?” Tuesday, Feb. 17, 6 p.m.; Living Stations, Sunday, March 29, 7 p.m.

Plain City St. Joseph – Soup supper with book discussion (book to be determined), Tuesdays, Feb. 24 and March 1, 8, 15, 22 and 29, 6 p.m., parish center

Resurrection Cemetery, 9571 N. High St., Lewis Center – Outdoor Stations, Friday, April 3, 10 a.m.

Reynoldsburg St. Pius X – Soup suppers, Mondays, Feb. 23 and March 2, 16, 23 and 30, 6 to 8 p.m.; parish mission with Fr. Giles Maria Barrie, CFR, of the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, Sunday to Tuesday, March 8 to 10, 6 to 8 p.m.; Tenebrae service, Wednesday, April 1, 7 p.m.; Living Stations,

Friday, April 3, 6 p.m.; Easter egg hunt, Sunday, April 5, 11 a.m.

St. Joseph Cemetery, 6440 S. High St., Columbus – Stations, Friday, March 27, 10 a.m., Our Mother of Sorrows Chapel

Somerset Holy Trinity and St. Joseph – Stations, Fridays, Feb. 20 and March 6 and 20 at Holy Trinity and Feb. 27 and March 13 and 27 at St. Joseph, 7 p.m.; Eucharistic Adoration, Tuesdays, Feb. 24 and March 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. with Holy Hour at 6 and “No Greater Love: A Biblical Walk Through Christ's Passion” video series at 7, Holy Trinity; Novena to St. Joseph, Wednesday to Thursday, March 11 to 19 before all Masses at both churches

Sunbury St. John Neumann – Stations, Fridays, Feb. 20 and March 6, 13, 20 and 27, 6:30 p.m.; parish mission with Marco Casanova of Hallow ministries, Sunday to Tuesday, March 8 to 10, following 6 p.m. Mass; penance service, Wednesday, March 11, 6:30 p.m.; confessions, Wednesday, April 1, 5 to 7 p.m. and Thursday and Friday, April 2 and 3, 10 a.m. to noon; Outdoor Stations, Friday, April 3, 11 a.m.

Westerville St. Paul the Apostle – Talks by Father Kevin Girardi, parochial vicar, on applying St. Paul's teachings to daily life, Sundays, Feb. 22 and March 1, 8 and 15, 6:30 p.m.; penance services, Wednesdays, March 18 and 25, 7 p.m.; parish mission with Father Joseph Tuscan, OFM Cap, director general of the Archconfraternity of Christian Mothers, Sunday to Tuesday, March 22 and 24 with confessions, rosary and veneration of relics of St. Pio of Pietrelcina and Blessed Solanus Casey at 6:30 p.m. and talk at 7. Topics: Sunday, “The Greatest Threat to Holiness Today”; Monday, “Pray, Hope and Don't Worry”; Tuesday, “The Solution”

Parishes offer regular, special Adoration times during Lent

Columbus Our Lady of Peace – Thursdays, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Columbus Our Lady of Victory – First Wednesdays, 12:30 to 8 p.m.

Columbus Sacred Heart – Thursdays, 10 a.m. to 7:30 p.m.

Columbus St. Agatha – Wednesdays, 9:30 to 11 a.m.; Thursdays, 7 to 8 p.m.; Sunday, 3 p.m.

Columbus St. Andrew – Tuesdays, 6 to 9 p.m., ending with Compline and Benediction

Columbus St. Catharine – Sundays through Fridays, 6 a.m. Sunday to midnight Friday, church closed Saturday from 12:01 to 6 a.m.; Saturdays, 6 a.m. to 4 p.m. Thursdays at 7 p.m. are ADORE nights featuring candlelit programs and confession

Columbus St. Cecilia – Tuesdays, 5:45 to 6:45 p.m.; First Fridays, 9 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Columbus St. Christopher – Weekdays, 3 to 4 p.m.; Thursday, Feb. 19, 7 to 8 p.m.

Columbus St. James the Less – Wednesdays, noon to 8 p.m. with bilingual Benediction

Columbus St. Josephine Bakhita at St. Elizabeth Church – Thursdays, 5:30 to 7 p.m.

Columbus St. Margaret of Cortona – Thursdays, 9:30 a.m. to noon

Columbus St. Mary German Village – First Fridays, from after 8:30 a.m. Mass to 10 a.m.; Tuesdays, Feb. 24 and March 3, 10, 17, 24 and 31, 5 p.m.

Columbus St. Patrick – Fridays, 12:15 to 1:15 p.m.; Fridays, 8 p.m. Friday to 7 a.m. Saturday (church locked; call church office at (614) 224-9522 for access information)

Columbus-Powell St. Peter St. Joan of Arc – St. Peter, Mondays through Fridays, 6 a.m. to 9 p.m., St. Joan of Arc, 9 a.m. Mondays through 8 a.m. Saturdays

Columbus St. Stephen the Martyr –

Thursdays, 6 a.m. to 3:45 p.m.

Columbus St. Thomas More Newman Center – Mondays through Fridays, 8:15 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. when Ohio State University classes are in session

Columbus St. Thomas the Apostle – Tuesdays, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Coshocton Sacred Heart – First and third Fridays, 9:30 to 11:15 a.m.

Danville St. Luke – Tuesdays, 11:30 a.m. to 10:30 p.m.; Wednesdays, 5:30 to 10:30 a.m.

Delaware St. Mary – Thursdays, after 5:30 p.m. Mass to 7:30 p.m.

Dennison Immaculate Conception – Tuesdays, 8:45 a.m. to 7 p.m.

Dover St. Joseph – Tuesdays, 5 to 6 p.m.; Thursdays, 9 to 9:30 a.m.; First Fridays, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Dublin St. Brigid of Kildare – Wednesdays, 5 to 7 p.m., chapel; First Fridays, 9:30 a.m. to 4 p.m., church

Gahanna St. Matthew the Apostle – 24 hours, seven days a week in basement adoration chapel. Open to the public from 6:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. weekdays and 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturdays and Sundays. Holy Hour for the reparation, purification and sanctification of the Church, fourth Fridays, 7 to 8 p.m.

Granville St. Edward – Mondays, 9:30 to 11:30 a.m.

Grove City Our Lady of Perpetual Help – First Fridays, 9 a.m. Friday to 9 a.m. Saturday; other Fridays, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.

Hilliard St. Brendan the Navigator – Mondays, 6 to 10 p.m.; Tuesdays, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m.; Wednesdays, 7 a.m. to 5 p.m.; Thursdays and Fridays, 9 a.m. to 10 p.m. (First Fridays until 1 p.m. Saturday); Saturdays, 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Johnstown Church of the Ascension – Tuesdays, 5 to 6 p.m.; Saturdays, 8:30 to 9:30 a.m.

Kenton Immaculate Conception – Tuesdays, 7:30 to 8:30 p.m.; Wednesdays, from end of 9 a.m. Mass to Benediction at 1 p.m.

Lancaster St. Bernadette – Wednesdays, 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.; 6 p.m. Thursdays to 8 a.m. Fridays

London St. Patrick – Thursdays, 6:30 to 7:30 p.m.; First Fridays, noon to 5:15 p.m.

Marion St. Mary – Fridays, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.

Marysville Our Lady of Lourdes – First Fridays, 8:30 a.m. to 8 p.m.; second Sundays, 10 to 11 a.m.

Mattingly Settlement St. Mary – First Fridays, 6 to 7 p.m.

Mount Vernon St. Vincent de Paul – Thursdays, 3 to 10 p.m.; Fridays, 5 a.m. to 5 p.m.

New Albany Church of the Resurrection – Third Sundays, noon to 4 p.m.

New Lexington St. Rose – Wednesdays, 5:15 to 6:15 p.m., concluding with Benediction and followed by Mass at 6:30

New Philadelphia Sacred Heart – Tuesdays, 7 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Adoration and confessions, Mondays, Feb. 23 and March 2, 9, 16, 23 and 30, 5 p.m., followed by Evening Prayer, Stations of the Cross and Benediction from 6 to 7

Newark Blessed Sacrament – Mondays, noon to 8 p.m.; Wednesdays, 9 to 11 a.m.

Pickerington St. Elizabeth Seton – Perpetual Adoration, except from noon to 1 p.m. Thursdays. Sign up at www.setonparish.com/ministries/adoration

Plain City St. Joseph – Mondays through Thursdays, 6 to 11 a.m. and 6 to 9 p.m.; Fridays, 6 to 8 and 9 to 11 a.m. and 4:30 to 6:30 p.m.

Portsmouth St. Mary – Perpetual Adora-

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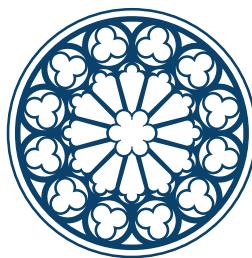
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Clergy Who Cook! event combines food, fun, funds for seminarians

By Hannah Heil
Catholic Times Reporter

The 16th annual Clergy Who Cook! fundraiser benefiting seminarians at the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus raised more than \$100,000 for the second consecutive year.

The event, hosted by the Friends of the Josephinum in the Jessing Center on Friday evening, Jan. 30, featured unique dishes prepared by 13 clergy in the diocese – the highest number to date.

Cuisines ranged from tacos to baklava sundaes to venison meatballs and chili.

By the end of the night, Marci Maynard, co-chair of the Clergy Who Cook! committee, had tears in her eyes. Tears were not from the spicy Indian-inspired Chicken 65 or fumes from Father Juan Macias Marquez's Texan "Holy Smoked Brisket."

Maynard simply could not contain emotions from an evening raising thousands of dollars for young men laying down their lives for Christ.

"It brought tears to my eyes, when you see all this money being given ... and you know it's going to go to this cause and help the seminarians directly," she reflected on the sold-out event. "I think people don't realize: 100 percent of what we make goes to them."

"We were worried that, with the weather and everything, we might not fill the place. There wasn't one seat that wasn't taken. People keep coming and loving it."

Maynard has been involved in the fundraiser since its inception. She has served as chair for 15 of its 16 years. Her co-chair, Jen Bennett, served in the role for a second year.

"Tuition ... does not cover all of the seminarian education and formation costs," Jim O'Connor, vice president for administration and treasurer at the Josephinum, said in his opening remarks.

"Friends of the Josephinum, through their efforts, including events like the Clergy Who Cook!, provide crucial funding for the seminary."

Proceeds from the event help fund scholarships, medical care, books, school supplies and programs in a seminarian's propaedeutic year, the first stage of formation and discernment.

Funds also provide seminarians opportunities to travel to places such as the Vatican and Washington for the National March for Life in January.

Event attendees voted for their favorite clergy-turned-chef by placing dollars in a designated jar.

Generous faithful could also root on their favorite cook by donating on the Friends of the Josephinum webpage ahead of the event, a first-of-its-kind feature. Approximately \$73,000 was raised before doors opened on Jan. 30.

Five baskets were sold in a live auction during the fundraiser, each raising between \$400 and \$4,400 to support seminarians.

"I've never cried, but I never saw how many people raised their paddles," Maynard added. "The person next to me gave \$5,000 and didn't even (bid) on 'Dinner with the Bishop.'

"They went and gave \$5,000 because they just wanted to – pretty special to be involved with somebody like that. It's pretty special that all the people who are here are these kind of people."

Masters of ceremonies included Colin Lee of Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church and Brother Joseph Logan, CPM (Fathers of Mercy) of Davenport, Iowa. The young men, in their third and sixth year,

respectively, at the Josephinum shared their testimonies with attendees.

Gary Allwein, owner of local Mustard Seed Catering, a father of nine and grandfather of 45, served as culinary judge.

He awarded "Most Creative" to Father Jacques Kik, pastor at Columbus Our Lady of Victory Church, for his baklava sundae. The priest also won People's Choice for a second year.

Attendees were given one free wooden-star token to vote for their favorite cuisine. Father Kik's dessert proved to be a crowd favorite.

Allwein awarded "Most Complex" to Father David Arroyo, CR (Order of Clerics Regular (Theatine Fathers)), diocesan vicar for Hispanic Ministry. Father Arroyo and members of the Spanish Knights of Columbus council at Columbus-Powell St. Peter St. Joan of Arc parish prepared ethnic tacos. It was Father Arroyo's second year winning in the category.

Grand Chef was given to Dublin St. Brigid of Kildare for bringing in the most dollars collectively from the parish, online and in person at Clergy Who Cook!, continuing a multiyear winning streak.

Father Jim Black, pastor, and Father Jason Fox, parochial vicar, made "walking tacos" with bags of Fritos chips. The winning team included parish Deacons Frank Iannarino and Paul Zemanek.

A series of desserts were also concocted by the night's chefs.

Father Tom Gardner, pastor at Newark St. Francis de Sales Church, and his brother, Billy, made "Adult Cookies & Milk," the beverage including a cream liqueur with cinnamon and vanilla flavors.

"There's nothing like food that brings people together," Father Gardner affirmed.

Clergy Who Cook! "brings so many different people from the community together," he said. "It's a great opportunity to just enjoy great food, celebrate seminarians and support them through ... the Friends of the Josephinum."

