

The MESSAGE

Southwestern Indiana's Catholic
Community Newspaper

January 31, 2025

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EMPOWERED BY THE SPIRIT

A Pastoral Letter on the Age of Confirmation in the Diocese of Evansville

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
In the final words spoken by our Lord before He ascended into Heaven, the Church is instructed, "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you." In His Great Commission, Christ reveals the purpose and destiny of the Church. So that His apostles would be prepared for this all-important mission, Jesus told them to remain in Jerusalem and to await the "promise of the Father," the Holy Spirit.

This promise was made manifest for the apostles on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit descended upon them in signs of a driving wind and tongues of fire. Empowered by the Spirit, the Church burst forth from the upper room and went forth into the world to boldly proclaim the Gospel.

The apostles would later lay hands upon the baptized to confer the same Holy Spirit, continuing the graces of the Pentecost event and strengthening and empowering the faithful for their mission to evangelize the world around them.

From the beginning, the sacrament of Confirmation has made real Christ's promise to be with us always until the end of the age. "The gift of the Holy Spirit at Confirmation makes Christ present in our very souls so that our relationship to him is intimate, interior, and experiential." In our time when large numbers of people are distancing themselves from Jesus Christ and the Church, the need for the faithful to be enkindled by the Holy Spirit to be missionary disciples, to fulfill the Great Commission, is a great imperative.

The normal age for receiving Confirmation has greatly varied over

See **BISHOP**, page 5

Queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo:

En las últimas palabras pronunciadas por nuestro Señor antes de ascender al Cielo, se instruye a la Iglesia: "Id, pues, y haced discípulos a todas las naciones, bautizándolos en el nombre del Padre y del Hijo y del Espíritu Santo, enseñándoles a guardar todo lo que os he mandado." En su Gran Comisión, Cristo revela el propósito y el destino de la Iglesia. A fin de que sus apóstoles estuvieran preparados para esta misión tan importante, Jesús les dijo que permanecieran en Jerusalén y que esperaran la "promesa del Padre," el Espíritu Santo.

Esta promesa se manifestó a los Apóstoles el día de Pentecostés, cuando el Espíritu Santo descendió sobre ellos en señales de un viento impetuoso y lenguas de fuego.

Fortalecida por el Espíritu, la Iglesia brotó del aposento alto para salir al

mundo a proclamar el Evangelio con valentía. Más tarde, los apóstoles impondrían las manos sobre los bautizados para conferir el mismo Espíritu Santo, continuando las gracias del evento de Pentecostés y fortaleciendo y empoderando a los fieles para su misión de evangelizar el mundo a su alrededor.

Desde el principio, el sacramento de la Confirmación ha hecho realidad la promesa de Cristo de estar con nosotros siempre hasta el fin de los tiempos. "El don del Espíritu Santo en la Confirmación hace presente a Cristo en nuestras almas, de modo que nuestra relación con Él es íntima, interior y experiential." En nuestro tiempo, en el que un gran número de personas se alejan de Jesucristo y de la Iglesia, la necesidad de que los fieles se enciendan por el Espíritu Santo para ser discípulos misioneros, para

See **OBISPO**, page 5

Table linens offer opportunity to 'take home a memory of the liturgy'

"The BENEDICTVS collection reflects the beauty and faith of this community . . ."

MARGHERITA VEZZANI



Submitted photo

The napkins and table cloth for the table linens are shown.

By **JOHN ROHLF**
The Message assistant editor

A set of table linens based on the architectural features of St. Benedict Cathedral allows individuals to "take home a memory of the liturgy," Father Alex Zenthoefer said.

Several months ago, Father Zenthoefer, Diocesan Vicar General and rector of St. Benedict Cathedral, noticed a couple of his friends, Lucia Bertaggia and Margherita Vezzani, were making table linens based on designs they

saw in Catholic Churches. Father Zenthoefer contacted them to see if they were interested in coming to the Cathedral to see the church and potentially design a set of table linens.

They visited the Cathedral and set to work on designs shortly afterwards. The first linens were created in October.

"For me, the desire was not to create another fundraiser, but to create an opportunity for our people to take home a memory of the liturgy," Father Zenthoefer said.

See **LINENS**, page 12

ICC supporting pro-life, pro-family initiatives at Statehouse



By **VICTORIA ARTHUR**
Statehouse Correspondent for
Indiana's Catholic Newspapers

On the heels of the Indiana March for Life, the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) is taking steps to support pro-life legislation while calling for a halt to the death penalty in the state.

The ICC — the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana — made its presence felt during the Jan. 22 march and rally in downtown Indianapolis and is backing life-affirming bills that have been introduced in the state legislature. Now, the ICC is also planning a Feb. 3 press conference at the Statehouse seeking the abolishment of the death penalty, which was recently reinstated in Indiana.

"All of our efforts tie in nicely with a week of reflection on the dignity of all human life, from conception to natural death," said Alexander Mingus, ICC executive director, referring to both the Indiana march and the national March for Life, held two days later in Washington, D.C.

These events continue to mark the anniversary of the 1973 Roe v. Wade Supreme Court decision legalizing abortion nationwide, even following the court's overturning of the ruling in 2022, which returned the issue of abortion to the states. In Indiana, most unborn lives are now protected from abortion, with exceptions in instances of rape or incest, lethal fetal anom-

See **ICC**, page 17



Submitted photos

Marching for Life in 2025!

On Jan. 22, nearly 250 people from the Diocese of Evansville joined more than 2,000 faithful from across Indiana for the 2025 Indiana March for Life in Indianapolis. The day consisted of prayer, education, advocacy and fellowship. It also included a Youth Rally and Mass for Life, lunch, a march through downtown Indianapolis, and a rally with speakers at the Indiana Statehouse. The diocesan group is shown in one photo with other faithful from across Indiana. The second photo shows Bishop Joseph M. Siegel, left, and Mater Dei High School President Deacon Dan Niemeier as they march for life on Jan. 22.



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Jubilee 2025 events across the Diocese

Special to The Message

Several opportunities are being planned to celebrate Jubilee 2025 across the Diocese of Evansville. As more events are scheduled, they will be added to the list, which can be found at <https://evdiomessage.org/local-news/>.

Masses at Pilgrimage Churches

Along with their own local celebrations they are planning, Bishop Joseph M. Siegel will celebrate Mass at the Pilgrimage churches over the course of the Jubilee year:

- 10 a.m. EDT on Sunday, May 4 — Our Lady of Hope Church in Washington (Bilingual)
- 4:30 p.m. EDT on Saturday, May 31 — St. Mary Church in Huntingburg
- 5:30 PM EDT on Sunday, Aug. 10 — St. Francis Xavier Basilica in Vincennes
- 4 p.m. CDT on Saturday, Oct. 4 — St. Philip Church in Posey County

“The Light is ON for You” is April 2

During this Jubilee year, Pope Francis has called for an increased appreciation for and celebration of the Sacrament of Penance. Several years ago, the diocese celebrated “The Light is ON for You,” a diocesan-wide reconciliation event. In support of this call from the Holy Father, we will bring back “The Light is ON for You” for the Jubilee, asking all parishes to offer the Sacrament of Reconciliation in as many of our churches as possible from 6-8 p.m. (local time) on Wednesday, April 2.



RENEW or Subscribe to The Message — Today!

Each year, the final issue in January marks the Diocese of Evansville’s annual “**Message Weekend,**” when the Catholic faithful have the opportunity to renew their annual subscription or subscribe to our weekly paper.



Do you enjoy receiving **The Message** six times a year? You don’t have to wait for the all-diocesan issues to stay up-to-date on events and the good news of Christ occurring across the 12 counties in the Diocese of Evansville!

Did you know . . . for less than 50 cents a week, you’ll receive 51 issues a year, plus complimentary digital editions?

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Visit our website, evdiomessage.org, to check out our content and download this week’s digital edition for free and see for yourself!

As Southwestern Indiana’s Catholic community newspaper, **The Message** staff works hard to spread God’s good news across our diocese. From our vast array of **local columnists**, including Bishop Joseph M. Siegel, to coverage of local diocesan celebrations, as well as news from across the Catholic world through **OSV News** and **Catholic News Service’s Rome Bureau**, **The Message** is committed to delivering the best weekly *Catholic community newspaper in Southwest Indiana*.

If you’ve already renewed your subscription, **The Message** Staff and the Catholic Diocese of Evansville sincerely **thank you** for your continued support.

We also extend our gratitude to some of our long-time advertisers like G.D. Ritzy’s and Holiday World, whose generous support allows us to offer a **Christmas coloring contest** for youth and **free passes** to Holiday World and Splashin’ Safari. Subscribe today to ensure you don’t miss out on all the fun!

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we offered a grace period for subscribers because we didn’t want you to miss any issues. We now humbly ask for you to **please renew those subscriptions** if you have the means to do so.

If you’ve enjoyed this issue of **The Message**, we invite you to please consider subscribing or renewing your subscription. We need your support to continue sharing the good news of Christ throughout our diocese.

To stay connected to your Catholic community, please use the envelope included in this issue to subscribe or renew to the print and/or digital edition of **The Message**.

The Message staff thanks you for your support and wishes you a blessed 2025!

AROUND THE DIOCESE

Happy Birthday!

Annie-Rose Keith, parish catechetical leader at Resurrection Parish in Evansville, celebrates her birthday Feb. 5.

Father Gene Schroeder, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Vanderburgh County, celebrates his birthday Feb. 7.

Joan Fredrich, principal of Holy Rosary School in Evansville, celebrates her birthday Feb. 7.

Father Jim Sauer, senior priest of the Diocese of Evansville, celebrates his birthday Feb. 8.

Yvonne Evans, parish catechetical leader at Our Lady of Hope Parish in Washington, celebrates her birthday Feb. 9.

Father Benny Alikandayil Chacko, pastor of Annunciation Parish of Evansville, celebrates his birthday Feb. 11.

Brooke Atkins, parish catechetical leader at St. Isidore the Farmer Parish in Celestine, celebrates her birthday Feb. 11.

Lori Stolz, parish catechetical leader at Blessed Sacrament Parish in Oakland City, celebrates her birthday Feb. 11.

Happy Anniversary!

Deacon Thomas Holsworth of St. Mary Parish in Huntington was ordained Feb. 10, 1990.

Retired **Deacon Cyril Will** was ordained Feb. 10, 1990.



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Join the Diocesan Choir for the 2025 Chrism Mass

Special to The Message

Please join the Diocesan Choir for the Chrism Mass at 5:30 p.m. CDT on Tuesday, April 15 at St. Benedict Cathedral in Evansville. The Choir is open to singers from all the parishes of the Diocese of Evansville. This is a great opportunity to come together and share in musical prayer. Members are typically in eighth grade and older. While reading music and attending all the practices are recommended, it isn't a requirement!

Practices are held in St. Benedict Cathedral, 1328 Lincoln Ave., Evansville, Indiana 47714. Please enter on the east side of the Cathedral.

Practices are:

- 2-4 p.m. CDT on Sunday, April 6
- 6-7:30 p.m. CDT on Tuesday, April 8 (Come for practice, and stay for a great concert after!)
- 2-4 p.m. CDT on Sunday, April 13

Contact Jeremy Korba at 812-589-3886 or via email at jkorba@evdio.org with questions.

We are looking to grow the Diocesan Choir in 2025. Please invite others in your music program to join us!

Dates for three 2025 TEC retreats set

Three Teens Encounter Christ retreats will be held at St. Mary Parish in Ireland this year.

The first of the three retreats will be held Feb. 15-17. The other two TEC retreats will be July 19-21 and Nov. 8-10. TEC is a three-day retreat based on the Paschal Mystery of Jesus Christ. The retreats are for individuals 17 years old or a high school junior to adult.

The retreats are hosted at St. Mary Parish, 2829 N. 500 W, Jasper, IN 47546. To register, visit www.switec.org. For more information, email tec@evdio.org.

Virtual, in-person Taizé prayer scheduled

Join the Sisters of Providence for song, quiet contemplation and inspiring readings during the ecumenical Taizé Prayer

service from 7-8 p.m. EST Feb. 11. Persons of all faith traditions are invited to these prayer services, which include prayer, beautiful music and time for silence and spoken and silent reflection.

Join in person in the Church of the Immaculate Conception at St. Mary-of-the-Woods or find the livestream link or more information at Taize.SistersofProvidence.org. Call 812-535-2952 for more information.

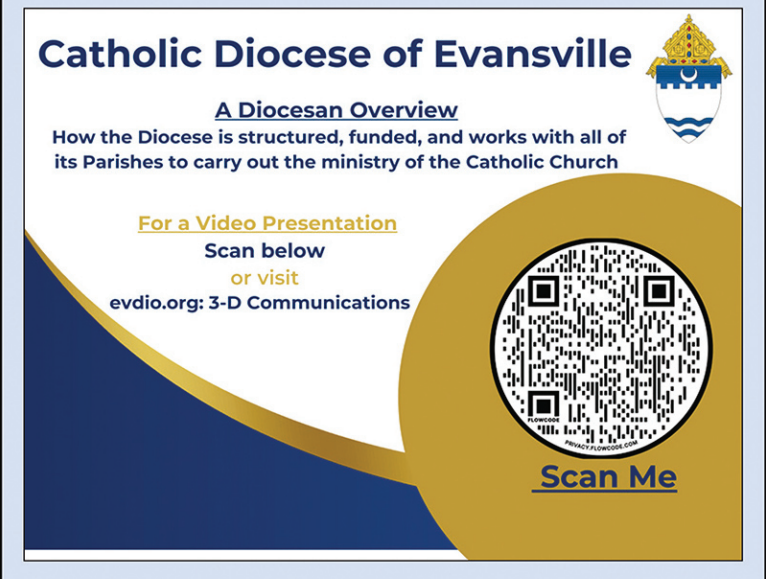
'The Mirror of Consciousness: Seeing the Divine in All Things'

Embark on a transformative journey to uncover the profound connection between ultimate reality and daily life. Through this exploration, discover how to see God reflected in all creation and embrace a deeper sense of divine connection in daily living.

Have you ever wondered how the Catholic Diocese of Evansville operates in partnership with all of its parishes to carry out the ministry of the Catholic Church in southwestern Indiana?

Here's your opportunity to learn more!

Watch **3-D Communications**, *Diocesan Director Discussions*, A TED-Talk style video sharing an overview of the Catholic Diocese of Evansville. Learn more as Dean Happe, Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer, explains the Diocese's structure and how it works together with all of its parishes to carry out the mission of the Catholic Church in our diocese. Scan the QR Code or visit www.evdio.org and select "3-D Communications" from the main menu.



Catholic Diocese of Evansville
A Diocesan Overview
How the Diocese is structured, funded, and works with all of its Parishes to carry out the ministry of the Catholic Church

For a Video Presentation
Scan below or visit
[evdio.org: 3-D Communications](http://evdio.org:3-D Communications)

Scan Me

The presentation is 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. CST Feb. 12 at the King's House at the National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows Visitors Center in Belleville, Illinois. Cost is \$60 per person, which includes lunch. Register online at www.kh.snows.org/events/coutinho2025/ or call 618-397-0584.

Sisters 'Virtual Guided Meditation' series continues

Join the Sisters of Providence of St. Mary-of-the-Woods, Indiana, for the second installment of the "Virtual Guided Meditation" series, scheduled to take place from 7-7:45 p.m. EST Feb. 13. The series will con-

tinue on the second Thursday of each month through May.

The free meditation series takes place via Zoom. Register online at Events.SistersofProvidence.org or by calling 812-535-2952 or emailing provctr@spsmw.org.

