



# The MESSAGE

Southwestern Indiana's Catholic  
Community Newspaper

February 6, 2026

Volume 56, Number 21

www.evdiomessage.org

## Holy Land Pilgrimage

Through Journey of Faith Tours, members of the Diocese of Evansville participated in a pilgrimage to the Holy Land Jan. 19-29. There was an optional three-day extension to Jordan Jan. 29-31. Spiritual directors for the pilgrimage were Diocese of Evansville Bishop Joseph M. Siegel and Father Jason Gries, pastor of Holy Redeemer Parish in Evansville. Stops on the pilgrimage included the Mount of Olives, Sea of Galilee and Nazareth, among other stops.



At left, Bishop Joseph M. Siegel, second from right, celebrates Mass at the Church of Mary and Martha in Bethany. Also standing at the altar are Father Jason Gries, far left, Deacon Dan Niemeier, second from left, and Diocesan Director of the Office of Worship Matt Miller, serving as the Master of Ceremonies.



Submitted photos  
Bishop Siegel places items on the 14-point star, which marks the spot of Jesus' birth.

See more photos on page 5

## Firing squad shot down as additional execution method in Indiana

By VICTORIA ARTHUR  
Statehouse Correspondent for  
Indiana's Catholic Newspapers



The Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) is hailing positive developments at the midpoint of the legislative session, including the rejection of a push

to introduce execution by firing squad as a means of capital punishment. Following impassioned debate on the House floor, a bill that would have added this controversial method of carrying out the death penalty in Indiana was defeated in a close vote. Rep. Bob Morris (R-Fort Wayne), a Catholic lawmaker who last year introduced legislation to abolish the death penalty altogether, was among those appealing to his colleagues to vote no on House Bill 1119. "We have executed people in this country wrongfully," Rep. Morris told his fellow House members before their vote on Jan. 28. "One thing is for certain: You will never bring that life back when it is gone." Calling execution by firing squad inhumane and the effort to bring this method to Indiana "taking a step backwards," Rep. Morris called for a renewed look at capital punishment in the Hoosier state. Currently, only lethal injection is allowed by law to carry out the death penalty, although lawmakers backing House Bill 1119 argued that the high cost of the drugs involved as well as supply issues have created the need for alternate methods. "I'm against every means of capital punishment until this body can debate it," Rep. Morris said. "Stand here and tell me the best way to execute a life. I'm a pro-life legislator, and I know

See ICC, page 8

## Olympics 2026: Pope calls for 'healthy competition' to unite people at Winter Games



OSV News photo/Archdiocese of Milan

Altar servers process into the Basilica of San Babila in Milan at a Mass marking the arrival of the "Cross of Athletes" Jan. 29. The cross was entrusted to the Archdiocese of Milan by Athletica Vaticana, the Holy See's sports association, ahead of the 2026 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games in Milan and Cortina d'Ampezzo.

By JUNNO AROCHO ESTEVES  
OSV News

(OSV News) — In a message to the Archdiocese of Milan, Pope Leo XIV expressed his hope that the 2026 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games will be an occasion of solidarity and bridge-building between peoples and cultures. The papal message was read during a Jan. 29 Mass marking the arrival of the "Cross of Athletes" and the official launch of the archdiocese's Olympic pastoral initiative, "For Each Other."

In his message, which was signed on his behalf by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, the pope said he hoped the Olympic Games would bring about "sentiments of friendship and fraternity, strengthening awareness of the value of sport at the service of the integral development of the human person." "The Holy Father assures his prayers so that these days of healthy competition may contribute to building bridges between cultures and peoples, promot-

See OLYMPICS, page 5