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Legislation abolishing death penalty among ICC's priorities at Statehouse



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At the start of a new legislative session, the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) is already out front on numerous issues, including the state's recently reignited debate over the death penalty.

The 124th Indiana General Assembly opened Jan. 8, less than a month after the state carried out its first execution in 15 years. Lawmakers are now considering — and the ICC is strongly supporting — House Bill 1030, which would eradicate the death penalty in Indiana. Its author, Rep. Bob Morris (R-Fort Wayne), is a Catholic who has spoken widely about his change of heart concerning capital punishment, which he favored until recently.

The ICC's support for this measure comes as additional Catholic lawmakers lead the charge on other key legislation, including bolstering parents' authority over their children's use of social media and offering a fresh start to residents who have an eviction on their record.

Underscoring these issues is the Catholic Church's unwavering commitment to upholding the sanctity of human life and protecting the vulnerable, according to Alexander Mingus, executive director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana.

See **ICC**, page 8

Ascension St. Vincent Evansville awards \$20,000 to Youth First

Special to The Message

Ascension St. Vincent Evansville has awarded \$20,000 to Youth First, Inc., to invest in the health and well-being of youth and families. The award will provide mental health support and substance misuse prevention through social work services and prevention programs in more than 20 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Evansville. Ascension St. Vincent Evansville is dedicated to advancing compassionate, patient-centered care within its statewide ministries. Charitable contributions from supporters fund programs and projects focused on holistic care that extends beyond traditional healthcare services, allowing new ways to improve outcomes and create positive experiences for those served.

"We recognize the vital importance of mental health support for students in the Evansville Diocese, particularly at school, where our youth spend so

See **YOUTH**, page 5



Submitted photo

Ascension St. Vincent Evansville awarded \$20,000 to Youth First for mental health support and substance misuse prevention for youth in Catholic schools in the Diocese of Evansville. Pictured are Youth First Social Worker Jenna Pauli, left, Ascension South Region President Alex Chang, Youth First President and CEO Parri Black and Holy Redeemer Principal Andrea Dickel.

Uniting community through faith: The story of Our Lady of Guadalupe at Jasper's St. Joseph Parish

Special to The Message

Kyle Woehler, a third-year high school student and Boy Scout at St. Joseph Parish in Jasper, was working toward earning his Eagle Scout rank. Initially, Kyle had two potential ideas for his project: a fountain with a garden around it or the idea of erecting a statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe. After careful consideration and discussions with the parish council, it was decided that the statue of Our Lady would be the more fitting choice. There were no exterior Marian statues on St. Joseph's campus, and the hope was that it would help further integrate communities together.

The decision was made, and Kyle began working on the project in September 2023. The first step was to find a statue, which was made easy with the help of Father John Brosmer and Father Homero Rodriguez. They quickly identified the statue they wanted, and with the assistance of Father Homero's connections, they secured a statue from a trusted supplier in Jalisco, Mexico. The statue, crafted from Cantera stone, was perfect for the parish.

However, there were a few

hiccups along the way. The transportation of the statue was delayed due to hurricanes in the area, but Father Homero went above and beyond, finding a replacement driver to ensure the statue's safe arrival. Before the statue made it to St. Joseph, Kyle and the team had to decide on the perfect location for it. After considering several factors, they chose an area close to both the church and the sidewalk. Moreover, the chosen spot placed the statue back-to-back with the Deliverance Cross, symbolizing the powerful connection between Mary and Jesus.

Once the location was set, they prepared a concrete foundation for the statue and added a sidewalk to view the statue. The next step was to create the garden around the statue. The layout of the garden was finalized by Pat Gehlhausen, the maintenance supervisor. The group decided to plant roses around the statue, as roses are a powerful symbol of Our Lady of Guadalupe. Brad Popp was enlisted to install the statue, and landscaping was completed in two separate work sessions with the help of many volunteers from the parish.



Submitted photo

The blessing ceremony was held Dec. 9 after the bilingual Mass.

Woehler expressed his gratitude to everyone who helped bring the project to fruition.

"I would like to thank the parishioners, donors, volunteers, and the Buildings and

Grounds Committee who made the completion of this project possible," Kyle said. "I also want to thank Father Homero, who facilitated the acquisition and delivery of

See **STATUE**, page 5