Abbey Caskets to host GriefShare beginning in March

Abbey Caskets, a work of St. Meinrad Archabbey, will sponsor a 13-week GriefShare support group at St. Meinrad Archabbey Guest House Mondays at 1 p.m. CST. The first meeting will be Monday, March 3, 2025.

A GriefShare support group is a safe, welcoming place that helps people navigate the difficult emotions of grief. During this 13-week, video-based program, participants will discover what's "normal" in grief and be offered guidance and tools to move through the grief process.

The group will meet each Monday for about 90 minutes. Each meeting will start with a 30-minute video on a grief-related topic. The group will then discuss the video and how it applies to the lives of those who are grieving.

For more information, visit www.griefshare.org. To register, contact Teresa Dilger at tdilger@abbeycaskets.com or 800-987-7380.

Please send information for **AROUND THE DIOCESE** to The Message, P.O. Box 4169, Evansville, IN 47724. The e-mail address is message@evdio.org.



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Praying with history

Editor's note: For 2025, the Office of Catechesis' weekly *Connecting Faith and Life* column will be renamed *Connecting Creed and Life*. As a way of celebrating the 2025 Jubilee Year and the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea, the focus of *Connecting Creed and Life* will consist of reflections on the Nicene Creed that seek to relate aspects of the Creed to daily living.

I liken working for the church and being Catholic to going on a long, meandering treasure hunt for a trove that will only be found in heaven. Worth it, right, for the prize of eternity in paradise with the King of the Universe? We're 2,000 years old! Not only do we have a lot of stuff and are credited with moving society and culture forward with patronages of the arts and sciences, but many individuals have devoted their entire lives to digging into the mysteries in which our faith holds the key. Through the saints, we're given the means and the example to commune with God especially through ways of prayer.

St. Ignatius of Loyola is credited with developing what's come to be known as "Ignatian" prayer. Meaning, practitioners of this specific brand of spiritual conversation are invited to meditate on specific verse or verses from scripture. Practitioners place themselves in the scene of the verse of focus. For example, a popular verse to meditate on is Parable of the Lost Sheep found in



CONNECTING CREED AND LIFE

ANNIE-ROSE KEITH

the book of Matthew. The apostle writes, "Then Jesus told them this parable: 'Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Doesn't he leave the ninety-nine in the open country and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? And when he finds it, he joyfully puts it on his shoulders and goes home. Then he calls his friends and neighbors together and says, 'Rejoice with me; I have found my lost sheep'" (Matthew 15: 3-6). Ignatian prayer invites us to put ourselves in the meadow with the sheep. This makes sense because we, as members of a parish, are often referred to as "a flock" by our pastors, the media, etc. Which one of the sheep are we? Are we staying with the 99 while the shepherd goes after the lost sheep? Are we the sheep that runs away? ... Are we the sheep that follows the shepherd to go after the lost sheep? Lots of options for reflections here with this particular form of prayer! It's also a nice accompaniment to this, our Jubilee Year of Hope, especially when meditating on the above parable. Jesus is always going to come after us, no matter how lost we may become.

Our church rests on the two pillars of scripture and tradition, which in themselves, are connected. They are not completely separate from each other. We as members of the Body of Christ are separate in our bodies, but one in our baptism. The Holy Trinity is separate in forms, yet one in God. Furthermore, every time we are at Mass we are actually at Calvary because of the meaning and importance of memory from our Jewish brothers and sisters. In this context, Ignatian prayer can be applied to historical events in the life and development of our Roman Catholic Church. As we dig in to this year of Jubilee and revisit pivotal councils in the history of our faith, I'm excited to imagine the room where the early fathers of our church formulated the words to disseminate the Trinity to their flocks. How was the Holy Spirit moving in that room? How did they know the Holy Spirit was moving? How do we know the Holy Spirit's moving in the room? Friends, I humbly submit that Ignatian prayer is not only a fantastic prayer tool, but an opportunity to dig deeper into the hope that comes from following Jesus and his church.

Annie-Rose Keith is the Director of Faith Formation for Resurrection Parish in Evansville. A native of Southern Illinois, Annie-Rose enjoys dabbling in various creative outlets like painting, music, crochet and graphic design, and spending time with her husband Joe and children, Juliana and Theo.

Faith, our mission and meaning

He said to them, "Because of your little faith. Amen, I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20).

Faith is an encounter with Jesus! Our intentional meeting with Jesus provides the gifts we need for the mission before us. God has a purpose for each unique and unrepeatable life. Do you acknowledge the gifts God gives you?

We are created for relationships, so we grow in faith through our connection with others. Faith is not just a system of knowledge, things we are told, or an outline to help us understand who we are. Our potential is achieved with grace from God and support from others. God desires that we recognize



GRATITUDE FOR THE GIFT OF FAITH

ZOE CANNON

our need for one another. Every baptized person is infused with grace and holiness to live out our call.

I want my students of religion and history to understand our salvation story. I created a unit on the 14 historical books of the bible, and the faithful people responsible for leading us on the road to salvation. There are 12 books from the Old Testament, and two from the New Testament that make up these historical books. Our path to salvation is like a superhighway. In this journey, we are studying Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2

Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, Ezra, Nehemiah, 1 Maccabees, Luke and Acts of the Apostles. The major figures like Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, the Maccabees, Jesus and the apostles reveal powerful witness.

This teaching is coupled with inspiration to pray for eyes of faith. Knowing why and how Jesus suffered for us brings us into a closer relationship with Him. He died to make men holy — Something we should never forget!

Affirming one another as one Body in Christ with many responsibilities is God's plan. If you notice a special talent, especially in young children, be sure to encourage them. People recognize athletic ability and spend time and money to improve the talent.

See **GIFT OF FAITH**, page 18

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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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DECREE

Age for Sacrament of Confirmation

In my pastoral letter regarding lowering the age for the reception of the Sacrament of Confirmation in the Diocese of Evansville, I explain, "In our time when larger numbers of people are distancing themselves from Jesus Christ and the Church, the need for the faithful to be enkindled by the Holy Spirit to be missionary disciples, to fulfill the Great Commission, is a great imperative. A study of our diocesan records shows that over 30 percent of our youth who are baptized as infants do not receive Confirmation once they have come of age. In recognition of these considerations and after assessing the needs of our diocese through an extended period of prayer, observation, an extensive consultation and discernment, I have decided that the normative age children will receive the Sacrament of Confirmation in our diocese will be 10 years old. In practice, this means that they will receive this sacrament in the 5th grade. The hearts and lives of these children are fertile ground to plant the seeds of apostolic witness. This reality

has been an element of my discernment to adjust our diocesan norm."

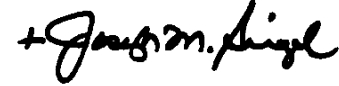
Therefore following consultation with the Priests, Pastoral Life Coordinator, Council of Priests, Diocesan Pastoral Council, Directors of Diocesan Departments, Parish Catechetical Leaders, Principals, Parents and Youth Ministers, in accord with canons 8 SS2, 29 and 889 SS1 and 2 – 91 of the Code of Canon Law and the complementary legislation of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops pertinent to canon 81 which was granted recognition by the Congregation for Bishops effective July 1, 2002, I hereby decree the following for the beginning of each respective academic year in the Diocese of Evansville:

- 2025-2026: Year of Preparation – continue to confirm 16-year-olds (10th grade)
- 2026-2027: Year 1 – confirm 14-16 year-olds (9th-10th grade)
- 2027-2028: Year 2 – confirm 12-14 year-olds (7th-9th grade)

- 2028-2029: Year 3 – confirm 10-13 year-olds (5th-7th grade)
- 2029 and following: Diocesan-wide conformity to confirmation age of 10 years old (5th grade)

The provisions of this decree are effective in accord with the above-listed specifications, all things to the contrary notwithstanding.

Given at Evansville, Indiana
12 January 2025



Most Reverend Joseph M. Siegel, DD, STL
Bishop of Evansville



Dean Happe
Chancellor

Bishop

Continued from page 1

the centuries in the Latin Rite of the Church, depending on local needs and circumstances (Eastern Rite churches normally confirm at the time of baptism). It was the judgment of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops in 2001 that Confirmation "shall be conferred between the age of discretion (7) and about sixteen years of age." Since then, our diocese has adopted various ages, from 8th grade to most recently confirming in or around 10th grade. However, this practice seems not to have borne the desired spiritual fruits, and the situation of our diocese has mirrored that of many others throughout the Church in the United States.

In his general audience on Oct. 30, 2024, Pope Francis shared how this struggle with Confirmation often presents itself: "The problem is how to ensure that the sacrament of Confirmation is not reduced, in practice, to 'last rites,' that is the sacrament of 'departure' from the Church." Regrettably, our situation also reflects the reality that many of our young people leave before they receive Confirmation. A study of our diocesan records shows

that over 30 percent of our youth who are baptized as infants do not receive Confirmation once they have come of age.

For several years, many who work in catechetical ministry and serve in our parishes have shared that while sacramental preparation has its share of challenges, Confirmation preparation has been especially challenging. In addition, many of our youth who receive Confirmation in 10th grade then detach themselves from ongoing faith formation and even the practice of their faith. For those who remain, their formators are often left with insufficient time to prepare the newly confirmed to live a life of bold and faithful witness to the Gospel.

In recognition of these considerations and after assessing the needs of our diocese through an extended period of prayer, observation, extensive consultation and discernment, I have decided that the normative age children will receive the sacrament of Confirmation in our diocese will be 10 years old. In practice, this means that they will receive this sacrament in the 5th grade.

Broadly speaking, children at this age are more or less as mature as they are going to be before they enter into adolescence, yet they still retain the sense of awe and wonder so often observed in young children. Although it does not always equate to chronological age, the humility of a child-like faith is the ideal condition to receive Christ within one's self through the Holy Spirit. It is for this reason that Christ said to his disciples, "Amen, I say to you, unless you turn and

become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven." Having the ability to recognize what is being offered through the sacrament of Confirmation and the growing sense of agency burgeoning in the youth are ideal conditions to receive the Sacrament of Confirmation with the vision that Confirmation is given as a gift to the faithful to prepare him or her for the mission to evangelize. The hearts and lives of these children are fertile ground to plant the seeds of apostolic witness. This reality has been an element of my discernment to adjust our diocesan norm.

Baptism is given so that we might "be freed from the power of darkness and brought into the realm of the freedom of the children of God, to which all men are called." Even considering its dynamic effects upon humanity, Baptism alone is ordinarily insufficient for our faith to reach full maturity, as "for all the baptized, children or adults, faith must grow after Baptism." Confirmation is not only "necessary for the completion of Baptismal grace" but the moment by which the faithful are now "more strictly obliged to spread and defend the faith by word and deed."

It can thus be said that the aim of Confirmation is two-fold: for the growing conformity of the Confirmand to the person of Christ, and for the equipping of the Christian to evangelize and carry out the Great Commission. Full initiation into the Church is to be understood not as a "choosing of

See **BISHOP**, page 6

Bishop's Schedule

Mass, Confirmation, Sts. Peter and Paul Parish, Petersburg, 4:30 p.m. EST, Saturday, Feb. 1.

Fundraiser, MEO 25th Annual, Warehouse 410, Evansville, 5:30 p.m. CST, Saturday, Feb. 1.

Mass, Confirmation, Precious Blood Parish, Jasper, 10:30 a.m. EST, Sunday, Feb. 2.

Meeting/Dinner, Catholic Legislators, Indianapolis, 5:30 p.m. EST, Monday, Feb. 3.

Meeting, Clergy Personnel Board, Catholic Center, Evansville, 1:30 p.m. CST, Tuesday, Feb. 4.

Meeting, Directors, Catholic Center, Evansville, 1 p.m. CST, Thursday, Feb. 6.

Visit, Seminarian, Kenrick-Glennon Seminary, St. Louis, Friday, Feb. 7.

Obispo

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cumplir la Gran Comisión, es un gran imperativo.

La edad normal para recibir la Confirmación ha variado mucho a lo largo de los siglos en el Rito Latino de la Iglesia, dependiendo de las necesidades y circunstancias locales (las iglesias de Rito Oriental normalmente confirman en el momento del bautismo). La Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos dictaminó en 2001 que la Confirmación "se conferirá entre la edad de discreción (7) y alrededor de los dieciséis años de edad." Desde entonces, nuestra diócesis ha adoptado varias edades, desde el 8º grado hasta la confirmación más reciente en o alrededor del 10º grado. Sin embargo, esta práctica parece no haber dado los frutos espirituales deseados, y la situación de nuestra diócesis ha reflejado la de muchas otras en toda la Iglesia en los Estados Unidos.

En su audiencia general del 30 de octubre de 2024, el Papa Francisco compartió cómo se presenta a menudo esta lucha con la Confirmación: "El problema es cómo garantizar que el Sacramento de la

Confirmación no se reduzca, en la práctica, a la 'extremaunción', es decir, al Sacramento de la 'salida' de la Iglesia." Lamentablemente, nuestra situación refleja también la realidad de que muchos de nuestros jóvenes se van antes de recibir la Confirmación. Un estudio de nuestros registros diocesanos muestra que más del 30 por ciento de nuestros jóvenes que son bautizados como infantes no reciben la Confirmación una vez que han alcanzado la mayoría de edad.

Durante varios años, muchos de los que trabajan en el ministerio catequético y sirven en nuestras parroquias han compartido que, si bien la preparación sacramental tiene su parte de desafíos, la preparación para la Confirmación ha sido especialmente desafiante. Además, muchos de nuestros jóvenes que reciben la Confirmación en el 10º grado luego se desvinculan de la formación continua en la fe e incluso de la práctica de su fe. Para los que se quedan, a menudo no les queda tiempo suficiente para preparar a los recién confirmados para vivir una vida de testimonio audaz y fiel del evangelio.

En reconocimiento de estas consideraciones y después de evaluar las necesidades de nuestra diócesis a través de un período prolongado de oración, observación, consulta extensa y

discernimiento, he decidido que la edad normativa en la que los niños recibirán el sacramento de la Confirmación en nuestra diócesis será a los 10 años. En la práctica, esto significa que recibirán este sacramento en el 5º grado.

En términos generales, los niños a esta edad son más o menos tan maduros como van a ser antes de entrar en la adolescencia, pero aún conservan la sensación de asombro y maravilla que a menudo se observa en los niños pequeños. Aunque no siempre equivale a la edad cronológica, la humildad de una fe infantil es la condición ideal para recibir a Cristo dentro de uno mismo a través del Espíritu Santo. Es por esta razón que Cristo dijo a sus discípulos: "En verdad os digo que si no os volvéis y os hacéis como niños, no entraréis en el reino de los cielos." Tener la capacidad de reconocer lo que se ofrece a través del sacramento de la Confirmación y el creciente sentido de agencia que florece en los jóvenes son condiciones ideales para recibir el Sacramento de la Confirmación con la visión de que la Confirmación se da como un don a los fieles para prepararlos para la misión de evangelizar. El corazón y la vida de estos niños son tierra fértil para

See **OBISPO**, page 6

Bishop

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one's faith for one's self," but rather as an ordinary condition for fruitfulness and ever-greater conformity to Christ in the pursuit of holiness. The essential relationship between holiness and mission was pointed out clearly by Pope Benedict XVI as he said, "My dear friends, you must be holy and you must be missionaries since we can never separate holiness from mission."