Retired priest Father Pete Gideon created a "mystery dessert." Father Nic Ventura, a formator and director of liturgy at the Josephinum, fashioned a bourbon-chocolate mousse with cherries.

"I was here for the first Clergy Who Cook! as a seminarian and just really glad to be here to support the men in formation," Father Ventura said.

"You remember what you went through as a seminarian, but then, also, we're here to help them."

Deer meat was a popular dish: Father Michael Hartge, diocesan Vicar General and Moderator of the Curia, crafted venison meatballs with meat from a buck he shot hunting in Perry County. Father Adam Streitenberger and Deacon Steve Petrill, who minister at the Columbus St. Thomas More Newman Center by Ohio State University, made venison chili.

India natives Father Anthony Raj Bellamkonda Irudayam, pastor at Columbus Our Lady of Peace, and the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Heart of Mary – FIH, whose convent is at the parish, cooked Indian Chicken 65.

Father Tim Lynch, pastor at Columbus St. Mary Church in the German Village neighborhood, prepared a "Render Unto Caesar's Chicken Salad."

Father Brian O'Connor, pastor at Canal Winchester Immaculate Heart of the Blessed Virgin Mary parish, served a cheese ball. Retired diocesan priest Father Pat Toner featured an Irish shepherd's pie.

To get involved with the Friends of the Josephinum, visit www.PCJ.edu/Friends.



Some of the priests who participated in Clergy Who Cook! at the Pontifical College Josephinum on Jan. 30 gather for a photo..

Photos courtesy Sarah Lightle



Father David Arroyo, CR, and the Spanish Knights of Columbus at Columbus-Powell St. Peter St. Joan of Arc parish received the award for the "Most Complex" entry with their ethnic tacos.



Father Jacques Kik (right), pastor at Columbus Our Lady of Victory Church, won the "Most Creative" award for his baklava sundae.

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Bridgettines help nurture young couples' marriage vocation

By Hannah Heil
Catholic Times Reporter

EDITOR'S NOTE: National Marriage Week is observed Feb. 7-14 and World Marriage Day is Sunday, Feb. 8.

Since arriving in Columbus in October 2018, the Sisters of the Most Holy Savior of St. Bridget have made an impact beyond young women discerning consecrated life.

The Bridgettine Sisters, who reside at the Convent of St. Birgitta adjacent to Columbus Holy Family Church on the city's west side, are attracting a growing number of young married couples and families.

Several married couples meet for monthly dinners at the convent.

Fluctuating family schedules can often shift monthly gatherings, but couples gather with the religious sisters for potluck-style dinners when they are able. About 12 couples are active in the group.

Mother Eunice, who is mother superior of the Bridgettine community in Columbus, also hosts a small-group book club for young mothers each month. The group's conversations center on motherhood, family and their vocation.

Callie, 25, and Nate Meyer, 27, graduates of Dublin St. Brigid of Kildare School and Columbus Bishop Watterson High School, are active at the convent.

The couple, who married in 2023 and belong to Columbus St. Mary Church in the German Village neighborhood, reside in Hilliard with their son Beau, 1.

The Meyers were introduced to the Bridgettines by Father Stash Dailey, who led the couple in marriage preparation. Father Dailey, now pastor at Worthington St. Michael the Archangel Church, invited them to join young married couples at the convent for meals and fellowship.

"Being connected to the sisters and to other couples has been incredibly enriching for our marriage," Callie affirmed. "It reminds us that we are not living our vocation in isolation."

"Seeing other marriages lived faithfully, alongside the steady witness of the sisters, continually draws us back to prayer, sacrifice and intentional love."

The couple's relationship with the consecrated sisters has been grounding. Nate described the Bridgettine community as an anchor, especially when facing worldly demands and distractions.

"Entering this season of life newly married, raising a child and building a career, it can be overwhelming," he admitted. "Having a relationship with the Bridgettines and being connected to other young Catholic families gives us both fellowship and a steady model to follow."

"Their presence helps us remain intentional about our marriage, our faith and the way we choose to build our life together."

Per Mother Eunice's recommendation, the Meyers said they plan to enthrone their home to the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

In addition to couple dinners, Nate has volunteered at the convent with a group of men, lending a hand during ongoing renovations to the compound. The men helped place a fountain, clear debris and work on the convent's walkway.

"What I also deeply admire is the level of sacrifice their vocation requires," Nate said of the sisters. "Being cloistered, they give up many of the everyday freedoms most of us take for granted in order to devote their lives to God and to praying for and serving others."

"Spending time with them gave me a new perspective on intentionality, selflessness and what it looks like to truly love others by first loving God."



Several young married couples gather at the Convent of St. Birgitta in Columbus for monthly potluck-style dinners with the Bridgettine Sisters including (from left) Mother Eunice, Sister Albina and Sister Amor.

Photos courtesy of the Hill Family



Bridgettine Sisters (from left) Jose Mary, Mother Eunice and Leticia attend the baptism of Scottie Hays (center) with parents Tanner and Avery, who are involved at the convent.

Photo courtesy of the Hays Family

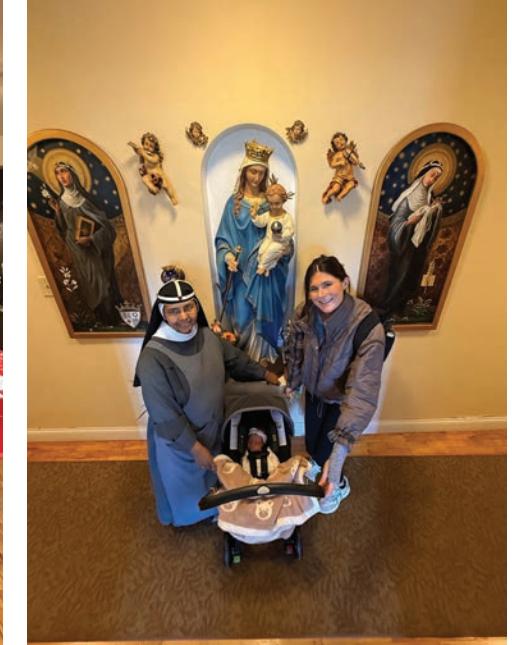


Married couple Sarah and Austin Hill and their son, John, 3, celebrate at the Convent of St. Birgitta with Sister Florianna, who now resides at the order's convent in Connecticut.

Photo courtesy of the Hill Family



Several married couples, including Nate and Callie Meyer, visit Mother Eunice (center) and the Bridgettine Sisters at their convent for monthly dinners. Photo Courtesy of the Meyer Family



Avery Hays (right) brings Scottie to visit Mother Eunice (left) and the Bridgettine Sisters at their convent shortly after giving birth to her daughter. Photo courtesy of the Hays Family

attentiveness — one where you slow down and are seen and valued."

Hill and her husband Austin, 34, are also active at the convent. The couple married in 2019 and met the Bridgettines later that year. They are parents to son John, 3, and belong to Holy Family Church.

In a unique blend of vocations, Austin attended seminary and studied for the priesthood before discerning a call to marriage. Now a husband and father, he is also active with religious sisters in consecrated life at the convent.

"Mother Eunice has been really good for the Columbus convent and community, and especially young women. She's been a really good mentor."

Six sisters currently reside at the Bridgettine convent in Columbus.

The community's primary charism is unity among Christians. Consecrated religious in the order live a simple lifestyle of prayer and hospitality.

Callie noted a profound sense of welcome and care when visiting the convent. She described the community as present and intentional.

"They are thoughtful in the smallest, most meaningful ways," she said of the religious sisters. "They make sure we are always fed, that our babies have blankets to play on, and that the space feels peaceful and comfortable for families."

"There is never a sense of inconvenience or rush. The convent feels like a true home with personal care and maternal

During the next three years, Sarah and Austin spent much time at the Bridgettine convent in prayer as they carried the cross of infertility. The Bridgettine Sisters were by the couple's side interceding.

In November 2022, the Hills welcomed their son John. "I always say that they prayed him here just as much as we did,"

Sarah said.

John, the fruit of many prayers, can now be found in the Bridgettine convent chapel on Tuesdays.

Sarah brings her young son to Adore the Blessed Sacrament each week, a tradition she has maintained since being pregnant with him. Outside of the womb, John has attended Adoration at the convent since he was about six weeks old.

"We go, and then go pray for an hour, and then he goes and gets either some ice cream or a piece of cake, and then he gets to play with the sisters for a little bit before we go home," Sarah said.

"I love that he gets to grow up there and doesn't really know any different. Most 3-year-olds wouldn't go sit in silence for an hour, but that's just part of his routine, and he knows that's what we do on Tuesdays."

Avery Hays, 25, and her husband, Tanner, 27, who reside in Plain City, also regularly meet with young married couples at the convent for dinners and developed a close relationship with the Bridgettines.

"The lives of semi-cloistered religious sisters and young married couples with children might seem very different, but the parallels run deep," Avery said. "Both vocations require discipline, humility, faith and an abundance of love. Both demand daily self-sacrifice."

"Having a relationship with the

By Dr. Perry Cahall
For The Catholic Times

Why Natural Family Planning?

The short answer to this question is “because natural family planning (NFP) is a morally, spiritually and medically healthy method of practicing responsible parenthood that enables spouses to both avoid and achieve pregnancies in a manner that cooperates with God’s design for human sexuality.” So, in order to explain “Why use NFP?” instead of other means of avoiding or achieving pregnancy, we first need to place NFP in the context of God’s design for married love. There are four truths that can help us understand this design.

First, we are not our own. St. Paul tells us this in 1 Cor 6:16-19, where he addresses sexual sin and exhorts us to glorify God in our bodies. Everything we are and everything we have comes from God, including our bodies and our sexuality. We belong to God before we belong to ourselves, which means we don’t have the right to do whatever we want with our bodies and our sexuality. This is hard for us to accept until we realize that the God to whom we belong loves us more than we could ever love ourselves, and He wants our happiness more than we could ever want it. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain by handing ourselves over to God and His plan for sexual love – He created it after all.

Second, according to God’s design, sexual intercourse, which is most properly called the marital act, is about forming a communion of persons in marriage. Human sexuality involves the entirety of the human person, and masculinity or femininity permeates the entirety of the human person in the intimate union of body and soul (CCC 2332). The complementarity of masculinity and femininity allows for a husband and wife to form a communion of persons through their bodies, which means the marital act is never just a union of bodies but an intimate communion of persons.

Third, as spouses solidify a communion of persons through the marital act, this act is about giving and receiving, not taking. Each spouse freely makes a gift of self to the other and in turn receives the other’s gift. Pope St. John Paul II said that in the marital act God has designed the human body to “speak” a “language,” and this language is the language of self-gift and

Why Natural Family Planning?

reception (*Theology of the Body* 103:4-6). The “language of the body” is supposed to be the language of unconditional love that is spoken in the wedding vows. Spouses should want to speak through their bodies – “I come here freely, to give myself to you and only you, all of me until death do us part, open to receiving children from God.”

Fourth, in God’s plan, as spouses form a communion of persons through mutual personal giving and receiving in the marital act, this act is also designed to give and receive life and love. This is the concrete measuring stick for determining the morality of any proposed sexual act. We can ascertain through reason that sexual intercourse is designed for babies and bonding, which means that any use of sexual intercourse that intentionally opposes the procreative or the unitive aspects of the act is opposed to God’s design, is not good for us, and if done knowingly and willingly is sinful.

Understanding God’s plan for sexual loving, spouses may decide to have more children or not to have more children based upon their circumstances and their responsibility to God, to each other, to their already existing children, and to society (*Humanae Vitae* 10). John Paul II notes, “If we assume that the reasons for deciding not to procreate are morally right, the moral problem of the way of acting in such a case remains” (TOB 122:3). So, the question is, how do spouses truly act responsibly as they plan their families?

First, we can say that morally wrong is “every action which, either in anticipation of the conjugal act, or in its accomplishment, or in the development of its natural consequences, proposes, whether as an end or as a means, to render procreation impossible” (HV 14). This is the definition of a contraceptive act. Further, we can say that responsible family planning means observing “the innermost structure of the conjugal act” and “the inseparable connection between the two meanings of the conjugal act” (HV 12).

NFP is the only truly responsible, and natural, method of family planning because NFP respects the nature of the marital act and the nature of the spouses. A couple using NFP to avoid a pregnancy for physical, psychological, financial or other just reasons never does anything before, during or after any marital act to make procreation impossible. Tracking the wife’s biological markers of fertility, if an NFP-using couple needs to avoid a pregnancy they abstain from the marital act during

the fertile days of the wife’s cycle. When this couple comes together in the marital act during the days that are known to be infertile, their acts of intercourse are not contraceptive (acting against conception); instead, they are simply non-conceptive, just as are acts of intercourse after a wife goes through menopause.

