

The MESSAGE

Southwestern Indiana's Catholic
Community Newspaper

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Reitz Memorial senior John “Jack” Logan awarded Lilly Scholarship

By MEGAN ERBACHER
The Message assistant editor



JOHN “JACK” LOGAN

As Reitz Memorial High School senior John “Jack” Logan walked to the media center, he assumed his help was needed for the National Honor Society, because he serves as vice president of the organization. However, once he walked through the doors and saw his parents, he was “very confused.”

In December, Logan was surprised to learn his undergraduate college tuition will be paid in full because he was named a Vanderburgh County 2023

See [LILLY](#), page 16

Catholic Schools Week

BY MICHELLE PRIAR
Interim Superintendent
of Catholic Schools

Next week, Catholic schools across the country will celebrate National Catholic Schools Week, which begins Jan. 29. It's a time when we recognize the role Catholic schools play in the lives of so many families, parishes and communities. Catholic schools provide opportunities for students to thrive in a learning environment that promotes faith formation, academic growth, servant leadership and a strong moral foundation.

In the Diocese of Evansville, we're blessed to partner with families as we serve over 5,600 students in 26 schools. We truly value this partnership. Our pastors, administrators, teachers and support staff are committed to helping young people grow in their love for Christ, live healthy and productive lives and make significant contributions to the greater community. It's our hope that students think of their Catholic School family as an extension of their family at home; one where they

feel safe, nurtured, inspired and loved.

Hoosier families, especially in Southern Indiana, are fortunate that they have many viable education options for their children. As Catholics, we believe that parents are their child's first teachers and, as such, they should be given every opportunity to make the best educational choices for their children to meet their needs and expectations. The Choice Scholarship Program provides these opportunities to families who might not otherwise have an option. Some might be surprised to learn that they qualify for one; for example, a family of four with a total household income of \$154,000 or less meets the financial requirement.

This year, tens of thousands of families across the state benefit from a Choice Scholarship. Currently, in the Diocese of Evansville alone, 3,416 students receive Choice Scholarships. That number reflects a 29 percent increase from last year. In addition, enrollment across the diocese is on the rise. We experienced a 4 percent increase in enrollment this school year.

See [SCHOOLS](#), page 7



Sarto Chapel repairs and refresh complete

SPECIAL TO
THE MESSAGE

Through the use of bequest funds, the generosity of numerous volunteers across the Diocese of Evansville and several vendor partners, the diocese recently completed a repair and refresh of the chapel in Sarto Retreat House for minimal cost.

The chapel is in constant use throughout the year during dozens of retreats at the facility, and Bishop Joseph M. Siegel regularly celebrates Mass there for the diocesan staff. Bishop Siegel noted, “We are extremely grateful for all who made it possible to complete these improvements in timely manner while helping keep the expense as low as possible.

See [SARTO](#), page 3



The Message photo by Tim Lilley

Bishop Joseph M. Siegel celebrates Mass Jan. 19 in the Sarto Retreat House Chapel, which recently underwent some repairs and a refresh.

Marching for Life!



On Jan. 23, the anniversary of Roe v. Wade, about 120 high school students and adult chaperones from across the Diocese of Evansville marched in the 2023 Indiana State March for Life. The day included Mass at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church in downtown Indianapolis, celebrated by Archdiocese of Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson and concelebrated by Diocese of Evansville Bishop Joseph M. Siegel and Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana Bishop Timothy L. Doherty. After Mass, hundreds of pro-lifers marched about a mile from St. John to the steps on the south lawn of the Indiana Statehouse for a rally with multiple speakers. *Shown in the photo, the Evansville group stands outside the Indiana Statehouse. See full coverage of the March in the Feb. 3 issue of The Message.*

The Message photo by Megan Erbacher

Pro-life legislation in Statehouse spotlight



BY VICTORIA ARTHUR
Statehouse Correspondent for
Indiana’s Catholic Newspapers

The Indiana Statehouse remains a center of public-policy debate after the overturning of Roe v. Wade, as lawmakers consider a wide range of new pro-life bills while the state Supreme Court weighs challenges to last summer’s groundbreaking law that extended legal protection to unborn babies.

Indiana became the first state in the nation to enact a new law of this kind following a special legislative session from late July to early August, which culminated in the passage of Senate Bill 1, which significantly limited abortion in Indiana. Later known as Senate Enrolled Act 1, the law took effect Sept. 15 but was almost immediately challenged in court by Planned Parenthood and the American Civil Liberties Union.

On Jan. 19, the Indiana Supreme Court began hearings on the law — as elsewhere in the Statehouse, lawmakers were starting to review newly introduced legislation on a broad variety of pro-life matters. The Indiana Catholic Conference is closely monitoring developments in both branches of state government.

“We don’t know when the Indiana Supreme Court will give its ruling, but we are hopeful that SEA 1 will stand,” said Angela Espada, executive director of the ICC, the public-policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. “We pray for an ultimate decision that will promote a culture of life and respect the dignity of the pre-born and their mothers.”

Oral arguments on SEA 1 opened days before the 50th anniversary of the January 1973 Roe v. Wade U.S. Supreme Court decision, which declared a constitutional right to an

abortion. That decision was overturned in June 2022 with the high court’s ruling in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, which returned regulation of abortion to the states and served as the catalyst for the last summer’s special session of the Indiana General Assembly.

SEA 1, which was signed into law Aug. 5 by Gov. Eric Holcomb, banned both surgical and chemical abortions with some exceptions, including pregnancies resulting from rape or incest (within 10 weeks of fertilization), and in cases of lethal fetal anomalies or to save the life of the mother (up to 20 weeks post-fertilization).

In addition, the measure terminated the licensure of all abortion centers and required abortions to be performed in hospitals or surgical centers owned by hospitals. Historically, nearly all abortions in Indiana have taken place in abortion centers, such as those operated by Planned Parenthood. Enforcement of SEA 1 has been on hold pending the legal challenges by Planned Parenthood and other abortion providers and advocates.

While the future of SEA 1 hangs in the balance, the ICC will focus on the 2023 legislative session, now in full swing, continuing to serve as a voice for the unborn while also advocating for other key issues in the pro-life realm.

“We want people to remember that, while there have been some gains since the Dobbs ruling, there is still much work to be done — and not only as it relates to abortion, but to the entire spectrum of life issues,” Espada said. “We are encouraged by the number of bills that have been introduced so far this month to assist babies, mothers and families.”

This includes proposed bipartisan legislation for paid

family leave and child tax credits — as well as child support and tax credits for the unborn.

Senate Bill 319, authored by Sen. Andy Zay (R-Huntington), establishes that an unborn child is considered a dependent child and, therefore, eligible for a tax exemption. Meanwhile, Rep. Elizabeth Rowray (R-Yorktown) has introduced House Bill 1009, which would allow a child-support order to include the period dating from the conception of the child.

Sen. Shelli Yoder (D-Bloomington) has authored Senate Bill 255, which would provide a tax credit for child and dependent care for Hoosiers earning less than 250 percent of the federal poverty level. A similar measure, Senate Bill 238, is backed by Sen. Greg Taylor (D-Indianapolis).

In addition, proposed legislation promoting universal child care and pre-kindergarten education has been introduced by Sen. Fady Qaddoura (D-Indianapolis). Among other provisions, Senate Bill 471 would provide tax credits for employers who provide child care for their

employees.

These efforts follow the second key outcome of last summer’s special legislative session — providing Hoosiers with relief from soaring inflation. That included the allocation of \$45 million to support pregnant women, postpartum mothers, babies and families.

Fiscal concerns will top the agenda for this long session of the General Assembly, held every two years and culminating in passage of the state budget, likely in late April or early May.

For the ICC, measures that support babies, mothers and families are of paramount importance, in line with the long history of Catholic social teaching. Protecting the most vulnerable and affirming human dignity from conception to natural death will remain the most pressing of the Church’s priorities, according to Alexander Mingus, associate director of the ICC.

For example, another measure that the ICC will support in this legislative session concerns the dignified handling of the remains of a baby lost through

miscarriage. House Bill 1058, introduced by Rep. Randall Frye (R-Greensburg), would establish that a healthcare facility may transfer the remains of a miscarried child to a nonprofit organization that provides funerals, cremations or burials.

“The Church’s social doctrine insists on the profound dignity of the human person, a principle that guides the ICC’s policy work,” Mingus said. “Of the many bills filed this session, we will work to support the policies that affirm this dignity, and provide material support for mothers and families.”

To follow priority legislation of the ICC, visit www.indianacc.org. This website includes access to I-CAN, the Indiana Catholic Action Network, which offers the Church’s position on key issues. Those who sign up for I-CAN receive alerts on legislation moving forward and ways to contact their elected representatives.

March for Life holds first national event since overturn of Roe v. Wade

BY KATE SCANLON
OSV News

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — The March for Life held its 50th annual event Jan. 20 — the organization’s first national event since the overturn of the Roe v. Wade decision that initially prompted it. Activists cited an array of next steps, from continuing to push for laws limiting abortion to expanding social safety net measures.

The 2023 event was the first

national March for Life since the U.S. Supreme Court’s June 2022 ruling in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, which overturned Roe. “While the March began as a response to Roe, we don’t end as a response to Roe being overturned,” Jeanne Mancini, the march’s organizer and a Catholic, told tens of thousands gathered at the pre-march rally. “Why? Because we are not yet done.”

Standing on the event stage at the National Mall, with the U.S. Capitol visible in the background, Mancini told attendees at a rally prior to the march that “the country and world changed” when Roe was reversed in June 2022. But she said the annual March for Life would continue in Washington until abortion is “unthinkable.”

Heating advice to help you stay safe and snug, and save money

SPECIAL TO THE MESSAGE

Here’s a message to warm your heart — and the rest of you.

Fuel to heat our homes can mean high bills. And heating increases the risks of fire, explosion and carbon-monoxide poisoning. But a heating system that works efficiently can mean more warmth, more safety and more money left for other things.

The Evansville-Vanderburgh County Building Commission, Evansville Fire Department, Vanderburgh County township fire departments, American Red Cross, CenterPoint Energy and your local heating and air conditioning contractors want to alert the you to the dangers of carbon-monoxide poisoning; and fire and explosion from a malfunctioning furnace, a blocked flue or chimney, a broken gas line or inadequate air for combustion.

There may be hidden damage to your furnace, gas piping, flue or chimney. All citizens should have their furnaces, space heaters, ranges, water heaters, gas lines, chimneys, flues and other heating equipment checked by a licensed heating contractor without delay. You should do this every year. You will protect yourself and your family this winter and save on heating bills.

Carbon monoxide replaces the oxygen in the air we breathe when fuel-burning equipment is operating and the vent or chimney is obstructed, or there is not enough air to let the equipment burn fuel efficiently. Carbon monoxide is odorless, colorless and tasteless; it catches its victims unaware, sometimes as they sleep. If you suspect a carbon-monoxide problem, leave your home and call 911 or your local fire department.

Families have been killed by carbon-monoxide poisoning, and many others have become seriously ill. Symptoms may be similar to the flu — including headache, dizziness, nausea and shortness of breath. There

If you need assistance

Editor’s note: the following is not a complete list. Look online for other resources.

- American Red Cross will provide in-home disaster and home fire safety education, test your smoke alarms and replace up to three if needed, and supply specialty alarms for the deaf and hard of hearing. Phone 888-684-1441.
- CenterPoint Energy has details on energy-saving products, income-qualified weatherization and energy assessments, and rebates for purchases of qualifying furnaces, programmable thermostats and insulation. Phone 866-240-8476 or visit centerpointenergy.com/saveenergy.
- Faith-based organizations, social agencies and township trustees may help with heating bills and other needs. Phone 211 to find resources.

may be chest pain, fatigue and confusion. You may go to sleep and never wake up.

Always use portable generators outdoors, at least 20 feet from the house; and direct the engine exhaust away from windows and doors. Don’t use a range or oven for heat. Candle fires also have killed families.

Be careful using candles during power outages and other times! And make a family fire-escape plan.

The American Red Cross reminds you to use supplemental heating sources according to directions. Don’t use extension cords or power strips with space heaters.

Help alert your family with working smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms. Consider installing gas leak alarms. Regularly test the alarms and change any batteries, and replace the alarms as directed. Your local fire department may be able to check your alarms and replace them free.

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AROUND THE DIOCESE

Presentation on St. Mother Theodore Guerin is Feb. 1 in Jasper

Sister of Providence Susan Paweski will visit Jasper to perform the Life of St. Mother Theodore Guerin at 6:15 p.m. EST Feb. 1 at the St. Joseph Parish Center. She brings to life the saint’s story. Dressed in full habit of that time, Sister Susan enacts the character of St. Mother Theodore, complete with a Breton accent! She weaves the story of this great saint from her childhood days on the Breton shores of France to her missionary work in Indiana. Refreshments will follow the presentation in the Parish Center lobby. All are welcome.

Happy Birthday!

Deacon Michael Helfter of Holy Family Parish in Jasper celebrates his birthday Feb. 3. **Annie-Rose Keith**, parish catechetical leader at Resurrection Parish in Evansville, celebrates her birthday Feb. 5. **Christian Mocek**, president of Reitz Memorial High School in Evansville, celebrates his birthday Feb. 6. **Father Gene Schroeder**, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Vanderburgh County and president of St. Joseph Cemetery in Evansville, celebrates his birthday Feb. 7. **Joan Fredrich**, principal of Holy Rosary School in Evansville, celebrates her birthday Feb. 7.

Happy Anniversary!

Father Sudhakar Bhastati, administrator of St. Peter Parish in Montgomery, was ordained to the priesthood Jan. 29, 2009. **Father Anthony Govind**, administrator of Christ the King Parish in Ferdinand, was ordained to the priesthood Jan. 29, 2009.

Designer Bingo is Feb. 3 at St. John, Daylight

St. John the Evangelist Parish in Daylight is hosting Designer Bingo at 6 p.m. CST Feb. 3 to benefit Right to Life-Southwest Indiana’s Go Mobile Clinic. The parish is located at 5301 Daylight Drive, Evansville, IN 47725. Individual tickets are \$35 each, and tickets for a table of 6 are \$200 each. Tickets include dinner and 20 games of bingo. Additional bingo cards

and a cash bar will be available. All guests must be ages 21 and over. Register online at www.rtlswin.org/designer-bingo.

Sisters of St. Benedict Marriage Enrichment Retreat

The Sisters of St. Benedict in Ferdinand are hosting a Marriage Enrichment Retreat from 7 p.m. EST Feb. 3 through 12:30 p.m. EST Feb. 5 at the monastery. Led by Josh and Angie Greulich, the retreat will focus on understanding marriage through the lens of married saints and scripture. Couples will gain tools that they can use to help communicate with each other, help recognize each other’s strengths and help pray together. The retreat includes all meals, plus lodging in the Benedictine Hospitality Center at the monastery. Interested couples can learn more and register at www.thedome.org.