We know that in our day and age, our youth face both ancient and novel threats to living and practicing their Catholic faith, many of which come through unprecedented access to technology and a culture that is, in many ways, "post-Christian." In the Western world, the average age of exposure to the dangers of pornography occurs by the age of 12. By the United States national average, most children will have a cell phone by the time they turn 12. A 2018 study showed the median age of a youth who disaffiliated from the Church was only 13 years old. I believe there is great wisdom in engaging the gifts of the Holy Spirit by making Confirmation available to our youth at a younger age to enable them to better prepare for the temptations and storms that are part of everyone's life.

As we seek to bring about this vision, there will undoubtedly be challenges. In the process of discerning this decision, several dioceses that have moved their Confirmation age were contacted so that we could learn from their experiences. Feedback was collected from our parents, priests, catechetical leaders, youth ministers, principals, other parish leaders and diocesan directors. Some of the received comments expressed fears about problems that could emerge after making this change. I certainly recognize and understand these concerns. However, I see this initia-

tive as an opportunity to renew our parish formation programs in order to prepare our children at a younger age for the evangelical mission that is entrusted to all the confirmed and to set them firmly on the path of spiritual growth through the graces of this sacrament.

In order to meet the needs of our people and assist parish catechetical leaders in this transition, our diocese will be adopting a multi-year rollout plan to provide sufficient time for the variety of our parish situations to achieve conformity. Over the next five years, starting in the fall of 2026, we will begin the period of transition with the aim of reaching diocesan-wide conformity to the new age by the fall academic year of 2029:

- 2025-2026: Year of Preparation – continue to confirm 16-year-olds (10th grade)
- 2026-2027: Year 1 – confirm 14-16 year-olds (9th-10th grade)
- 2027-2028: Year 2 – confirm 12-14 year-olds (7th-9th grade)
- 2028-2029: Year 3 – confirm 10-13 year-olds (5th-7th grade)
- 2029 and following: Diocesan-wide conformity to confirmation age of 10 years old (5th grade)

With this transition, it is anticipated that parish catechetical programs serving children grades 6-12 will need to adjust their ministries, including the discernment of youth ministry programs for such children, in order to best serve the formation of their youth and facilitate their engagement in the evangelizing mission of the Church. It is also anticipated that even after the Confirmation age is moved to 10 years old, there will arise situations where youth who are over 10 years old will seek to receive Confirmation (e.g., baptized converts to the Catholic faith or older youth who have moved into our area from other dioceses), and parish-

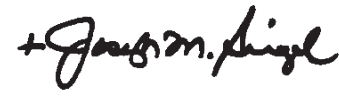
es will need to be prepared for this ahead of time.

A holistic and comprehensive effort to form and support not just parents and their children, but all members of the community must be made at every one of our parishes if we are to see the merits of this shift realized to their fullest potential. Further communications and concrete best practices on how parishes should proceed moving forward will be communicated through the diocesan offices. Likewise, the diocesan offices will be assisting our parishes in implementing these changes.

Our Lord's Great Commission is for every Catholic disciple, and the sacrament of Confirmation is an essential catalyst for fostering a culture of lifelong faith formation and evangelization. It is my hope and prayer that engaging children at a younger age will enable parents and parishes to help the confirmed to use the Gifts of the Holy Spirit to deepen their life of faith as they mature to become the bold missionary disciples Jesus has called us all to be.

I entrust this initiative and its implementation to Holy Mary, Mother of God, patroness of our diocese. As she was in the Upper Room on Pentecost as the Church was born, may she be with our local Church as we seek a renewal of Pentecost in our time and place through a greater use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed in Confirmation.

Sincerely yours in Christ,



Most Reverend Joseph M. Siegel, DD, STL
Bishop of Evansville

January 12, 2025

Feast of the Baptism of the Lord

Obispo

Continued from page 5

plantar las semillas del testimonio apostólico. Esta realidad ha sido un elemento de mi discernimiento para ajustar nuestra norma diocesana.

El bautismo se da para que podamos "ser liberados de la potestad de las tinieblas y llevados al reino de la libertad de los hijos de Dios, a la cual todos los hombres están llamados." Aun considerando sus efectos dinámicos sobre la humanidad, el Bautismo por sí solo es ordinariamente insuficiente para que nuestra fe alcance la plena madurez, ya que «para todos los bautizados, tanto niños como adultos, la fe debe crecer después del Bautismo.» La confirmación no sólo es «necesaria para la consumación de la gracia bautismal» sino también el momento en el que los fieles están ahora «más estrictamente obligados a difundir y defender la fe con la palabra y con las obras.»

Por lo tanto, se puede decir que el objetivo de la Confirmación es doble: para la creciente conformidad del Confirmando con la persona de Cristo, y para la preparación del cristiano para evangelizar y llevar a cabo la Gran Comisión. La plena iniciación en la Iglesia no debe entenderse como una "elección de la propia fe para sí mismo," sino más bien como una condición ordinaria para la fecundidad y una conformidad cada vez mayor con Cristo en la búsqueda de la santidad. La relación esencial entre santidad y misión fue señalada claramente por el Papa Benedicto XVI cuando dijo: "Mis queridos amigos, deben ser santos y deben ser misioneros, ya que nunca podemos separar la santidad de la misión."

Sabemos que en nuestra época, nuestros jóvenes enfrentan amenazas antiguas y nuevas para vivir y practicar su fe católica, muchas de las cuales provienen de un acceso sin precedentes a la tecnología y una cultura que es, en muchos sentidos, "post-cristiana." En el mundo occidental, la edad promedio de exposición a los peligros de la pornografía es de 12 años. Según el promedio nacional de los Estados Unidos, la mayoría de los niños tendrán un teléfono celular cuando cumplan 12 años. Un estudio de 2018 mostró que la edad media de un joven que se desafiló de la Iglesia era de solo 13 años. Creo que hay una gran sabiduría en utilizar los dones del Espíritu Santo al hacer que la Confirmación esté disponible para nuestros jóvenes a una edad más temprana para

permitirles prepararse mejor para las tentaciones y tormentas que son parte de la vida de todos.

A medida que tratemos de hacer realidad esta visión, sin duda habrá desafíos. En el proceso de discernimiento de esta decisión, se contactó a varias diócesis que han cambiado su edad de Confirmación para que pudiéramos aprender de sus experiencias. Se recogieron comentarios de nuestros padres, sacerdotes, líderes catequéticos, ministros de jóvenes, administradores escolares, otros líderes parroquiales, y directores diocesanos. Algunos de los comentarios recibidos expresaban temores sobre los problemas que podrían surgir después de realizar este cambio.

Ciertamente reconozco y entiendo estas preocupaciones. Sin embargo, veo esta iniciativa como una oportunidad para renovar nuestros programas de formación parroquial para preparar a nuestros hijos a una edad más temprana para la misión evangélica que se confía a todos los confirmados y para ponerlos firmemente en el camino del crecimiento espiritual a través de las gracias de este sacramento.

Con el fin de satisfacer las necesidades de nuestra gente y ayudar a los líderes catequéticos parroquiales en esta transición, nuestra diócesis adoptará un plan de implementación de varios años para proporcionar tiempo suficiente para que la variedad de situaciones de nuestra parroquia logre la conformidad. Durante los próximos cinco años, a partir del otoño de 2026, comenzaremos el período de transición con el objetivo de alcanzar la conformidad de toda la diócesis con la nueva era para el año académico de otoño de 2029:

- 2025-2026: Año de preparación — Continúe confirmando a los jóvenes de 16 años (10º grado)
- 2026-2027: Año 1 — Confirmar jóvenes de 14 a 16 años (~9º-10º grado)
- 2027-2028: Año 2 — Confirmar a los niños de 12 a 14 años (~7º-9º grado)
- 2028-2029: Año 3 — Confirmar niños de 10 a 12 años (~5º-7º grado)
- 2029 — Conformidad de toda la diócesis con la edad de Confirmación de 10 años (5º grado)

Con esta transición, se anticipa que los programas de catequesis parroquial que atienden a niños de 6º a 12º grado necesitarán ajustar sus ministerios, incluido el discernimiento de los programas de ministerio juvenil para dichos niños, con el fin de servir mejor a la formación de sus jóvenes y facilitar su participación en la misión evangelizadora de la

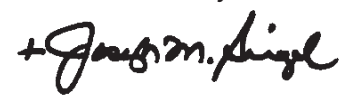
Iglesia. También se anticipa que incluso después de que la edad de Confirmación se traslade a los 10 años, surgirán situaciones en las que los jóvenes mayores de 10 años buscarán recibir la Confirmación (por ejemplo, conversos bautizados a la fe católica o jóvenes mayores que se han mudado a nuestra área desde otras diócesis), y las parroquias deberán estar preparadas para esto con anticipación.

Se debe hacer un esfuerzo holístico e integral para formar y apoyar no solo a los padres y sus hijos, sino a todos los miembros de la comunidad en cada una de nuestras parroquias si queremos ver los méritos de este cambio realizados a su máximo potencial. A través de las oficinas diocesanas se comunicarán más comunicaciones y prácticas concretas sobre cómo las parroquias deben proceder en el futuro. Del mismo modo, las oficinas diocesanas ayudarán a nuestras parroquias a implementar estos cambios.

La Gran Comisión de Nuestro Señor es para cada discípulo católico, y el sacramento de la Confirmación es un catalizador esencial para fomentar una cultura de formación en la fe y evangelización a lo largo de toda la vida. Es mi esperanza y oración que involucrar a los niños a una edad más temprana permita a los padres y parroquias ayudar a los confirmados a usar los dones del Espíritu Santo para profundizar su vida de fe a medida que maduran para convertirse en los audaces discípulos misioneros que Jesús nos ha llamado a todos a ser.

Encomiendo esta iniciativa y su puesta en práctica a Santa María, Madre de Dios, patrona de nuestra diócesis. Así como ella estuvo en el Cenáculo en Pentecostés cuando nació la Iglesia, que ella esté con nuestra Iglesia local mientras buscamos una renovación de Pentecostés en nuestro tiempo y lugar a través de un mayor uso de los dones del Espíritu Santo otorgados en la Confirmación.

Sinceramente suyo en Cristo,



Reverendísimo Joseph M. Siegel, DD, STL
Obispo de Evansville

12 de enero de 2025

Fiesta del Bautismo del Señor

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

Pipe organ dedication concert kicks off Sacred Music Series

By **JOHN ROHLF**
The Message assistant editor

St. Benedict Cathedral will hold a dedication concert for their new pipe organ in early February.

St. Benedict Cathedral and Parsons Pipe Organ Builders will present the Pipe Organ Dedication Concert at 7:30 p.m. CST Feb. 8. The concert will be held inside St. Benedict Cathedral in Evansville. The concert will feature Nathan Laube, a concert organist and associate professor of organ at the Eastman School of Music.

"We're thrilled to welcome acclaimed organist Nathan Laube to St. Benedict Cathedral," Diocese of Evansville Director of Music and St. Benedict Cathedral Director of Liturgical Music Jeremy Korba said. "He's one of the nation's top organists and we're thrilled that he will be our very first concert performer on the Opus 52 pipe organ in the Cathedral."

Korba said Laube will present "a varied mix of music" and will offer something for everyone in attendance. Laube

will truly show the depth of sounds available on the new pipe organ at St. Benedict Cathedral, Korba stated.

Father Alex Zenthofer, Diocesan Vicar General and rector of St. Benedict Cathedral, said the concert is a big moment for the Cathedral. He said it is an opportunity to show the beauty that results when people are willing to give of themselves.

"The Cathedral is not just a place of worship. It's also a place of culture," Father Zenthofer said. "It's a place where Catholic culture in all of its richness can be experienced in a concrete way. The concert is just one example of what that looks like."

The organ represents for Parsons Pipe Builders and for St. Benedict Cathedral how an instrument can serve in its primary service accompaniment role and also as a solo instrument capable of rendering a large portion of the available organ literature, Parsons Pipe Organ Builders President Richard Parsons said.

"This project was several years in the planning and mak-

ing, including the many church preparations and remodeling, which contributes so much to the success of this project," Parsons said. "We are very grateful that the good folks at St. Benedict entrusted us with this important project and we look forward to it serving the members of St. Benedict for generations."

Korba said the concert will represent a true kick-off for their Sacred Music Series at St. Benedict Cathedral. The spring will feature a performance by the University of Evansville and Community Ensembles April 8, featuring Duruflé Requiem. The Evansville Philharmonic Chorus will present a concert April 27, and they are working on more concerts for the rest of 2025. There will be more details soon, Korba said.

Installation of the organ was completed earlier this year by Parsons Pipe Builders. The organ was a gift from Virginia and the late Dave Cook.

The organ features both a Nave and Gallery division. The Gallery division is the main organ and sits in the



Submitted photo

The Gallery division is the main organ and sits in the choir loft in the back of the cathedral.

choir loft in the back of the cathedral. The Gallery organ features over 3,700 pipes. The secondary organ is the Nave division, which sits in the front of the cathedral near the statue of the Blessed Mother and the cantor stand. The Nave organ contains eight sets of pipes for a total of 560 pipes.

Doors will open for the Feb. 8 dedication concert at 6 p.m. There will be a reception following the concert in the Cathedral School. Donations will be accepted at the door. The concert will be held at St. Benedict Cathedral, 1328 Lincoln Ave., Evansville, IN 47714.

Source + Summit is April 4-6 at Reitz Memorial High School

Special to The Message

"I plead with you — never, ever give up on hope; never doubt, never tire and never become discouraged. Be not afraid."

— St. John Paul II

"This is my body, which is given for you" (Luke 22:19).

The young people of the diocese (ages 13-24) are invited to join hundreds of young pilgrims on a three-day spiritual Pilgrimage of Hope at Source + Summit 2025. This year's retreat weekend is April 4-6 at

Reitz Memorial High School in Evansville, and it will be defined by the extraordinary graces that God wants to pour into our souls during this Jubilee Year!

Joining the pilgrimage will be NCYC, SEEK and Steubenville Youth Conference favorites Dr. Andrew and Sarah Swafford. They will zero in on drama-free, healthy relationships, virtue, dating, and avoiding characteristic pitfalls in relationships. They will discuss how their faith enables them to relate well with others at every

stage, with joy and confidence. The Swaffords have authored many popular books and already made a significant impact on the faith journey of many in our diocese.

Source + Summit will also welcome Benedictine Father Augustine Wetta, a dynamic monk, teacher, author and speaker whose life and work blend faith, creativity and humor impacting all who encounter him. He is a member of St. Louis Abbey in Missouri, where he teaches high school and coaches rugby. Known for

his bestselling books, "Pray. Think. Act," "The Eighth Arrow" and "Humility Rules: Saint Benedict's Twelve-Step Guide to Genuine Self Esteem."

The Scally Brothers, a dynamic duo from Toledo, Ohio, will lead praise and worship and partner with the Source + Summit music team. Back by popular demand, Catholic Illusionist Giancarlo Bernini, will share his unique ability to brilliantly connect the truths of Catholicism through an impassioned presentation that is entertaining, informative

and inspiring. Other speakers include the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia, Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, Apostolic Sisters of St. John and Diocese of Evansville priests, religious and more.

Through inspiring talks, small group discussions, praise and worship, adoration, the Holy Mass, Reconciliation, food, fun and new friends, Source + Summit will connect the dots for diocesan young people. The information they receive about their faith and the sacraments will move from their heads into their hearts leading to a personal experience of God, the goal of our faith.