Additionally, NFP couples always speak the fullness of the truth of the “language of the body.” In each of their marital acts, they give all of themselves, holding nothing back. However, in an act of contracepted intercourse the bodies of spouses say, “I come here freely, to give all of myself to you, except ... my fertility, and I also don’t really want ... your fertility.” Objectively, the spouses are choosing not to give and receive the fullness of themselves. This is why John Paul II says contraception (along with extra-marital sex) falsifies the language of the body and causes the body to speak a lie (TOB 123:6).

However, many, if not most, couples use contraceptives not because they understand and reject God’s design for the marital act but simply because contraceptives are so prevalent and accepted in our culture. Let’s be clear, it’s not that couples using contraception don’t love each other. Rather, they don’t realize that they are not allowing themselves to experience the fullness of personal love that God wants for them. So, without realizing it, couples using contraception not only work against the life-giving aspect of the marital act, but they also prevent the fullness of self-giving love.

Contraception and NFP involve two different moral acts. Using NFP, a couple avoids a pregnancy by refraining from the marital act altogether, thereby reverencing the truth that each act of intercourse is designed to give and receive love and life. When NFP-using couples engage in the marital act, they maintain the intrinsic connection of each marital act to life (HV 11), and they always give the fullness of themselves to each other, including their procreative potential. Therefore, the NFP couple’s behavior does not oppose life or love. Even if a couple uses NFP to avoid pregnancies without a good reason, while they can be guilty of selfishness, even serious selfishness, they are not guilty of an act of contraception, which opposes the life-giving potential of the marital act, trying to change its nature to be what we want it to be.

Additionally, NFP is good medicine! It understands fertility as a healthy condition

and by tracking a woman’s cycle it can be used to help promote overall reproductive health, sometimes identifying anomalies in a woman’s cycle that are signs of more significant problems. In contrast, contraceptive “medicine” looks at a properly functioning system of the body, the reproductive system, and tries to make it function improperly. This is the opposite of the purpose of medicine, and we should expect negative side effects to result when we work against bodily health.

Also, it is important to realize that NFP can be used to accomplish a goal that contraception is incapable of accomplishing – achieving a pregnancy. Using NFP can help a couple identify problems with their fertility, so the couple can then seek treatments to heal any maladies and help them conceive through the marital act, as God has designed. This is very different from certain artificial reproductive technologies that seek to “produce” a child apart from the marital act (like IVF and artificial insemination), therefore severing the intrinsic connection between babies and bonding. God has pledged himself to create a human person when the biological conditions are apt for creating life. However, we can bring about those conditions according to God’s design, or not.

For those married couples who are hesitant to try NFP, you have nothing to fear. Modern methods of NFP are effective at helping couples achieve pregnancies, or if a just need arises, to avoid pregnancies as well. If thinking about using NFP, you find yourself afraid to take that step, ask yourself what is behind that fear. Is it a fear of letting go of perceived control? Is it the fear of the periodic abstinence that is necessary if you need to avoid a pregnancy? Is it a fear of not having sex on-demand? Is it a fear that not having sex-on-demand might have negative effects on your marriage? Or, is it some other fear? Be honest and sincere in identifying this fear and present it to the Lord in prayer. After all, one of the most often stated commandments in the Bible is the Lord telling us, “Be not afraid!”

There are other benefits to practicing NFP that cannot be achieved with contraception. NFP has the potential to promote better communication in marriage, it promotes pure and chaste sexual loving, it promotes the mastery of desires instead of allowing our desires to control us, it can help spouses

See NFP, Page 18

COUPLES: Bridgettines help nurture young couples’ marriage vocation, *Continued from Page 16*

Bridgettines ... we are never walking alone. We can always count on them to lift up our prayers, and their presence has deeply enriched our lives and marriage.”

The Hayses, who married in 2023 and belong to Columbus-Powell St. Peter St. Joan of Arc parish, are parents to a 4-month-old daughter, Scottie.

Avery, a 2018 graduate of Bishop Watterson, shared that the Bridgettine convent was the first place she visited after giving birth.

She is active in Mother Eunice’s small-group book club at the convent. The mother superior’s “spiritual motherhood within religious life translates beautifully into wisdom for motherhood within the family,” she noted.

For young married couples and parents, Avery described the Convent of St. Birgitta as a “place of encouragement, prayer and genuine community.”



John Hill, 3, prays with the Bridgettine Sisters in their Adoration chapel at the convent, where he comes every Tuesday.

Photo courtesy of the Hill Family



Scottie Hays, who was born in September 2025, is pictured with a white linen crown, known as the Crown of the Five Holy Wounds, part of the habit worn by Bridgettine Sisters.

Photo courtesy of the Hays Family

couples.

“We also draw continual inspiration

from the sisters and the way they live their vocation. Their vocation continually inspires and strengthens our own.”

The Bridgettine Order was founded by St. Bridget of Sweden in the 14th century. The order’s spirituality is rooted in a deep love of Christ, especially in remembrance of His sufferings.

The Bridgettine Sisters are present in 19 countries, including two convents in the United States: Columbus and Darien, Connecticut. The order’s motherhouse in Rome is the former dwelling of St. Bridget of Sweden.

To learn more or get involved in Columbus, visit www.Bridgettines.com.

For more information about National Marriage Week and World Marriage Day, visit the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ website at www.usccb.org/topics/marriage-and-family-life-ministries/national-marriage-week.

Maria's Message: Be defensive, not distracted, when driving

By Tim Puet
For The Catholic Times

A devastating tragedy that cut short the life of WBNS-TV sports reporter Dom Tiberi's 21-year-old daughter has given him the opportunity to perhaps save many other lives.

Maria Tiberi, a senior majoring in graphic design at Ohio State University, died on Sept. 17, 2013 when her car collided with the rear end of a semi-trailer truck stopped on Interstate 270. Police believe some sort of distraction led to the crash.

"They've never been able to determine exactly what happened and that's the part that kills us. She was wearing a seat belt, driving the speed limit and her phone was locked and in her purse on the back seat. But she must have been doing something that distracted her because you don't just run into the back of a semi on I-270," Tiberi said.

"The hardest thing I've ever had to do was to say goodbye to her in her room at Grant Hospital. As I tell kids today, it's something you never want to do to your parents, brothers or sisters – to have them in the place I was that night. My heart goes out to any parent who's lost a child."

"I was so lost after Maria died that I didn't know what to do. I knew that if I went back on the air, I'd have to embrace what happened. Fortunately, while I was off the air, a couple things occurred.

"The first was that I found out that car crashes are the leading cause of death in the United States for people ages 8 to 24," killing more than 3,000 people in that age group in 2023, the last year for which

complete figures are available, according to the Insurance Institute for Highway Safety. "I had no idea this was the case and I don't think many other people do," Tiberi said. "I knew this was something I needed to tell people and wanted to do it in a way they'd remember."

"Then I sat down with the late Rita Wolfe, a member of the family which at that time owned WBNS and The Columbus Dispatch, and talked about what I wanted to do. She came up with the idea that became Maria's Message," a program that Tiberi estimates has been presented to more than 500,000 people in the past 11 years and is one of two ways the Tiberi family has been honoring Maria.

The other is the Maria Tiberi Foundation, which raises money to provide driving simulators to schools, sponsor a summertime defensive driving course and present a \$1,000 scholarship annually to a senior at Maria's alma mater, Dublin Coffman High School, who wants to major in media or graphic arts programs

in college.

Tiberi said more than 500,000 people, including 170 student groups and employees of companies such as the Nationwide, State Auto and Encova insurance companies, American Electric Power and Columbia Gas of Ohio, have taken part in the Maria's Message program, a 30-minute presentation.

He said he also has received great cooperation from the Ohio State University athletics department. Head football coach Ryan Day had him present the program to his team twice and it has been viewed by members of several other teams.

"I always start the program by telling students 'If you take nothing else away from this, I want you to know that you are loved. Your life matters. People care about you. I couldn't bring my daughter home, but I want you to come home,'" he said. "It's a very painful thing to do every time, but I don't want anyone else to go through this."

"Then we have a first responder talk about what it's like to deal with the type of situation that involved Maria. We show a short video on what happened that night and end by having students take a pledge to keep their hands on the wheel and their eyes on the road and to be defensive, not distracted, when they drive."

"I tell them, 'You may think this is all just a lot of talk and this kind of thing won't happen to you, but these things do happen,'" he said. "I ask them to raise their hands if they know someone who was hurt in a car accident and usually three-fourths of them do. Then I ask if they know someone who died in a crash and probably half of them raise their hands. All of a sudden they realize it can affect them."

"We don't ask for questions afterward because we want to keep the presentation short. The best thing about what happens afterward is that so many kids just want to come up and hug me and say they're going to go home and hug their parents and brothers and sisters," Tiberi said.

"Then I get postings on social media or emails from parents who say that's what happened and their kids told them how much the program made them appreciate their families. This makes me feel good and know that what I'm doing is worth something. I don't know if it's saved anybody's life, but it's possible."

To date, the Maria Tiberi Foundation has placed 96 driving simulators at four schools, most recently at Columbus St. Charles Preparatory School, which has 21 simulators in its robotics building. The Tolles Technical Center in Plain City, Eastland-Fairfield Career and Technical Schools in Groveport and the Fort Hayes Metropolitan Education Center in



Dom Tiberi films a Maria's Message segment at Columbus St. Charles Preparatory School, where 21 driving simulators provided by the Maria Tiberi Foundation are used in its robotics building.



Simulators help users practice skills such as speed control, navigating distractions, following at a safe distance and driving in various weather conditions. Photos courtesy St. Charles

Columbus each have 25 simulators.

Because schools in Ohio no longer offer driver education classes, the simulators are available on nights and weekends and for use during school field trips.

Tiberi said the foundation donated 10 simulators for use in Springfield to help immigrants there learn to drive. Each site has an interpreter and an instructor providing free training. The foundation also is working with the Ohio Highway Patrol on expanding the program statewide.

Each simulator costs \$15,000 and has 16 lesson plans that teach skills such as speed control, navigating distractions and following at a safe distance. Participants also can practice driving in various weather conditions. Tiberi said the units have provided him with an experience realistic enough to make him forget he wasn't on the road.

The foundation's summertime defensive driving course is offered at no charge three times during the summer at the Columbus headquarters of Safelite auto glass. The daylong event is conducted by professional drivers, is for young people with 10 to 15 hours of driving experience and includes drills in wet-pavement braking, emergency lane changes and skid-pad maneuvers, plus classroom instruction.

Maria's Message has been credited with assisting in the passage of an Ohio law allowing police to stop drivers solely for "using, holding or physically supporting" a cellphone while driving. Tiberi was present when the legislation was signed in 2023 by Gov. Mike DeWine, who himself

has experienced the death of a daughter in an auto accident.

The state also has toughened requirements for young people learning to drive. Last year, the Ohio Legislature approved a law requiring anyone 21 or younger to log 50 hours of supervised driving and complete a state-approved training course before applying for a driver's license.

Tiberi, who has been at WBNS since 1981, graduated from Columbus St. Francis DeSales High School and majored in journalism and public relations and played football at Otterbein University. He and his wife, Terri, have a 35-year-old daughter, a 30-year-old son and three grandchildren.

He has gained national recognition for Maria's Message, receiving the 2023 Celebration of Service award in the large-market category from the National Association of Broadcasters. He said the program is the first of its type in the nation and believes it may still be the only one.

"I wasn't real happy with God when we lost Maria," Tiberi said. "I don't know why God does what He does, but I've come to realize that spreading Maria's message is my mission, and I know that Maria is in a better place."

"I'd never have been able to get up 170 times and share the most painful experience of my life without her acting as an angel on my shoulder."

For more information about Maria's Message, go to www.10tv.com/marias/message. To donate and to learn more about the Maria Tiberi Foundation, go to www.mariatiberifoundation.org.

NFP: Why Natural Family Planning, *Continued from Page 17*

love each other as persons and not treat each other as objects for sexual satisfaction, it can be used to knowingly and consciously co-create a child with God, and it can open couples up to more holistic intimacy beyond sexual intimacy, like spiritual, intellectual, emotional and broader physical intimacy. NFP also promotes reverence for God, for God's design for sexual love, and for each other.

We need to remember that loving in a fallen world will always involve effort and sacrifice. So, truly responsible parenthood can never be effort free. Before a couple decides to avoid a pregnancy, it would be good for them to go before Jesus in prayer and say, "Dear Jesus, we don't think we can

welcome another child into the world right now because ..." What follows the "because" will help to clarify whether or not the couple is being generous enough with the Lord. The Lord will not ask anything of us that we cannot bear. We need to remember that God's moral laws are for our happiness. In effect, he provides us with instructions for the healthy functioning of our humanity. Only by following His instructions, which are instructions of love, can we realize the deepest desires of our hearts – hence, this is, "Why NFP?"

Perry Cahall, Ph.D., is the Academic Dean, Theology, and Dean of Institutional Planning, Assessment and Accreditation at the Pontifical College Josephinum.

ADORATION: Parishes offer times during Lent, *Continued from Page 13*

Waverly St. Mary, Queen of the Missions – Wednesdays, 5 to 6 p.m.

West Jefferson Sts. Simon & Jude – Tuesdays, 5 to 5:45 p.m.; First Fridays, 9 a.m. to 6 p.m.; Saturdays, 3:30 to 4 p.m.