All Saints Parish co-hosts ‘Crossing the Railroad Tracks’ Feb. 18

Crossing the Railroads Tracks: A conversation with Kelly Coures about the history of race and housing in Evansville. Join members of All Saints Parish and Mt. Olive Galilee Baptist Church 1 p.m. to 3 p.m. CST Feb. 18 at the Evansville African American Museum, 579 S Garvin St., Evansville, IN 47713. No cost, but limited to 50 participants. To register, contact Brenda Meyer at 812-457-5529 or email bmeyer@evdio.org.

Peace in the Mourning retreat is March 25

The Diocese of Evansville Office of Family and Life will offer *Peace in the Mourning* — a retreat day for widows of all ages and stages — from 8 a.m. to 5:15 p.m. CDT March 25 at the Catholic Center, 4200 N. Kentucky Ave., Evansville, IN 47711. Come, spend a day to experience healing from the loss of your loved one. Registration is \$75 per person, and scholarships are available for those in need. For more information, email egirten@evdio.org.

Daughters of Isabella scholarships available to Catholic girls

The Daughters of Isabella Circle 144 is offering two \$500 scholarships. Applications may be completed and returned to the D of I by any baptized high-school-senior Catholic girl who plans to attend an accredited college or university this summer or fall. The application forms are available at the guidance counselor’s offices at both Mater Dei and Reitz Memorial High Schools, and may be obtained by contacting Susan Kirsch at 812-459-6305 or email susiekm@aol.com. Application deadline is March 31.

Sarto

Continued from page 1

The work was done around the Christmas holidays when the retreat house was not in use. Work included:

- Thorough cleaning of walls, pews, and floors
- Painting of the chapel ceiling
- Installation of crown molding
- Lighting revisions – including cleaning, re-lamping and redesign
- Terrazzo floor repair and rehab
- Installation of new Stations of the Cross, which were repurposed from Holy Trinity Church in Evansville
- Refinishing the ambo and presider’s chair
- Replacing the confessional doors for enhanced privacy
- Installation of a new tabernacle

The Message photo by Tim Lilley
The project included installation of a new tabernacle, which is shown behind the altar.



Mother to Mother consignment sale is Feb. 4

St. John the Baptist Parish in Newburgh’s Mother to Mother Ministry will host their Spring/Summer consignment sale from 8-10:30 a.m. Feb. 4. Items are half-price from 11 a.m. to noon. Admission is \$1. Registration is open to consign and volunteer. For more information, visit www.mothers-to-mothersale.org/ or on Facebook at St. John Mother to Mother Consignment Sale.

Holy Cross Chicken Dinner is Feb. 5

Holy Cross Parish in Fort Branch will hold a chicken dinner from 10:45 a.m. to 1 p.m. CST Feb. 5. Dine-in and carry-out dinners will be avail-

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Grace is all around us!

“He is your praise; he is your God, who has done for you those great and awesome things that your own eyes have seen” (Deuteronomy 10:21).

I believe in miracles! We see them as the sun comes up to begin a new day; when a newborn baby is brought into the world; and with every beat of our heart, a miracle occurs. The very first miracle performed during Jesus’ earthly ministry was at a wedding feast. The sacredness of marriage and family cannot be understated.

In February 2005, my family witnessed a miracle in the healing of our youngest son, Patrick. I attribute this blessing to our trust in God; an anointing from a Catholic priest that took place in the trauma unit; the gift of Lourdes water; and the power of the rosary. During the many weeks our son spent in a coma, I prayed the rosary several times a day. I used his 10 fingers as my beads. The unveiling of this miracle creates a vivid reminder of how much God loves us! Trusting in His Almighty power is the most important thing we can do every day!

Our devotion to the rosary remains a daily practice in our lives. In 2019, my husband, Dick, and I decided to take a rosary-making class. We found one offered by Benedictine Sister Nicolette Etienne at Our Lady of Grace Monastery in Indianapolis. It was Dick’s plan to teach each of our grandchildren how to make their own First Holy Communion



GRATITUDE FOR THE GIFT OF FAITH

ZOE CANNON

rosary. This new tradition is an opportunity for catechesis — and special time spent with Grandpa.

This spring, we have two grandchildren making their First Holy Communions. In addition to our rosary class, I created another project for our grandchildren as they prepare for these beautiful sacraments. A photo session is planned in the home parish of each grandchild. The finished product is a book with pictures of all the sacraments used at Mass and everything found inside their church — complete with pictures of their Baptism, first Reconciliation, and first Holy Communion day.

We plan a retreat weekend with each child to make this special time very personal, and we share our own pictures and experiences from our first sacraments. Our granddaughter, Kendall, lives in Warsaw, Indiana; I contacted the pastor at Sacred Heart Parish to obtain permission to use the church for our catechesis project. Kendall and I sat down together and made a list of all the items we should look for in her church. With our plan com-

pleted, we set out to make ourselves at home in God’s house.

Kendall’s Dad took off work to join us for the adventure in the church. Father Jonathan Norton was very excited about our plan and agreed to meet with us. He not only opened up the church, but also spent an hour with us explaining the beauty and practice of all 45 items on our list — and more! It was such a gift to be part of this learning process and recall the memories of the day Kendall’s Dad made his First Communion.

We returned for Mass on Sunday morning, and Kendall asked Father Jonathan to bless the rosary she made with her “Poppy.” I was overwhelmed by the grace we all received during our time spent sharing the faith with our granddaughter and her family. I watched her Dad, Patrick, take pictures of Father Jonathan blessing her rosary; and I was reminded of the priest that blessed him in the hospital trauma unit 18 years ago, and the power of the rosary that provided us with this beautiful moment of grace. If you trust in a loving and merciful God, you will witness miracles all around you! He is your God; thank Him for the awesome things He has done for you! Amen!

Zoe Cannon lives in Morgantown, Indiana, and is a member of Sts. Francis and Clare Parish in Greenwood, Indiana.

‘Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts’

“And so, with Angels and Archangels, with Thrones and Dominions, and with all the hosts and Powers of heaven, we sing the hymn of your glory, as without end we acclaim:

Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts . . . ”

With a very heavy heart, I sank into my pew and prepared to listen to the homily at the 8 a.m. Mass Dec. 9, 2022. As I looked to the ambo, I saw Father Jose take the notes he had prepared for the homily that morning and put them to the side. He took a deep breath and then paused to gather himself. As he began to speak, his image was blurred by the tears welling in my eyes. Unable to control my emotions, eventually I had to remove my glasses and use my sleeve to wipe my tears.

You see, the day before, our parishioners Julie Schnell and her daughter, Alayna, died in a tragic



CONNECTING FAITH AND LIFE

BRENDA HOPF

automobile accident only a couple of miles from my house. Older daughter Addison Schnell was seriously injured. The Schnell and Temple families were at the forefront of our thoughts and prayers as we prayed the Mass on this morning.

Father Jose began by telling us he would not be using his notes but, rather, would be sharing some thoughts he had while in the sacristy before Mass began. He shared that, often, as the “Holy, Holy, Holy” begins, he looks at the servers standing in

front of him at the foot of the altar, dressed in their cassocks and surplices, and thinks how they remind him of angels. Father Jose said he imagines them singing along with the saints and angels in heaven as the “Holy, Holy, Holy” is sung.

Before this Mass began, he said he envisioned the times Alayna and Addison had stood there as servers singing the “Holy, Holy, Holy.” Father Jose then reminded us that, on this morning and at every Mass hereafter, that Julie and Alayna will be singing and praying with us, along with “all the hosts and Powers of heaven.”

Oh my; I barely heard anything else Father Jose said. What an incredibly beautiful and comforting reminder of what we believe as Catholics. As the tears continued to flow, I even began to think of my deceased relatives and friends. This correspondence

See FAITH AND LIFE, page 5

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To the Catholics of the Diocese of Evansville: This edition is one of six issues of **The Message** to be mailed to every registered Catholic household this year. Two dollars of each Catholic Church member’s contribution pays for these diocesan-wide subscriptions.

Diocesan policy: Report and inform

Report child abuse

Every allegation of child abuse must be reported to Child Protection Services, an agency of Indiana state government.
Toll-free: 800-800-5556

Denuncie

Toda acusación de abuso de menores debe ser reportada al Servicio de Protección al Menor (Child Protective Services, CPS), una agencia del gobierno de Estados Unidos que está localizada en el estado de Indiana.
Puede llamar gratis al: 800-800-5556.

Report and inform

In the event of an allegation of sexual abuse of a minor (a person under 18) by diocesan personnel, report the allegation to authorities, and inform the Victims Assistance Coordinator for the diocese.
Toll-free: 866-200-3004, local: 812-490-9565

To report allegations of sexual misconduct involving bishops of the United States, or to report their intentional interference in a sexual abuse investigation, contact the Catholic Bishop Abuse Reporting service.

Toll-free: 800-276-1562, or report online at ReportBishopAbuse.org.

Denuncie e informe

En caso de una alegación de abuso sexual de un menor (una persona menor de 18 años) cometido por algún miembro del personal diocesano, reporte dicha alegación a las autoridades y también infórmele al coordinador diocesano de Asistencia para las Víctimas.

Puede llamar gratis al: 866-200-3004, o al número local: 812-490-9565.

Para reportar alegaciones de conducta sexual inapropiada cometida por obispos en los Estados Unidos, o para reportar su interferencia intencional en una investigación de abuso sexual, contacte al Servicio de Abuso de Obispos Católicos.

Puede llamar gratis al: 800-276-1562, o reportarlo en línea en ReportBishopAbuse.org.

The Message

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In support of our Catholic schools

As we observe Catholics Schools Week, I would like to offer my support for our 26 schools — and our parents, teachers and administrators who make them possible.

I am strongly committed to our Catholic schools because I believe that they continue to play a vital role in the Church and society. As God and traditional faith and values are ever more vehemently forced out to the peripheries of society, secular “dogmas” seem to be taking their place and are seeping into every aspect of our culture — even in educational curriculums at all levels. In contrast, Catholic schools provide an avenue to teach and celebrate the centrality of our faith in Jesus Christ and to share the values He taught, which, in turn, informs how we live and make decisions. Children spend so many hours in school. What they learn (in all subjects) and the environment in which they learn are vitally important to help them grow as faithful Catholics and committed missionary disciples of our Lord.

I learned this from my parents as they put my eight brothers and sisters and me through 12 years of Catholic education. That meant driving us back



THE BISHOP’S CORNER

MOST REV.
JOSEPH M. SIEGEL

and forth to school from our farm each day (a 40-minute round-trip) for classes, sports and other activities as well as financial sacrifices, which meant more work on their part. But they firmly believed that the “more” that Catholic schools provided was worth the effort and expense, that “more” being the sharing of our Catholic faith in classes, prayers and especially liturgies which helped them to raise us in the faith. It wasn’t always easy, but I will always be grateful that my parents made that commitment.

Parents, I want to thank you for the sacrifices you make to provide a Catholic education for your children. Even with the great blessing of educational scholarships offered by our state (which we hope they will expand in the current legislative session), I know that providing this vital gift to your sons and

daughters still entails cutting back on some of the “extras” — as well as making the time and effort to volunteer for various school events and committees. Your partnership with our schools helps you to fulfill the promise you made at your children’s baptism to raise them in the Catholic faith by being their first and best of teachers. All that they learn in school reinforces how you live the faith in your home — through family prayer, the example of your life and especially by coming together each Sunday and holy day for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist, the source and summit of our faith.

Even many decades after graduation, I continue to be grateful for the priests, religious sisters and brothers, lay teachers and administrators who played such important roles in my education and formation as a follower of Jesus. I know our Catholic school teachers and administrators have the same commitment to provide the best Catholic education possible, forming our young people in spirit, mind and body as disciples of Jesus. Their desire to share their faith with their students, not only in religion class but in

See **BISHOP**, page 6

En apoyo a nuestras escuelas Católicas

Al observar la Semana de las Escuelas Católicas, me gustaría ofrecer mi apoyo a nuestras 26 escuelas, y a nuestros padres, maestros y administradores que las hacen posibles.

Estoy fuertemente comprometido con nuestras escuelas católicas porque creo que continúan desempeñando un papel vital en la Iglesia y la



EL RINCÓN DEL OBISPO

MOST REV.
JOSEPH M. SIEGEL

sociedad. A medida que Dios, la fe y los valores tradicionales son cada vez más vehementemente forzados a salir a las periferias de la sociedad, los “dogmas” seculares parecen estar tomando su lugar y se están filtrando en todos los aspectos de nuestra cultura, incluso en los currículums educativos en todos los niveles. En contraste, las escuelas católicas proporcionan una vía para enseñar y celebrar la centralidad de nuestra fe en Jesucristo y para compartir los valores que Él enseñó, lo que, a su vez, informan cómo vivimos y tomamos decisiones. Los niños pasan tantas horas en la escuela. Lo que aprenden (en todas las materias) y el ambiente en el que aprenden son de vital importancia para ayudarlos a crecer como fieles católicos y discípulos misioneros comprometidos de nuestro Señor.

Aprendí esto de mis padres que nos pusieron a mis ocho hermanos y hermanas y a mí por 12 años de educación católica. Eso significaba llevarnos de ida y vuelta a la escuela desde nuestra granja todos los días (un viaje de ida y vuelta de 40 minutos) para las clases, deportes y otras actividades, así como sacrificios financieros, lo que significaba más trabajo de su parte. Pero creían firmemente que el “extra” que proporcionaban las escuelas católicas valía la pena el esfuerzo y el gasto, que el “extra” era compartir nuestra fe católica en clases, oraciones y especialmente liturgias que les ayudaban a formarnos en la fe. No siempre fue fácil, pero siempre estaré agradecido de que mis padres hicieran ese compromiso.

Padres de familia, quiero agradecerles por los sacrificios que hacen para proporcionar una educación católica para sus hijos. Incluso con la gran bendición de las becas educativas ofrecidas por

nuestro estado (que esperamos se amplíen en la sesión legislativa actual), sé que proporcionar este regalo vital a sus hijos e hijas todavía implica reducir algunos de los “extras:” así como hacer el tiempo y esfuerzo para ser voluntario para varios eventos y comités escolares. Su asociación con nuestras escuelas le ayuda a cumplir la promesa que usted hizo en el bautismo de sus hijos de criarlos en la fe católica al ser sus primeros y mejores maestros. Todo lo que aprenden en la escuela refuerza cómo viven la fe en su hogar, a través de la oración familiar, el ejemplo de vida y especialmente reuniéndose cada domingo y días de fiesta para la celebración de la Sagrada Eucaristía, la fuente y la cumbre de nuestra fe.