Averi Bauer shared her experience in an essay: "I simply do not have the words to describe how adoration at Source + Summit makes one feel. This was the moment that I realized that God is meant to have such a bigger impact on my life than just a weekly, Sunday morning Mass . . . I could not imagine how differently my life would be if I would not have taken the chance to go to Source + Summit my freshman year. It truly changed my life for the better, and I am forever grateful for the opportunity God gave me to go find my true purpose through him at this wonderful event."

The cost is \$50 before March 21; and \$55 after. Each additional sibling is \$35. For more information, contact your parish Youth Minister or visit sourcesummit-evansville.org.

St. Benedict Cathedral & Parsons Pipe Organ Builders present:

PIPE ORGAN DEDICATION CONCERT

Featuring:

NATHAN LAUBE

CONCERT ORGANIST

Associate Professor of Organ at the Eastman School of Music



SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 8
7:30 PM CST
ST. BENEDICT CATHEDRAL

St. Benedict Cathedral
1328 Lincoln Ave.
Evansville, IN 47714
saintbenedictcathedral.org

Call (812) 589-3886
for more information

DOORS OPEN AT 6PM

Donations Accepted at the Door

Concert is Free and Open the Public. Reception Following Concert in the Cathedral School.



OSV News photo/Rico Torres, Lionsgate
Gerard Butler as 'Big Nick' O'Brien and O'Shea Jackson Jr. as Donnie Wilson in Den of Thieves 2: Pantera.



OSV News photo/Anne Marie Fox, Sony
Keke Palmer and SZA are shown in a scene from the movie "One of Them Days."

AT THE MOVIES

The following are capsule reviews of movies recently reviewed by OSV News. Ratings are also given by the Motion Picture Association (MPA).

"Den of Thieves 2: Pantera" (Lionsgate)

Gerard Butler reprises his role as an unorthodox Los Angeles police detective. Dissatisfied with the outcome of the investigation chronicled in the original film, he's once again on the trail of one of the criminals he previously hunted (O'Shea Jackson Jr.) who has now joined a Serbian gang plotting a massive diamond theft in the South of France. Returning writer-director Christian Gudegast's slow-paced, overly detailed heist movie tries to gain some dramatic ballast by having its protagonist flirt with abandoning law enforcement in favor of collaborating in the burglary, and viewers of faith will welcome the fact that his conscience troubles him on this score during a visit to a Catholic church. Yet, while the ultimate outcome is morally sound in some respects, it's blatantly unacceptable in others. Way-ward values, much stylized violence with brief gory images, drug use, a few instances each of profanity and milder swearing, pervasive rough language, frequent crude and crass dialogue, obscene gestures. The OSV News classification is O — morally offensive. The MPA rating is R — restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian.

"One of Them Days" (TriStar)

Generally wearisome and sometimes vulgar buddy comedy about two best friends and roommates (Keke Palmer and

SZA) scrambling to avoid eviction from their apartment after the deadbeat boyfriend (Joshua David Neal) with whom the latter is shackled up squanders the monthly rent money she entrusted to him. Screenwriter Syreeta Singleton and director Lawrence Lamont try to garner laughs from life in a dodgy Los Angeles neighborhood but their portraits of local personalities feel more like caricatures. A pleasantly shy romance (involving Patrick Cage) gets lost in the mix. Cohabitation, drug use, much sexual humor, including anatomical sight gags, about a half-dozen profanities, frequent milder swearing, pervasive rough and crude. MPA

rating is R — restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian.

"Wolf Man" (Universal)

After being wounded in an attack by a werewolf, a caring family man (Christopher Abbott) rapidly shows signs of succumbing to lycanthropy himself, which is bad news for his wife (Julia Garner) and young daughter (Matilda Firth) since they are trapped with him in a remote cabin in the forests of Oregon where his assailant continues to stalk them. Director and co-writer Leigh Whannell's tense, hard-edged horror film doesn't indulge in bloodletting for its own sake. But it does include scenes

depicting repellant behavior that many may wish to avoid. Considerable violence with much medical gore, numerous gruesome sights, a few profanities, about a half-dozen instances each of milder swearing, rough language and crude

talk. The OSV News classification is L — limited adult audience, films whose problematic content many adults would find troubling. The MPA rating is R — restricted. Under 17 requires accompanying parent or adult guardian.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH

Gospel for Sunday, February 2, 2025

Luke 2:22-40

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

SACRIFICE	CONSECRATED	GLORY
HEARTS	RIGHTEOUS	DESTINED
DICTATE	JERUSALEM	PEACE
BLESSED	SALVATION	MASTER
CUSTOM	PURIFICATION	DEVOUT
THOUGHTS	REVELATION	LAW
PIGEONS	CONTRADICTED	AMAZED

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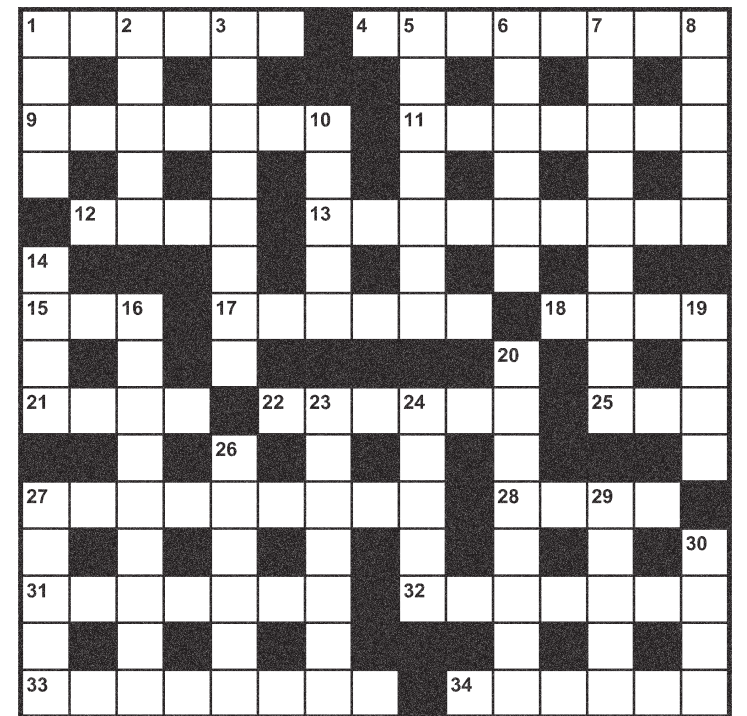
ACROSS

- 1 Turn away from sin
- 4 Pertaining to those who have received Orders
- 9 Minor Prophet
- 11 Wool or velvet hat trimmed with ermine and worn by the pope
- 12 Jacob's first wife
- 13 Part of the Eucharistic Prayer
- 15 Latin for "to pray"
- 17 ___ for the poor
- 18 Catholic actor Guinness
- 21 He called for justice to roll down like water
- 22 Patron saint of jewelers
- 25 First NT epistle
- 27 The Holy Land
- 28 Notre ___
- 31 Supreme ___

- 32 Song that begins "Holy, Holy, Holy"
- 33 These commemorate Jesus' crucifixion
- 34 Pairs' debarking point

DOWN

- 1 The Upper ___
- 2 Prince of ___
- 3 "Love your ___ as yourself"
- 5 Catholic opera singer Pavarotti
- 6 Catholic star of "Everybody Loves Raymond"
- 7 Title for the Holy Spirit
- 8 "So the king ordered Daniel to be brought and cast into the ___ den" (Dan 6:17)
- 10 "For where your treasure is, there also will your ___ be" (Mt 6:21)
- 14 Sight of Xavier University, briefly
- 16 Got a toothache? Try this saint
- 19 "It ___ upon a midnight clear ..."
- 20 Mary Magdalene mistook the Risen Jesus for this
- 23 Author of Black Like Me who became a Third Order Carmelite
- 24 Abbr. for two NT epistles
- 26 Francis' hometown
- 27 John, Paul and John Paul
- 29 "___ Dolorosa"
- 30 "___ was in the beginning, is now..."



www.wordgamesfor Catholics.com

See answers on page 13.

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Finance Office reports results of diocesan operations through June 30, 2024

By ALISON MONTEE
Diocesan Finance Officer

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 6/30/24.

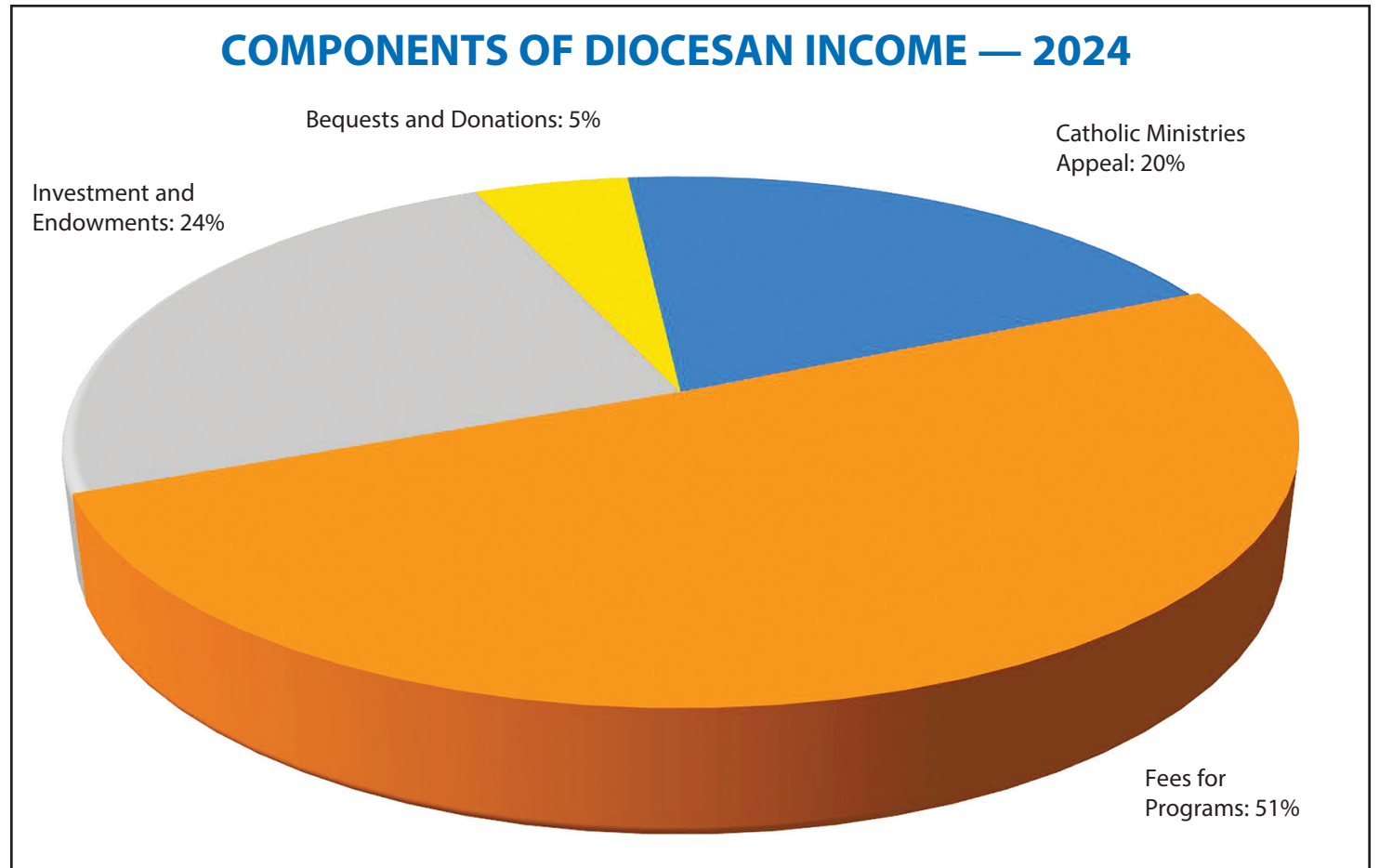
The full financial report, with auditor’s opinion, footnotes and supplemental information can also be found on the diocesan website at evdio.org under Departments, Finance Office, Forms and Documents.

The required format of audited financial statements can be a little overwhelming when deciphering the results of the fiscal year. It can be difficult to decipher what’s “Good” and what’s “Bad.” As such, we have included some supplemental information that we hope will be helpful:

- Link/QR Code to a short video providing an Overview to 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:

Last year a short video was developed providing an overview of how the Diocese is structured, funded, and works with all of its parishes to carry out the ministry of the Catholic Church



in Southwestern Indiana. I encourage you to make a little time to view this video at the link or QR code below:



www.evdio.org/3-d-communications.html

The Audited Financial Statements

presented here represent the three “lines of business,” including 1.) Diocesan Ministries, 2.) The Deposit/Loan Program, and 3.) The Self-Funded Insurance Program whereby these three “lines of business” rely on four primary sources of revenue in order to fund their operations as follows:

- **Catholic Ministries Appeal** (formerly CPC) — Funds only used for lines of business 1 and 2
- **Fees for Programs & Services** (Including the Insurance Program)
- **Investment & Interest Income** (Including Returns on Endowment holdings)

- **Bequests & Donations** (Including cash distributions from Endowment holdings)

The pie chart included above reflects each of these sources of revenue and their respective percentage of total revenue presented in the audited financial statements for 2024. (Note: The percentages in this chart include the Insurance Program whereas the percentages of revenue shared in the aforementioned overview video do not, therefore the percentages referenced in the video do not exactly match the chart above — both are accurate based on their specific application.)

FINANCIAL RESULTS SUMMARY:

The table, below, represents a condensed summary of the audited income statement. The fiscal year ended with very solid financial results, on a normalized basis (eliminating extraordinary items — discussed later), just slightly better than break-even for normal operations of the Diocesan offices and the Deposit and Loan pro-

gram (lines of business 1 and 2), and generated a prudent surplus in the Insurance Program (line of business 3) in order to maintain appropriate insurance reserves for the future. Additionally, similar to 2023, we were fortunate to experience a couple of extraordinary income items that created a strong positive change in Net Assets. These extraordinary items consisted of a substantial uptick in the investment market which generated

some significant unrealized gains in our investments and endowment funds and we benefitted from another nice reduction in our pension plan liability that further contributed to the positive change in Net Assets. Whether including or excluding the extraordinary items Net Income, Balance Sheet Liquidity, and overall Net Asset positions were extremely solid.

See **AUDIT**, page 10

Income and Expense Summary

	6/30/2024	6/30/2023
Income:		
Catholic Parishes Campaign Income	\$ 6,412,258	\$ 6,348,771
Net Investment & Endowment Income	\$ 7,862,763	\$ 6,309,427
Bequests & Donations - Contributions & Endowment Distributions	\$ 1,558,789	\$ 1,209,383
Fees for Programs - Insurance, Medical, & Service Fees	\$ 16,320,465	\$ 15,488,683
Total Revenue, Gains, & Support	\$ 32,154,275	\$ 29,356,264
Total Expenses	\$ 24,367,395	\$ 22,926,310
Change in Net Assets - i.e. Net Income/(Loss) - Operating	\$ 7,786,880	\$ 6,429,954
Change in Pension Liability	\$ 4,959,589	\$ 6,843,717
Total Change in Net Assets - i.e. Net Income/(Loss)	\$ 12,746,469	\$ 13,273,671



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evdiomessage.org

Audit

Continued from page 9

INCOME:

The Income statement reflects a \$12.7M net income for the year (positive change in Net Assets), compared to a previous year net income of \$13.2M, which would appear to be excessively **Good**, it is important to note that the primary driver of each of those results are massive swings in the investment market. Both in 2023 and 2024, the market was extremely favorable which required increasing the valuation of our investments on the balance sheet (referred to as “unrealized gain”) creating a large net income on the income statement. Although these are important elements of our financial results and stability, it is essential to look beyond these large unrealized gains and into the normalized results of the operations of the Diocese. The information below attempts to assist you in reviewing normal operations of the diocese.