Westerville St. Paul the Apostle – Mondays through Fridays, 9 a.m. to 9 p.m. in chapel

Worthington St. Michael the Archangel – 9 a.m. to 11 p.m. Mondays and 5 a.m. Tuesdays to 9 p.m. Fridays in chapel

Zanesville St. Nicholas – First Fridays, 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m.

Zanesville St. Thomas Aquinas – Wednesdays, 9:30 a.m. to 9 p.m. in chapel

Zoar Holy Trinity – Wednesdays, 7 to 8 p.m.

Mercedarian brother installed as lector

Brother Kevin Cush, O. de M., of the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy was installed as a lector on Saturday, Jan. 24 at Columbus Holy Family Church during the parish's 9 a.m. Mass.

The Mass was celebrated by Father Matthew Phelan, O. de M., vicar provincial of the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy in the United States whose members are commonly known as the Mercedarian Friars. Father Phelan serves as pastor at Our Lady of Lourdes parish in Philadelphia.

Also present for the Mass were Mercedarian Fathers Michael Donovan, O. de M., pastor at Holy Family Church, and Daniel Bowen, O. de M., the order's vocation director. Servers included Seamus O'Malley, Joseph Rudolph and Chris Yankay.

Brother Kevin, 26, processed into Holy Family Church on Jan. 24 with the Mercedarian Friars and was called forward during Mass by Father Phelan.

A Bible was given to the Mass' celebrant. Brother Kevin knelt before Father Phelan, who presented him the Sacred Scriptures. Receiving the Bible symbolized reception of the Ministry of Lector.

A lector is appointed to read the Sacred

LOCAL NEWS AND EVENTS

Rite of Election to be held at two locations

The Rite of Election will be celebrated this year on Sunday, Feb. 22, the First Sunday of Lent, by Bishop Earl Fernandes.

The rite will be held at two locations: Columbus St. Catharine of Siena Church at 1:30 p.m. in English and 4 p.m. in Spanish at Columbus Christ the King Church.

The rite is celebrated for individuals, known as catechumens, who are unbaptized and preparing to receive the Church's three sacraments of initiation: Baptism, Confirmation and the Eucharist.

Catechumens will enter the Church on Saturday, April 4, the date of the Easter Vigil this year.

The Rite of Election concludes a formation period in the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults (OCIA) known as the catechumenate stage. The rite begins a final preparation period for individuals preparing to receive the sacraments of initiation.

During the Rite of Election, the director of OCIA, or designee, from the parish is present with the catechumens preparing to receive the sacraments.

OCIA directors are called forward during the Rite of Election by Bishop Fernandes to read aloud the names of the catechumens, formally presenting them to the bishop. Catechumens stand when their name is called.

The bishop elects, or chooses, the catechumens to enter into a final preparation period. Each OCIA director places a sheet with the catechumens' names in the Book of the Elect.

After the rite, a catechumen is known as an elect.

The elect will begin a period of purification and enlightenment, focused on spiritual preparation, interior reflection and repentance, before receiving the sacraments of initiation six weeks later.

Baptized Christians who are not Catholic but seeking full communion with the Church through the sacraments of the Eucharist and/or Confirmation are known as candidates. Calling the Candidates to Continuing Conversion is an optional rite celebrated for baptized Christians typically at the parish level.

Irish organizations sponsor summer student trip

Students who will be graduating from

Scriptures, with the exception of the gospels, during Mass and other sacred liturgies.

Lectors can recite responsorial psalms in the absence of a cantor and read the Prayers of the Faithful, or intentions. Brother Kevin recited the Prayers of the Faithful during Mass after receiving the ministry.

Lectors also assume responsibility to instruct the faithful to read from Scripture during liturgies.

Brother Kevin, a native of northeast Ohio, is a seminarian at the Pontifical College Josephinum. He professed his first vows at Holy Family Church in August 2023.

The Mercedarian Friars, founded in 1218 by St. Peter Nolasco, are an international community of priests and brothers. Members live lives of prayer and communal fraternity based on the Rule of St. Augustine.

Mercedarians take traditional vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, and an additional fourth vow to give oneself up for individuals whose faith is in danger. Primary ministries include parochial (parish) service, education, and hospital and prison chaplaincy.

The order has nine provinces established worldwide: Rome, Argentina, Brazil, Chile,



Brother Kevin Cush kneels before Father Matthew H. Phelan, O. De M., Vicar-Provincial of the Order of the Blessed Virgin Mary of Mercy (Mercedarian Friars) in the USA, on Saturday, Jan. 24 at Columbus Holy Family Church as he has received the Ministry of Lector. Father Phelan is flanked by Father Michael Donovan, O. De M. (foreground), pastor at Holy Family, and Father Daniel Bowen, O. de M. (partially hidden). The book bearer is server Chris Yankay. CT photo by Ken Snow

Ecuador, Peru, Mexico and two in Spain. The United States vicariate, which falls under the Roman province, includes locations in

Philadelphia; St. Petersburg, Florida; Le Roy, New York; Cleveland; and Columbus.

LOCAL NEWS AND EVENTS

eight through 12th grades this year are invited to apply for a 26-day summer program in Ireland designed to introduce North American students to the characteristics and qualities of Irish life.

Locally, the Daughters of Erin, the Shamrock Club and the Greater Columbus Irish Cultural Foundation will combine to sponsor one scholarship to what is known as the Irish Life Experience. The event will take place from June 28 to July 23 and include classes, workshops and tours in locations throughout Ireland.

The sponsoring organizations will pay for round-trip airfare from Boston to Ireland, room and board, tuition, group tours, transportation and activities for the winning student. Personal items such as souvenirs and snacks are not included. The student's family will be responsible for paying for transportation to and from Columbus and Boston.

There will occasionally be optional activities offered at an additional cost, such as amusement park rides, concerts and movies.

Students applying for the program must be recommended by a member of one of seven Irish-related organizations in central Ohio: the Ancient Order of Hibernians Patrick Pearse Division, Columbus Comhaltas, Daughters of Erin, Emerald Society of Columbus, Greater Columbus Irish Cultural Foundation, Ladies Ancient Order of Hibernians, and Shamrock Club of Columbus.

Interested students should not apply for the program online. Instead, contact the Daughters of Erin at daughtersoferin@gmail.com, for application materials. These will include an application form, school transcript and recommendations from school counselors and teachers.

The deadline to apply is Wednesday, April 1. Applicants will be contacted to schedule an interview with the selection committee.

For more information, go to www.irishlifeexperience.com.

Dominican Learning Center awarded grant from Foundation

The Dominican Learning Center, a founding ministry of the Dominican Sisters of Peace, has received a \$6,000 grant

from the Catholic Foundation to help support adult learners in the 2025-2026 academic year.

The center will use the money as needed to provide basic academic skills through June for people learning the English language, to conduct training and in-service programs for volunteer teachers and to provide them with the materials needed.

The center conducts learning programs at its office at 672 S. 3rd St., Columbus and seven Columbus Catholic churches – St. Peter/St. Joan of Arc, St. James the Less, St. Thomas the Apostle (Martin de Porres Center), St. Mary Magdalene (Bishop Ready High School), St. Cecilia, Christ the King (All Saints Academy) and St. Josephine Bakhita.

The center has multiple success stories each academic year that show its positive impact on learners. At least 80 percent of learners have shown an improvement in reading and listening skills as measured by pre- and post-testing. The end of the year becomes a time of celebration at the partner parishes as learners are recognized and various cultures celebrate achievements together.

Franciscan University to serve as pilgrimage site

Franciscan University of Steubenville will serve as a pilgrimage site for the 2026 Jubilee Year of St. Francis of Assisi, declared by Pope Leo XIV in honor of the 800th anniversary of the saint's death.

The pope's declaration said that during the year, the faithful are invited to "follow the example of the Saint of Assisi, becoming models of holiness of life and constant witnesses of peace."

Father Dave Pivonka, TOR, university president, said three chapels at the university – the Portiuncula Chapel, a model of the chapel St. Francis rebuilt in Assisi; the recently renovated Christ the King Chapel, and the Sacred Heart Chapel in the university's new Christ the Teacher academic building – will serve as pilgrimage destinations.

Pilgrims who fulfill conditions outlined by the Church at these sites may receive the special indulgence granted for the Jubilee.

The university will host the "Sister

Death – Gate of Life" conference from Thursday to Saturday, Nov. 5 to 7, marking the anniversary of St. Francis' death.

The event will feature keynote presentations by distinguished Franciscan scholars including Father J. A. Wayne Hellmann, OFM Conv; Father Thomas A. Piolata, OFM Cap; and Sister Margaret Carney, OFS, and will include discussions on St. Francis' life and legacy, Franciscan tradition, and Catholic and Franciscan views on health care, care for the dying and enduring Christian hope.

Dominican Sisters of Peace offer 'Zoom and See' retreat

The Dominican Sisters of Peace will host a Lenten discernment retreat on Friday and Saturday, Feb. 27 and 28 via the Zoom videoconference platform.

The theme of the retreat will be "Beyond Giving Things Up." It is open to single Catholic women ages 18 to 45 who are contemplating a religious life. It will be led by Sister Francine Schwarzenberger, OP, a spiritual director and liturgy coordinator at the Heartland Spiritual Center in Great Bend, Kansas.

The retreat is designed to be a time when those discerning a religious vocation can learn about life as a sister and experience Lent in a new way. It will offer ways to turn from superficial Lenten practices and find new ways to receive the gifts of Lent and enter a deeper relationship with God.

Zoom sessions from 6 to 8 p.m. Friday and 1 to 3:30 p.m. Saturday will cover topics including how to reflect and discern and the pillars of Dominican life – prayer, service, community and study.

Those who attend will be able to ask questions of the sisters and others involved in the retreat. They can also arrange time to talk with a sister one-on-one during and after the retreat.

To find out more and to register, contact Sister Ana Gonzalez at (475) 224.0519 or ana.gonzalez@oppeace.org. The Dominican Sisters of Peace currently have five women in formation for consecrated religious life.

Fifth Sunday of Ordinary Time Year A

Christ's light overpowers the world's darkness through us

Isaiah 58:7-10
Psalm 112:4-5, 6-7, 8-9
1 Corinthians 2:1-5
Matthew 5:13-16

A little light goes a long way.

We have started to notice the days lengthening, finally, as the Church starts to turn her gaze from the dim manger scene of Christmas to the resplendent empty grave at Easter. Entering into the gloom of human history at its bleakest point, during the darkest time of the year in the blank dead of midnight, the Messiah clearly establishes His holy identity: "I am the light of the world, says the Lord." In an undreamable turn, He then tells us plainly, "You are the light of the world."

We Christians derive our own fundamental nature from Christ's. It comprises our whole existence and manner of being. He says, "whoever follows me will have the light of life."

We are to imitate Him in a substantial way, not merely through external morality but from our interior essence that radiates out into holy activity, in everything from prayer to charity: "Just so, your light must shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your heavenly Father."

That light is diffusive of itself, never dimming within, but always emanating out from

its original core, which is the Lord. It is not shared with us merely for its own sake, and it is certainly not intended to stop at us. A lamp "is set on a lampstand, where it gives light to all in the house," that is, the Church, this collection of illuminated homes where enlightened souls dwell, "A city set on a mountain." Through that elevated beacon that "cannot be hidden," the whole world and everything in it gets elucidated.

We don't properly speak of the "speed of darkness," although perhaps we must reckon it equivalent to the rate of light's receding. That doesn't mean they're equal. Against all dualistic notions of reality both ancient and contemporary, light and dark and the good and evil they symbolize don't exist as some kind of well-matched rivals.

Anybody with a match in an unlit, enclosed room must admit his own feeble helplessness, but also the uncontrollable power of the force he bears over the shadows that envelop him. St. Paul humbly acknowledges his inadequacies: "I came to you in weakness and fear and much trembling, and my message and my proclamation were not with persuasive words of wisdom." He doesn't contend with some cold obsidian evil within but rather the gray blasé that needs the blaze of grace. Thus, he offers us the model of drawing the firepower of our noble actions from their ultimate source, "with a demonstration of Spirit



SCRIPTURE READINGS

Father Tyron Tomson

Father Tyron Tomson is a priest of the Diocese of Columbus pursuing a Licentiate in Sacred Scripture in Rome.

and power, so that your faith might rest not on human wisdom but on the power of God."

Isaiah reiterates an admonition for God's good works to permeate throughout our lives when he instructs us: "Share your bread with the hungry, shelter the oppressed and the homeless; clothe the naked when you see them, and do not turn your back on your own" and to "remove from your midst oppression, false accusation and malicious speech." That sentiment is reiterated by the Psalmist: "Light shines through the darkness

for the upright; he is gracious and merciful and just. Well for the man who is gracious and lends, who conducts his affairs with justice ... Lavishly he gives to the poor; his justice shall endure forever." Virtue, living clear and free in the righteousness of God, is directly linked to walking in the white bright noonday sun of His blessing.

