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Legislation would offer state employees access to lower-interest loans



By **VICTORIA ARTHUR**
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The Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) is among a wide range of advocates backing a bill that would offer state employees an alternative to relying on high-interest payday loans in times of financial hardship.

Senate Bill 122 would allow Indiana employees to borrow up to \$1,000 through nonprofit loan programs already in place statewide and repay them through payroll deductions. The lawmaker behind the bill says this lower-cost loan option could serve as an important new benefit for state employees, particularly those struggling financially or facing unexpected expenses.

"There are people in this state who face financial emergencies — perhaps because of their health or a car breakdown — and they need money," said Sen. Spencer Deery (R-West Lafayette), the primary author of Senate Bill 122. "The state can be a leader in saying that offering these nonprofit loans is an excellent benefit we can offer employees."

Under the proposed legislation, the State of Indiana would gradually phase in this new benefit to its 32,000 employees by expanding nonprofit loan programs already in place

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Diocese works to meet needs of Haitian community

By **JOHN ROHLF**
The Message assistant editor

In order to better serve the needs of the Haitian community in the Diocese of Evansville, Father Johnson Vil was recently assigned chaplain for the Haitian Community in the diocese.

Bishop Joseph M. Siegel said he is "grateful to our local pastors," who he said brought to the attention of the Diocese of Evansville the pastoral needs of the growing Haitian community, as well as the importance of providing a priest who could speak Creole to serve them. Bishop Siegel said through the assistance of the National Center of Haitian Apostolate in New York, they were able to make contact with Father Vil, who expressed interest in working in the Diocese of Evansville.

"I am very grateful to Most Rev. Max Leroy Mesidor, Archbishop of

Port-au-Prince, Haiti, for generously allowing Father Vil to be assigned here as chaplain for the Haitian community," Bishop Siegel said. "Father Vil is a fine priest who has already made an impact with his ministry to the community and I am thankful for his willingness to serve in Southwest Indiana."

The first Mass in Creole at Annunciation Parish was held Dec. 1 at Holy Spirit Church in Evansville. There were about seven people in attendance. Since that point, they have had as many as 50 individuals attend the Mass in Creole, according to Annunciation Parish Catechetical Leader Anne Baumgart. The Mass is held at 11 a.m. CST Sundays at Holy Spirit Church.

The Mass is available to better serve the growing number of Haitians in the diocese. There are an estimated 10,000 Haitians in Evans-

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Submitted photo
Father Johnson Vil, right, speaks to a community member at Holy Spirit School.

Catholic Schools Week kicks off Jan. 26

By **MICHELLE PRIAR**
Superintendent of
Catholic Schools

Catholic schools across our diocese will join hundreds of others as we celebrate National Catholic Schools Week next week, from Jan. 26 through Feb. 1. Every year students, school staff and families look forward to this week as they find creative ways to celebrate and recognize the invaluable contributions of Catholic education to our communities. It's a cherished annual tradition and a time to reflect on how Catholic schools are cornerstones of spiritual formation, academic rigor and character development. I'm so proud of how our schools reflect our commitment to provide faith, excellence and service.

Catholic schools have the unique opportunity to ensure that faith is our foundation. In our diocese, daily prayer, weekly Mass and integration of Catholic teaching in every subject



are all ways that students are exposed to the rich traditions of our Catholic faith. Students are encouraged to grow in their relationship with God and develop a moral compass guided by Gospel values. Faculty and staff work hand in hand with students as everyone involved in the school has opportunities to share their beliefs, foster compassion and integrity, and realize their sense of purpose.

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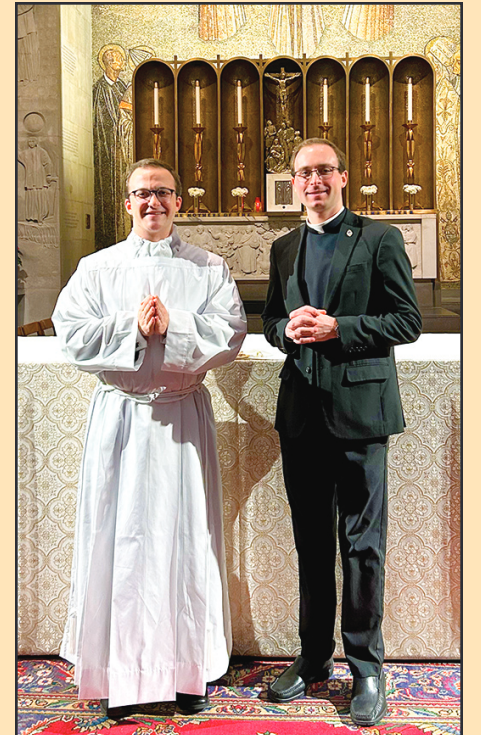
Diocesan Seminarian Dylan Stefanich receives ministry of lector

On Jan. 12, the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Diocese of Evansville Seminarian Dylan Stefanich received the ministry of lector in the Chapel of the Immaculate Conception at the Pontifical North American College in Rome, Italy. He is pictured, left, with Father Tyler Underhill.

Stefanich was one of 34 seminarians to be installed as lectors. The ministry of lector is conferred upon those who prepare and proclaim readings from Scripture at Mass and other liturgical celebrations. A lector may also recite psalms between the readings and present the intentions for the general intercessions.

The 34 seminarians are in their first year of theological formation for the priesthood. They will have three additional years of theological, spiritual and pastoral formation before being ordained to the priesthood in their home dioceses.

Father Underhill, parochial vicar of St. Benedict Cathedral in Evansville, was present for the Mass. Father Underhill shared: "It was a beautiful Mass celebrated by Archbishop Joseph J. Kennedy, Secretary of the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith. In his homily, he talked about the importance of always sharing the Word of God in all things, especially in its proclamation in the Liturgical act."



Submitted photo courtesy of Father Tyler Underhill