So, as discussed above, the \$12.7M net income is primarily driven by the unrealized gains on investments (\$7.8M) and a reduction in Lay Pension Liability (\$4.9M). *If those two extraordinary income items were eliminated,*

the results of the operation would be, as stated earlier, a little better than break even with net income of about \$40K. Below is further explanation of these market-driven, extraordinary items:

1. Market performance over the course of the year was up and down with a lot of volatility in the market, however, the fiscal year ended strong which allowed us to record unrealized gains again this year although slightly less than last year. This drove significant increases in the value of our investment assets and, in turn, created substantial income on the Income Statement. Again, it should be noted that this is certainly beneficial, but the gains are primarily “unrealized” meaning the value of the investments increased creating income that is shown on the income statement, however did not drive actual cash receipts to fund operations. Our investment strategies are designed to smooth and protect against the effects of market fluctuations in the long term but can swing significantly year to year.
2. The pension liability was reduced by a material amount of \$4.9M. This reduction is driven

by additional funds placed into the pension plan, as was the intention for the year, coupled with favorable investment returns on the plan assets, and an increase in the discount rate to 5.5 percent (up from 5 percent Prior Year) driving a significant benefit to the income statement. Both our balance sheet and Income statement were materially impacted in a positive way by these factors. While our strategies in managing the pension plan liability continue to produce favorable results, a number of the factors that create these large swings in the liability and then influence our income statement results are driven by the actuarial assessments of the plan and the discount rates dependent on the bond market, which are often beyond our direct control.

EXPENSE:

Normalized Operating Expenses, excluding extraordinary items discussed below, came in generally as expected, just slightly unfavorable to budget (\$110K) due primarily to increased interest paid out to our parishes based on their deposit balances with the Diocese (line of business 2).

As alluded to above, during the year we encountered two extraordinary expense items that involved utilizing a number of prior year, earmarked contributions, to complete construction of a small chapel in the Catholic Center (note that this construction began and a portion of the expense was recorded as extraordinary expense in the 6/30/23 financial statements) as well as renovation of the former convent on the Sacred Heart Campus which is now the House of Formation, housing our first-year seminarians starting their Propaedeutic year. While these were planned items and funded from prior year contributions, as well as current year donations, they did create a slightly larger unfavorable variance to budget than the \$110K referenced above.

On the whole, the expenses of Diocesan Ministries and Operations and the Deposit and Loan Program (lines of business 1 and 2) were managed effectively compared to budget. The slight overage in those operating expenses were offset by much lower than planned expenses in the insurance program (line of business 3). The insurance program generated another solid year of controlled claim losses and closely managed administrative

See **AUDIT**, page 11

Statements of Activities Year Ended June 30, 2024 and 2023

	2024			2023		
	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total
Revenue, Gains and Other Support						
Catholic Ministries Appeal	\$ 6,412,258	\$ -	\$ 6,412,258	\$ 6,348,771	\$ -	\$ 6,348,771
Contributions and other community support	34,860	627,190	662,050	166,690	290,079	456,769
Insurance and medical fees	16,093,175	-	16,093,175	15,254,139	-	15,254,139
Service fees	227,290	-	227,290	234,544	-	234,544
Net investment return	5,535,032	50,775	5,585,807	4,877,388	55,561	4,932,949
Change in beneficial interests in Foundation	-	736,145	736,145	-	466,731	466,731
Change in beneficial interests in Foundation – designated	1,540,811	-	1,540,811	909,747	-	909,747
Distributions from Foundation and other revenue	896,739	-	896,739	752,614	-	752,614
Net assets released from restrictions	612,069	(612,069)	-	567,707	(567,707)	-
Total revenues, gains and other support	31,352,234	802,041	32,154,275	29,111,600	244,664	29,356,264
Expenses						
Adult formation	202,501	-	202,501	179,725	-	179,725
Catholic Center and other operations	82,562	-	82,562	70,818	-	70,818
Chancery	762,113	-	762,113	770,385	-	770,385
Education	437,261	-	437,261	576,390	-	576,390
Insurance and medical programs	14,469,858	-	14,469,858	13,399,920	-	13,399,920
Hispanic-speaking ministry	106,584	-	106,584	100,943	-	100,943
Ministry to priests and clergy assistance	391,786	-	391,786	344,495	-	344,495
Newspaper and communications	427,692	-	427,692	440,693	-	440,693
Office of Worship	155,087	-	155,087	118,572	-	118,572
Permanent diaconate	93,081	-	93,081	67,058	-	67,058
Subsidies	769,944	-	769,944	754,848	-	754,848
Tribunal	218,921	-	218,921	203,567	-	203,567
Vocation Office and House of Discernment	1,253,923	-	1,253,923	843,742	-	843,742
Safe Environment	16,248	-	16,248	23,852	-	23,852
Youth ministries, including Newman Centers	343,042	-	343,042	397,098	-	397,098
Lay employee retirement plan	(355,531)	-	(355,531)	732,438	-	732,438
Employee 403(b) benefits	1,076,284	-	1,076,284	1,123,506	-	1,123,506
Office of Family and Life	93,963	-	93,963	81,460	-	81,460
Total program services	20,545,319	-	20,545,319	20,229,510	-	20,229,510
Management and general	3,599,883	-	3,599,883	2,497,691	-	2,497,691
Fundraising	222,193	-	222,193	199,109	-	199,109
Total support services	3,822,076	-	3,822,076	2,696,800	-	2,696,800
Total expenses	24,367,395	-	24,367,395	22,926,310	-	22,926,310
Change in Net Assets from Operating and Investing Activities	6,984,839	802,041	7,786,880	6,185,290	244,664	6,429,954
Change in Minimum Pension Liability	4,959,589	-	4,959,589	6,843,717	-	6,843,717
Change in Net Assets	11,944,428	802,041	12,746,469	13,029,007	244,664	13,273,671
Net Assets, Beginning of Year	17,256,274	8,206,083	25,462,357	4,227,267	7,961,419	12,188,686
Net Assets, End of Year	\$ 29,200,702	\$ 9,008,124	\$ 38,208,826	\$ 17,256,274	\$ 8,206,083	\$ 25,462,357

Audit

Continued from page 10

costs allowing the overall spend to be favorable to budget resulting in an overall favorable result in all expenses of the Diocese compared to budget.

NET RESULTS:

We have discussed both the normalized income and expense elements for the Diocese in this fiscal year as well as the extraordinary items including the sizeable, positive impact of unrealized gains on investments for the fiscal year. Those gains are good, but again, do not provide cash to fund operations. If we remove those unrealized gains and net all these income and expense results together and look at more normalized operating results, excluding the exceptional unrealized gains on investments, the favorable pension liability adjustment, and the two projects funded from prior year contributions (Chapel and Sacred Heart renovation), our “normalized” consolidated results were a little better than breakeven and allow us to remain in a very solid financial position. *That is Good!*

THE FINAL TAKE-AWAYS AND CLOSING COMMENTS:

- Whether extraordinary items are included or excluded from income and expense, the financial results are good and in line with expectations.
- Pension Liability reduction further boosted net income beyond normal expectations.
- The insurance program remains in strong position
- Strong Investment returns boosted net income beyond normal expectations.
- As we continue to make efforts to manage other income sources and are diligent in our expense management, we continue to show good results, which assists in managing the burden on the Catholic Ministries Appeal (formerly known as CPC), averaging an annual increase of just 0.8 percent (point 8) over the last five years while inflation during that same time period has averaged 4 percent.
- *All of this is Good!*

Statements of Financial Position June 30, 2024 and 2023

	2024	2023
ASSETS		
Cash	\$ 11,702,410	\$ 7,346,320
Receivables		
Catholic Ministries Appeal	529,155	532,555
Parishes and institutions, net of allowance; 2024 and 2023 – \$2,060	442,013	1,576,197
Loans – parishes and institutions, net of allowance; 2024 and 2023 – \$0	1,550,052	991,676
Loans – other organizations, net of allowance; 2024 – \$0	916,323	-
Interest receivable	36,049	23,271
Insurance services receivable	646,289	352,959
Other Diocesan operations	22,960	31,131
	<u>4,142,841</u>	<u>3,507,789</u>
Investments	61,856,886	56,580,830
Beneficial interests in Foundation	18,822,505	16,538,668
Prepaid expenses and other assets	2,443,448	2,255,872
	<u>\$ 98,968,090</u>	<u>\$ 86,229,479</u>
LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS		
Liabilities		
Accounts payable	\$ 307,927	\$ 273,835
Deposits held for parishes and other Diocesan operations	46,102,171	39,755,460
Other accrued expenses and liabilities	1,637,743	2,320,811
Unearned service revenue	15,799	15,799
Accrued pension liability	12,695,624	18,401,217
	<u>60,759,264</u>	<u>60,767,122</u>
Net Assets		
Without donor restrictions – undesignated	(11,812,386)	(19,275,628)
Without donor restrictions – designated	41,013,088	36,531,902
	<u>29,200,702</u>	<u>17,256,274</u>
With donor restrictions	9,008,124	8,206,083
	<u>38,208,826</u>	<u>25,462,357</u>
Total liabilities and net assets	<u>\$ 98,968,090</u>	<u>\$ 86,229,479</u>

It should be noted that while our normalized operating margins are stable, the market volatility will continue to drive unpredictable results in investment income, uncertainty of the bond market discount rates will continue to cause uncertainty in the pension liability status and other economic pressures will be important to monitor during this next year. Prudent fiscal management remains key.

I would like to once again thank all members of our diocese who give tirelessly of their time, talent and treasure within the parishes, schools, communities, and throughout the diocese, as one church. We are fortunate to have a great team of people helping to serve the faithful of our Diocese.

We continue to be blessed with the generosity of our Catholic Faithful.

We appreciate you, the Catholic faithful of the Diocese of Evansville and understand that you have entrusted us to safeguard the assets and funding for the Diocese. These financial results for 2024 reinforce our efforts for a strong financial plan, effective management of resources, and to continue to be good stewards of the resources in which you have entrusted us.

At National Prayer Vigil for Life, young people challenged ‘to be a light in our culture’

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — In a basilica “adorned with beautiful mosaic art,” the “most impressive” mosaic was “the gathering of people from so many different places coming together to stand for life and to be a light in our culture,” Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, said Jan. 23. He was the main celebrant and homilist at the opening Mass of the National Prayer Vigil for Life at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception. A congregation of 5,500 filled the Great Upper Church. Among the concelebrants were Cardinal Wilton D. Gregory, now retired as Washington’s archbishop, and his newly named successor, Cardinal Robert W. McElroy, formerly the bishop of San Diego. In his homily, Archbishop Naumann, a former chairman of the

U.S. bishops’ pro-life committee, called on young people to witness to their peers. “My good young people, say not that you are too young to be a light in our culture and society. You’re called to help them to come to know what brought you here tonight.” A Mass early Jan. 24 closed the vigil, with Bishop Robert J. Brennan of Brooklyn, New York, as the main celebrant.

OSV News photo/Mihoko Owada

Young people pray at the National Prayer Vigil for Life Mass at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington Jan. 23, 2025, the evening before the annual March for Life.



Linens

Continued from page 1

“A reminder to unite their meals at home with the sacrificial meal we celebrate at Mass.”

Vezzani said it was both a surprise and an immense honor to design the limited edition collection. They saw it as an opportunity to rediscover and share the beauty of sacred art with families and bring it into their homes.

“The BENEDICTVS collection reflects the beauty and faith of this community, resonating far beyond Indiana,” Vezzani said. “It shows how sacred art and shared values can unite and uplift, becoming a beacon for other dioceses and Catholic communities to follow. Beauty truly knows no boundaries, and Evansville’s example is a testament to that.”

Bertaggia was the designer for the project. She was “deeply captivated” by the artwork adorning the baldacchino, prominently situated on the altar at St. Benedict Cathedral. She said the first pattern draws inspiration from the

ceiling above the baldacchino.

“During Mass, this view is visible only to the celebrant and only at the precise moment of consecration,” Bertaggia said. “From the angels set against a radiant golden backdrop, vines emerge and spread across the entire surface . . .”

The second pattern designed for the runners is inspired by the central, upper section of the baldacchino. Father Zenthoefer noted the table runners pull its design from the cupola of the baldacchino with its geometric pattern that highlights the work of humanity operating in harmony with the work of God. The third pattern used for the napkins is inspired by the medallions representing the fruits of new life in Christ, Bertaggia said. The napkins show the floral pattern adorning the baldacchino as well as the new organ, Father Zenthoefer said.

“It has been such a joy to share this story,” Father Zenthoefer said. “Because it is exactly what we want to do as the Cathedral: we want to shape culture by inviting people to pattern their lives off of the experience of the liturgy.”



Submitted photo

Design drafts for the table linens inspired by St. Benedict Cathedral are shown. The linens were designed by Barefoot Homemade.

The linens can be seen and purchased at www.barefoothomemade.com/product/benedictvs-linen-tablecloth/. Anyone interested in purchasing the

table linens can also contact Father Zenthoefer by email at azenthoefer@evdio.org or by calling the parish office at 812-425-3369.

Pope to media: Share hope, build community, shun aggressiveness

By CINDY WOODEN
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis urged communicators to use their platforms to inspire hope by avoiding aggressive language and rejecting rhetoric that dehumanizes others.

“I dream of a communication capable of making us fellow travelers, walking alongside our brothers and sisters and encouraging them to hope in these troubled times,” the pope wrote in his message for the World Day of Communications.

The pope’s message was released Jan. 24, the feast of St. Francis de Sales, patron saint of journalists, and the start of the Vatican celebration of the Jubilee of the World of Communications.

The Vatican and most dioceses will celebrate the World Day of Communications June 1, the Sunday before Pentecost.

Describing his dream particularly for Catholic communicators, Pope Francis said theirs should be “a communication capable of speaking to the heart, arousing not passionate reactions of defensiveness and anger, but attitudes of openness and friendship.”

And with the Holy Year 2025 being focused on hope, the pope said communications should be “capable of focusing on beauty and hope even in the midst of apparently desperate situations, and generating commitment, empathy and concern for others.”

A Christian form of communication, he said, “does not peddle illusions or fears, but is able to give reasons for hope.”

The theme for the church’s 59th celebration of World Day of Communications is “Share with gentleness the hope that is in your hearts,” taken from the First Letter of St. Peter.

Pope Francis wrote that he chose the theme because modern communication is increasingly “characterized by disinformation and polarization, as a few centers of power control an unprecedented mass of data and information.”

“Too often today communication generates not hope, but fear and despair, prejudice and resentment, fanaticism and even hatred,” he wrote in the message. “All too often it simplifies reality in order to provoke instinctive reactions; it uses words like a razor; it even uses false or artfully distorted information to send messages designed to agitate, provoke or hurt.”

In his letter, the apostle Peter tells Christians that they have an obligation to give others an account of their hope, something which the pope said is accomplished best when Christians allow “the beauty of love” to shine through their words and actions.

Pope Francis asked Catholic communicators “to discover and make known the many stories of goodness hidden in the folds of the news, imitating those gold prospectors who tirelessly sift the sand in search of a tiny nugget.”

Seeking out those “seeds of

hope” and sharing them, he said, “helps our world to be a little less deaf to the cry of the poor, a little less indifferent, a little less closed in on itself.”