Someone reading this right now may be in a dark cloud of despair. It threatens us all at one point or another, from sin to depression or even just plain old bad days. Know this: Christ was born at midnight for you. He arose from the black tomb for you. He established His luminous Church for you. He sends fellow light-bearing Christians out for you. He has prepared a radiant, holy Heaven for you.

Each suffering soul has been guaranteed by the authority of Sacred Scripture: "your wound shall quickly be healed; your vindication shall go before you, and the glory of the Lord shall be your rear guard. Then you shall call, and the Lord will answer, you shall cry for help, and He will say: Here I am!" That's the Lord speaking, who first created the universe out of the empty void, who further promises: "Then your light shall break forth like the dawn, and ... then light shall rise for you in the darkness, and the gloom shall become for you like midday."

Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time Year A

Love your neighbor ... love your enemy synthesizes Christ's message

Sirach 15:15-20
Psalm 119:1-2, 4-5, 17-18, 33-34
1 Corinthians 2:6-10
Matthew 5:17-37

We are about to close the first part of Ordinary Time, this special period between the end of the Christmas season and the beginning of Lent. "The Christmas-Epiphany Mystery is the celebration of the transmission of divine light" (Keating, Thomas, *The Mystery of Christ: The Liturgy as Spiritual Experience*, Element, 1991, 13). The current period is a continuation of the manifestation of the Epiphany so that we get to see the beginning of Jesus' public ministry and, hence, appreciate how the first rays of the "Sun from on High" (Lk 1:78) begin to illuminate, enlighten, and warm humankind.

Today's Gospel passage provides us with a sample of how deep that Light wants to penetrate: "Indeed, the word of God is living and effective, sharper than any two-edged sword, penetrating even between soul and spirit, joints and marrow, and able to discern reflections and thoughts of the heart" (Heb 4:12).

Today's passage is the first part of what is sometimes called "the antitheses" (six in total), although this term may be a bit of a misnomer. The entire "antitheses" section includes what belongs to the next Sunday in Ordinary Time that will not be read this year; hence, I will include it in this consideration. This section of the Gospel presents Jesus per-

fecting the ancient moral code, "the Law and the Prophets," in a variety of ways.

Jesus says that, "unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." How can we achieve a righteousness superior to that of the scribes and Pharisees, who were so meticulous in their observance of the Law? The evangelist displays for us a set of instructions that show the change Jesus wants to accomplish in several areas (keep in mind the presentation of the commandments in Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5). In today's passage, the focus is on the relationship with our neighbor. Christ addresses the precepts of the Old Law, considering the full range of our relationships with our neighbor in order to proceed to internalize the law at the deepest levels of the heart.

We can consider two levels in Christ's teaching: the first concerns our attitude toward our neighbor in terms of respecting them and avoiding harming them; the second, our attitude when our neighbor harms us.

At the first level, Christ --, taking the cue from three commandments ("you shall not kill, you shall not commit adultery, and you shall not lie") --, brings the Law and the Prophets to perfection in three ways: first, by pointing out the authentic meaning of the text, the deeper meaning: not only must we not kill our neighbor, but we must also avoid any act that harms them in any way, even in-



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.

sults and curses; second, by teaching to avoid not only sin, but even what an occasion of sin is ("if your right eye ... if your right hand ..."); and third, by establishing stricter limits to prevent falling into sin ("do not swear at all ..."). Thus, the fifth, sixth, and ninth, and eighth commandments are addressed.

At the second level, the Old Law is evidently transcended. It becomes clearer how the teaching, which began with negative precepts ("you shall not do this ..."), moves toward

positive precepts that demand exceeding justice (the term for holiness in the Gospel.) First, Christ advises no retaliation at all. Then, He not only does not bother to mention the commandment "You shall not steal," nor what is said about coveting the possessions of others, but He goes further, teaching not to covet even one's own possessions ("give him the cloak as well ... go with him two miles ..."). Jesus proposes a "super-justice," necessary to overcome the countless difficulties that would arise from a supposedly strict justice in societal life. To achieve this, we must be ready to renounce even our own rights (NB: the "super-justice" that Jesus proposes here must not be understood as denying the claim for legitimate rights, especially the defense of the poor and unprotected). Thus, the seventh and tenth commandments are addressed.

Christ's teaching reaches its culmination with the six and final antithesis ("love your neighbor ... love your enemy ...") that synthesizes everything that is said: The sublime model is ultimately found in the heavenly Father who "makes his sun rise on the bad and the good." Therefore, he concludes, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect" (v. 48).

Hence, as we are about to begin the season of Lent, today's Gospel very fittingly gives us input to make a deep examination of our lives in order to see how much we strive to follow the path that Jesus opened for us with His own life.

THE WEEKDAY BIBLE READINGS

2-9/2-14	MONDAY	THURSDAY	2-2/2-7	MONDAY	Matthew 6:1-6,16-18
1 Kings 8:1-7,9-13		1 Kings 11:4-13	James 1:1-11		
Psalm 132:6-7,8-10		Psalm 106:3-4,35-36,37,40	Psalm 119:67,68,71,72,75,76	Deuteronomy 30:15-20	
Mark 6:53-56		Mark 7:24-30	Mark 8:11-13	Psalm 1:1-2,3,4,6	
TUESDAY		FRIDAY	TUESDAY	FRIDAY	
1 Kings 8:22-23,27-30		1 Kings 11:29-32;12:19	James 1:12-18	Isaiah 58:1-9a	
Psalm 84:3,4,5,10,11		Psalm 81:10-11ab;12:13,14-15	Psalm 94:12-13a,14-15,18-19	Psalm 51:3-4,5-6ab,18-19	
Mark 7:1-13		Mark 7:31-37	Mark 8:14-21	Matthew 9:14-15	
WEDNESDAY		SATURDAY	WEDNESDAY	SATURDAY	
1 Kings 10:1-10		1 Kings 12:26-32;13:33-34	Joel 2:12-18	Isaiah 58:9b-14	
Psalm 37:5-6,30-31,39-40		Psalm 106:6-7ab,19-20,21-22	Psalm 1:3-4,5-6ab,12-13,14,17	Psalm 86:1-2,3-4,5-6	
Mark 7:14-23		Mark 8:1-10	2 Corinthians 5:20-6:2	Luke 5:27-32	

DIOCESAN WEEKLY RADIO AND TELEVISION:

Mass Schedule: Weeks of February 8 and 15

DAILY MASS

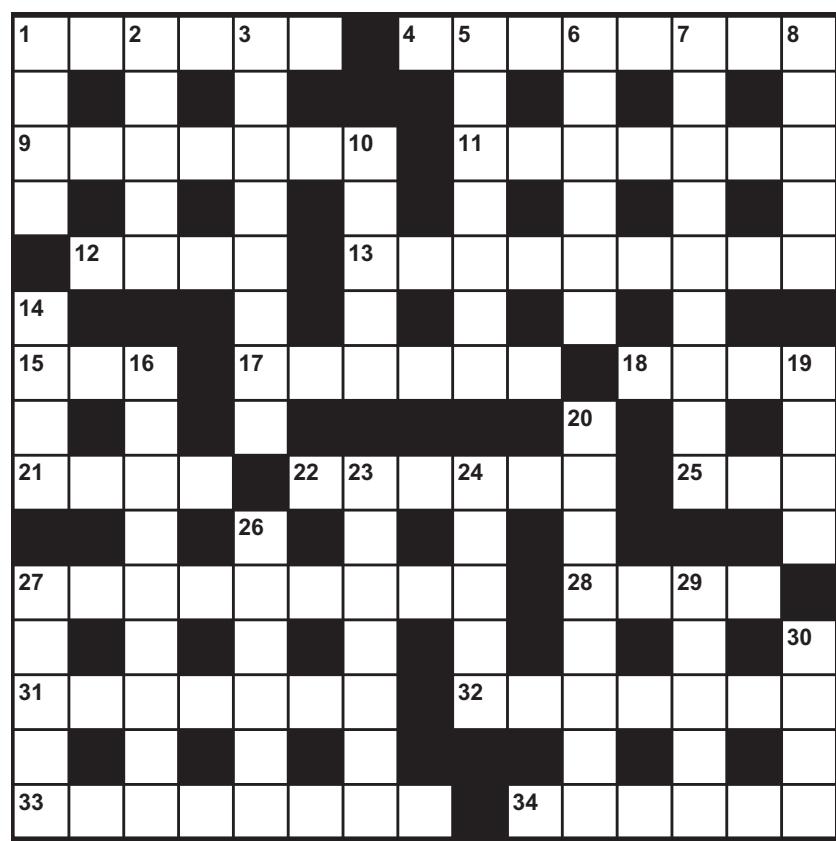
8 a.m., Our Lady of the Angels Monastery in Birmingham, Ala. (Encores at noon, 7 p.m. and midnight). See EWTN above; and on LifeTV (Channel 113, Ada, Logan, Millersburg, Murray City, Washington C.H.; Channel 125, Marion, Newark, Newcomerstown and New Philadelphia; Channel 207, Zanesville); 8 p.m., St.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

12:05 p.m. weekdays, 8 a.m. Saturdays, Mass from Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral on St. Gabriel Radio (AM 820), Columbus, and at www.stgabrielradio.com and diocesan website, www.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.stannmary.org); Delaware St. Mary (www.delawarestmary.org); Sunbury St. John Neumann (www.saintjohnsunbury.org); and Columbus Immaculate Conception (www.icclos.org). Check your parish website for additional information.

We pray the propers for Weeks I and II of the Liturgy of the Hours

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ACROSS

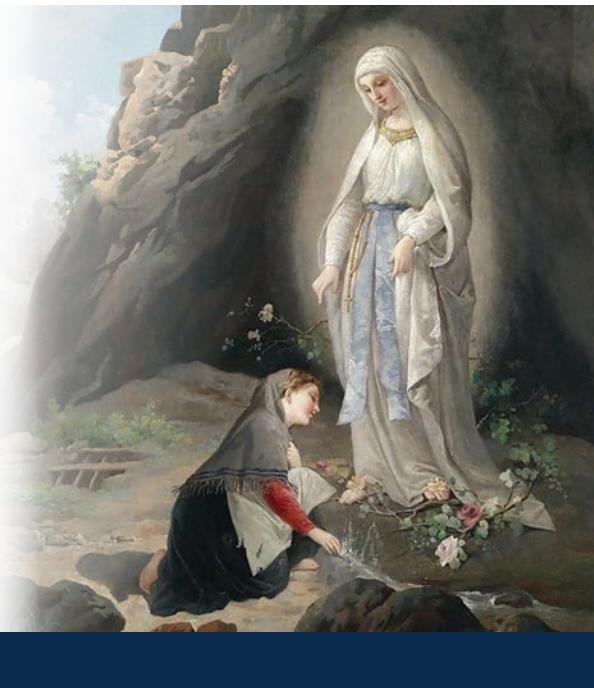
1 Legend says St. George was this, vis-à-vis a dragon
 4 City to which Paul was traveling when he was blinded
 9 There are three from John
 11 Woman saved by Daniel
 12 Second word of a Latin hymn
 13 Our Lady of _____
 15 Father of Jehoshaphat
 17 The Crown of _____
 18 Brought by a wise man
 21 According to Psalms, he says there is no God
 22 Patron saint of jewelers
 25 Bk. of the Pentateuch
 27 The Holy Land
 28 Prophet in Luke
 31 Supreme _____
 32 Thomas Aquinas is patron saint of these Catholic institutions
 33 These commemorate Jesus' crucifixion
 34 Longest of the prophetic books of the Old Testament

DOWN

1 "You are the _____ of the earth" (Mt 5:13)
 2 The table
 3 Bread and Wine
 5 Fast and _____
 6 Patron saint of Scandinavia
 7 Jesus healed his servant
 8 Garden tempter
 10 Third of HIS
 14 The golden _____
 16 Got a toothache? Try this saint
 19 Ordinary _____
 20 A high priest
 23 Author of Black Like Me who became a Third Order Carmelite
 24 Abbr. for two NT epistles
 26 Italian city of St. Clare
 27 John, Paul and John Paul
 29 She renamed herself Mara
 30 OT book about a Jewish heroine

Upcoming Feast Days

2-08 St. Josephine Bakhita
 2-11 Our Lady of Lourdes
 2-11 World Day of the Sick
 2-17 Mardi Gras
 2-18 Ash Wednesday



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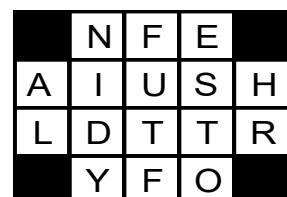
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Words of Wisdom

by Pat Battaglia, aka Dr. Fun

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Irene "Susie" Johnson

Funeral arrangements will be announced later for Irene "Susie" Johnson, 81, who died Tuesday, Jan. 6.

She was born on Nov. 2, 1944 in Columbus to Rocky and Rose (Fandauzzi) DeMatteo and was a graduate of Columbus St. Joseph Academy in 1962 and the University of Dayton.