Incluso muchas décadas después de graduarme, sigo estando agradecido por los sacerdotes, hermanas y hermanos religiosos, maestros laicos y administradores que desempeñaron papeles tan importantes en mi educación y formación como seguidor de Jesús. Sé que nuestros maestros y administradores de escuelas católicas tienen el mismo compromiso de proporcionar la mejor educación católica posible, formando a nuestros jóvenes y niños en espíritu, mente y cuerpo como discípulos de Jesús. Su deseo de compartir su fe con sus estudiantes, no solo en la clase de religión sino en todas las clases y con su ejemplo, tiene un impacto real. Les agradezco por su compromiso y las largas horas de trabajo para proporcionar esto a nuestros jóvenes y niños en nuestras escuelas, sabiendo que podrían estar recibiendo una mejor compensación financiera en la educación pública. También quiero agradecer a nuestros pastores y parroquias con escuelas por su disposición a proporcionar el tiempo, la energía y los recursos para apoyar la educación católica en sus comunidades.

Espero y oro para que nuestros estudiantes aprovechen al máximo las innumerables oportunidades para aprender que su educación católica les brinda. Con la ayuda de Dios y el apoyo de sus maestros, administradores y pastores, que se comprometan a invertir

See **OBISPO**, page 6

Bishop’s Schedule

RCIA Retreat Opening Prayer, Catholic Center, Evansville, 8:30 a.m. CST, Saturday, Jan. 28.

Confirmation Mass, Resurrection Church, Evansville, 5 p.m. CST, Saturday, Jan. 28.

Confirmation Mass, St. Mary Church, Ireland, 9 a.m. EST, Sunday, Jan. 29.

Catholic Schools Week Mass, St. Benedict Cathedral, Evansville, 9:30 a.m. CST, Tuesday, Jan. 31.

Clergy Personnel Board Meeting, Catholic Center, Evansville, 1:30 p.m. CST, Tuesday, Jan. 31.

Department Head Meeting, Catholic Center, Evansville, 1:30 p.m. CST, Thursday, Feb. 2.

School Mass, St. Joseph Church, Princeton, 9 a.m. CST, Friday, Feb. 3.

Official

From the desk of Most Rev. Joseph M. Siegel

• Appointed **Deacon Tony Schapker** as Diocesan Chaplain for the Boy and Girl Scouts of America, effective Jan. 3.



Letters to the editor

The Message accepts letters to the editor for review and possible publication, with preference given to letters addressing topics and events covered in the paper.

The body of letters should be no more than 200 words; letters are subject to editing.

Mail letters to the editor to **The Message**, P.O. Box 4169, Evansville, IN 47724-0169, or email them to message@evdio.org.

The Message reserves the right to decline publication of submitted letters to the editor.

Faith and Life

Continued from page 4

between heaven and earth is not something I think of often enough as I pray the Mass. I cried even harder when I realized a tragedy was the reason for this beautiful, comforting reminder — and so especially appropriate during this time of Eucharistic Renewal.

I remember reading something in the past that suggested the “Holy, Holy, Holy” is the most important of all the people’s accla-

mations at Mass. It is like a cheer; a joyful shout of thanks and praise to God. It is meant to be powerful, as if the people cannot stand it another moment and need to burst out in praise of God.

If we would only come to Mass with that same enthusiasm — the enthusiasm of a gym full of fans cheering for our team. Right before the game is to begin, we feel the tension rising; the gym is about to erupt with loud cheer-ing.

Similarly at Mass, the anticipation should have us all on the edge of our seats, as together we prepare to burst out in praise of God and, with all the heavenly hosts, including our loved ones in heaven, without end acclaim:

“Holy, Holy, Holy Lord God of Hosts”

Brenda Hopf is a member of Divine Mercy Parish in Dubois County and also contributes to the “Sharing the Load” column in *The Message*.

Special Olympics



Special Olympian basketball athletes from Vanderburgh County, in white, and Harrison County, Indiana, which includes the town of Corydon, in blue, square off Jan. 21 at the Diocese of Evansville Catholic Center. The Catholic Center hosts Special Olympics basketball games annually; and this year, those games will take place on two dates. Jan. 21 saw the first action, and it will continue with games scheduled for Feb. 18. Jan. 21 action featured four teams from Vanderburgh County, the Harrison County team and a team from Vigo County, which includes Terre Haute.



The Message photos by Tim Lilley

Knights of St. John Commandery 345 give back

Sts. Peter and Paul and St. James schools in Haubstadt each received a \$1,000 donation from the Knights of St. John Commandery 345. The donations are made possible by the Knights of St. John annual sausage sales. Both schools are extremely grateful for the donations which will help serve the many needs of students in regards to their learning and education. Pictured during the Jan. 5 check presentation are Knights of St. John representative John Karges, left; Megan Howington, Sts. Peter and Paul principal; Eric Chamberlain, St. James principal; and Knights of St. John representative Tony Karges.



Submitted photo

We Remember in Prayer

Following is a feature in *The Message*, designed to help draw together the People of God in southwestern Indiana.

• **Benedictine Sister Mary Victor Kercher** of Monastery Immaculate Conception in Ferdinand died Jan. 20 at the monastery. Sister Mary Victor was born Loretta Emma Kercher on March 13, 1926 in Evansville, the sixth of 10 children of John and Catherine (Beckerle) Kercher. She entered the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand in 1943 from St. Joseph Parish and made her monastic vows in 1945.

Sister Mary Victor earned a bachelor's degree in Education from St. Benedict College, a master's degree in Education from Notre Dame University, and a master's degree in Spanish with a Latin minor from Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C. She also earned her Certification to serve as a school principal from Notre Dame.

She taught elementary students at St. Mary School in Washington; Christ the King School in Indianapolis; and St. Bartholomew School in Columbus, all in Indiana. She taught high school students at Mater Dei High School in Evansville, and was principal of St. Ferdinand High School in Ferdinand for nine years. She served as a missionary at Monasterio Reina de Paz in Coban, Guatemala, for 14 years.

Sister Mary Victor spent a year at the Hope Community Program in Little Falls, Minnesota, and later served as its director. She was a Spanish teacher at Marian College in Indianapolis; and served in Pastoral Care at St. Agnes Parish in Evansville and at Our Lady of Guadalupe in Parish Milford, also serving as Diocesan Liaison for Hispanic Ministry during that time. She served as Assistant Director of Hispanic Ministry in Dale, Indiana. At the monastery, she was on the Oblate Team and Coordinator of Mission Appeals. Most recently, she served in Prayer Ministry with the Benedictine Sisters of in Hildegard Health Center. In 2020, she celebrated 75 years as a Sister of St. Benedict.

Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated Jan. 24 in the monastery church. Interment followed in the monastic cemetery. Please keep Sister Mary Victor, her family and the Sisters of St. Benedict of Ferdinand in your prayers.

Please send information for WE REMEMBER IN PRAYER to Tim Lilley at The Message, P.O. Box 4169, Evansville, IN 47724 or e-mail tlilley@evdio.org.



SISTER MARY VICTOR KERCHER

Bishop

Continued from page 5

all classes and by their example, makes a real impact. I thank them for their commitment to long hours of work to provide this to our young people in our schools, knowing they could be receiving higher financial compensation in public education. I also want to thank our pastors and parishes with schools for their willingness to provide the time, energy and resources to support Catholic education in their communities. I hope and pray that our stu-

dents will take full advantage of the countless opportunities for learning their Catholic education provides them. With God's help and the support of their teachers, administrators and pastors, may they make the commitment to invest their time and energy into their faith formation — whether in school, at home or in church. If they do, it will make all the difference for them — not just now but in the years to come — as they take what they learned in our Catholic schools, live it in their lives and enable their faith to actively influence our society in the ways of Jesus Christ.

Obispo

Continued from page 5

su tiempo y energía en su formación en la fe, ya sea en la escuela, en el hogar o en la iglesia. Si lo hacen, hará toda la diferencia en sus vidas, no solo ahora sino en los años venideros, tomando lo que

aprendieron en nuestras escuelas católicas, aplicándolo a sus vidas y permitiendo que su fe influya activamente en nuestra sociedad de acuerdo a las enseñanzas de Jesucristo.

— Translated by Bertha Melendres, Director of Office of Hispanic Ministry, Diocese of Evansville

SOURCE + SUMMIT welcomes Jackie Franchois Angel and Father Leo Patalingug



Mater Dei High School hosted the 2022 SOURCE + SUMMIT youth retreat.

Submitted photo

SPECIAL TO THE MESSAGE

Well-known Catholic evangelists Jackie Franchois Angel and Father Leo Patalingug are coming to the 2023 SOURCE + SUMMIT retreat weekend in Evansville! Reitz Memorial High School will host the youth retreat (for ages 13-24)

March 17-19, and the Christ the King campus of Annunciation Parish will host the adult retreat March 18. The theme for the retreats this year is “Through Him and With Him and In Him.”

About the special guests

Jackie Franchois Angel is a

favorite at NCYC, SEEK and Steubenville Youth Conferences. An amazing youth evangelist, worship leader, author, songwriter, Ascension Presents contributor and mother of four, Jackie has changed the lives of thousands of young people around the world by giving them confidence in who God created them to be.

Father Leo Patalingug is an NCYC presenter, internationally acclaimed speaker, host of EWTN’s “Savoring our Faith,” radio host, author, chef and founder of Plating Grace. Father Leo will be sharing his



JACKIE FRANCHOIS ANGEL



FATHER LEO PATALINGUG

unique and energetic style of proclaiming of the Gospel during his presentations to youths and adults from around our diocese!

Other presenters

Giancarlo Bernini, a popular Catholic catechetical illusionist who, patterned after St. John Bosco, teaches profound truths through entertaining and engaging his captivated audiences, is back by popular demand! His personal testimony and down-to-earth interactions with all participants have made him a favorite friend of Source + Summit!

Father Tyler Tenbarger, Diocesan Director of Vocations, Source + Summit Chaplain Father Sudhakar Bhasati and many of our local priests will attend and participate. They are the real rock stars and heavy lifters behind the scenes — hearing confessions not just during Source + Summit, but every day in your faith life in this diocese.

The Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecelia and our

own religious and deacons will participate throughout weekend, leading attendees in prayer and talks. They will enhance this retreat experience by sharing the spiritual fruits of their lives — serving His church living Through Him and With Him and In Him.

Bishop Joseph M. Siegel invites the youth in our diocese to come together at this very unique and grace-filled time of prayer, worship, adoration, faith-sharing and fellowship to be renewed in their love for Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. Bishop Siegel looks forward to being with the participants to celebrate the closing Mass on Sunday morning.

Cost is for the youth retreat at Reitz Memorial is \$50 for first child, \$35 for each additional sibling.

Cost for the adult retreat is \$30 — or \$20 if you have a child attending the youth retreat. Lunch and free childcare will be available.

For complete information go to www.sourcesummitevanosille.org or call 812-453-1024.

St. Meinrad names new director of Center for Youth and Young Adult Evangelization

SPECIAL TO THE MESSAGE

Scotty Biggs of Greensburg, Indiana, has been named the director of St. Meinrad’s Center for Youth and Young Adult Evangelization. He began his work Dec. 6.

In this position, Biggs provides vision and oversight for the programs and activities of the center, including the “One Bread, One Cup” high school conferences and college internship; the Young Adult Initiative; and the Office for Hispanic and Latino Ministry.

Biggs holds a bachelor’s degree in history from Eastern Kentucky University and a certificate in spiritual direction from Our Lady of Grace Monastery. He is currently working toward a master’s degree in theology from St. Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology.

Most recently, Biggs has been a diocesan missionary for the Batesville Deanery in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. He has also been the coordinator of youth and young adult ministry at St. Bartholomew Parish in Columbus, Indiana.

Prior to that, he worked at St. Bartholomew Parish as the director of youth ministry and Confirmation prep. From 2013-14, he worked for the Capuchin Youth and Family Ministry. He is also a writer and content developer for Sadlier Publishing Co.

Biggs also has taught liturgical arts at the “One Bread, One Cup” youth conferences, which is a program of the Center for Youth and Young Adult Evangelization at St. Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology.



SCOTTY BIGGS

Schools

Continued from page 1

Our schools have many things to be proud of; and next week; students in Catholic schools across our diocese will be finding unique ways to celebrate — everything from students across the diocese coming together to celebrate Mass with Bishop Siegel at St. Benedict Cathedral, to special school assemblies and activities, to fun student dress days.

If you have a child enrolled in one of our Catholic schools, check out your school’s schedule of events. If you don’t currently have a child enrolled with us but want to learn more, contact the principal at a local Catholic school, visit www.evdio.org/schools-information.html, or stop by a school from 5-7 p.m. local time on Feb. 2. Each school will be hosting a Come and See evening where you can speak directly with a school administrator. Come, see and help us celebrate Catholic schools!

Catholic Schools Week organizers offer daily themes

SPECIAL TO THE MESSAGE

Catholic schools across the Diocese of Evansville will celebrate National Catholic Schools Week Jan. 29-Feb. 4. *Interim Superintendent of Schools Michelle Priar discusses it in a story that appears elsewhere on this page.*

Bishop Joseph M. Siegel will celebrate the annual Catholic Schools Week Mass Jan 31 at St. Benedict Cathedral in Evansville, and our schools will welcome families to Come and See events Feb. 2.

The National Catholic Educational Association, which organizes events surrounding Catholic Schools Week, also have produced a set of option daily themes that some schools may choose to use to celebrate the 2023 observance. Those themes include:

- Jan. 29 – Celebrating your parish
- Jan. 30 – Celebrating your community
- Jan. 31 – Celebrating Catholic school students
- Feb. 1 – Celebrating the nation
- Feb. 2 – Celebrating vocations
- Feb. 3 – Celebrating faculty, staff and volunteers
- Feb. 4 – Celebrating families

Read more about the 2023 celebration by visiting www.ncea.org.

Read more about Diocese of Evansville Catholic schools by visiting www.evdio.org/catholic-schools.html.

AT THE MOVIES

NEW YORK (OSV News) — The following is a capsule review of a movie recently reviewed by Our Sunday Visitor News. Ratings are also given by the Motion Picture Association (MPA).

“The Pale Blue Eye” (Netflix)

A skillfully evoked gothic atmosphere as well as a quick pace initially promise much in writer-director Scott Cooper’s screen version of Louis Bayard’s 2003 mystery novel. Following the murder and mutilation of a cadet at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point in 1830, a retired New York City detective (Christian

Bale) currently living nearby is engaged to solve the crime. He collaborates with the institution’s resident doctor (Toby Jones) and with an eccentric member of the corps by the name of Edgar Allan Poe (Harry Melling) to hunt down the killer. But the path to identifying the culprit takes more than one unexpected bend. Opinions will be divided about how satisfying the ultimate wrap-up is. Yet it’s safe to say that moral complexity and seamy subject matter make this whodunit best for grown-ups. Occult and other mature themes, including suicide and revenge, some gory violence and gruesome images, a sexual assault, an implied nonmarital relationship, at least one use of profanity, a couple of instances each of milder oaths and rough language. The OSV News classification is A-III — adults. The MPA rating is R — restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian.