“Be witnesses and promoters of a nonaggressive communication; help to spread a culture of care, build bridges and break

down the visible and invisible barriers of the present time,” the pope asked Catholic media professionals.

“May you always find those glimmers of goodness that inspire us to hope,” he told them. “This kind of communication can help to build com-

munion, to make us feel less alone, to rediscover the importance of walking together.”

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Vocational Program “Pescadores”

Last year, the vocation’s office of the diocese started a vocational program for Hispanics called “Pescadores.” The objective of this program is for Spanish-speaking young people to discover and discern their Christian vocation along with their family, so that they can respond to the call that God makes them, whether to the single life, married life, priestly life or religious life. St. John Paul II said that “the family is the first and most excellent seedbed of vocations to a life of consecration to the Kingdom of God (Familiaris consortio, 53).” Therefore, we hoped to help families with this mission of supporting their children to discover their vocation.

In this vocational program, families receive a program that guides them throughout the year. Once a week, they gather together as a family to do what the program suggests for that week. Thus, they pray regularly for vocations, read and meditate on the Bible and on the lives of the saints. Also, they visit the seminary and other places that help them learn more about the life of seminarians, priests and religious. In addition, they carry out other activities in the community such as visiting the sick, praying for the deceased, among other activities.

We have divided the liturgical year into three sections. From Advent to Holy Week, it is focused on



BECAUSE I AM CATHOLIC!

FATHER MARTIN ESTRADA

knowing more about God and the faith. During Easter, the focus is knowing oneself, our talents and our call of Christ to be missionary disciples. And finally, in the Ordinary Time, the focus is on knowing deeply the different vocations and how to discern the call. We also have a Vocation Chalice that each family receives for a week to pray and reflect on the different vocations in a more intense way.

Currently, we have more than 60 registered families with nearly 100 young people between 12 and 25 years of age in the six parishes where the Hispanic ministry is present in the Diocese. Every two months, there is a virtual meeting with the families to evaluate the program and share of the fruits. It should be noted that the parents themselves are responsible for carrying out the program, so families become more involved in the promotion of vocations and truly become vocational seedbeds.

I appreciate Bishop Siegel and Father Tyler

Tenbarga’s interest in promoting Hispanic vocations, as well as all the parents who have been praying and supporting their children in this program. I hope that the Lord continues to call men and women to leave their nets and follow him, and that young people respond with a generous and brave heart to continue proclaiming the good news to the people of God.

I ask you to pray for vocations, especially to priestly and religious life.

Vocational Prayer

Oh Jesus, eternal Shepherd of souls!
Deign to look with eyes of mercy on this portion of your beloved flock.

Lord, we need a greater number of priests.
Multiply vocations and sanctify our priests more and more.

We ask this through the intercession of the Immaculate Virgin Mary of Guadalupe,
your sweet and holy Mother.

Oh Jesus, give us priests according to your heart!
Amen.

Father Martin Estrada serves as Associate Pastor at Holy Rosary Catholic Church in Evansville and Associate Director of Hispanic Vocations.

Programa Vocacional “Pescadores”

Junto con la oficina de vocaciones iniciamos el año pasado con el programa vocacional para hispanos llamado Pescadores. El objetivo de este programa es que los jóvenes de habla hispana junto con su familia descubran y discernan su vocación como cristianos para que puedan responder al llamado que Dios les hace, ya sea a la vida de solteros, vida matrimonial, vida sacerdotal o vida religiosa. San Juan Pablo II decía que “la familia es el primer y excelentísimo semillero de vocaciones a una vida de consagración al Reino de Dios (Familiaris consortio, 53).” Por tanto, se espera ayudar a las familias con esta misión de apoyar a sus hijos a descubrir su verdadera vocación.

En este programa vocacional, las familias reciben un programa que les guía durante el año. Una vez por semana se reúnen como familia para hacer lo que el programa dicta para esa semana. Así oran regularmente por las vocaciones, leen y meditan la Biblia y sobre la vida de los santos. También, visitan el seminario y otros lugares que les ayudan a conocer más sobre la vida de seminaristas, sacerdotes y religiosos. Además, realizan otras actividades en la comunidad como visitar enfermos, orar por los difuntos, entre otras actividades.

El año litúrgico lo hemos dividido en tres



¡PORQUE SOY CATÓLICO!

EL PADRE MARTIN ESTRADA

secciones. De adviento a la Semana Santa es enfocado en conocer más a Dios y la fe. Durante la Pascua el enfoque es el conocimiento personal y llamado de Cristo a ser discípulos misioneros. Y, por último, en el tiempo ordinario el enfoque es conocer a fondo las diferentes vocaciones y como discernir el llamado. También tenemos un cáliz vocacional que cada familia recibe una semana para rezar y reflexionar sobre las diferentes vocaciones de una manera más intensa.

Actualmente tenemos más de sesenta familias registradas y con cerca de cien jóvenes entre los doce y veinticinco años de edad en las seis parroquias donde se tiene la presencia del ministerio hispano en la Diócesis. Cada dos meses se tiene una evaluación del programa y se comparte los frutos del programa por medio de juntas virtuales con todas las familias. Cabe resaltar que los mismos padres de familia son los responsables de llevar a cabo el programa así las familias se involucran más en la promoción vocacional y se

convierten realmente en semilleros vocacionales.

Agradezco el interés del Señor obispo Siegel y el padre Tyler Tenbarga por promover las vocaciones hispanas, así como a todos los padres de familia que han estado orando y apoyando a sus hijos en este programa. Espero que el Señor siga llamando hombres y mujeres a dejar sus redes y a seguirlo y que los jóvenes respondan con un corazón generoso y valiente para seguir proclamando la buena nueva a todo el pueblo de Dios.

Les pido que oren por las vocaciones, especialmente a la vida sacerdotal y religiosa.

Oración Vocacional

¡Oh Jesús, Pastor eterno de las almas!
Dígnate mirar con ojos de misericordia a esta porción de tu grey amada.

Señor, gemimos en la orfandad.
Danos vocaciones, danos sacerdotes, religiosos santos.

Te lo pedimos por la inmaculada Virgen María de Guadalupe, tu dulce y Santa Madre.

¡Oh Jesús danos sacerdotes, religiosos y almas consagradas según tu corazón! Amen.

El Padre Martin Estrada se desempeña como Pastor Asociado de la Parroquia del Santo Rosario y Director Asociado de Vocaciones Hispanas.

THIS WEEK’S ANSWERS

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Jesus, I trust in you

Aaron and I were both raised in a Catholic family that taught us the Church's teachings. We both attended Catholic schools and religious education programs. I was taught about Natural Family Planning (NFP) in late middle school, and again my senior year of high school. I always knew when I got married, my spouse and I would practice NFP; there weren't any other options for me. Thankfully, when Aaron and I started dating, and that became a topic of discussion, he was 100 percent on board. We were both open to having children right away, so when we were married in July 2021, God answered our prayers and we welcomed our first son exactly nine months later.

NATURAL FAMILY PLANNING

By TARYN AND AARON SMITH

When our son was around a year old, we decided we were open to start growing our family again. But, things didn't happen as quickly as they did the first time, and I started to worry. I had a gut feeling (I know now that was the Holy Spirit) telling me that something was wrong. I had doctors tell me, "It always takes longer with the second child, just keep trying for at least a year." Thankfully, our NFP practitioner, Terri, was right there to listen to all my concerns. She connected us with Dr. William Blanke, the locally supportive NFP doctor, and he immediately saw us for an appointment. We quickly realized that I was going to need a higher level of medical care than Dr. Blanke could provide, but he left us with something that we carried with us our entire journey. Dr. Blanke told us to pray the Divine Mercy chaplet, and to be constantly reminded of Jesus' **mercy** for us; this was all a part of His plan for us. Jesus, I trust in you.

We were connected with Dr. Gavin Puthoff in St. Louis, Missouri, a highly

trained NFP doctor and NAPRO surgeon. My first appointment was with one of his nurse practitioners and it was the most thorough appointment I have ever been to. After lab draws, ultrasounds, NFP chart reviews and physical exams, I was diagnosed with stage two endometriosis, and a five centimeter left tubal cyst, both of which required surgery. Dr. Puthoff informed us, had we gotten pregnant before surgery with a cyst of that size, it could have caused serious damage including loss of my tube and/or ovary. He also told us that endometriosis is the number one cause of secondary infertility.

After receiving that diagnosis, I felt like my world was rocked. I was so thankful to be getting answers, but was also questioning, "Why me, God?" I couldn't understand why we were being asked to carry this heavy cross. When it came time to schedule surgery, I was originally told his schedule was booked out for six months. My heart sank, and I thought, there is no way I can wait that long. That's when God's mercy showed up again. "I'm not sure why he has this opening next month, but if you'd like to get it scheduled for April 10, I can get your name on the books," were the next words that came from his scheduler's mouth. I couldn't believe it. Thank you, Jesus! April 10, 2024, was the Wednesday following **Divine Mercy** Sunday. I was going to be having surgery at "Mercy Hospital," just a few days after "Divine Mercy Sunday." Jesus, I trust in you!

When surgery was concluded, Dr. Puthoff was pleased with how everything went, and said we could start trying for another child soon after. Just three months from April, we received that positive pregnancy test we had been longing for. We are over half way to meeting our miracle baby, due exactly one year from my surgery, early April 2025. I am back under the care of



Submitted photo

Aaron and Taryn Smith are pictured with their son, Harrison.

Dr. Blanke for this pregnancy, and the baby is growing healthy, right on track as it should. We could not be more thankful or feel more blessed. Baby is set to be baptized on April 27, 2025, which indeed is **Divine Mercy** Sunday! Jesus, I trust in you!

Without the help of NFP, I truly do not believe we would have ended up in the care of Dr. Blanke or Dr. Puthoff, thus delaying proper diagnosis and

treatment. While this was not an easy cross for us to carry, we can't help but to be thankful because it was all a part of God's plan for us. It strengthened our marriage and our faith. Everything happens on God's timing, not ours, and ultimately, he knows what is best.

Taryn and Aaron Smith, and their son, Harrison, are members of Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Haubstadt.

Acedia: The Noonday Devil in our Modern World

A patient comes into the office, we will call him Mike. I glance at the reason for his visit and see that he is here to discuss symptoms of possible depression. Mike tells me that over the past several months he has felt depressed. He feels well physically but has no motivation and does not feel any happiness or joy in his life. He is finding it harder and harder to interact meaningfully with his wife and kids. He has been able to go to work and do his job, but he finds no meaning or purpose in it. He finds himself mindlessly scrolling through social media or binging a Netflix series. Mike considers himself a spiritual man but quit going to church and no longer prays. He tells me that he would like to try a medicine to see if that would help with his symptoms.

What do we do? Do we prescribe Mike an antidepressant and send him out the door? He very well could need medication and a referral for counseling. However, we should not neglect a possible spiritual component to his symptoms. Could the vice of acedia (spiritual sloth) be contributing to the way he is feeling?

How do we distinguish between acedia and depression? Major depression disorder (MDD) is a serious illness and does need to be treated with medications as well as intensive psychological counseling. MDD symptoms include persistent hopelessness, sleeping too much or too little, fatigue, difficulty concentrating, changes in appetite, physical complaints, and, in more severe cases, thoughts of self-harm or suicide. Acedia is more of a spiritual sadness. In his book, "The



CATHOLIC HEALTHCARE

DEACON GARY KEEPEs

Noonday Devil: Acedia, the Unnamed Evil of our Times," Dom Jean-Charles Nault says, "On the one hand, acedia is a sin against the joy that springs from charity; it is sadness about what ought to gladden us most: participation in the very life of God." It should be mentioned that acedia and depression can be present in a person at the same time.

How do we address the symptoms of acedia? Evagrius of Pontus, a 3rd century Desert Father, tells us, "Perseverance is the cure for acedia, along with the execution of all tasks with great attention." The Benedictine rule of Ora et Labora (prayer and work) helps us to persevere. We must persist in our daily work and pray even when we receive no consolation from it. Just as the early monks were told to stay in their cell and persist in prayer, so should we get up every morning and go to work; doing our work to the best of our ability. We must set aside time for prayer every day regardless of the emotion we are feeling at the time. Think of Mother Theresa caring for the poor of Calcutta day in and day out for more than 45 years. We know that Mother Theresa suffered from a spiritual dryness for a good part of her life. Could this have been her battle with acedia? Yet she persisted in her work and prayer.

Another way to overcome acedia is through wonder and gratitude. The great early 20th century English author GK Chesterton can help us to understand this antidote. Chesterton's writings are filled with wild adventures experienced in the normal everyday life of his characters. Chesterton sees the world as a "wild and startling place" if only we have the eyes to see. It is magical and enchanted. In his book *Orthodoxy*, he says, "I came to feel as if magic must have a meaning, and meaning must have someone to mean it. There was something personal in the world, as in a work of art; whatever it meant, it meant violently."

Gratitude is Chesterton's other antidote for acedia. He says, "You say grace before meals. All right. But I say grace before the concert and the opera, and grace before the play and the pantomime, and grace before I open a book, and grace before sketching, painting, swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing, dancing, and grace before I dip the pen in the ink." His point is to always be thankful to God for everything.

Acedia is a very common vice in our world today. Combat it by persevering in work and prayer. View the world with wonder and gratitude. And read more Chesterton.

Dr. Keepes serves as a permanent deacon for the Diocese of Evansville. He is assigned to Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Petersburg and Blessed Sacrament Parish in Oakland City. He also is a member of the Southwestern Indiana Guild of the Catholic Medical Association.

Reflection and hope for the New Year

“They that hope in the Lord will renew their strength, they will soar on eagles’ wings; They will run and not grow weary, walk and not grow faint” (Isaiah 40:31).

I reflected on this scripture from Isaiah multiple times this past month. I thought this scripture seemed appropriate for the month. January is the start of a new year, a period of reflection, a time of new beginnings, and for many, renewed hope for the future. As we began this new year, I paused and reflected on the numerous blessings Catholic Charities received last year thanks to the generous support of many. We could not offer our services and support hundreds of individuals throughout the year without your prayers, donations, and a devoted and caring team of staff members, volunteers, board members and other supporters. Thank you to all who help to make our progress possible.

While I try to focus on the many things we have to be grateful for, I must acknowledge that I do regret that there are many in need who we could not help. I pray that each year we can do more to support those in need throughout our community. I pray that more people have the stability and the resources needed to achieve their potential. I pray that when those in need seek support that they are treated with dignity and respect and are filled with greater hope for their future.

While there is still much to do to support those in need, it is important to celebrate some of the individuals that Catholic Charities had the honor to work with and recognize the progress they made this past year.

Josh* reached out to Catholic Charities near the



CATHOLIC CHARITIES

DENISE SEIBERT TOWNSEND

end of 2024. He shared that he had the opportunity to start a new job shortly after the new year. However, the position required work boots but he did not have the funds to purchase the required footwear. Josh* shared that he had been incarcerated for several years and was recently released. This position is his first full-time job opportunity after his incarceration. He recognized that this job is an important part of his journey. He connected with our Boots4Work program and obtained work boots. Josh started working and will continue to have regular follow ups with Catholic Charities; he has hope for the future.