Sister Doris Regan, OP

Funeral Mass for Sister Doris Regan, OP, 89, who died Wednesday, Jan. 14 at the Mohun Health Care Center, was celebrated Thursday, Jan. 29 at the Motherhouse of the Dominican Sisters of Peace. Burial was at St. Joseph Cemetery, Columbus.

She was born on May 21, 1936 in Plainfield, New Jersey to Joseph and Mary Catherine (Cella) Regan.

She received a Bachelor of Arts degree in Latin and history from the College of St.

CROSSWORD SOLUTION



She was a teacher at Columbus Holy Family and Reynoldsburg St. Pius X schools and also taught in Athens.

She was preceded in death by her parents and her husband, Danny. Survivors include a son, Andrew (Jennifer); a daughter, Erin (Ahmed Ali); brothers, John and David; a grandson and a granddaughter.

Mary of the Springs (now Ohio Dominican University) in 1960, a Master of Arts degree in art from the Catholic University of America in 1972 and certificates in spiritual direction, administration and clinical pastoral education.

She entered the congregation of the Dominican Sisters of St. Mary of the Springs (now the Dominican Sisters of Peace) in 1956 and professed her vows on July 9, 1958, taking the name Sister Sheila.

In the Diocese of Columbus, she was a teacher at Columbus Holy Spirit School (1959-1960), Columbus St. Mary of the Springs Academy (1960-1961, 1962-1963) and Columbus Bishop Watterson High School (1961-1962). She also taught in the Diocese of Steubenville and was an administrator for 24 years at Northwest Catholic High School in West Hartford, Connecticut.

She then served for 28 years in her congregation's Latin American missions – eight years in Bolivia, one year in Peru and 19 years in Honduras. She returned in 2017 to Columbus, where she was a volunteer in the Motherhouse before becoming a resident of the Mohun center in 2022.

She was preceded in death by her parents; a brother, Father Richard Regan, SJ; and a sister Joan Sheridan. She is survived by nieces and nephews.



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Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles Parish, Chillicothe

CARANNA, Charles Anthony "Chuck," 83, Jan. 17

St. Andrew Church, Columbus

CIANCETTA, Rita A. (Marut), 69, Jan. 8

St. Brendan Church, Hilliard

CLARK, Dean, 93, Jan. 23

Christ the King Church, Columbus

CLARKE, Nancy E., 93, Jan. 10

St. Peter St. Joan of Arc Parish, Columbus-Powell

FINK, Michael Eugene, 67, Jan. 27

St. Patrick Church, Junction City

GABLE, M. Adelaide (Nash), 95, Jan. 26

St. Rose of Lima Church, New Lexington

HAHN, Sharon, 89, Jan. 11

St. Joseph Church, Sugar Grove

IRWIN, James Eugene, 82, Jan. 12

Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles Parish, Chillicothe

KING, Rosetta Mae, 95, Jan. 23

Our Lady, Queen of Apostles Parish, Chillicothe

KOLATTUKUDY, Pappachan, 88, Jan. 4

St. Andrew Church, Columbus

KRUG, Mary Ann, 90, Jan. 15

Our Lady, Queen of the Apostles Parish, Chillicothe

MAISCH, Daniel Paul "Potts," 68, Jan. 22

St. Paul the Apostle Church, Westerville

O'CONNOR, James F., 90, Jan. 15

St. Patrick Church, Columbus

SCALLY, John Joseph, 55, Jan. 14

St. Joseph Church, Plain City

SHERLOCK, Ralph Michael "Mike," 78, Jan. 22

St. Rose of Lima Church, New Lexington

SPELLACY, Marjorie Ann, 91, Jan. 17

St. Andrew Church, Columbus

TRUE, Steven Lee, 62, Jan. 22

Our Lady, Queen of Apostles Parish, Chillicothe

Deacon Daniel Murray

Funeral Mass for retired Deacon Daniel Murray, 78, who died Friday, Jan. 30, was celebrated Thursday, Feb. 6 at Sunbury St. John Neumann Church. Burial was at St. Joseph Cemetery, Columbus.

Deacon Murray was ordained a deacon of the Diocese of Steubenville on Nov. 10, 2012 in Steubenville Holy Name Cathedral by Bishop Jeffrey Monforton. He served in the consortium of Athens St. Paul, Athens Christ the King and Pomeroy Sacred Heart churches before moving to Sunbury in 2019. He retired from active ministry in 2021.

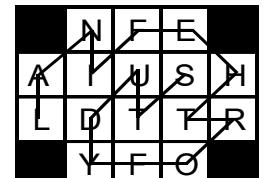
He was born in Columbus on Dec. 10, 1947 to Paul and Anne Murray and was a member of the last graduating class of Columbus Aquinas High School in 1965. He earned a Bachelor's degree from the former Columbus St. Charles College and

a Master's degree in education from Ohio State University.

He spent most of his career as an educator, serving at various times as a middle school English and social studies teacher, football coach, musical director, administrator and intervention specialist in many southeast Ohio districts, including Athens, Newcomerstown, Vinton County and Nelsonville-York. He also organized tournaments in softball, hockey and basketball in the Athens area.

He was preceded in death by his parents, brothers, Hugh and Brian; and sister, Margaret. Survivors include his wife, Lisa; son, Sean (Josie); daughters, Colleen (Rich) Ruiz and Jennifer (Brad) Barga; brother, Jim (Gertrude); sister, Terry (Rick) Paulette; and 10 grandchildren.

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Should I refrain from Communion?

Dear Father,

I would like to know more about situations in which a person should not receive Holy Communion. I know that a person should not receive when a mortal sin has been committed and has not yet gone to confession, but what constitutes a mortal sin? Also, for what reasons might a person refrain from receiving Communion if he/she has not committed a major sin?

-Peter

Dear Peter,

Mortal sin impedes a person from receiving Holy Communion because mortal sin breaks friendship with God. The sacrament of penance (aka, Confession, Reconciliation) restores that friendship. The sacrament was instituted by Christ for just that purpose. The sacrament of Confession is not superfluous when it comes to mortal sin.

Mortal sin has three main components: the deed or omission is grave, and there is full knowledge and deliberate consent to the act (or omission). If one of these three is missing, then the sin is venial. St. Thomas Aquinas describes venial sin as a disorder, though not opposed to the love of God and neighbor, such as a thoughtless word. Mortal sin, he says, "is incompatible with the charity" for God and neighbor.

Grave matter, according to the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (no. 1858), "is specified by the Ten Commandments." To have full knowledge means that one knows that the deed or omission is sinful. To give deliberate consent means that one makes a choice for something seriously sinful. "Feigned

ignorance and hardness of heart do not diminish, but rather increase, the voluntary character of a sin" (no. 1859).

Some examples illustrate the three aspects of a mortal sin. To knowingly and deliberately chop down my neighbor's valuable oak tree meets the criteria for a mortal sin. However, if I do this while sleepwalking, with no awareness of what I am doing, it is not a mortal sin because I had no knowledge of it. I cannot pretend, though, to have been sleepwalking in order to escape divine justice.

Or, a parent who neglects the religious education of his/her child commits a mortal sin because religious education is a grave matter. This egregious neglect is an omission. It is grave because it affects the child's soul and eternal life. Raising a child involves much more than simply putting food on the table and clothes on her back.

To receive Holy Communion, that is, to feast on the Body and Blood, soul and divinity of Christ, while in the state of mortal sin is to pretend that sin is not offensive to God. It is, in fact, another serious sin. Repenting of serious sin involves much more than a simple "I'm sorry." Reparations are required.

If a husband seriously offends his wife, he owes her much more than a quick apology. The reparation would include a healing conversation, including a heartfelt appeal for forgiveness, with the intention of not repeating the offense.

God has given us the means of making proper reparation through the sacrament of penance. By going to Confession, God sets right what we have destroyed. He makes us capable of loving him again.

Going to Confession involves confessing



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.

our sins to God through the priest, expressing sorrow for them, receiving the grace of forgiveness through the priest's absolution and carrying out the reparation or penance the priest assigns.

It may happen that a person is in doubt about whether a sin is mortal. In this situation, a person is encouraged to make an act of sorrow and to receive Communion. One is encouraged to bring this up with a priest in one's next regular confession so as to receive pastoral advice about the matter.

However, abstaining from Holy Communion when one is not in the state of mortal sin is quite a different issue. It

is generally not healthy to abstain from Communion when there is no good reason.

This is because we need the spiritual nourishment that Communion provides. It is the "bread of life" that sustains us as we journey to our ultimate end, heaven. Holy Communion is the food on earth that prepares us for the banquet of eternal union with the Blessed Trinity after this earthly life.

There is a wrong-headed notion that fasting from the Eucharist helps to cultivate reverence or a desire for the Blessed Sacrament due to its absence. Some have done this for several weeks at a time, including Sundays. Imagine a mother saying to her children: "I'm going to stay away from you for several weeks so that I miss you more." How absurd!

While reception of Holy Communion is not at all a requirement for Sundays, or any day, for that matter, receiving Communion is important for the health of our souls. Our Lord Jesus deeply desires intimate communion.

Periodic abstinence from Communion is not a Catholic practice and is not encouraged. While Lent is a time for fasting and abstinence from natural food and drink, it does not include the spiritual food of the Eucharist. Our Mother, the Church, even insists that every Catholic is obliged to partake of the Sacred Feast at least once a year.

If a person is in mortal sin: go to Confession, then Communion. Otherwise, always prepare for a good Holy Communion ... and heaven. *Questions about the sacraments should be sent to sacraments101@columbuscatholic.org.*

The example of Jesus



A SHEPHERD'S CARE

Father Thomas Buffer

Father Thomas Buffer is the pastor at Columbus St. Cecilia Church.

of Jesus."

How can the authentic Catholic tradition help us respond to the teaching that Jesus worked miracles as a man to give us an example to imitate?

Let's go back to what Pope Leo said: "The greatest mistake we can make as Christians is ... 'to claim that Christ's grace consists in his example and not in the gift of his person.'"

When St. Augustine said this, he was opposing Julian of Eclanum. He accused Julian of teaching that someone could be saved by his own effort by imitating the virtues of Christ:

"You want the grace of Christ to be found in his example, not in his gift, saying that men are made just by the imitation of Christ, not by the giving of the Holy Spirit ... If justice comes from the imitation of the just, Christ died for nothing, because there were just men before him too, who can be imitated by those who wish to be just."

Of course, neither St. Augustine nor Pope Leo was responding to the NAR teaching that Christ worked miracles as a man to give us an example to follow. Nevertheless, their words remind us that Christ brings a unique grace to the human race because he is uniquely God and man, the incarnate Word, "God who gives himself to us."

The purpose of the Incarnation was not to

offer an example so that we could perform greater miracles than Christ's, or become just by imitating his matchless virtues, but to show us God doing something that humans could not: bringing the unmerited gift of salvation to the human race. The Incarnation was the supreme example of God's grace at work: the Son of God humbled himself to be born of the Virgin.

And this is how Christians can imitate the example of Jesus. In fact, there is only one place in the Gospels where Jesus said that he was giving us an example to follow. It involved no miracle or mighty deed. It is not John 14:12 but John 13:15. After Jesus washed his disciples' feet during the Last Supper, he said, "I have given you an example, that you also should do just as I have done to you."

St. Peter likewise urged his flock to follow the example of Jesus, not by working miracles but by bearing suffering patiently: "Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1 Pt 2:21).

Speaking of the imitation of Christ, the

Catechism of the Catholic Church calls for humble service, not mighty deeds:

459 The Word became flesh to be our model of holiness: "Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me." ... Jesus is the model for the Beatitudes and the norm of the new law: "Love one another as I have loved you." This love implies an effective offering of oneself, after his example.

520 In all of his life Jesus presents himself as our model. ... In humbling himself, he has given us an example to imitate, through his prayer he draws us to pray, and by his poverty he calls us to accept freely the privation and persecutions that may come our way.

Christians should imitate the Lord Jesus not by attempting to work miracles but by recognizing that he did something for us that we will never be able to do. Our life of faith is a response to God's love. We imitate Christ's example best by loving as he loved, even if we will never do it as well as he did.

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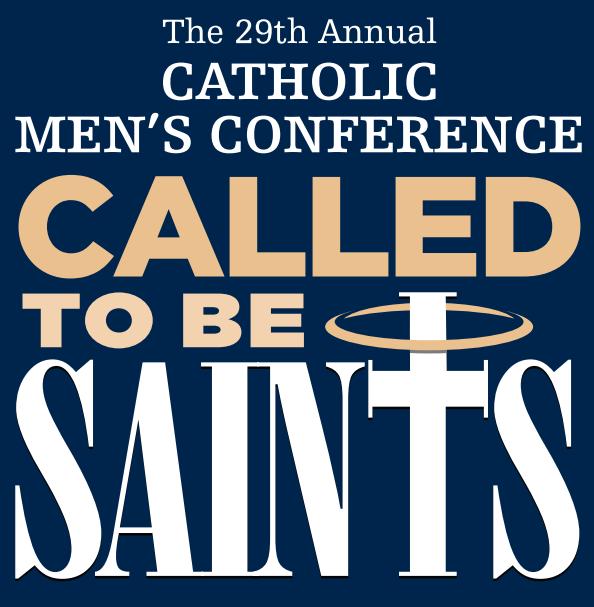


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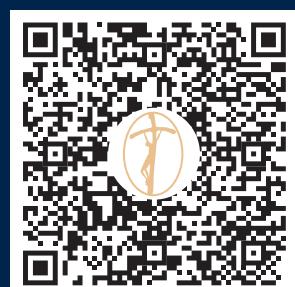
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St. John Bosco and the joy of teaching a soul

Children are not subjects but a reminder of the revelation of God's love, possessing a visible reality that requires any teacher to both nurture and nourish the soul of a child. The premise of any teaching environment requires and involves the exercise of a loving environment directed at the soul and care of the child, and not the initial regurgitation of information. These important attributes were skillfully and lovingly exercised by St. John Bosco, who, upon encountering the displaced and discarded children of Turin, Italy, lovingly sought to offer these children of the street a refuge of love through his preventive teaching methodology of reason, religion and kindness.