Harry Melling, left, as Edgar Allen Poe is shown in a scene with Christian Bale as Augustus Landor from The Pale Blue Eye. © 2022 Netflix, Inc.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH

Gospel for Sunday, January 29, 2023

Matthew 5:1-12a

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

- CHILDREN
MEEK
DISCIPLES
HEAVEN
SATISFIED
POOR
MERCIFUL
- HEART
BLESSED
JESUS
COMFORTED
THIRST
HUNGER
CROWDS
- MOUNTAIN
CLEAN
INHERIT
MOURN
KINGDOM
GOD
SPIRIT

I P S G C O M F O R T E D G H
N V D N I S L I W G I Y D R E
H Q W R C Y D L A K Q E K W A
E L O U H J H V E W I N B V R
R Q R O V U D N G F F G U E T
I P C M N X I K S J W I M I T
T O C G S A D I S C I P L E S
Q O E L T U T Y G A S N G B C
B R Q N E A S O N P G P X A N
S L U N S A D E I T S R I H T
M O E I E W N R J W G F E W Y
M E B S D V I M O D G N I K M
M F E Q S T A M E R C I F U L
R K O K I E N E R D L I H C E
J F J W L P D D H W J Y G A O

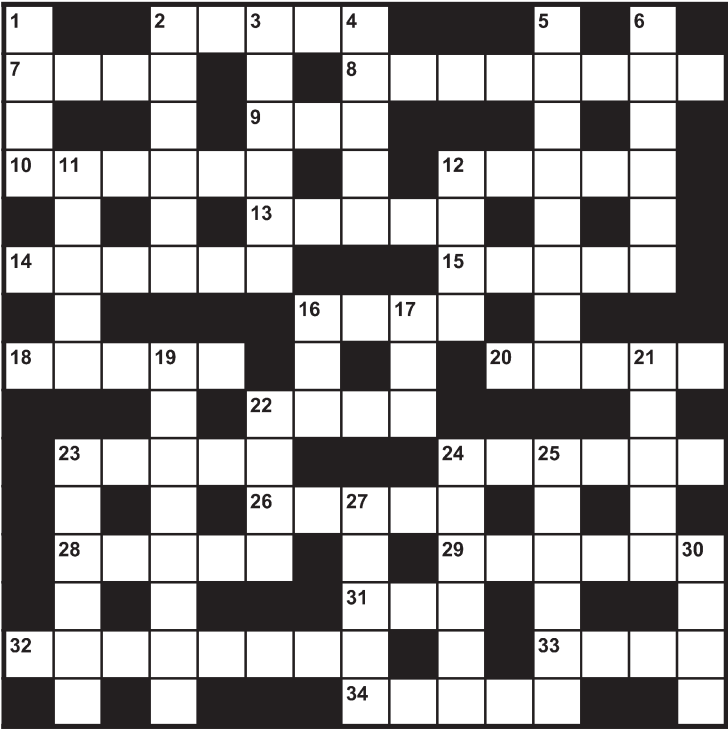
CROSSWORD

ACROSS

- 2 Letter by which a priest is released from one diocese and accepted into another
- 7 “... to the ____ of the earth.” (Acts 1:8)
- 8 Word of praise and joy
- 9 Commandment number
- 10 Father of Noah
- 12 Meeting of bishops
- 13 The flight to here is one of the Sorrows of Our Lady
- 14 Catholic convert whose poems include “Trees”
- 15 One of the seraphim or cherubim, for example
- 16 “Angel of God, my guardian ____”
- 18 ____ *Novarum*
- 20 Biblical tooth action?
- 22 St. ____ de Beaupre
- 23 “... the Spirit of glory and of God ____ upon you.” (I Pet 4:14)
- 24 A Doctor of the Church
- 26 Biblical name meaning “laughter”
- 28 Mea ____
- 29 Founder of the Discalced Carmelites
- 31 “... ____ take away the sins of the world.”
- 32 Teachings
- 33 “... a sorrow ____ death” (Sir 37:2)
- 34 In Genesis, Melchizedek’s domain

DOWN

- 1 Catholic actress, winner of Academy Award for her role in “Hud”
- 2 According to Proverbs, a



www.wordgamesforcatholics.com

- gracious woman gets this
- 3 AKA Hadassah
- 4 First Catholic United States Chief Justice
- 5 Priest and founder of Boys Town
- 6 Louisiana governor who converted to Catholicism
- 11 Vestment worn about the neck and shoulders
- 12 The Wise Men followed it
- 16 Daniel was in the lion’s

- Angela Merici
- 21 St. Francis de ____
- 22 The Archdioceses of Tokyo and Mandalay are here
- 23 Priest
- 24 Type of sin
- 25 “____ corda”
- 27 “... with darkness over the ____” (Gen 1:2)
- 30 French-speaking Canadian diocese

See answers on page 17.

COMMITTED TO OUR CLIENTS. COMMITTED TO OUR COMMUNITY.



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Finance Office provides 2021-22 results

SPECIAL TO THE MESSAGE

The annual audit of the financial statements of the Administrative Offices of the Catholic Diocese of Evansville has been completed, and we have the opportunity to share with you the financial results of our Diocesan Operations for fiscal year ended 6/30/22.

The full financial report, with auditor’s opinion, footnotes, and supplemental information can also be found on the diocesan website at evdio.org under Departments, Finance Office, Forms and Documents.

Admittedly, the format required for the audited financial statements can be a little overwhelming and there are so many “moving parts” it can be difficult to decipher what’s “Good” and what’s “Bad.” So, similar to last year, we’ve included some supplemental information, as listed here, that I hope will be helpful:

- Overview of how the Diocesan Offices are organized
- Chart showing the primary sources of revenue for the diocese
- Condensed Income and Expense Summary
- Audited Statement of Financial Position (Balance Sheet)
- Audited Statement of Activity (Income Statement)

ORGANIZATION OVERVIEW:

The Administrative Offices of the Diocese, and the accompanying financial statements consist of 3 primary “Lines of Business”, if you will, managed and operated by the Administrative Offices:

- 1) **Diocesan Ministries (Operations) — CPC helps fund these ministries**
- a. Chancery – Bishop’s Office and Administrative Functions
 - b. Tribunal
 - c. Safe Environment Management & Oversight
 - d. Stewardship and Development

- e. Office of Catechesis (Adult Religious Formation)
- f. Catholic Schools Office
- g. Vocations and House of Discernment
- h. Office of Worship
- i. Ministry to Priests and Clergy Assistance
- j. Office of Hispanic Ministries
- k. Activities – Facilities; Grounds; and Sarto Retreat House
- l. Communications Office & *The Message*
- m. Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry (including College Campus Ministries)
- n. Family & Life Ministry

- 2) **Deposit & Loan Program — CPC helps fund this operation**
- a. Savings & Loan Bank for Parishes
- 3) **Self-Funded Insurance Program — CPC funds are NOT used to fund the Insurance Program**
- a. Insurance Program for Lay and Clergy Medical Plans & Parish Property, Liability, Casualty, and Workers Comp Insurance

The Audited Financial Statements represent these 3 lines of business — 1 Diocese; 3 Lines of Business; serving:

- 45 Parishes
- Approximately 70,000 Registered Catholic Faithful
- Approximately 1,400 Lay Employees
- Approximately 79 Clergy (46 Active; 33 Retired)
- 26 Catholic Schools (22 Elementary and 4 High Schools) serving approximately 7,000 students
- Catholic Charities Operations

The Diocese has four primary sources of revenue to fund these 3 lines of business:

- **CPC Campaign** (CPC is Not used for the Insurance Line of Business)
- **Fees for Programs & Services** (Including the Insurance Line of Business)
- **Investment & Interest Income** (Including Returns on Endowment holdings)
- **Bequests & Donations** (Including cash distributions from Endowment holdings)

The pie chart accompanying this report reflects each of these sources of revenue and their respective percentage of total revenue presented in the audited financial statements for 2022. Please note that due to the volatile nature of the investment market in 2022, like many organizations and individual investors, we incurred a substantial decrease in the carrying value of our investments. While these decreases are anticipated to be temporary and should recover over a period of time, recording the reduction in the carrying value does require that we record a sizeable loss of investment income in 2022 as well (“unrealized loss”). This will be discussed in more detail later in this commentary.

As a result, the pie chart *above* does not reflect any actual income from investments for the fiscal year, whereas investment income would more typically represent 10 - 20 percent of total revenue and 2021’s strong investment results actually represented over 30 percent of total revenue:

statement. The normal operating results from standard operation of diocesan ministries were actually slightly better than breakeven and favorable to budget for the year while also maintaining stable cash and net asset positions as well. *That’s Good!*


Certainly, the significant reduction in the investment portfolio is an area for constant management and oversight, but these are primarily unrealized losses that are expected to recover over

time and therefore aren’t overly concerning in the near-term given our long-term investment strategy and our stable net asset position.

We were very fortunate once again in fiscal 2022 to experience:

- Continued generosity of our Catholic Faithful giving tirelessly throughout the diocese as a whole
- Another successful CPC Campaign

See **AUDIT**, page 10




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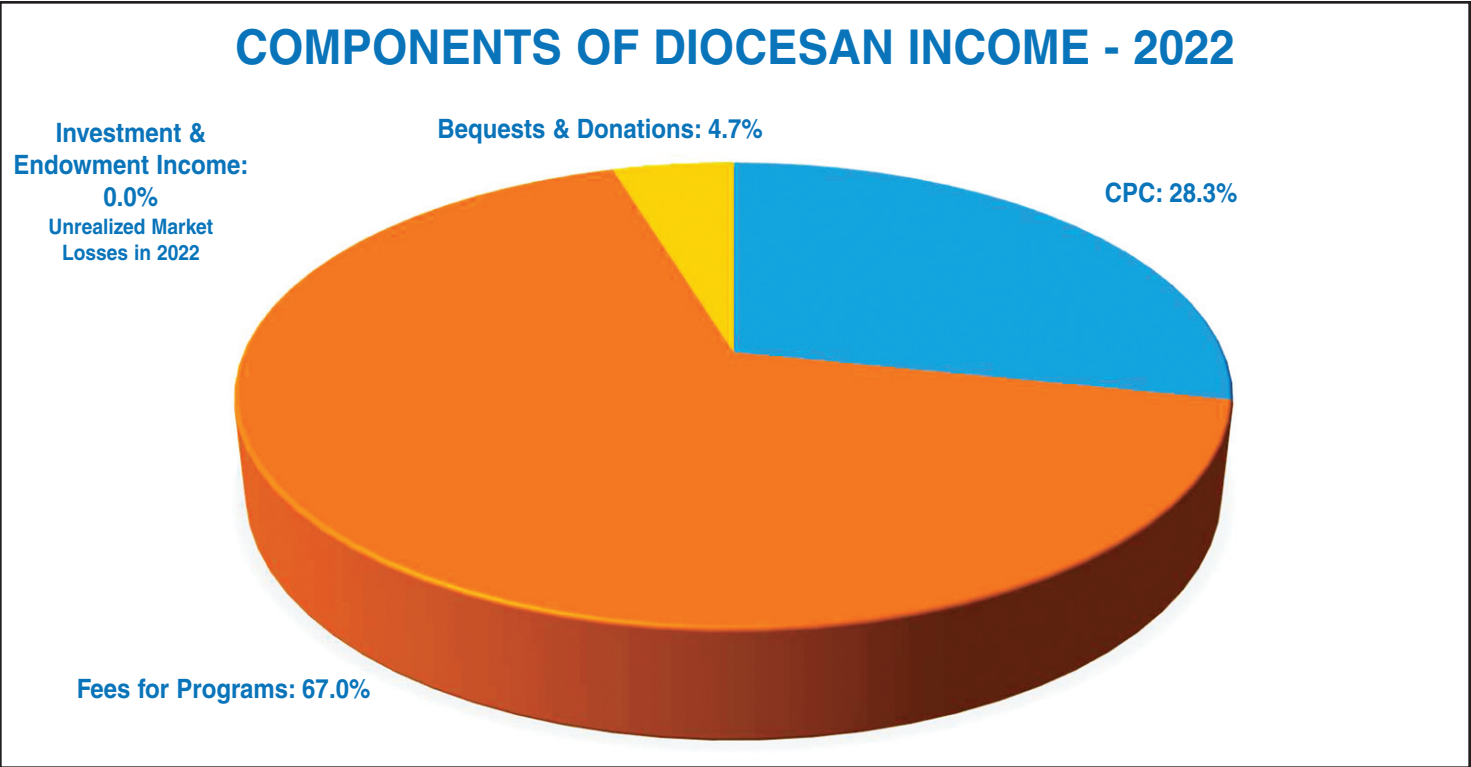
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Income & Expense Summary			
	6/30/22		6/30/21
Income:			
Catholic Parishes Campaign Income	\$	6,285,911	\$ 6,223,674
Net Investment & Endowment Income	\$	(11,093,635)	\$ 13,772,337
Bequests & Donations - Contributions & Endowment Distributions	\$	1,045,463	\$ 2,077,818
Fees for Programs - Insurance, Medical, & Service Fees	\$	14,913,905	\$ 14,441,513
Total Revenue, Gains, & Support	\$	11,151,644	\$ 36,515,342
Total Expenses	\$	22,343,551	\$ 22,439,636
Change in Net Assets - i.e. Net Income/(Loss) - Operating	\$	(11,191,907)	\$ 14,075,706
Positive Change in Pension Liability	\$	3,961,165	\$ 8,453,477
Total Change in Net Assets - i.e. Net Income/(Loss)	\$	(7,230,742)	\$ 22,529,183

Audit

Continued from page 9

- Favorable actuarial analysis of our Pension Plan driving another sizable reduction in pension expense
- Continued strong expense management and favorable operating expense outcomes

With those favorable elements in mind, we did encounter a few financial headwinds as well:

- As already mentioned, unlike 2021’s exceptionally strong investment performance that produced a \$13.7 million “unrealized gain” in 2021, the market performed very poorly in 2022 driving an \$11 million “unrealized loss” in 2022.
- While 2021 included \$1.7 million in one-time revenue from a sizable bequest and the CARES Act PPP program, those revenue elements were not present in 2022.

So, are the results *Good* or *Bad*? They are primarily *Good*. The actual operation of the diocesan ministries, excluding the effects of the poor market performance, was *Good* and showed modest net income, with stable revenue and effective expense management. The investment market performance, of course, was *Bad* and did cause the income statement to show a net loss overall. But, with the normal operation results of the diocese being *Good* and the poor investment performance expected to be a temporary setback, 2022 was a solid year.

Certainly, we must remain cautious and conservative in our financial planning given the impacts of the poor market performance and continued inflationary pressures in the economy, but the general operating condition of the diocese is stable and that is *Good* and for that, we are *Thankful!*

We would be remiss if we did not thank all members of our diocese that give tirelessly of their time, talent, and treasure within their parishes, communities, and throughout the diocese, as one church.

“For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what one does not have. . .