Over the past few years, Lynn* had sought emergency financial assistance from Catholic Charities a couple times to help with her rent. She had maintained steady employment, but often did not have the funds needed to pay her monthly bills. Lynn* had faced some serious medical concerns in the past. While her health is now stable, she requires ongoing medical care and prescriptions, which add to her monthly expenses. She wanted to make changes in her life to provide more stability. In 2024, Lynn* decided to participate in Catholic Charities’ Neighbor to Neighbor program. Through this faith-based, intensive life skills education program she focused on goal setting, individual growth and financial literacy. She has accomplished

several goals already and continues to work toward achieving others. She has become more aware and diligent with her spending and recently started building a savings. She recognizes that her journey is a work in progress, but she now feels more confident and prepared to navigate through her journey, resulting in greater hope for the future.

Josh* and Lynn* are just a couple of the hundreds of people that Catholic Charities supported in the past year thanks to the generosity of many. I am grateful that Catholic Charities can be a resource on a person’s journey. Our programs are designed to accompany those served by supporting them through the challenges they face, giving them the tools they need to thrive, and instilling hope and confidence.

As we journey through this new year, may the words of St. Brendan remind us that whatever our journey may be this year may we remain faithful and trusting in God. “Help me to journey beyond the familiar and into the unknown. Give me the faith to leave old ways and break fresh ground with You” (St. Brendan).

*Name changed for privacy.

Catholic Charities offers a variety of services including mental health counseling, life skills training, immigration legal services, and emergency financial assistance programs. For services or more information, contact Catholic Charities by calling 812-423-5456 or visit our website at www.ccevansville.org.

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

Citizens for Heaven

With the beginning of a new semester and the recent feast of Blessed Basil Moreau (Jan. 20), founder of the Congregation of Holy Cross (which founded the University of Notre Dame), I have had ample occasion to reflect on my hopes and hesitations regarding the next term of academic study. And though yes, I am daunted by a significant increase in the caliber and quantity of work demanded of me, and yes, I am also very eager and excited to learn so much from these particular courses, I want to consider one more dimension of my education, one which I hope will inspire each of us in our respective activities in life.

In his 36th circular letter to the members of his congregation, Blessed Basil Moreau wrote, “We shall always place education side by side with instruction; the mind will not be cultivated at the



MEDITATION IGNIS

MARIA SERMERSHEIM

expense of the heart. While we prepare useful citizens for society, we shall likewise do our utmost to prepare citizens for heaven.” This quotation has been adopted as a special part of the mission of Notre Dame. In theological studies, the note of caution is often heard to warn against focusing too much on intellectual distinctions such that we forget the heart of the matter and the true gift of faith, which is lived out in a much more simple life than all the problematizing academic articles may make it seem.

I think this danger is quite true, and though an academic article written by a Jewish scholar about Leviticus 19:17 can be so beautifully convicting that it spurs me to seek God’s grace in the sacraments, and a doctoral seminar studying the Hebrew of the Joseph story in Genesis 37 can lead to profound meditation on the mystery of divine providence, I am fully aware that this semester will require enough late nights of translating and summarizing that I will be tempted to consider it rote and dry work that needs only to be conquered and not deeply considered. Indeed, it is true of all disciplines in life: we can become too focused on specializing in whatever skill or merely accomplishing whichever task that we become detached from the nourishing content of living love for Christ in everything. We must intentionally choose to follow

Moreau’s model and not allow the mind to be cultivated at the expense of the heart. It is easy to pour our energies into the checklist and to forget the prayer list.

As this new year continues, let’s consider how much more important it is to become citizens of heaven. In all our resolutions, in all of our dreams and doubts about our various pursuits this year, let us not cultivate earthly success or accomplishment at the expense of holiness.

Maria Sermersheim is pursuing her doctorate in biblical studies at the University of Notre Dame and is a graduate of Reitz Memorial High School. She welcomes emails at msermersheim@evdio.org.

Support Your Parish

Thinking about how to use your IRA Distribution this year?

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evdiomessage.org

Is kneeling to receive Communion allowed?

Question: I have been hearing that the "norm" in the United States is to receive Communion standing. Does this mean that people who try to kneel for Communion are breaking canon law? (Florida)

Answer: You are correct that receiving Holy Communion while standing is the local norm for the United States, but this doesn't mean that those who choose to kneel for Communion are doing anything wrong or "illegal."

The relevant section of the church's law can be found in the current 2012 edition of the General Instruction of the Roman Missal (GIRM) — i.e., the official "instruction book" for how Mass is to be celebrated.

In GIRM paragraph 160 we read: "The norm established for the Dioceses of the United States of America is that Holy Communion is to be received standing, unless an individual member of the faithful wishes to receive Communion while kneeling."

Read in context, the word "norm" here is not used in the sense of "firm rule that can never be violated." Instead, it's more like the standard default option in the United States. Within certain parameters, specific bishops' conferences or regions are legitimately empowered to decide on such "default options" that align most closely with local needs and cultural sensitivities (meaning, of course, that in other countries standing for Holy Communion might not be the norm).

However, what is interesting about the United States' GIRM 160 is that it seems to make a point to respect the desire or "wish" of an individual com-



QUESTION CORNER

JENNA MARIE COOPER

municant who prefers to kneel. Although the current American GIRM indicates standing as the normal posture for Holy Communion in this country, it does not seek to impose this on those members of the faithful who personally feel more comfortable receiving Communion while kneeling.

I think one reason why there might be some confusion on this issue is that the same paragraph in an earlier edition of the American GIRM from 2003 states that: "The norm for reception of Holy Communion in the dioceses of the United States is standing. Communicants should not be denied Holy Communion because they kneel. Rather, such instances should be addressed pastorally, by providing the faithful with proper catechesis on the reasons for this norm."

The 2003 GIRM's mention of the need for "catechesis" for those who opt to kneel rather than stand for Communion has ambiguous implications. That is, it might be interpreted that those who knelt were doing something wrong and needed correction. On the other hand, it could also be read as the church's concern that those who opted to kneel were doing so for appropriate reasons and not merely suffering from scruples. In any case, the current 2012 GIRM is

the document in force today, so the precise meaning of the 2003 GIRM is somewhat of a moot point.

What does this all mean for us practically in our lives of faith?

First of all, on a very basic level, it is important to be courteous to our fellow communicants, and avoid anything that causes a disruption to the smooth and orderly distribution of Holy Communion during Mass. It should also go without saying that Holy Communion should always be received in a spirit of humility, and it should never be an occasion to show off or draw attention to ourselves.

By the same token, we should avoid forming negative judgments about our brothers and sisters in Christ based on how they receive Communion. Those who choose to receive on their knees are not necessarily doing so because they think they are "more Catholic than the pope;" rather, it is more charitable to assume that those who kneel are expressing genuine Eucharistic piety in a way straightforwardly permitted by law.

Likewise, those who receive standing and/or in the hand are not less devout, less respectful or less in awe of the great gift of the sacrament of the Most Holy Eucharist. They are simply receiving in the ordinary, customary way for their country.

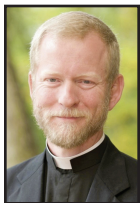
Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to CatholicQA@osv.com.

Catholic hospitals and 'gender reassignment' for minors?

In October 2024, a group known as "Do No Harm" released the Stop the Harm Database (STHD), a searchable internet resource that comprehensively catalogs sex change treatments performed between 2019-2023 on minors in healthcare facilities throughout the United States.

Do No Harm profiled children's hospitals and examined their advertised services to determine which medical interventions they provide. They also analyzed insurance claims data to determine which sex change procedures each healthcare facility had administered to minors. The data come from medical billing codes, which are submitted to insurance companies to claim payment.

The public release of the database revealed that



MAKING SENSE OF BIOETHICS

FATHER TAD PACHOLCZYK, PhD

several Catholic health care facilities have been involved in "gender reassignment" practices. According to the findings, Providence Health & Services, which owns 51 hospitals across seven western states, is the Catholic health system that performed the largest number of transgender interventions on children, carrying out a total of 81 transgender surgeries, and prescribing hormones or puberty blockers to 113 children. The National

Catholic Bioethics Center, which has years of experience working with the same types of medical billing codes, has analyzed the STHD report and issued a statement on its homepage (ncbcenter.org) addressing the report and its findings.

The best interpretation of authoritative Catholic teaching and moral principles is that a person should not cause damage to his or her healthy body (via surgery or hormones) based on a mistaken and subjective impression that he or she was "born in the wrong body." The corollary would be that Catholic health care institutions should not perform or cooperate with any gender-transitioning surgical

See **BIOETHICS** page 19

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Pope clears way for beatification of Georgia martyrs

By CINDY WOODEN
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis has formally recognized that five Franciscan missionaries ministering in what is now the U.S. state of Georgia were killed for their faith.

By signing the decree in the sainthood cause of the Georgia martyrs Jan. 27, the pope cleared the way for their beatification, although a date for the ceremony was not announced immediately.

The Spanish Franciscans Pedro de Corpa, Blas Rodríguez de Cuacos, Miguel de Añón, Antonio de Badajoz and Francisco de Veráscola were killed between Sept. 14 and Sept. 17, 1597, after Father de Corpa told a young Indigenous man, Juanillo, who was heir to a Guale chiefdom, that as a baptized Christian he could not take a second wife.

Juanillo and a band of his men killed the priest with a stone hatchet at the Mission of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Tolomato, which is near modern-day Eulonia, Georgia. They then went after the other Franciscan missionaries living and ministering along the Georgia coast.

Recounting the story of the Georgia martyrs on its website, the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, said Father de Corpa not only “reprimanded” Juanillo for taking a second wife, but also “told him that he would oppose his succession as village chief if he persisted in

his polygamous choice.”

Bishop Stephen D. Parkes of Savannah, the diocese that includes the missions where the five friars were martyred, thanked all the people who worked to promote their sainthood cause for more than 40 years.

“May Venerable Friar Pedro de Corpa and Companions intercede for families everywhere, and inspire husbands and wives around the world to live out the sacrament of marriage with love, truth, and fidelity,” the bishop wrote in a statement Jan. 27.

The first proof of the five Franciscans’ readiness to give their lives for the Lord was their choice “to leave Spain and set out as missionaries to a land and among peoples still partly unknown. The five were aware of the risks and dangers associated with their apostolate also in relation to their safety,” the dicastery said.

“Moved by a genuine spirit of love for Christ and service to the church, they accepted to be sent on mission to the North American territory,” it said.

Pope Francis signed other decrees Jan. 27 as well, including recognizing:

- The miracle needed for the canonization of Italian Blessed Vincenza Maria Poloni, founder of the Sisters of Mercy of Verona; she lived from 1802-1855.
- The martyrdom of Swiss Marist Brother François Benjamin May, also known as Brother Lycarion, who was shot in Barcelona, Spain, in 1909 during an anar-



CNS photo/screen grab from YouTube, Diocese of Savannah
The five Spanish Franciscans, known as the Georgia martyrs, are seen in a painting featured in a video from the Diocese of Savannah, Georgia.

chist rebellion.

- The heroic virtues of Mother Riccarda Beauchamp Hambrough, a longtime assistant to and later successor of St. Mary Elizabeth Hesselblad, who refounded the Bridgettine Sisters; the two hid persecuted Jews, Communists and Poles from the Nazis in Rome during World War II.

- The heroic virtues of Italian Father Quintino Sicuro, a diocesan priest and hermit, who lived 1920-1968.

- The heroic virtues of Italian laywoman Luigia Sinapi, who lived 1916-1978. The Dicastery for the Causes of Saints said that she experienced “numerous supernatural gifts such as precognition of events and situations, bilocation, discernment of spirits and, above all, mystical union with the Lord Jesus, lived in an atmosphere of modesty, humility and service. Many people, including priests, high prelates, politicians and ordinary people came to her for spiritual comfort.”

Hope amid suffering leads to God, pope says in message for world’s sick

By JUSTIN MCLELLAN
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — While the Holy Year 2025 refrain, “Hope does not disappoint,” can be difficult for those suffering from illness to embrace, Christians are called to recognize God’s closeness even in moments of weakness or despair, Pope Francis said.

Sickness “becomes an occasion for a transformative encounter” when one is open to God, he wrote in his message for the 33rd World Day of the Sick, observed by the church

Feb. 11, the feast of Our Lady of Lourdes.

In addition, the Vatican will host the Jubilee of the Sick and Health Care Workers April 5-6, an event that will close with a papal Mass celebrated in St. Peter’s Square.

“Suffering always brings with it a mysterious promise of salvation, for it makes us experience the closeness and reality of God’s consoling presence,” the pope wrote in the message released Jan. 27.

Despite the frailty felt “on the physical, psychological and spiritual levels” during

times of illness, “we also experience the closeness and compassion of God, who, in Jesus, shared in our human suffering,” Pope Francis wrote.

“God does not abandon us and often amazes us by granting us a strength that we never expected and would never have found on our own.”

Pope Francis said that suffering can also be accepted by Christians as a gift, for it “makes us aware that hope comes from the Lord.”

“Indeed, only in Christ’s resurrection does our own life and destiny find its place

within the infinite horizon of eternity,” he wrote.

The pope compared the journey of the ill to that of the disciples on the road to Emmaus, who, by sharing their anxieties and disappointments with Jesus, came to recognize his presence, enabling them to “sense that ‘greater reality’ which, by drawing near to us, restores our courage and confidence.”

Suffering, Pope Francis added, develops a profound sense of sharing and encounter. Those who tend to the sick realize that they are “angels of

hope and messengers of God for one another,” be it at home, a clinic, nursing home or hospital.

“We need to learn how to appreciate the beauty and significance of these grace-filled encounters,” he wrote. “We need to learn how to cherish the gentle smile of a nurse, the gratitude and trust of a patient, the caring face of a doctor or volunteer, or the anxious and expectant look of a spouse, a child, a grandchild or a dear friend.”

Such gestures are “rays of light to be treasured,” the pope said.

ICC

Continued from page 1

alies, or medical issues endangering the life of the mother.

In this post-Roe landscape, one Indiana lawmaker is attempting to add clarity to the medical complexities surrounding care for pregnant women and their unborn children. House Bill 1325, authored by Rep. Joanna King (R-Middlebury), would require the Indiana Department of Health to create a video for physicians concerning the state’s abortion laws and the

standard of care for treating pregnant women with life-threatening conditions.

“We often hear that with the new abortion laws, it makes it impossible for women to get the care they need because physicians fear that what they’re doing will be called an abortion,” Mingus said. “Having this extra education should offer reassurance that physicians can treat a woman having a miscarriage or care for a mother whose life is at risk while recognizing that, as the billboards from Right to Life say, we want to ‘love them both.’ We care about the life of the mother and the life of her baby.”

The bill is currently awaiting a hearing.

Another measure recently introduced in the legislature would offer families a tax credit for newborn babies, including those who are adopted. Senate Bill 497, authored by Sen. Greg Walker (R-Columbus), would allow parents to claim a \$500 refundable credit within their child’s first year to help with the costs of adding a member

to their family.

“The newborn or new dependent tax credit increase would help growing families settle into their new normal after welcoming a child into their lives,” Sen. Walker said. “We want to support new families in Indiana, and this is a great step in the right direction.”

The ICC strongly supports the bill as both a life-affirming measure and a way to assist families, especially those struggling financially.

“It’s a way for the state to say, ‘We value the lives of newborn children, and we value families raising children,’” Mingus said. “This proposed legislation also acknowledges that there are many financial hardships for young families, and this is a small way of helping to relieve some of that.”

Other advocates agree. “Whatever part of the state we live in, whatever our home or background or religion, one of our deepest values is the ability to provide security and opportunity for our families,” said Erin Macey, director of the

Indiana Community Action Poverty Institute. “In each young Hoosier, we see potential and an unwritten story. These are our future innovators and entrepreneurs, neighbors and leaders.”