Don Bosco's preventive instructional methodology fostered an environment that echoed a desire for God and the salvation of souls. This was his intent for any child that entered his oratory seeking physical and spiritual refuge. For St. John Bosco, the theological virtue of love was the hallmark of his preventive system, which also meant exerting loving discipline on his boys of the oratory if they acted out against the rule of the oratory. The implementation of the Preventive System (Reason, Religion and Kindness) focused on bringing the child closer to Christ. Reason focused on offering a loving environment to provide an opportunity for the child to learn. The goal of this first principle is to develop good Christians and useful citizens. The teacher in this teaching process is the bridge toward a child's discovery of the world through a Catholic lens.

Religion stressed the ugliness of sin and the value of living a virtuous life. The aim for the young man in the oratory was to develop the intellectual and physical gifts and direct him toward a greater good. There are five distinctive characteristics behind the exercise of religion aimed to help the young man attain personal holiness:

Zach Zarembinski was 18 when he suffered a massive brain bleed during a high-school football game, was rushed to Regions Hospital in St. Paul, Minnesota and placed in a coma. Nine days later, 16-year-old Isabelle Richard arrived at the adjacent children's hospital on the same campus after a near-fatal car crash left her in a coma.

This year, they will be married.

Somehow, God wove their survival stories into one beautiful love story. Zach and Isabelle, both devout Christians, will be celebrating their romance this Valentine's Day at their favorite Italian restaurant as they continue to plan their September wedding.

"God orchestrated this in his perfect timing," says Isabelle, now 23, a Hy-Vee employee from Lakeville, Minnesota. "It's crazy what God can do!"

Looking back, the couple can trace the many ways God nudged them together. Zach learned about Isabelle when her mom came to the press conference announcing his release from the hospital. After nine days in a coma, his discharge gave her hope.

Their moms connected on Facebook. When Isabelle's mother shared the news that, after 2 1/2 months, her daughter was finally out of a coma, Zach felt compelled to leave an encouraging comment online — and to come meet her in her hospital room. A photo was snapped of the two teens — Isabelle in her hospital bed, Zach crouching behind her, both smiling brightly. It was February 2019.



CALLED TO TEACH, NOT JUDGE

Dr. Marlon De La Torre

Dr. Marlon De La Torre serves as the senior director for the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis in the Diocese of Columbus. His professional catechetical background spans more than 30 years.

1. Holiness of ordinary life
2. The joy and optimism of holiness
3. Centrality of Confession
4. The Holy Eucharist
5. Love of Mary

Kindness emphasizes the virtue of love. St. John Bosco would stress: "Let us make ourselves loved, and we shall possess their hearts." In other words, our Christian witness must be constant for the development of the child. The learning environment should be warm and inviting, not cold. The family spirit reigned; he did this through rapport, friendliness, presence, respect, attention, dedication to service and personal responsibility. The Preventive System aims to guide the child to know that he is a precious gift created in God's image and likeness out of love.

St. John Bosco was very direct in his intention to save the souls of every young man he encountered in the streets of Turin and those who would arrive

in front of his Oratory. Professing the reality of Jesus Christ and demonstrating Christ's love through His crucifixion were very important to Don Bosco because they centered on his teaching methodology of reason, religion and kindness. Frequent reception of the sacraments of reconciliation and the Holy Eucharist served as the pillars of his methodology and language of faith. These external proofs are what the Catechism of the Catholic Church calls "motives of credibility," (CCC 156) examples and models of the faith that provide a clear context of how to express our assent of faith to Christ and His Church.

The direct and relentless nature of his teaching methodology focused on caring for the soul of the child. The entire teaching structure of the oratory focused on instruction in the Catholic faith, with emphasis on the daily and weekly reception of the sacraments, exercise in self-discipline and the desire to leave a holy and virtuous life. Any Catholic educator would do well to apply St. John Bosco's Preventive System of learning toward their students. Why, because it requires that we address the soul of the child first, as echoed by the following practical steps:

- Students desire to be loved and accepted, no matter what age.
- The goal is to get them to love you through your authentic witness of the faith.
- The environment should reflect a desire to lead students into a journey with Jesus Christ.

In St. John Paul II's Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesis in Our Time*, he provides us with an instructional context about the aim of our catechetical instruction that reflects St. John Bosco's preventive system of instruction.

The aim of catechesis is to be the teaching and maturation stage, that is to say, the period in which the Christian,

having accepted by faith the person of Jesus Christ as the one Lord and having given Him complete adherence by sincere conversion of heart, endeavors to know better this Jesus to whom he has entrusted himself to know His mystery the kingdom of God proclaimed by Him ... (St. John Paul II, *Catechesis In Our Time*, 20)

Every encounter with a child within a Catholic learning environment should exude joy from the teacher, even when tempted not to. The delivery of information, whether academic or spiritual in nature, is meaningless without the authentic, joyful witness of the teacher as an active disciple of Jesus Christ. At the core of any Catholic teaching moment lies the opportunity to guide a child toward the loving embrace of Christ and to strengthen his embrace through the sacramental life of the Church.

The lasting impression for any child is the joy they witness from the teacher who earnestly desires to lead them to holiness. For St. John Bosco, the teaching of the Catholic faith encompassed his entire teaching philosophy, and it is something we should embrace:

Frequent confession, Communion and daily Mass are the pillars that must support the edifice of education from which we propose to banish threats and the rod. Never force the boys to frequent the sacraments. Instead, encourage them and give them every opportunity to do so. During retreats, triduum, novenas. Sermons and catechism classes, the beauty, the grandeur and the holiness of our religion must always be dwelt on, for in the sacraments it offers all of us an easy and useful means to attain peace of mind and eternal salvation. (Lappin, *Give Me Souls*, 146-147)

Two survivors, one love story



TWENTY SOMETHING

Christina Capecchi

Christina Capecchi is a freelance writer from Grey Cloud Island, Minn.

In the months that followed, neither faced an easy road to recovery. Both leaned on their faith. Zach's spiritual life had been cultivated by many Catholic influences. He was in his fifth year at Hill-Murray School in Maplewood, Minnesota, a respected Catholic school where a Benedictine nun served as chaplain of his football team.

Sister Linda Soler, OSB, was "a steady presence for Zach," he said, praying for him often and striking up regular conversations when he visited her office in campus ministry. Meanwhile, Rebecca Fandrich, a theology teacher, opened his eyes to the power of the Holy Spirit. "I learned how to live with a deeper understanding of the world beyond the five senses," Zach said.

He worked to lose weight, become a runner and advance his career. Isabelle relearned how to walk, talk and drive — all while completing high school. Five-and-a-half years after the two had first met in Isabelle's hospital room, she received the final all-clear from her neurosurgeon. When her mom, Esther, shared the news on Facebook, Zach left

another encouraging comment. Esther responded and suggested the two families go out for dinner.

"I'm so proud of you," Zach remembers telling her. At the same time, he was thinking, "Wow, she's pretty! Let me get her phone number!"

He did — and their courtship soon began. The 20-somethings discovered their shared Christian values and the remarkable way they complemented each other. In part, that balance traced back to their brain injuries: Zach's on the left, Isabelle's on the right.

"She's the creative thinker, and I handle the nuts and bolts," said Zach, now 25, who lives in Apple Valley, Minnesota, and works at a Verizon store.

Strong where the other is weak. With

God at the center, they move forward as one.

They're planning a September wedding in Red Wing, Minnesota, with their pastor from ZOE Church in Burnsville, which is associated with the Assemblies of God.

Reflecting on their journey to the altar still fills them with awe.

"God was looking out for us the whole time," Isabelle said.

"God is faithful," Zach added. "All those painful moments made me stronger and led me to Isabelle."

When people hear their story, many remark that it sounds like a Hallmark movie.

Zach has the perfect reply: "God writes better stories than Hallmark!"

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Faith in action

At Catholic Social Services, our team selects an annual theme to guide our year. This theme informs our day-to-day decisions and particularly how we respond to the signs of our time, in support for those whom we are called to serve. For 2025, it was "Serving with Purpose" as a response to be pilgrims of hope during the Jubilee year. For 2026, we selected "Faith in Action" as a response to the call for a visible witness of faith in a challenging time. So how do we live our faith in action today, as Catholics, as Christians, and as neighbors?

Love for love

As a community of faith, we are blessed to have a rich tradition of those who came before us. Our great saints lived their lives often during difficult times as well, and they teach us how to respond with faith in action regardless of the circumstances. One such witness was from a young woman who lived in the turn of the 20th century, St. Elizabeth of the Trinity. St. Elizabeth was a French Discalced Carmelite nun and spiritual writer. She died in 1906 at the age of 26 after battling a rare kidney disease, was beatified by Pope St. John Paul II in 1984, and canonized by Pope Francis in 2016. She wrote, "We have come to know and believe in the love God has for us. That



SERVING AS NEIGHBORS

Kelley Henderson

Kelley Henderson is a Third Order Carmelite who serves as President and Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Social Services. He is a member of Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral and serves in volunteer leadership roles with Catholic Charities USA, Inter-Provincial Lay Carmelite Commission, and Mission and Culture Committee at Mount Carmel Health System.

is our great act of faith, the way to repay our God, love for love." She understood that our act of faith through love was a sign of gratitude to God for the love and mercy afforded us. We repay in kind ... love for love. Each time we express care

and concern for another, we are sharing our faith as an expression of love.

For and with each other

To find inspiration for living our faith in action, we only have to look around us. For every person in struggle, you will likely discover someone with a hopeful outlook. It is these encouraging people that keep us looking forward. Last month, I visited one of our senior residences where over 100 people live. That evening was game night, and a volunteer family was hosting bingo! The husband found us through his employer, realizing that he had a Catholic resource at his disposal to introduce the value of service to his children. Dad, mom and four kids worked together to call bingo for a group of about 60 residents. The kids worked the room, helping older residents identify the number that Dad shouted out while Mom ensured prizes were claimed. Each "BINGO!" resulted in a roar of applause and laughter as a prize was claimed. The treasure was not in the prize, it was in the celebration of community. We are called to be there for and with each other in good times and bad. Showing up is the treasure that supports each other forward to better things.

Pray on it

If we are called to repay love with

love, and we know that faith in action is a concrete way to have a public witness, where can you begin? You may be in a position to literally show up and serve a neighbor in need ... do that. Perhaps it is clearing snow for an elderly neighbor or taking groceries to a parishioner recovering from illness ... do that. Others can give of time and resources through an employer or school by hosting a food drive ... do that too. Perhaps you have not found that right opportunity that matches your abilities and time. Until then, we can all "pray on it!" Taking the needs of others to prayer is a powerful way of sharing your witness through intercession. Let people know that you are praying for them, and when asked for prayer consider praying on the spot! When others witness prayer in public, it is faith in action, and reminds the world that our hope is in the One who gives life and meaning.

If you are looking for a place to put your faith in action during 2026, consider serving with Catholic Social Services. Our volunteers come from many walks of life, yet they have a shared purpose ... to serve as neighbors.

Learn more about getting involved with Catholic Social Services at www.serveasneighbors.org

Healing the wounds of sin -- reconciliation and restoration

By Christopher Crum
For The Catholic Times

A person can look put together and still be bleeding inside.

One can run the job, manage the schedule, keep the lights on, keep our word and show up for the people who count on us. Men can look like they have it handled. And then, when the house is quiet, the truth rises. The mind races. The heart tightens. The soul feels divided. Old memories, habits, grudges, cravings. Regrets that were buried. And beneath it all, a fear most would rather deny than acknowledge: If people really knew us, would they still respect us?

That gap between the man people see and the man inside is exhausting. We stay "fine" in public and feel like an imposter in private. Not only does the individual hide from people -- but from God.

We manage Him with performance, usefulness, busyness and being "productive." We stay moving so we do not have to sit still long enough to be seen. Because silence holds up a mirror. And many of us are afraid of what we might find in the reflection: a man we do not recognize, a man our younger self would be disappointed in, a man our older self will regret.

So we keep control. We keep the narrative. We keep the mask. But that is not strength. That is the wounds of sin.