2 CORINTHIANS 8:12

ADDITIONAL NOTES ON INCOME AND EXPENSE:

The following provides additional detail related to the summarized information above:

Investment (Loss): As previously noted, the significant shift in market performance caused 2022 to reflect an \$11 million investment loss compared to the 2021 \$13.7 million gain. As discussed previously, it is important to note that a substantial amount of the investment losses are “unrealized loss-

es” meaning the value of the investments decreased substantially, creating loss on the income statement, but did not drive an actual cash drain that would hinder funding of operations in the short term. While it is an area for continued, close monitoring and planning, it is not an immediate threat. These “unrealized gains and losses” can fluctuate significantly year to year with the performance of the market. We maintain an investment strategy for the long-term and anticipate recovery in the portfolio over time.

Bequests & Donations Income: While bequests and donations at the Diocesan level are typically modest, we were fortunate to garner some sizable gifts in fiscal year 2021. We returned to more modest levels in 2022, which drove some decrease in this revenue component in 2022 compared to 2021. However, it is important to note for the long-term, that with the success of the *Stewards of God’s Grace* (SOGG) Capital Campaign, the Diocese was able to establish 8 new endowments earmarked for key operations functions of the diocese. Those endowments have now reached a material

balance which is allowing a meaningful increase in cash available for distribution to assist in funding operations, and therefore, also helping manage the burden on CPC.

Lay Pension Expense & Liability: You may recall from the 2019 and 2020 financial reports, our balance sheet and income statement were materially impacted in a negative way by sizeable increases in our estimated unfunded pension liability to the tune of \$4.5MM in 2020 and \$4.1MM in 2019. Much of these “swings” in the liability are out of our control and dictated by actuarial assessments of the plan in conjunction with discount rates dictated by the bond market.

Falling discount rates, even with good investment performance, and infusion of cash into the plan, often means increased liability and expense. With steadily falling discount rates prior to 2021, despite our efforts to increase funding levels, we had been forced to recognize sizeable increases in the liability and expense.

That changed in 2021, however, as

we finally encountered a stabilization in the discount rate, which allowed the efforts we began in 2013 to address the funding status of the plan, to actually take hold and chip away at the liability, including an \$8.4 million decrease in the expense and liability in 2021.

More good news, in 2022, the discount rate not only held steady, it actually increased for the first time in many years. Rising discount rates typically mean decreased liability and expense . . . a *Good thing*. The increase in the discount rate in 2022, despite some drop in overall investment returns on plan assets, coupled with improved cash management and pension funding initiatives, reduced the pension expense and the unfunded pension liability approximately \$3.9 million for the year. The unfunded pension liability has now decreased \$14 million since 2020 (also, a *Good thing*).

Diocesan Ministry Expenses: Overall diocesan ministry expenses, as itemized in The Diocesan Overview section, “a.” through “n.” on page 9, were

See **AUDIT**, page 11

The Administrative Offices of the Catholic Diocese of Evansville (Chancery and Certain Diocesan Operations)

Statement of Activities Year Ended June 30, 2022

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
Revenue, Gains (Losses) and Other Support			
Catholic Parishes Campaign	\$ 6,285,911	\$ -	\$ 6,285,911
Contributions and other community support	80,924	286,209	367,133
Insurance and medical fees	14,724,957	-	14,724,957
Service fees	188,948	-	188,948
Net investment return	(8,641,327)	63,720	(8,577,607)
Change in beneficial interests in Foundation	-	(829,234)	(829,234)
Change in beneficial interests in Foundation – designated	(1,686,794)	-	(1,686,794)
Distributions from Foundation and other revenue	678,330	-	678,330
Net assets released from restrictions	634,070	(634,070)	-
Total revenues, gains (losses) and other support	12,265,019	(1,113,375)	11,151,644
Expenses			
Adult formation	196,821	-	196,821
Catholic Center and other operations	75,103	-	75,103
Chancery	696,254	-	696,254
Education	876,629	-	876,629
Insurance and medical programs	13,981,776	-	13,981,776
Spanish-speaking ministry	95,274	-	95,274
Ministry to priests and clergy assistance	372,724	-	372,724
Newspaper and communications	374,872	-	374,872
Office of Worship	109,694	-	109,694
Permanent diaconate	57,625	-	57,625
Subsidies	732,870	-	732,870
Tribunal	187,396	-	187,396
Vocation Office and House of Discernment	585,774	-	585,774
Safe Environment	39,244	-	39,244
Youth ministries, including Newman Centers	371,477	-	371,477
Lay employee retirement plan	(15,680)	-	(15,680)
Employee 403(b) benefits	1,000,926	-	1,000,926
Office of Family and Life	79,229	-	79,229
Total program services	19,818,008	-	19,818,008
Management and general	2,283,737	-	2,283,737
Fundraising	241,806	-	241,806
Total support services	2,525,543	-	2,525,543
Total expenses	22,343,551	-	22,343,551
Change in Net Assets from Operating and Investing Activities	(10,078,532)	(1,113,375)	(11,191,907)
Change in Minimum Pension Liability	3,961,165	-	3,961,165
Change in Net Assets	(6,117,367)	(1,113,375)	(7,230,742)
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	10,344,634	9,074,794	19,419,428
Net Assets, End of Year	\$ 4,227,267	\$ 7,961,419	\$ 12,188,686

Audit

Continued from page 10

flat year over year with most managed at or below budget for the year and several slightly lower than prior year, even with a restart of several of our ministry programs that had been paused in fiscal 2021 due to the COVID Pandemic.

Insurance Program Expenses: The insurance program generated another successful year and despite a material increase in medical claims in 2022, still stayed within a good measure of controlled claims losses and closely managed administrative costs allowing for overall spend to come in nicely favorable to budget for the year.

Net Operating Results: With the stable revenue and effective expense management, diocesan Ministries continue to operate on narrow but stable profit margins, allowing the CPC assessment over the last 5 years to be held to an average increase of only 1.2 percent compared to an average inflation rate of 2.5 percent over the same 5-year period and an average increase of only .67 percent (point 67 percent) in the last 3 years.

THE FINAL TAKE-AWAYS AND CLOSING COMMENTS:

- Normalized operating results were slightly better than break even.
- Normal revenue and expense was stable and in-line with prior year and budget.
- Poor market performance drove substantial unrealized losses and suppressed investment returns serving as the primary driver of the overall Net Loss for the fiscal year.
- The \$3.9 million pension expense and Liability reduction helped mitigate the investment loss.
- The insurance program remains in strong position.
- Diocesan Ministries continue to operate on narrow but stable profit margins, allowing the CPC assessment over the last 5 years to be held to an average increase of only 1.2 percent compared to an average inflation rate of 2.5 percent over the same 5-year period and an average increase of only .67 percent (point 67 percent) in the last 3 years.
- Near-term liquidity and Net Asset position remains in stable condition.
- *That's Good!*

The Administrative Offices of the Catholic Diocese of Evansville (Chancery and Certain Diocesan Operations) Statements of Financial Position June 30, 2022 and 2021

Assets

	2022	2021
Cash	\$ 11,107,266	\$ 10,420,980
Receivables		
Stewards of God's Grace contributions receivable, net	-	22,405
Catholic Parishes Campaign	403,567	490,519
Parishes and institutions, net of allowance;		
2022 and 2021 – \$2,060	1,095,748	790,875
Loans – parishes and institutions, net of allowance;		
2022 and 2021 – \$0	1,112,461	1,323,298
Interest receivable	20,061	21,066
Insurance services receivable	296,976	417,628
Other Diocesan operations	43,640	22,678
	2,972,453	3,088,469
Investments	51,784,113	58,539,085
Beneficial interests in Foundation	15,155,438	17,329,630
Prepaid expenses and other assets	1,893,252	1,649,666
Total assets	\$ 82,912,522	\$ 91,027,830

Liabilities and Net Assets

Liabilities

Accounts payable	\$ 177,639	\$ 203,194
Deposits held for parishes and other Diocesan operations	42,527,034	37,296,421
Due to related parties, net	23,220	391,974
Other accrued expenses and liabilities	1,987,997	2,171,162
Unearned service revenue	15,799	15,799
Accrued pension liability	25,992,147	31,524,852
Payables to named beneficiaries	-	5,000
Total liabilities	70,723,836	71,608,402

Net Assets

Without donor restrictions – undesignated	(28,216,725)	(21,611,631)
Without donor restrictions – designated	32,443,992	31,956,265
Total net assets without donor restrictions	4,227,267	10,344,634
With donor restrictions	7,961,419	9,074,794
Total net assets	12,188,686	19,419,428
Total liabilities and net assets	\$ 82,912,522	\$ 91,027,830

While normalized operating margins are stable, several challenges and uncertainties remain. Market volatility will continue to drive unpredictable results in investment income and uncertainty in the pension liability, and continued, national inflationary pres-

ures will be an item to monitor closely during this year.

All of these items continue to reinforce our efforts for a strong financial plan, conscientious and diligent stewardship, and effective fiscal manage-

ment of the resources you, the Catholic faithful of the Diocese of Evansville have entrusted to our care. Thank you once again for your continued commitment to your parishes, communities, and the diocese as a whole. *That remains, Very Good!*

kate spade
NEW YORK

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MICHAEL KORS

COACH

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Help raise funds for the Go Mobile Clinic through a fun night of BINGO!

Friday, February 3, 2023 @ 6:00pm

St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church
5301 Daylight Drive, Evansville, IN 47725

Tickets include dinner and 20 games of BINGO.

20 games will be played with 20 chances to win designer prizes. Purses and accessories from Kate Spade, Michael Kors, Coach, and more!

Additional bingo cards and cash bar available. All guests must be 21 and over. Invite your friends for a exciting ladies' night benefiting a clinic that helps mothers and unborn babies!

The Go Mobile Clinic will be on site and open for tours.

*Donated by a Pro-Life Patron.

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Living saints at St. Matthew School

St. Matthew School in Mt. Vernon celebrated All Saints Day last November by Awakening the Saints. Fourth-grade and fifth-grade students learned about their chosen saint and participated in Saints Come Alive. Students memorized the life story of their saint, dressed as them and stood like a statue, waiting to be awakened. Each student had a small bucket and was “brought to life” when money was dropped in their bucket, and they recited the story of the saint they were portraying. They raised \$674.20, which was donated to the River Bend Food Pantry. The top photo shows fourth-grade students Scarlett Altstadt, front row left, Alie Girten, Jordyn Ricketts, Brinkley Gregory, Jack Konrath, Isaac Matthews, Cece Collins, back row left, Lauren Seifert, Iliza Ritzert, Daisy Roberts, Lily Altstadt and Kenadee Axley. The bottom photo shows fifth-grade students Addie Blackburn, front row left, Braxtyn Saum, Olive Muller, Nevaeh White, Ana Gonzalez and Kaylee Raben, Dax Konrath, back row left, Samuel Green, Jaclyn Le, Abbey Bourne and Lola Haggard.

Submitted photos



Celebrating Epiphany weekend!



St. Joseph Parish in Jasper celebrated the Epiphany all weekend! Festivities began Jan. 6 with a date night for parents and Epiphany Adventures for youngsters in pre-K through fourth grade. Shown in the top photo is storyteller Susan E. Fowler of Evansville, who brought the story of the Magi to life. The evening also included pizza, crafts and games. During weekend Masses Jan. 7-8, youngsters attended Mass dressed as the three kings from the east. Pastor Father John Brosmer is shown with the Magi — Luis Bradford, left, Aiden Vogt and Kylan Jones.



Submitted photos



The 2023 Tri-State Creation Care Conference
A Celebration of the Gift of Creation

Hearing the Cry of the Earth
in the Din of the Day-to-Day



Keynote address by John Mundell
Vatican-Appointed Director, Laudato Si' Action Platform



John Mundell is president and senior environmental consultant for Mundell & Associates, an Indianapolis-based environmental consulting firm with global reach. Because of his extensive work in promoting socially conscious businesses and his widely acknowledged efforts to promote a more sustainable economy, Pope Francis appointed John to be the global director of the Vatican's Laudato Si' Action Platform. John will challenge us to embrace the vision of the Pope's encyclical “Laudato Si” that people of all faiths and common concern join together to heal and to live in harmony with our Earth.

Saturday, February 25
9:00 am CST to Noon
Event is free and all welcome
Registration begins at 8:30

To be held at:
Aldersgate United Methodist Church
5130 Lincoln Ave, Evansville

Keynote address can be viewed through Zoom
For an invite click this link: Zoom invite
or email: tristate.creation.care@gmail.com
to request an invite

With presentations by:

Advanced Placement Environmental Science Students of the Signature School (Evansville's nationally recognized charter high school).

Ray Wilson of Faith in Place presenting “Thriving Faith Communities, How to Save Energy and Money.”

Gardening Tips from Frank Nellis, “Keeping Your Garden Prosperous by Keeping It Weed-Free without Chemicals.”

Featured also: Artist Dawn Murtaugh displaying her art created from salvaged and recycled items.



Tri-State Creation Care is a coalition of people of faith
dedicated to encouraging the care of our Earth and its resources.

www.tristatecreationcare.org Facebook: tristateinterfaithcreationcare Email: tristate.creation.care@gmail.org

The universal Assembly of God’s people

A few years ago, my family and I found ourselves traveling with my son’s soccer team for a weekend soccer tournament in San Diego, California. The team did so well that they played in the championship game, which ended late on Sunday afternoon. Being a good Catholic family, we knew we had to attend Mass. We found a Mass in Vietnamese just a few miles away. We rushed to it in our not-so-nice outfits, and we made it as the priest was starting to walk in. The ushers took us to the only available pew, right in the front.

This ended up being an unforgettable experience. For the first time, we were attending a Mass in a language other than our two normal languages — English or Spanish. Interestingly even the kids knew how to follow along, and they knew what part of the Liturgy we were on. Even though we could not understand what was being said, or the homily, we were able to pray and respond in our language. We had the missals to figure out what the readings were and what the priest must have been talking about in his homily. We felt welcomed — like they knew we were Catholic, too, and we wanted to take part of the celebration with them. We loved the liturgical music that was so lively in this community. We only wished we could have been able to sing with everyone.

This experience made me realize what it means to be a Catholic Church — the universal Assembly of God’s people. How truly fortunate we are to have a universal community of believers that celebrates the liturgy in a consistent way everywhere around the world. We enjoy a Church liturgy that surpasses languages and borders. It reminded me of when I first



BECAUSE I AM CATHOLIC!

BERTHA MELENDRES

came to California as a little girl, as a Mexican migrant, of how church felt like home for me because, even though everything else around me was different, the Mass felt the same; it was familiar and safe for me.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church gives us a beautiful explanation: “The Church is the people that God gathers in the whole world. She exists in local communities and is made real as a liturgical, above all a Eucharistic, assembly. She draws her life from the word and the Body of Christ and so herself becomes Christ’s Body” (CCC No. 752). It is almost impossible to imagine we have that through the wisdom of our Mother the church and by the will of God. All her children are fed the same food, the body of Christ in the Eucharist, and taught with the same word of God all around the world — every single day.