Speaking at a Jan. 16 press conference at the Statehouse entitled “Babies in the Budget,” Macey encouraged lawmakers during this budget-year legislative session to focus on the youngest and most vulnerable in the state.

The ICC, which served as a co-sponsor of that press conference, is now spearheading its own media briefing at the Statehouse. On Feb. 3, the ICC is inviting faith leaders, legislators and other advocates to join in calling for an end to the death penalty in Indiana.

Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson and Bishop Robert J. McClory of the Diocese of Gary are among those scheduled to speak at the Feb. 3 press conference.

“We continue to have conversations with legislators about how the death penalty is a pro-life issue, and how we advo-

cate for life from conception to natural death,” said Roarke LaCoursiere, ICC associate director. “During our upcoming press conference, we will emphasize that the death penalty is both a matter of faith and a matter of being pro-life.”

LaCoursiere, who engaged with numerous visitors to the ICC booth during the Indiana March for Life, reflected on the pro-life passion that she witnessed, particularly among high school and college students.

“I’d been to the Washington, D.C., March for Life, but it was my first time experiencing the march in Indiana,” LaCoursiere said. “I really appreciated how many schools allowed students to take a day off to come and pray with the bishops who were able to be there and go around to all the tables, including ours, and learn about what the state of Indiana is doing to build a culture of life.”



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Reitz Memorial's Simon Theby awarded 2025 Lilly Scholarship

Special to The Message

Reitz Memorial High School senior Simon Theby was surprised during a December assembly as he was named a Vanderburgh County 2025 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 any eligible Indiana public or private nonprofit college or university. The scholarships are awarded based on academic merit, extracurricular activities, two essays and a selective interview process.

In a Facebook post, Reitz

Memorial administration stated: "We couldn't be prouder of Simon's commitment to academics, service and leadership in the community! Congratulations, Simon!"

Lilly Endowment Community Scholars may also participate in the Lilly Scholars Network (LSN), which connects both current scholars and alumni with resources and opportunities to be active leaders on their campuses and in their communities.

Sidney Hardgrave, Vanderburgh Community Foundation regional director of community engagement and impact, said in a press release, "The Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship is often a life-changing opportunity for stu-

dents. This scholarship is extremely competitive and requires the completion of a rigorous process including an extensive application, essays and an interview. We are fortunate in Vanderburgh County to have many talented students with a heart for service to their communities."

Since its inception for the 1997-98 school year, Lilly Endowment has supported the Community Scholarship Program. More than 5,300 Indiana students have received the Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship with grant funding totaling more than \$490 million.

The primary purposes of the program, according to the press release, are: 1) to help raise the level of educational



Submitted photo

Reitz Memorial High School senior Simon Theby, center, is named a Vanderburgh County 2025 Lilly Endowment Community Scholarship recipient.

attainment in Indiana; 2) to increase awareness of the beneficial roles Indiana community foundations can play in their communities; and 3) to encourage and support the efforts of current and past

Lilly Endowment Community Scholars to engage with each other and with Indiana business, governmental, educational, nonprofit and civic leaders to improve the quality of life in Indiana.

Gift of Faith

Continued from page 4

The same strength can be developed in young people using their spiritual gifts. It is important to remind children to ask God for help in discerning their vocation in life.

My 11-year-old grandson, Hunter, has a unique artistic ability. He told me he was happy God chose that gift for him to share. We encourage him to use his skill, and his parents provide the supplies he needs. He entered an 18x24 acrylic canvas in a public library art contest. He won first place and used the \$50 prize money to buy more art supplies. While making his purchases, a very kind woman asked him about his interest in art. She was a retired art teacher and was very complimentary when he shared a picture of his winning entry. Her words of encouragement meant so much to him.

His artwork was crafted from a photograph taken while on vacation at the Grand Tetons. His family got up early for the mountain sunrise at Moulton Barn. During the experience, he

noticed a man capturing the moment from the back of his van. The artist shared his website and encouraged Hunter to practice his skill.

We may never know if our encouragement helps someone, but our Church and our world need the voice of faith to share our reason for believing.

"The heart of the person plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps" (Proverbs 16:9). Nothing will be impossible for you! Share truth! Amen!

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

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Feast of the Presentation of the Lord

First Reading: Malachi 3:1-4; Response: Psalm 24:7-10; Second Reading: Hebrews 2:14-18; Gospel: Luke 2:22-40

The name “Malachi” literally means “my messenger.” This title (or name) is mentioned in the work’s first verse (1:1), and again in today’s reading: “Lo, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me” (Malachi 3:1). These are the words of the Lord God to the Israelites. An early Jewish tradition considered the priest Ezra to be the author of “the book of Malachi.” Ezra was a key leader during the return to Jerusalem from captivity in Babylon.

In today’s reading, the Lord God is sending his “messenger of the covenant.” The purpose is to restore the Israelites to faithfulness after their past sins and disobedience of God’s law. When the messenger arrives, he “will purify the sons of Levi.” Also called “Levites,” they were entrusted with the operation of the Temple. The priests of the Temple — called “kohanim” were also “sons of Levi” — a sub-group of the Levites. The priests were responsible for the sacrificial offerings in the Temple. These verses say that the sons of Levi will “offer due sacrifice to the LORD.” But this will happen only after the priests are purified by the coming of the Lord’s messenger. The priests will lead the people of Israel in repentance

The Lord’s messenger will purify “like the refiner’s fire.” This image describes the purification of metal with fire. These verses invoke gold and silver as examples of precious metals that are purified by fire. The Lord’s messenger is also compared to “the fuller’s lye” — which is used to clean clothes. Again, impurities must be removed. If God’s people are purified and made pleasing to God, then they will be precious to God, like precious metal.

Hebrews 2:10-11 emphasizes that Jesus — by his Incarnation and Resurrection — has brought “many children to glory.” He therefore calls us “brothers.” Because Jesus shares our human nature, we are enabled to become sons and daughters of God. Hebrews 2:14 says “the children share in blood and flesh.” Now that God’s son also shares this “blood and flesh,” we can become children of God.



SUNDAY SCRIPTURE

FATHER PAUL NORD

Through his human death, Jesus has destroyed “the one who has the power of death, that is, the Devil” — freeing humanity from slavery to death.

Hebrews 2:17 explains that Jesus serves as “a merciful and faithful high priest before God to expiate the sins of the people.” This compares Jesus to the high priest who led the sacrifices in the Temple of Jerusalem. This is a central message of the letter to the Hebrews. As high priest, Jesus is our representative and the mediator of humanity’s new relationship with God. This new relationship is the new covenant of Christ.

Jesus “had to become like his brothers and sisters in every way.” Since Jesus fully shares our humanity, “he himself was tested through what he suffered.” So also we “are being tested” by our suffering. Jesus’ purpose is “to expiate the sins of the people.” This is a reference to the sin offering that the high priest made every year on the Day of Atonement in the Holy of Holies of the Temple in Jerusalem.

The Gospel, from Luke 2, comes after the birth of Jesus. Jewish parents have specific faith practices to give gratitude to God for a newborn son. Luke emphasizes that Mary and Joseph are faithful to the law of Moses. Today’s gospel passage mentions this law five times — most often as “the law of the Lord.” First, for faithful parents of a son, on the eighth day, he is circumcised and given a name. Jesus is given the name that the angel Gabriel had told Mary (Luke 2:21). Second, on the 40th day, the mother is instructed by Leviticus 12:6-8 to bring offerings to be sacrificed to God by the priest. The purpose was for the mother to receive ritual purification after childbirth. Jewish law has extensive rules on how men or women can become ritually impure, and how they may be purified. After childbirth, Leviticus prescribes sacrifices of a lamb and a

turtledove — but allows poor parents to substitute a second turtledove for the lamb. Mary and Joseph offered the poor parents’ sacrifice. These events occur at the Temple in Jerusalem — the center of Jewish faith life.

Simeon, a righteous and devout man, comes to the Temple under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The scene is remarkable — Simeon takes the newborn Jesus into his arms — and he blesses God with prophetic words. The Church today uses these prophetic words as a Cantic prayer at Compline. Inspired by the Spirit, Simeon describes Jesus as God’s “salvation” and “a light for revelation to the Gentiles.” Mary and Joseph “were amazed.” Simeon then speaks directly to Mary. These words prophesy the consequences of Jesus’ birth for his own people, Israel. Mary is depicted as a personification of the people of Israel. The message is that Jesus’ divine mission will cause division among the Israelites, although Simeon had earlier described Jesus as “glory for your people Israel.”

Anna, a prophetess, is also present. Her fidelity to God is remarkable — she never leaves the Temple, and she worships “night and day with fasting and prayer.” She has done this for many years and is now very old. Anna came forward, gave thanks to God, and “spoke about the child to all who were awaiting the redemption of Jerusalem.” This is a key line — Simeon and Anna are faithful Israelites who are patiently awaiting God’s redemption of his people. Anna is very old. Simeon had received a divine revelation “that he should not see death before he had seen the Christ of the Lord.” God’s redemption has finally arrived — Jesus the Messiah has come to the Temple — the place of God’s presence among his people. God is acting now to redeem his people and also the Gentiles — as Simeon prophesied. After this, the Holy Family returns home to a quiet life in Nazareth, where Jesus grows — “filled with wisdom” and having “the favor of God.”

Benedictine Father Paul Nord is a monk of St. Meinrad Archabbey, and teaches at St. Meinrad Seminary. His Sunday Scripture columns are © Father Paul Nord, O.S.B.

Bioethics

Continued from page 16

procedures, nor provide puberty-blocking or cross-sex hormones for gender transitions.

The fact that some Catholic hospitals are involved in sex reassignment procedures reminds us of the need for continued vigilance on the part of diocesan bishops and Catholic health care leaders when it comes to Catholic health care facilities within their purview. There may also be a need for more thoroughgoing ethical formation for employees and administrators to assist them in countering the pro-transgender ideological messaging that has recently become commonplace.

When a Catholic hospital appears in a database as having offered hormones or carried out gender reassignment surgeries, it should be noted that this may not be indicative of current policy or practice. Some Catholic hospitals, for example, have had pediatric endocrinologists on staff who had prescribed puberty blockers or cross-sex hormones, but when the fact was discovered, and meetings were arranged to review and discuss the situation, the practice came to a stop. The cessation of such practices would not typically be indicated in such databases.

The Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services (ERDs) are a set of authoritative ethical guidelines prepared by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops for Catholic hospitals and health care facilities. As of 2024, there was no directive dealing explicitly with trans-

genderism in the ERDs. The bishops are poised to address this matter in upcoming editions of the ERDs, and have offered other definitive guidance through their March 2023 “Doctrinal Note on the Moral Limits to Technological Manipulation of the Human Body.” This latter document clarifies that gender reassignment interventions are not licit, even as some Catholic hospitals may have continued to operate under the impression that definitive guidance is not yet available.

Catholic hospitals clearly must hold to a higher standard than that of their secular counterparts. Secular hospitals may promote practices that violate human dignity, by harming, mutilating or even ending the lives of those whose health they are supposed to be serving and protecting.

Catholic hospitals may never condone or participate in these

unethical practices, whether they be vasectomies, tubal ligations, direct abortions or physician-assisted suicides, nor may they condone or participate in the range of practices coming under the heading of “gender transition.” This is especially important when these involve offering puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones, “top surgeries” and “bottom surgeries” to children and young people.

Our sex is a fixed reality of our being, given by God, not a personally negotiable or otherwise malleable quantity, even if we may face significant struggles in accepting and fully integrating this remarkable gift.

To treat our human maleness or femaleness as “re-assignable” is to invite serious harm into the lives of those who may be dealing with genuine and deep-seated psychological challenges regarding their own “gender identity.” Catholic health care facilities serve the

best interests of their patients with gender confusion by directing them towards supportive psychotherapy that works to address the underlying psychiatric issues prompting them to seek gender-transition.

By holding firmly to the impermissibility of immoral procedures and safeguarding their patients’ dignity in the practice of medicine, Catholic health care leaders serve the Lord’s restorative designs and assure that medical practice remains an authentically healing art.

Rev. Tadeusz Pacholczyk, PhD, earned his doctorate in neuroscience from Yale and did post-doctoral work at Harvard. He is a priest of the diocese of Fall River, Massachusetts, and serves as Senior Ethicist at The National Catholic Bioethics Center in Philadelphia. See www.ncbcenter.org and www.fathertad.com.

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INPEA names new executive director

Special to The Message

The Indiana Non-Public Education Association recently announced that the Board of Directors selected James McNeany as its next executive director. He will begin his new role in June and assume full responsibility upon the retirement of John Elcesser in July. Elcesser has served as INPEA's executive director since January 2008.

"We are thrilled to welcome James McNeany as the new executive director for INPEA," said Michelle Priar, INPEA Board President and Superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Evansville. "His extensive leadership experience in non-public schools as well as his unwavering commitment to INPEA make him uniquely qualified to take the



JAMES MCNEANY

reins upon John Elcesser's retirement."

McNeany has served as the principal of St. Theodore Guerin High School in Noblesville since 2013. For his outstanding achievements, he was recognized as the Indiana

District 5 Principal of the Year in 2024. Before his role at Guerin Catholic, McNeany served as principal at All Saints Catholic School in Logansport and assistant principal and athletic director for Logansport Community School Corporation. He began his education career as a middle school math teacher at Columbia Middle School in Logansport.

"James brings the unique combination of having had successful school leadership experience while also being actively involved in the public policy arena," Elcesser said. "He has been involved in the work of INPEA for over 10 years, so he has a keen understanding and commitment to INPEA's mission and work."

McNeany currently serves

on the Board of Directors and Legislative Advocacy Committee for INPEA.

"James has worked closely with INPEA for a number of years, including serving on our Board of Directors, so he understands the importance of fostering relationships and creating a culture of collaboration that will serve Hoosier educators, students and their families well," Priar said. "I'm confident that his expertise will build on the legacy that John Elcesser has determinedly developed over the past 17 years, and I'm excited to see how James will lead INPEA into our next chapter."

A man of deep faith, McNeany is a member of St. Maria Goretti Parish in Westfield. He is a member of the Knights of Columbus and active in the Central Indiana

Cursillo Community. He also studied in the Ecclesial Lay Ministry Program at St. Joseph College in Rensselaer. James lives in Westfield with his wife, Dr. Jennifer McNeany, and five children, all of whom are current students or graduates of Diocese of Lafayette-in-Indiana schools.

"I am truly honored and excited to serve as the next executive director of this vital organization," McNeany said. "Representing the outstanding non-public schools across our state is a privilege. I have long admired the exceptional work of John and the INPEA team in fostering an environment where non-public schools can thrive in Indiana. I look forward to building on their efforts and continuing to advance the mission of each school we represent."

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

Special to The Message

Be bold against the cold. Stay warm against the storm.

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 citizens of Evansville and Southwestern Indiana to the dangers of carbon monoxide poisoning, 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. We are recommending that all citizens 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 and 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 in Evansville and across the country 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 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.

Be careful using candles during power outages and at other times. Make a family fire escape plan.

The American Red Cross reminds you to use supplemental heating sources as directions state. 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.

If you need assistance

Editor's note: For a complete list of resources, look online at evdiomessage.org.

- Faith-based organizations, social agencies and township trustees may help with heating bills and other needs. Call 211 to find 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. Call 888-684-1441.

- Evansville Urban Enterprise Association offers free carbon monoxide alarms and smoke alarms, while supplies last, to residents of the Enterprise Zone and the service areas outside the zone who have not received them in the past. Call 812-426-2490.

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