Sin is rarely just "I broke a rule." More often, it is "something in me is hurt, and I have been treating the pain with sin." We are men who learned to protect ourselves. Control disguised as competence. Resentment hidden under responsibility. Pride dressed up as high standards.

That wound, left untreated, does not just make us sin. It makes us guarded. It makes us capable of going through the motions while living divided inside. We can have it all together on paper and still be far from peace.

God does not want a mask. He wants a healed heart.

In the mirror, we learn the cause of sin is often self-protection dressed up

as wisdom. It is control disguised as competence. It is resentment hidden under responsibility. It is "high standards" that are really pride, because when no one is watching, we still need to be impressive. When our mouth is shut, the mind keeps racing: improve something, fix something, plan something, control the environment, create movement, anything, so we do not have to be still long enough to look in the mirror.

Eventually, we start to recognize the real battle is not against the past. It is against control.

Control is the oldest hiding place. Control lets us manage pain without surrendering it. Control lets us remain "strong" without remaining humble. Control lets us avoid the one thing God wants: our honest heart offered freely without hesitation.

That is why the silence works. When we step away from the modern world on purpose, the exits disappear. Noise cannot drown it. A crowd cannot cover it. Motion cannot outrun it. When the distractions fade, the interior life becomes visible. The first time with the mirror comes like a freight train. The mind runs its own newsreel: scenes, motives, near-misses, compromises, resentments, things we "happily forgot." And we discover the hard truth: There is no hiding and no defense.

This is where God gives a gift: compunction.

Compunction is not self-hatred. It is not shame tourism. It is cleaning grief. It is sorrow inside mercy. It is the heart being pierced by truth and love at the same time. It hurts, but it does not crush. It exposes, but it does not discard. It says, "I have not loved as I have been loved" and then, "God is still calling me." And that piercing is not cruelty. It is the mercy of God refusing to let us stay divided.

This is why the story of the prodigal son is not sentimental. It is surgical. The son rehearses a speech. He expects punishment. He expects distance. He expects to earn his way back. But the Father runs. The Father embraces. The Father restores. The son still must come home. But he comes home to a Father who already knows the mess and does not look

away.

That is reconciliation: homecoming. Not a courtroom, but a return to the One who calls us son.

In returning home, we must tell the difference between guilt, shame and mercy.

Guilt can be grace. It says, "I DID wrong." It points us toward repair. Shame is darker. Shame says, "I AM wrong." Shame isolates. Shame numbs. Shame hides. Shame keeps a man stuck in the basement of his own soul with the lights off, calling it strength.

Mercy is different. Mercy tells the truth and keeps loving us while we face it. Mercy does not flatter us, and it does not discard us. Mercy says, "Stay here with Me. Let Me heal what you keep trying to manage."

This is why confession is vital for a man who wants to be whole.

Confession is not a shame booth. Confession is a field hospital. It is where the divided man becomes one again. Hidden becomes spoken. Poison gets exposed to light. The burden stops growing in the dark.

Many of us are trying to heal with secrecy and willpower, not because God withholds grace.

Because there is a basement where we keep the sin we will not name. The thing we keep "meaning to deal with." The part of our story we do not want touched. We padlock it with busyness. We cover it with competence. We bury it under responsibility. We decorate it with "I'm fine." And we call it maturity.

But it is fear.

Because we think, if God sees this, we are finished.

The deeper truth is harder and better: God already sees it. The question is whether we will let Him enter it. Not to humiliate us. To heal us.

Vulnerability before God is not something that happens to us. It is something we choose. Not because we got caught. Not because we hit rock bottom. Not because someone forced our hand. Because we finally want freedom more than we want to stay protected. That is the turning point. That is where a man stops being "found out" and starts being freely known.

To support this healing, the tradition gives us three practical anchors. They are simple, but they are not easy.

First: obedience builds stillness. In the modern world, our mind is trained to react, check, refresh, respond and stay "on." Obedience is how we stop. We obey silence from our phone. We obey the boundary that work ends. We obey that we will not chase every impulse. Stillness is not laziness; it is the inner discipline to stay present before God.

Second: austerity builds solitude. Solitude is not loneliness. It is stepping away from the modern world on purpose to step closer to God. Austerity is how we create space for that. We go without a comfort we rely on. We simplify our life. We refuse the endless conveniences that keep us padded and numb. Solitude is easier to enter when we are not addicted to constant comfort.

Third: fasting builds silence. Fasting quiets the appetite, which is often the loudest voice in the room. When we learn to say "no" to the body, the inner storm calms. Hunger becomes prayer. Deprivation becomes offering. The point is not punishment. The point is freedom: the ability to hear God without our cravings shouting over Him.

In this light, temptations are no longer only threats. They are training. They reveal where we still reach for control, comfort, image and self-protection. And every temptation becomes an opportunity to turn toward Christ. Choose God in the present moment. Let grace "tap in."

God does not expose us to shame us. He exposes us to heal us. He does not dig up the past to accuse us. He brings it into the light so it stops owning us. He is not a prosecutor hunting a conviction. He is a surgeon with steady hands, exact and unflinching, ordered toward healing.

And when we finally stop managing, stop hiding, stop negotiating, we find the astonishing reality that has been true the whole time.

He already knew.

And He did not look away.

And He has no interest in leaving us there.

Vivat Jesus.

Status Animarum reports and their vital role in diocesan planning

This past month has been the time of the year when the annual Status Animarum reports from across the diocese are due to the Chancery Office, and the Chancery Office in turn must submit a Status Animarum report to the Holy See regarding the entire diocese that we have just completed.

With the latest round of this reporting process, which occurs all around the world in the Church, I find this is a good opportunity to talk a little bit about its importance and benefits.

“Status Animarum” is a Latin phrase that translates to “State of Souls.” The diocesan Status Animarum report is a valuable historical and ongoing record-keeping tool used in the Catholic Church. The document produced by the Status Animarum reporting process is a comprehensive record of the sacramental and demographic information at the parish and diocesan levels.

The Status Animarum reports includes several key categories of information, covering data like:

- Parish statistics: Total number of families and individuals (souls).
- Sacramental data: Number of baptisms, confirmations, marriages and first communions.
- Mass attendance: Average weekend Mass attendance over the course of each year.
- Clergy and staff: The number of priests, deacons and religious, including those residing in the rectory and those with special faculties.
- Pastoral activities: Data related to religious education programs, parish ministries and outreach to the sick or



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.

marginalized.

The formal, Church-wide requirement for maintaining the Status Animarum was initiated by Pope Paul V in the Rituale Romanum of 1614, codifying the practice of the entire Church to begin documenting parish and sacramental information. Since then, the report has evolved and continues to be completed and submitted annually more than 500 years after its introduction.

In addition to being used as an annual statistical report for diocesan administration, the Status Animarum also serves as a key resource helping clergy and staff at all levels to understand better the people they serve and the conditions that different segments of those populations experience, both spiritually and practically.

By seeing the trends occurring within

each parish and diocese, the Church is better able to plan its ministries, evangelization efforts, vocations outreach and charitable efforts in a world that is in constant due to the ebb and flow of historical trends. This reporting can help identify gaps in these efforts, aiding the effective evolution of the Church's ministries.

Understanding marriage trends fosters efforts to provide effective catechesis and practical preparation for couples engaged to be married. Information in these reports also helps the catechesis of those preparing for other sacraments as well: Baptism, Communion, Confession and Confirmation.

This information also helps Church clergy and staff provide other much needed ministries based on what the populations being served are experiencing, seeing where charitable outreach is most needed, what kind of family ministries are most needed, and how best to educate children and young people.

It is vital to understand population shifts, such as aging, where new families are located, better planning and allocating resources for elder care, youth ministry, determining where schools need to be built, and so forth. Understanding our populations and trends also helps pastors understand the current context of their parishioners' lives.

Furthermore, good data can help pastors identify those who have stopped practicing their faith, allowing for intentional outreach to seek and find those who can most benefit from the opportunity of encountering and re-encountering Jesus Christ.

Further benefits of good reporting and

data gathering help parishes and dioceses with financial planning. Understanding the demographics of specific areas supports planning for fundraising and budgeting. Identifying the need for new ministries, such as Spanish-language Masses or youth programs, is another benefit of analyzing the “souls” each parish serves.

A tremendous amount of work each year, especially as one year winds down and a new one begins, occurs in order to effectively complete and submit this report, work that is done both by parish and diocesan staff members. These days, in the 21st century, the reporting from our parishes to our diocese and our diocese to the Vatican is accomplished digitally.

I am also very grateful to the numerous people who worked so hard to make the report a reality year after year.

While it may seem like another “hoop” to jump through, I encourage everyone to see this work as something that goes far beyond that easy notion, something that fosters the growth and vitality of our beloved Church.

The Status Animarum remains a crucial, historic and continuously relevant tool. It is a bridge crossing the gap between the administrative, logistical requirements of a parish as an organization and its principal, spiritual mission to care for the “souls” entrusted to each parish.

By recording its ongoing story through this meticulous “State of Souls” process, the Church not only preserves its worldwide history but ensures that its pastoral care is informed, specific and genuinely, in the spirit of the Rituale Romanum, focused on spiritual needs and welfare of every member of the faithful.

Cardinal Dolan: By no means finished yet



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.

to his willingness to both work with the powers of this world and speak hard truths to them when necessary. I'd like to focus on three aspects of the man that may not have received sufficient notice thus far.

First, beneath the smiling, gregarious Irish American big brother or uncle that is his public persona, Timothy Michael Dolan is a serious intellectual. He may well be the best-read bishop in the United States; that sitting room where we would sip and talk was overflowing with new books, and they were not there for decoration. They had been read, or were being read, and it was the rare title I'd mention to the cardinal that he hadn't heard about — and those that were new to him, he ordered. With an earned doctorate in U.S. Catholic history, Cardinal Dolan knew the story of Catholicism in these United States inside and out and had the largest treasure trove of historical

anecdotes I've ever encountered, many of them gleaned from his mentor, the great John Tracy Ellis.

Second, Cardinal Dolan is a fiercely loyal friend. After he got acquainted with the head of the Ukrainian Greek Catholic Church (UGCC), Major-Archbishop Sviatoslav Shevchuk, he became one of the Ukrainian leader's advocates and defenders. Dolan was sitting next to Shevchuk when the head of the Russian Orthodox Church's “foreign affairs” department, Metropolitan Hilarion Alfeyev, in a display of grotesquely bad manners and Russian imperial arrogance, befooled his invitation to address a Synod by lambasting the UGCC. The cardinal archbishop of New York turned to the major-archbishop of Kyiv-Halych and said, “If you want to walk out, I'll be right with you.” And in the four years since Russia's invasion of Ukraine, no American bishop has been more supportive of the UGCC's head in the U.S., Archbishop Borys Gudziak, than Cardinal Dolan.

Then there is the cardinal's constant

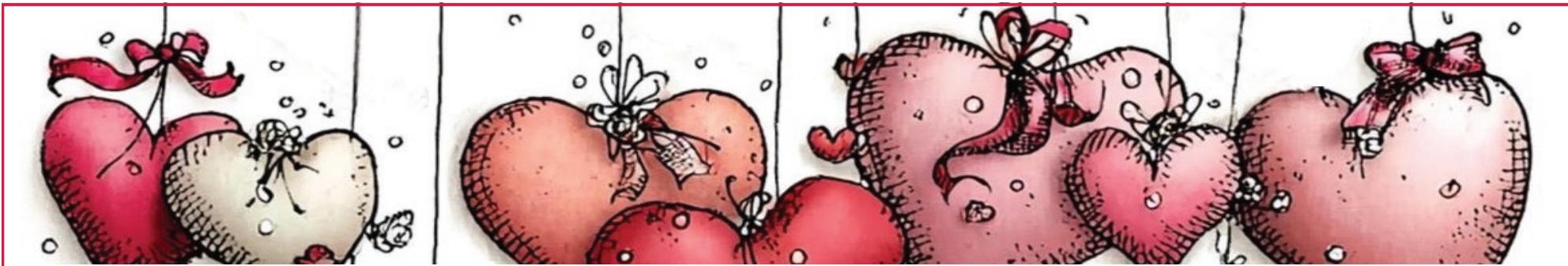
defense of religious freedom, manifest in his creating a small shrine honoring Hong Kong prisoner of conscience Jimmy Lai in St. Patrick's Cathedral. Regime-friendly (or compromised) Chinese in New York protested; the cardinal paid no heed.

Young Tim Dolan never wanted to be anything but a parish priest, and he has remained that at heart. When friends are ill, he calls. His parish visits as archbishop in both Milwaukee and New York were his favorite moments as a shepherd. Wherever he has served, virtually everyone regrets his leaving, which cannot be said, alas, of every senior churchman.

As of February 6, he will not be archbishop of New York. But Cardinal Timothy Dolan, in good health and full of energy, is by no means at the end of his ministry or influence. His presence will be felt stateside, and in Rome, for years to come. And we may thank God for it.

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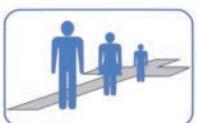


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