A friend of mine helped me realize that, maybe, not a lot of people have experienced the amazing power of our Catholic Mass. He encouraged me to write about this experience because he had been touched by it himself. Therefore, if you have never experienced the beauty of our Liturgy in another language, I invite you to attend any of our Masses in Spanish, which are offered in six different parishes across our diocese. Our beautiful liturgy brings

Schedule of Masses in Spanish across the Diocese of Evansville

St. Francis of Assisi Parish, at St. Joseph Church in Dale – 11 a.m. CT, Sunday

Holy Rosary Parish in Evansville – 12:30 p.m. CT, Sunday and 6 p.m. CT, Wednesday

Basilica of St. Francis Xavier (the old cathedral) in Vincennes – 8 a.m. ET, Sunday

St. Mary Parish in Huntingburg – 12 p.m. ET, Sunday

St. Joseph Parish in Jasper – 10:30 a.m. ET, Sunday

Our Lady of Hope Parish in Washington – 11:15 a.m. ET, Sunday and 7 p.m. ET, Tuesday

us together as one, in communion with our God — no matter the language or location — to give thanks to God for his immense love and to anticipate what is to come; as one day, we will be gathered around the table of our Lord in his kingdom.

Bertha is the Director of Hispanic Ministry for the Diocese of Evansville.

La Asamblea universal del pueblo de Dios

Hace unos años, mi familia y yo nos encontramos viajando con el equipo de fútbol de mi hijo para un torneo de fútbol de fin de semana en San Diego, California. El equipo lo hizo tan bien que jugaron en el juego de campeonato, que terminó el domingo por la tarde. Siendo una buena familia católica, sabíamos que teníamos que asistir a misa. Encontramos una misa en vietnamita a pocos kilómetros de distancia. Corrimos a misa con nuestros atuendos no tan agradables, y logramos llegar cuando el sacerdote comenzaba a entrar. Los ujieres nos llevaron al único lugar disponible, justo en la primera banca.

Esto terminó siendo una experiencia inolvidable. Por primera vez, asistíamos a una misa en un idioma distinto de nuestros dos idiomas normales: inglés o español. Curiosamente, incluso los niños sabían cómo seguir, y sabían en qué parte de la liturgia estábamos. Aunque no podíamos entender lo que se decía, o la homilía, pudimos orar y responder en nuestro idioma. Teníamos los misales para averiguar cuáles eran las lecturas y de qué debía haber estado hablando el sacerdote en su homilía. Nos sentimos bienvenidos, como si supieran que nosotros también éramos católicos, y queríamos participar en la celebración con ellos. Nos encantó la música litúrgica que era tan animada en esta comunidad. Ojalá



¡PORQUE SOY CATÓLICA!

BERTHA MELENDRES

hubiéramos podido cantar con todos ellos.

Esta experiencia me hizo darme cuenta de lo que significa ser una Iglesia Católica: la Asamblea universal del pueblo de Dios. Cuán verdaderamente afortunados somos de tener una comunidad universal de creyentes que celebra la liturgia de manera consistente en todo el mundo. Disfrutamos de una liturgia de la Iglesia que supera los idiomas y las fronteras. Me hizo recordar cuando llegué por primera vez a California cuando era niña, como migrante mexicana, de cómo la iglesia se sentía como casa para mí porque, aunque todo lo demás a mi alrededor era diferente, la Misa se sentía igual; Era familiar y me sentía segura.

El Catecismo de la Iglesia Católica nos da una hermosa explicación: “La Iglesia es el pueblo que Dios reúne en el mundo entero. La Iglesia de Dios existe en las comunidades locales y se realiza como

asamblea litúrgica, sobre todo eucarística. La Iglesia vive de la palabra y del Cuerpo de Cristo y de esta manera viene a ser ella misma Cuerpo de Cristo” (CIC No. 752). Es casi imposible imaginar que a través de la sabiduría de nuestra Madre la iglesia y por la voluntad de Dios, todos sus hijos son alimentados con el mismo alimento, el cuerpo de Cristo en la Eucaristía, e instruidos con la misma palabra de Dios en todo el mundo — todos los días.

Un amigo mío me ayudó a darme cuenta de que, tal vez, no mucha gente ha experimentado el asombroso poder de nuestra misa católica y me animó a escribir sobre esta experiencia porque él mismo había sido tocado por ella. Por lo tanto, si nunca has experimentado la belleza de nuestra liturgia en otro idioma, te invito a asistir a cualquiera de nuestras Misas en Ingles, que se ofrecen en todas las parroquias de nuestra diócesis. Nuestra hermosa liturgia nos reúne como uno, en comunión con nuestro Dios, sin importar el idioma o en que lugar, para dar gracias a Dios por su inmenso amor y anticipar lo que está por venir; ya que un día, estaremos reunidos alrededor de la mesa de nuestro Señor en su reino.

Bertha es la Directora del Ministerio Hispano de la Diocesis de Evansville.

Pro-life leaders explore ‘humanizing our political system’ after Dobbs

BY KATE SCANLON
OSV News

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — Pro-life leaders explored new avenues to humanize politics post-Roe at the 24th annual Cardinal O’Connor Conference on Life on Jan. 21. The conference was organized by pro-life Georgetown University students, the day after the 50th March for Life, and was protested by pro-choice students, mirroring the “cultural crossroads” beyond its campus that speakers discussed.

Representatives from a wide array of pro-life groups dis-

cussed ways to broaden the social safety net or implement new pro-family initiatives, such as a recent proposal to make childbirth free of out-of-pocket costs.

The conference is typically held the day before or after the annual March for Life in Washington, according to the university. It was first held in 2000 and later named in honor of the late Cardinal John O’Connor, who was archbishop of New York; a Georgetown University alumnus; and founder of the Sisters for Life. Cardinal O’Connor was known for his pro-life activism on abortion, but also for his

opposition to the death penalty and his support for social-safety-net programs.

Jeanne Mancini, president of the March for Life and a Catholic, spoke at the conference and said the reversal of the Roe v. Wade decision has the potential to drastically change viewpoints on abortion over the coming years. She pointed out people often associate what is legal with what is moral, and so there will be new opportunities to change the hearts and minds of people who “haven’t yet a full understanding of the inherent dignity of the human person.” A few dozen students with

H*yas for Choice, a pro-choice group at Georgetown that operates without university approval, protested the event, chanting slogans about how the pro-lifers in attendance were unwelcome.

Editor’s note: The group’s official name uses an asterisk instead of the letter o, as noted above.

Mancini referenced the protesters in her remarks, saying it was demonstrative of a “reverberation in our culture” after the Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization ruling. That June decision overturned Roe v. Wade and

reversed the high court’s prior jurisprudence that ruled abortion a constitutional right.

“I believe it shows us that we have our work cut out for us, and there’s a lot of wounded-ness still in our culture about the dignity of the human person,” she said.

The “cultural crossroads,” Mancini said, requires that the pro-life movement “lead with love” on the issue, making sure to create new avenues of support so women facing unplanned pregnancies do not feel pressured into abortion.

The event featured additional concurrent speakers from a variety of organizations.

The work of mourning

Roger Scruton, a writer and philosopher, penned an essay, “The Work of Mourning,” in which he states, “. . . mourning is a therapy that points toward survival.”

Sigmund Freud thought mourning was necessary in order to have a new life and avoid a listless state he called melancholia or willed hopelessness.

Let me give an example of what surviving for a new life may mean. Shortly after I entered medical practice, a very pleasant middle-aged lady sought evaluation and treatment with what she thought was asthma. However, the examination and laboratory testing did not confirm asthma.

Her history noted a teenage son had died several years previously in an automobile accident. It was only around the anniversary of this son’s death that she developed her breathing problems. She volunteered that her son’s room was untouched, being exactly as it was on the day he died.

She had never truly accepted his death and mourned her loss. Once she worked through an authentic period of mourning, her asthma never returned. This story underlines the importance of mourning, which helps to overcome the trauma of the loss of a loved one, bringing new life and health.

Mourning, however, may be quite difficult. Often emanating from the trauma of loss is blame. The mourner may take on blame for surviving, and place blame on the one who died for dying. Does my surviving present a burden? Is there anger over



CATHOLIC HEALTHCARE
DR. PETER ROSARIO

new unexpected or unwanted responsibilities resulting from the death of a loved one? One can imagine the excessive struggle with blame toward the deceased in the case of death by suicide.

Guilt is another entity complicating the process of mourning. The trauma associated with abortions may not be felt in the immediate first five years; but 20 or more years later, guilt can become a major obstacle to wholesome mental health. How difficult it may be to overcome guilt and resentment when the deceased held a poor relationship with the mourner in their lifetime.

Mourning may take years to complete. For a young child who loses a parent, every stage in that child’s development into adulthood may require a period of mourning.

Here are two aids to help in the mourning process: forgiveness and religion.

The mourner must offer forgiveness and seek forgiveness. Offer forgiveness to the deceased for dying. Through “dialogue,” seek forgiveness from the deceased for resentment or guilt such as believing the death was somehow a punishment intended for the bereaved individual. What is needed is

empathy that erases blame, guilt and resentment. The need for religion comes through the wisdom of Holy Mother Church offering the funeral Mass with its rites and rituals. We have God’s Grace which comes through the sacraments, Holy Communion and Reconciliation, and the Church — the community of believers — to ease the burdens experienced in mourning. One can develop a hardness of heart and unhappiness without this support.

A hardness of heart can produce feelings of nihilism toward mourning; nothing to concern ourselves with. In the words of Roger Scruton, “The loss of religion . . . is the loss of loss.” Put another way, one loses the ability to handle loss.

Loss is not confined to death. It may encompass loss of a job, loss of physical ability or cognitive function, or loss of connection with family members or friends. These losses also need a period of mourning. Loss builds inner strength if offered as a spiritual sacrifice to place before God.

Our Catholic faith plays a very important part to help bear the losses, offer hope and eliminate guilt. Mourning is necessary, but it requires work. The effort will bear fruit. With the help of the Church, through its sacraments and its community of people, those who mourn shall be comforted. Survival into a new life awaits.

Dr. Rosario is a member of the Southwestern Indiana Guild of the Catholic Medical Association.

Meet Rachel and Isaac Sellers

Editor’s note: NFP columnist Laura McKenzie interviewed Rachel and Isaac Sellers for this column.

When/ how did you come to an awareness of NFP/openness to life and how did it become a part of your desire within marriage?

Rachel — Isaac and I went to religious education at Sts. Peter Paul Parish in Haubstadt growing up. In high school, Dr. Bill Blanke came to talk to our class about NFP. He explained how its teaching aligns with the Catholic Church, and the benefits NFP has on married couples. Isaac and I were dating at the time, and we knew immediately that NFP was what we wanted to do when we got married.

How have the Church’s teachings on marriage appealed to you?

Rachel — Growing up with three sisters, I get to experience the beauty of a large family. Knowing that children are gifts from God, and that all gifts from God are blessings, makes it hard for me not to desire a big family one day!

Isaac — I think a common theme in Catholic teaching, on vocations, specifically, is sacrifice. If we are willing to sacrifice, then we will be able to enjoy the fruits of our labor. All we can do as humans is give our best effort every day; lay down our lives



NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING
LAURA MCKENZIE

for others; and God will provide what we need.

What have been the biggest benefits to practicing NFP?

Isaac — The biggest benefit I found is that NFP allows us to be fully open to life, and that it is up to God if we have kids. If God wants us to have children, he will help provide what is essential for our child along the way. This gives Rachel and me peace of mind, and makes the marital act an act of love and not lust.

Rachel — I see so many benefits of NFP for Isaac and me as a couple, but the biggest advantage is within our communication. Communication can be challenging, and it causes tension in a lot of marriages. However, in order for NFP to be successful, you and your spouse must keep open communication with each other, which



RACHEL AND ISAAC SELLERS

strengthens your marriage in many ways.

What are the biggest challenges?

Isaac — The biggest challenge is having self-control. As an individual, and as a couple, we have to have a

*See **NFP**, page 15*

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Psychedelic drugs and new mental health treatments

Researchers are investigating a new generation of drugs, for treating mental illness, that are derived from psychedelic substances. A molecule known as psilocybin, for example, found in so-called magic mushrooms, appears to be helpful in treating patients with depression. Although these powerful psychoactive substances can be abused for their hallucinogenic/psychedelic properties, several strategies can help assure their therapeutic use in an ethically sound way for the treatment of mental illness.

One strategy involves an approach known as microdosing. A microdose relies on a fraction of the dose that typically causes a hallucinogenic, psychedelic experience. Anti-depressant benefits have been reported with doses just five percent to 10 percent the strength of the psychotropic, so-called tripping dose, thereby avoiding a full-blown psychedelic experience.

A 2022 study published in the journal “Nature” by researchers from the University of British Columbia confirmed that, at one month post treatment, psilocybin microdosers demonstrated greater observed improvements in mood and mental health when compared to non-microdosed controls.

In addition to psilocybin, a faster-acting psychedelic drug known as dimethyltryptamine, or DMT, is also being studied for its ability to provide durable antidepressant activity for some patients — with benefits reportedly lasting 3-5 months following treatment.

Psychedelic-assisted approaches show particular promise when combined with psychotherapy sessions to treat severe depression or post-traumatic stress disorder, or both. Following a microdosing session, an individual may report feeling more emotionally tender, more sensitive to his or her own feelings, and more open to breaking out of neurotic thought loops.

In the hands of a skilled therapist, it may be possible to use that period of reflection to help a patient find his or her way through a past trauma. Integration becomes quite important, as the therapist seeks to imprint new insights and create new pathways.

Some clinicians have emphasized that, without sup-



MAKING SENSE OUT OF BIOETHICS

FATHER TAD PACHOLCZYK

portive interventions and appropriate psychotherapy, if a painful experience is unlocked, there is a risk of re-traumatization and severe stress. Individuals being treated with psychedelics might be triggered to confront unanticipated and painful memories; alternatively, visceral, uncomfortable or frightening experiences may be provoked — potentially making matters worse for an individual who is seeking improved mental health. Accompaniment and therapy in psychedelic treatment is, therefore, particularly important. An already-established, trusted and tested relationship with a psychotherapist is invaluable prior to turning towards approaches that rely on drug-induced alterations of one’s mental state.

Although the physiological safety of psychedelics is relatively well established, psychological and psychiatric effects are less predictable; effects depend on setting, health, mood, belief systems and cultural environment. Good measures of caution and circumspection are required, and these agents should only be used under skilled supervision. People have entered into states of psychosis after experimenting with psychedelic drugs. Experiencing a bad trip can leave individuals with flashbacks for years. If someone is already on the brink of psychosis or despair, the wrong experience could be very damaging.

When it comes to psychotherapy, moreover, not all practitioners will necessarily be equally competent. The adage, “Be careful who you allow to walk in the landscape of your mind,” implies that care and practical wisdom are called for when pursuing professional guidance and support. A competent Catholic psychotherapist can assist with treatment from a holistic angle that integrates spiritual, religious and psychological dimensions — all of which may be needed for healing therapies to be most effective.

Young people require special attention and protec-

tion from drug-induced effects. Early exposure to mind-altering drugs can turn into disastrous multi-year stretches with various addictions. Mind-altering drugs raise the prospect of pushing youth with fragile, still-developing neural circuits over the edge and leading them into a future marked by struggles with substance dependencies.

For more extreme cases of depression, patients receiving larger psychedelic doses than microdoses have also sometimes reported enduring improvements. Advocates for the use of psychedelic substances note that, while some may recoil at the prospect of tripping or encountering distortions in perception, those facing severe depression already have a highly distorted perception; such drugs may help derail patterns of neural activity that underlie these distortions.

As clinical work with psychedelic substances advances, we may begin to see the development of other variants of these molecules that will offer desirable therapeutic outcomes without the hallucinations that are often seen as barriers for these types of drugs.

Recognizing a certain eagerness on the part of the public to become early adopters of psychotropic therapies (e.g. marijuana treatments promoted on limited evidence), it remains important to emphasize how prudence and caution are in order. In the words of one researcher, “public uptake of microdosing has outpaced evidence, mandating further prospective research.”

As these drugs begin to appear on the scene for valid therapeutic purposes, it will be important to acknowledge the risks and dangers of non-monitored or self-administered psychedelics — even as we seek to identify and carefully minister to mental-health subpopulations who may benefit significantly from these novel and promising approaches.

Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, Ph.D. earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, MA, and serves as the Director of Education at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncb-center.org and www.fathertad.com.

NFP

Continued from page 14

lot of self-control at certain times of the month. This has been a challenge but has helped us grow together as well, as we’ve found other ways to show our love to each other.

Rachel — As a newly married couple, learning and implementing NFP can be challenging in the beginning. Just like starting any new task, project, etc. I believe that is why many individuals think NFP doesn’t work. As a young couple, we often hear doubts from others. However, the more awareness and education we can spread about how to implement NFP correctly, the more we will see it among married couples.

The more you are exposed to NFP and its teaching prior to entering the vocation of marriage, the better! However, it is never too late to learn the teachings of NFP and implement it in your marriage. Fortunately, our Catholic community is full of resources to help teach NFP, and help along the way.

What have been the unexpected surprises/blessings along the way?

After being together for eight years before marriage, we had no idea how much our relationship would change once we got married; NFP is definitely the root of the newfound love we have for each other. We both agree that our relationship is the best it has ever been, and we feel like NFP has opened our eyes

to the beauty of the Catholic Church. NFP encourages us to give ourselves completely to each other, and to love each other selflessly. It has not only brought us closer to each other, but closer to God.

How would you share this teaching of our Church to those who are most skeptical?

We are extremely grateful for the impact NFP has had on our relationship. Not only intimately, but emotionally and spiritually. We listened to married couples speak on these benefits for years; but until you actually experience it firsthand, it is hard to understand how powerful NFP is. We both agree that everyone should give NFP a chance; it is a beautiful gift!





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Boonville Knights hold free-throw tournament

SPECIAL TO THE MESSAGE

Knights of Columbus Council 10257 from St. Clement Parish in Boonville resumed its annual free-throw contest Jan. 15 after a two-year break due to COVID-19. Each competitor shot 15 free throws, with age-class winners determined by the highest number of free-throws made. In all, 23 boys and girls participated. Winners in each age group advanced to district competition. Age-group winners included Milah Kramer and Knox Bredemeire, 9-year-olds; Ella Boyle and Lucas Turner, 10-year-olds; Kayla Burns and Jaren Hancock, 11-year-olds; and Carlie Kuebler and Aidan Wahl, 12-year-olds.



Submitted photo

These youngsters competed in the Jan 15 free-throw contest sponsored by Knights of Columbus Council 10257. Shown are Carlie Kuebler, left, Kayla Burns, Ella Boyle, Milah Kramer, Aidan Wahl, Jaren Hancock, Lucas Turner and Knox Bredemeire.

Lilly

Continued from page 1

Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship recipient. The scholarship provides full-tuition, required fees and an annual stipend of up to \$900 for required books and equipment for four years of full-time undergraduate study at an accredited public or private nonprofit Indiana college or university. The scholarships are awarded based on academic merit and a selective interview process.

Logan assumed the time had passed for announcing scholarship recipients, so he was “completely surprised.”

“I saw the people who I interviewed with and thought, ‘Wow, this is actually happening,’” he said. “I started to have thoughts about what could happen now, especially for schools in Indiana, like Purdue or Notre Dame. Suddenly, Notre Dame became a possibility, because prior to that, I would not have been able to go to Notre Dame. It just became so much more real to me. I was definitely in a little bit of shock but happy.

“I now have a possibility to achieve that dream I’ve had forever.”

Logan is the son of Patrick and Bethany Logan, and he has two older sisters and a younger brother. The family’s home parish is St. John the

Baptist in Newburgh, where he has been an active member and helped teach a confirmation class.

Reitz Memorial principal Aaron Schmitt said the school community couldn’t be prouder of Jack and all that he stands for.

“I think it’s a testament to him, his character, how hard he’s worked, and how much he has been willing to take on,” Schmitt said. “I think it’s also a testament to the faculty, teachers and the staff both at SJB and Reitz Memorial, and how much people have been willing to provide guidance, push and make sure he is where he needs to be and that he understands he is capable of more.”

Logan’s accomplishments include serving as vice president of the National Honor Society; co-founding a Model UN club; participating in drama club, Students for Life, Youth Resources’ TeenPower and some international clubs. Logan also serves on the board for Incognito Instructors, a free online tutoring program for Reitz Memorial students.

“It’s definitely rewarding being able to help people and making a difference in an area

that I’m confident I can help in,” he said of his involvement with Incognito.

Athletically, Logan wrestles and plays lacrosse. Until this year, he also played soccer.

“All three of those sports have been some of the best experiences I’ve had between the coaching staff and the community of athletes,” he said.

Logan admitted to having many late nights to keep up with all that he’s involved in, but he’s also been able to rely on the people around him — including family, friends, coaches and teachers — to help him succeed.

“I’m terrible at procrastinating, so it has required a lot of time management,” he said. “I know my parents have definitely kept me honest about that, especially with making lists and making me look at them.”

Logan is still finalizing his plans after high school. He



Submitted photo

Pictured during the surprise celebration in December are Reitz Memorial president Christian Mocek, left; Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship recipient John “Jack” Logan; Dr. Trent Engbers, a Lilly board member and Reitz Memorial alum; and Reitz Memorial principal Aaron Schmitt.

applied to four schools: Notre Dame University, Purdue University, the Naval Academy and Air Force Academy. If he attends Notre Dame or Purdue, he plans to major in chemical engineering and will consider joining a Reserve Officers’ Training Corps (ROTC) program.

Sidney Hardgrave, Vanderburgh Community

Foundation regional director of community engagement and impact, said in a press release, “This year’s recipients impressed the committee with their accomplishments, leadership skills and maturity.”

Since the 1998-99 school year, more than 5,000 Indiana students have received the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship.

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Expect the unexpected

Expect the unexpected. Throughout our lives, we learn to expect the unexpected. In the Bible, we are provided many examples of how God taught us to expect the unexpected. We plan and prepare for the unexpected. Here is one scripture that reminds us of the importance of remaining faithful as we are faced with the unexpected:

“While the crowd was pressing in on Jesus and listening to the word of God, he was standing by the Lake of Gennesaret. He saw two boats there alongside the lake; the fishermen had disembarked and were washing their nets. Getting into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, he asked him to put out a short distance from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. After he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, ‘Put out into deep water and lower your nets for a catch.’ Simon said in reply, ‘Master, we have worked hard all night and have caught nothing, but at your command I will lower the nets.’ When they had done this, they caught a great number of fish and their nets were tearing. They signaled to their partners in the other boat to come to help them. They came and filled both boats so that they were in danger of sinking. When Simon Peter saw this, he fell at the knees of Jesus and said, ‘Depart from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man.’ For astonishment at the catch of fish they had made seized him and all those with him, and likewise James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners of Simon. Jesus said to Simon, ‘Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching men.’ When they brought their boats to the shore, they left everything and followed him” (Luke 5:1-11).



CATHOLIC CHARITIES

DENISE SEIBERT TOWNSEND

As I reflect on this scripture, I think about how difficult it would have been for the fishermen to leave their boats behind. These boats, and fishing, were their livelihoods. For many of these fishermen, I would assume that this is the only lifestyle they had known. Then, I think about how these disciples put their complete trust in Jesus to follow Him into this unknown future. I assume the disciples sometimes wondered if they made the right decision to follow Jesus; yet, they remained faithful and continued to follow Jesus and learn from Him.

Today, I think about how we feel when our lives suddenly and drastically change when we least expect it. Sometimes, the unexpected can bring great joy — meeting the person you eventually marry; the introduction of someone who becomes a new friend; and many other happy moments.

Yet, there are times when a person may be challenged by the unexpected loss of a job; an illness; an accident; the death of a loved one; or a natural disaster. These experiences can leave a person feeling alone, isolated, numb and uncertain. In these situations, it can be challenging to remain faithful and trusting in God. Yet, when we remain faithful, we

have more confidence that we can overcome these challenges.

Through our work at Catholic Charities, I also believe that we can help families faced with their own unexpected challenges. We provided hope to the single woman raising her six-year-old grandson. For a period of time, her hours at work were reduced, resulting in a loss of income. It only took a couple paychecks with the reduced hours for her to fall behind on her rent. She reached out to Catholic Charities for assistance in her time of need. Shortly after receiving assistance, her work hours were restored, resulting in more income. With help from Catholic Charities, she was able to maintain stable housing for her and her grandson and continue working.

When a man was feeling depressed and alone after his wife passed away, he contacted Catholic Charities for counseling services. When he initially contacted Catholic Charities, he said he felt hopeless and helpless. With guidance and support, this man learned how to manage his feelings. He now gardens, walks daily and participates in a men’s club at his church. He has hope for the future.

As you face your own unexpected challenges, I encourage you to remain faithful and remember that Catholic Charities is a resource to provide support and hope for the future.

Denise Seibert Townsend is director of Catholic Charities for the Diocese of Evansville.

God Bless You

I always appreciate the differences in the prayers of the Mass as liturgical seasons change; but recently, I was struck by a more fundamental element of the concluding rites — the final blessing. I attended the Jan. 6 Memorial Mass for Pope Emeritus Benedict XVI, and Bishop [Joseph M.] Siegel used the episcopal final blessing, a form which increased my anticipation for the final blessing and heightened my understanding of its significance. I began to consider more deeply the power of prayer in light of the power of a “simple” blessing; and as we enter into Ordinary Time again (quite possibly my favorite liturgical season), I invite you to do the same.

The blessing began as usual: “The Lord be with you — And with your spirit.” This merits much reflection on its own. We often pray it as a statement, “Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee.” Here, I think, we pray the words as more of a request that the Lord might accompany each person at the Mass and throughout their lives. And what does it mean to ask the Lord to be with us when we know that he always is?

Our very existence is sustained at each moment by his loving intention, so what different aspect of his presence does this prayer address? I could won-



MEDITATIONE IGNIS

MARIA SERMERSHEIM

der about those first lines for hours, but the blessing quickly continues with the following sequence: “Blessed be the name of the Lord — Now and for ever; Our help is in the name of the Lord — Who made heaven and earth.” We pray that the Lord’s name is recognized as great, that he is praised and blessed now and forever, just as we do in the Lord’s Prayer: “Hallowed be thy name.” We acknowledge our dependence on God, stating the fact that the Lord who created heaven and earth is the very same one who condescends to care for us, he is the same one upon whom we rely in every instance, for every assistance, great or small.

Then, taking the pastoral staff, the bishop makes the sign of the cross three times as he prays, “May almighty God bless you, the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit.” As much as it is the “episcopal blessing” and the bishop is the one praying for the

blessing, it is the almighty Lord who blesses us: God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, the Creator who is always with us, who sustains us, who intervenes for us beyond merely providing for our existence.

It is staggering — but true — to think that the God who created the universe and knows all of the past, the present and the future looks lovingly on me at that moment, especially, and blesses me.

The final blessing is adapted in many ways for many occasions, but it always concludes Mass; and it always invokes the one almighty God who made heaven and earth, regardless of whether the celebrant says it in so many words. Though it is called the “final blessing,” it is only the final blessing of each Mass; it is not (generally) the final blessing of our lives. How astonishing, that we can be — and are! — repeatedly, explicitly blessed by the almighty God. Yes, God bless you, in your sneezes and your snores, in your living and in your dying.

Maria Sermersheim is a 2018 alumna of Reitz Memorial High School and a 2022 graduate of the University of Notre Dame. She welcomes emails at msermersheim@evdio.org.

THIS WEEK’S ANSWERS

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Tens of thousands turn out for Walk for Life West Coast to speak for unborn

BY VALERIE SCHMALZ
OSV News

SAN FRANCISCO (OSV News) — The first Walk for Life West Coast since the U.S. Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade in June drew an outsized crowd of tens of thousands of pro-life supporters, apparently undaunted by California’s newly approved constitutional amendment removing all restrictions on abortion.

“Both Dobbs and Prop. 1 have reignited the pro-life movement in California, and today’s turnout shows it,” said Eva Muntean, co-chair of the Walk for Life.

The walk stretched more than

a mile along Market Street, the city’s main downtown thoroughfare, which was closed to traffic for the event.

“I want to speak for the unborn who don’t have a voice,” said Jesus Garcia, 24, a Cal-State East Bay student from Newark, California, who said this year was his fourth year at the walk. Garcia held a hand-made sign that said, “Abortion is violence against a human life. Not health care or a woman’s right!”

“After Roe, we decided to come and bring the prayer here where it was needed,” said Deacon Kevin Stephenson of St. Benedict Parish in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, who with

his wife, Monica, brought 20 high school students from the parish youth group, including two of their own children. Last year, they went to the March for Life in Washington. “It’s our kids who wanted to come here. We just followed the Holy Spirit.”

For California, the June 24 Dobbs v. Jackson’s Women’s Health Organization ruling that overturned Roe and returned abortion to the states is bitter-sweet: voters in November approved by nearly 67 percent Proposition 1, enshrining a state constitutional amendment legalizing contraception and abortion with no restrictions until birth.

Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

First Reading: Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13; Response: Psalm 146:6-7, 8-9, 9-10; Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Gospel: Matthew 5:1-12a

Zephaniah is one of the 12 Minor Prophets of the Old Testament. They are distinguished from the four Major Prophets: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and Daniel. Zephaniah’s ministry as a prophet took place in the early years of King Josiah (640-609 B.C.). It was religious reform time, and Josiah was the king fitted to do it. He was probably the morally best of the kings descended from King David (1,000-961B.C.), certainly morally superior to David. Zephaniah was, himself, a royal — a great grandson of King Hezekiah (715-686 B.C.). Josiah attempted to undo the foreign policies of his predecessor, King Manasseh (687-642), and the widespread idolatry that had crept into the Kingdom of Judah. Zephaniah’s ministry contributed to Josiah’s reforms. The political situation: the decline of the Assyrian Empire; the growing power of the New Babylonian Empire north and east of Judah; plus a powerful Egypt to the south.

Our reading from Zephaniah is a chopped-up version of two widely separated oracles (prophetic statements). In the first part, the prophet has just proclaimed warning threats about the coming “Day of the Lord,” a day when God would drastically intervene against idolatry, foreign dress by the royals and unbelief in Jerusalem. “Come together, Shameless Nation, before you are blown away like drifting chaff, before there comes upon you the fierce anger of the Lord . . . the day of the wrath of the Lord.” Suddenly, the tone changes as we enter our first reading. An appeal from the prophet to a remnant of good people: “Seek the Lord, you *humble* of the earth, who have observed his law. Seek *justice*. Seek *humility*.” These words probably determined the selection of this reading for today, since they echo the beatitudes of this Sunday’s gospel. Zephaniah dangles possible safety for the humble, “Then perhaps you will be sheltered on the day of the Lord’s anger.” As spokesperson for the Lord God, he promises, “I will leave a remnant among you, a people humble and lowly.” The Lord chose the best for the remnant since “they shall do no wrong, and speak no lies. No deceit in their



SUNDAY SCRIPTURE

FATHER DONALD DILGER

mouths.” The prophet closes with the imagery of the Lord’s protected flock: “They shall pasture and lie down with none to disturb them.”

The verses of Psalm 146 chosen as a response to the first reading display similarity to the beatitudes in today’s gospel reading. It must be for this reason that the assemblers of our Lectionary decided to borrow the first beatitude as the people’s response, “Blessed are the poor in spirit, the kingdom of heaven is theirs.” Here is the Psalmist’s description of the Lord God: The Lord is faithful to his promises, secures justice for the oppressed, feeds the hungry, sets captives free, gives sight to the blind, raises up the depressed, loves the just, protects strangers, orphans and widows. Quite a resumé should the Lord be looking for a job. The dark side: “The way of the wicked he brings to ruin.”

In last Sunday’s reading, Paul asked those who favored him over other missionaries, “Was Paul crucified for you?” This led him to expand on his preaching of a crucified Christ. No philosophy (wisdom) can explain God’s plan for a crucified Christ. It displays God’s weakness, but “God’s weakness is stronger than human strength.” Such weakness is also displayed in the membership of the Christian community at Corinth. Not many were educated, nor powerful, nor nobly born. They were just plain folks. Just as God chose the ignominy of the cross, he also chose the unlearned to shame the learned; the weak to shame the strong; the humble to shame the proud. This is God’s way, so that no human being can justly boast before God. That God chose a crucified Christ as the instrument of salvation is the greatest evidence that God’s ways are not our ways. *See Isaiah 55:8-9.*

The gospel reading opens the Sermon on the Mountain with nine beatitudes (blessings). What setting does Matthew choose for this first of Jesus’ five great sermons? A legitimate question since Luke

chooses a different setting for the same teaching material. Matthew begins, “When he saw the crowds, *he went up the mountain*. After he sat down, his disciples came to him.” Matthew envisions Jesus as a new Moses teaching the new Torah (laws) to the new Israel. But this is an upgrade. Moses received the Torah on the mountain, while the people were waiting in terror at a distance from the mountain. *See Exodus 19:12-18.* Nor did Moses speak to the people from the mountain. He brought the Torah down and taught them. Jesus, however, did not receive the Torah on the mountain. He was the Torah incarnate and spoke on his own authority: “You have heard that it was said to the men of old . . . *but I say to you . . .*” In this sermon, Jesus upgrades the teaching of Moses. Nor did his disciples, in terror, wait for him at a distance. They joined him on the mountain. Matthew implies this upgrade. John’s gospel is more direct, “The Torah (law) was given through Moses. Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17).

The nine beatitudes bless the poor in spirit — humble before God and humankind. They already live in the kingdom of heaven here on earth. A blessing on those who mourn over evil. They will not be left without consolation. A blessing on the meek, who patiently suffer oppression. They will see themselves vindicated by God. A blessing on those who hunger and thirst to bring justice to the poor. God will grant success to their efforts. A blessing on the merciful. God will be merciful to them. Blessed are the clean of heart — those not attached to material things. They will see God.

A blessing on peacemakers. They are God’s special children. A blessing on those who suffer persecution, insults, slander “because of me;” that is, because they publicly live their Christian values. God will richly reward them in heaven. What could “heaven” mean in this context? Life after death? Will heaven be an eternal banquet like the imagery described in Isaiah 25:6-8 — rich food and the finest wine? It is difficult to escape our concrete experiences. Pope St. John Paul II tried to pull us away from heaven as a material concept by describing heaven as fullness of communion with God. Benedict XVI taught, “Heaven is simply God.”

On Limbo and on silent prayer

Question: What happened to Limbo? (Sacramento, California)

Answer: Traditionally, limbo was thought of as a place in the afterlife that was neither heaven nor purgatory, but which also didn’t involve the full sufferings of hell proper. Limbo was meant for the non-baptized who were innocent of any serious personal sin. Generally, limbo was seen as the destiny of young children who died before baptism; and, in some cases, also as the eternal home of virtuous non-Christians.



QUESTION CORNER

JENNA MARIE COOPER

faith, “The necessity of sacramental Baptism is a necessity of the second order compared to the absolute necessity of God’s saving act through Jesus Christ for the final salvation of every human being.” And that “Sacramental Baptism is necessary because it is the ‘ordinary’ [my emphasis] means through which a person shares the beneficial effects of Jesus’ death and resurrection.”

That is, while baptism is the usual and ordinary means through which a person is able to attain eternal life in heaven, the Church still recognizes that God is free to extend his saving grace in an extraordinary way, beyond his promises. The overall conclusion of this document from the Commission is that, with respect to the eternal fate of unbaptized infants, we can have confidence in God’s tender mercy.

Question: I live alone, and every morning and night, I say my prayers out loud, but sometimes I pray silently, just in my head. Are those silent prayers heard? (Atlanta, Georgia)

Answer: God is everywhere and knows everything, so it is safe to say that even our purely silent prayers are heard by God.

Additionally, we are told throughout Scripture that God knows the secrets and

thoughts of our hearts. For example, in the book of Psalms, we pray: “LORD, you have probed me, you know me: you know when I sit and stand; you understand my thoughts from afar . . . Even before a word is on my tongue, LORD, you know it all.” (Ps. 139:1-2, 4)

Many of our greatest saints, such as Sts. Teresa of Avila and John of the Cross, place special value on “mental prayer” — a silent, often-wordless sharing of our hearts with God. And, in the Gospel, Jesus himself tells us: “. . . when you pray, go to your inner room, close the door, and pray to your Father in secret. And your Father, who sees in secret, will repay you” (Mt. 6:6).

Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to CatholicQA@osv.com.

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Footprints of Our Catholic Brethren

Winter had officially returned. On Saturday morning, the day before our historical stop at Corpus Christi, I found myself at the school for an 8 a.m. basketball game. Zach’s season was winding up, and we had become quite familiar with the Corpus Christi gym. With about 25 minutes before game time, I set off on a 4-mile run.

REFLECTION
BY JIM SCHROEDER
Corpus Christi Church, Evansville

The temperature was 6 degrees, and within a few steps, I could feel the chill of the morning in my face. It was a clear, beautiful day; and my route meandered across the Lloyd and down to Middle Mount Vernon Road, where the stream trickled along an old route that had once been a primary way to the town that bore its name. As I finally made my way back to the gym and stepped inside, I saw familiar faces that I had known since my high school days. But over 20 years later, with children now in grade school and our 40th birthdays approaching (and having gone by!), life was much different than the days we roamed the halls of Mater Dei wondering just what life would look like when we became adults.

The following day, my family and I

found ourselves back at Corpus Christi; this time, for the 11 a.m. Mass. Year six, the final year of the diocese historical tour, had officially begun; and by the time we heard those familiar words “the Mass has ended . . .” only five more stops remained until our final celebration at the doors of St. Benedict Cathedral on Pentecost.

But on this particular day, we were celebrating the Epiphany of Our Lord. Father Joseph was presiding that day from nearby St. Meinrad, and he reflected on the paradox of the kings in the Gospel. As he noted, King Herod was the epitome of paranoid and controlling, so worried that someone would overthrow him that he had a wife and three family members executed in addition to all the innocent young children that would die in an attempt to derail the Messiah’s reign. In contrast, the magi from the East were open and curious — wondering just whose star had been rising. They came a long way to pay him homage; and upon laying eyes on the Christ child, prostrated themselves in front of him and offered him gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. They humbly accepted his kingship, and returned to their homeland in jubilation for what they had seen.



JIM SCHROEDER



Submitted photo

This is the cover of Jim Schroeder’s book.

As Father reflected on these seemingly opposite individuals, the question was posed to the congregation about whom they saw in themselves. Were we worried about maintaining power and image, or were we willing to go on a journey in search of the meaning and purpose that only He could provide? I looked around the church, and once again saw a number of people I had known since my youth. No doubt, we were all on our own particular treks. No doubt, we all, at times, succumbed to fear that we would be overtaken by those more competent — and by circumstances that unexpectedly arose. No doubt, at times, we embodied a jealous Herod and a seeking magi.

As the final leg of our journey commenced, the real query posed was just where we would go in the long run. Like the creek that meandered next to that old county road, 40 years

of life had proved that it would not be a straight path. But in winding through the months and years to come, I hoped that the joy of the magi would define my path — and the paths of those around me, even when the winding hills set in. And I hoped that, when I finally arrived to find Him, I might pay him homage — not in gifts I carried in tow, but in the life for which I was bestowed.

This reflection is from Jim Schroeder’s book “The Evansville Diocese Historical Tour: Footprints of Our Catholic Brethren.” Jim, his wife, Amy, and their kids live in Evansville. They are parishioners at Holy Redeemer Parish. Jim is a pediatric psychologist and Vice President of the psychology department at Easterseals Rehabilitation Center. “The full story, including illustrations, is available on Amazon or with his other books and articles at www.james-schroeder.com.”

St. John the Baptist teachers awarded nearly \$13,000 in Mother Bear grants

Four teachers from St. John the Baptist School in Newburgh recently received nearly \$13,000 in grants from the Evansville-based Mother Bear Charitable Foundation. The mission of Mother Bear is to enrich the lives of exceptional children in Vanderburgh and Warrick counties. Maria Janney, K-8 high-ability language arts teacher and high-ability program coordinator, will use her grant for new materials and resources for the high-ability language arts classroom. This is her ninth year earning a Mother Bear grant, for a total of \$31,000. Janney said St. John is the only school in the diocese with a focused high-ability program. Becky Humm, K-8 high-ability math teacher, received a grant to purchase the leading math curriculum for primary-grade high-ability learners. Art teacher Cynthia Barfield’s grant is for “Art and Play — the SEL Way!” First-grade teacher Christin Eberhard received a grant for standards-aligned, play-based learning activities. Pictured are St. John the Baptist principal Elizabeth Flatt, left, Maria Janney, Cynthia Barfield, Becky Humm and Christin Eberhard.

Submitted photo



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Photo by Mick Hetman, special to The Message

Confirmation —
Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, Petersburg

Bishop Joseph M. Siegel celebrated Confirmation Jan. 8 at Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Petersburg. Shown are Sylvie McDivitt, left, Caroline McDivitt, Deacon Gary Keepes, Bishop Siegel, Brandon Schulties, Carlie Halbrader and Sts. Peter and Paul pastor Father Frank Renner.



Submitted photo

Confirmation — St. Peter, Linton,
and Holy Name of Jesus, Bloomfield

On Nov. 20, the parishes of St. Peter in Linton and Holy Name of Jesus in Bloomfield celebrated Confirmation at Holy Name of Jesus Parish. Pictured are James Woods, left, Nathan Worland, Bishop Joseph M. Siegel, Ian McKnight, Ty McKnight, Grace Lewellyn and Father Simon Natha, administrator of St. Peter and Holy Name of Jesus parishes.

Confirmation —
Holy Redeemer Parish, Evansville

Holy Redeemer Parish in Evansville celebrated Confirmation on Nov. 5 and 26. Shown in the Nov. 5 Confirmation photo, far right, are Addison Wies, front row left, Amelia Keen, Lydia McCullough, Sydnee Robinson, Ella Utley, Katalin Ulewicz, Hannah Purdy, second row left, Kaylynn Jones, Halle Broyles, Brooke Herdes, Addison Young, Deacon Tom Cervone, back row left, Bishop Joseph M. Siegel, Braydee Farmer, Logan Bettag, Brady Patterson, David (Ben) Davies, pastor Father Jason Gries and Deacon Kevin Bach. Pictured in the Nov. 26 Confirmation photo are Ava Market, left, Kyleigh Farmer, Rylan Garrett and Father Gries, in back. Not pictured is Director of Faith Formation Anne Stofleth-Martin.

Submitted photos



The Message:
Your Catholic community newspaper

BY TIM LILLEY
The Message editor

The Message truly is Southwest Indiana's Catholic community newspaper — working for you for **more than 50 years**.

We need your support to continue producing this Catholic community newspaper for the Diocese of Evansville. This issue marks the Diocese of Evansville's annual **"Message Weekend,"** when Catholics across our area have the opportunity to subscribe to the paper or renew their annual subscriptions.

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Sheila Barclay and Kathy Henderson serve on *The Message* staff with assistant editor Megan Erbacher and me, and they do great work for you on a daily basis. Sheila is responsible for the design and look of *The Message*, and Kathy handles subscriptions. They join Megan and me in a commitment to serving our readers by delivering the best newspaper and the best service possible.

Our [local columnists](#) include Bishop Joseph Siegel, Father Donald Dilger, Zoe Cannon, Director of Youth and Young Adult Ministry Jeremy Goebel, Director of the Office of Family and Life Eric Girtten, Director of the Office of Catechesis Joel Padgett, Brenda Hopf, Mary Ann Hughes, Kaitlin Klein, Director of the Office of Hispanic Ministries Bertha Melendres, Director of the Office of Stewardship Joe Paul Hayden, Kristine Schroeder, Maria Sermersheim, Andrea Goebel, members of the Southwest Indiana Guild of the Catholic Medical Association and Youth First counselors who are serving in our Catholic schools. Our priests and members of religious orders serving in the diocese also contribute.

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From top to bottom, from the front page to the back, *The Message* works hard for our Catholic community every week of the year. All of us hope you will renew your subscriptions or become new subscribers. We **thank you** again for your support and confidence. **Be assured of our commitment to bringing you the best community newspaper in our 12 counties.**

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