

The CATHOLIC TIMES

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POPE FRANCIS, 1936-2025

INSIDE THIS ISSUE



HOLY WEEK

An eventual Holy Week included priests attending the annual Chrism Mass at Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church before continuing with the Sacred Triduum and Easter Sunday at parishes and at a prison, Pages 15-18

TAKE ACTION:

Ask Your Members of Congress to Support the Religious Worker Protection Act

RELIGIOUS WORKER ACT

American bishops are encouraging Catholics and people of all faiths to reach out to their elected representatives in the U.S. Congress to ask them to pledge their support for the Religious Worker Protection Act, Page 19

BISHOP EARL K. FERNANDES

Bishop Fernandes' letter after Pope Francis' death

My Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,
Having been informed of the death of the Holy Father, Pope Francis, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, I wish to express my deepest condolences to you, the People of God in the Diocese of Columbus. As you know, the Holy Father had some recent health complications and died earlier today (April 21) in Rome. He was 88 years old.

My heart is saddened at the passing of Pope Francis, and I mourn with my brothers and sisters all over the world.

Pope Francis, the first Pope of the Americas, was born in Argentina in 1936. In 2013, he was called from Latin America to be the Bishop of Rome.

From the beginning of his Pontificate, with the Apostolic Exhortation *Evangelii Gaudium* (The Joy of the Gospel), he brought many of the insights from the



Aparecida document and Latin America to the universal Church. *Evangelii Gaudi-*

um was paradigmatic and programmatic for his entire pontificate. Francis called us to be a missionary Church which goes out of its comfort zone to the spiritual and existential peripheries, to be a poor Church for the poor.

The Holy Father consistently emphasized care for our common home and human fraternity: the need to see one another as brothers and sisters. We would do well to learn from his wisdom.

Having worked at the Apostolic Nunciature, I became very familiar with the writings and thought of Pope Francis. I am grateful for the opportunity to have worked at the Vatican embassy and to have been of service to the Holy Father. The same Holy Father also appointed me as the Bishop of Columbus, and I will forever be grateful.

Pope Francis has been tireless in em-

phasizing God's mercy, which he said cannot be a parenthesis in the life of the Church. Let us now commend him to the Father of Mercies that he would look upon him with the gaze of mercy and to Christ, the Good Shepherd, in the power of the Holy Spirit, beseeching the one, true Shepherd to welcome Pope Francis into those verdant pastures promised to those who believe in Him.

As bishop of the diocese, I offer my prayers for all those who mourn his loss, joining with my brothers and sisters around the world in giving thanks to God for the life and ministry of Pope Francis.

Yours in our Crucified and Risen Lord,

Most Reverend Earl K. Fernandes
Bishop of Columbus

Declaración de Mons. Fernandes tras la muerte del Papa Francisco

Mis queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo,

Habiendo sido informado de la muerte del Santo Padre, el Papa Francisco, Jorge Mario Bergoglio, deseo expresar mis más profundas condolencias a ustedes, el Pueblo de Dios en la Diócesis de Columbus. Como ustedes ya saben, el Santo Padre tuvo recientemente complicaciones de salud y ha fallecido hoy en el Roma. Tenía 88 años.

Mi corazón esta entristecido por la pérdida del Papa Francisco, y lloro junto con mis hermanos y hermanas de todo el mundo.

El Papa Francisco, el primer papa de las Américas, nació en Argentina en 1936. En el año 2013 fue llamado des-

de Latinoamérica para ser el obispo de Roma.

Desde el inicio de su pontificado, con la exhortación apostólica *Evangelii Gaudium* (La Alegría del Evangelio), trajo muchas de las ideas del documento de Aparecida y de Latinoamérica a la Iglesia universal. *Evangelii Gaudium* fue paradigmático y programático durante todo su pontificado. Francisco nos llamó a ser una Iglesia en misión, la cual sale de su zona de confort para ir a las periferias espirituales y existenciales, ser una Iglesia pobre para los pobres.

El Santo Padre enfatizaba constantemente el cuidado de nuestra casa común y la fraternidad humana: la necesidad de vernos uno al otro como hermanos y

hermanas. Haríamos bien en aprender de su sabiduría.

Habiendo trabajado en la Nunciatura Apostólica, me fui familiarizando con las escrituras y pensamientos del Papa Francisco. Estoy muy agradecido por la oportunidad de haber trabajado en la embajada vaticana y de haber estado al servicio del Santo Padre. Este mismo Santo Padre fue el que me nombró como el obispo de Columbus, y por ello estaré eternamente agradecido.

El Papa Francisco ha sido incansable en reiterar la misericordia de Dios, la cual, dijo, no puede estar separada de la vida de la Iglesia. Encomendémosle ahora al Padre de la Misericordia para que lo vea con una mirada de misericordia y a

Cristo, el Buen Pastor, con el poder del Espíritu Santo, supliquemos al único, verdadero pastor, que acoja al Papa Francisco y lo lleve a las verdes praderas prometidas para aquellos que creen en Él.

Como obispo de la diócesis, ofrezco mis oraciones por todos aquellos que lloran su partida, uniéndome con mis hermanos y hermanas de todo el mundo para agradecer a Dios por la vida y ministerio del Papa Francisco.

Suyo en nuestro Señor crucificado y resucitado,

Reverendísimo Monseñor
Earl K. Fernandes
Obispo de Columbus

Three to be ordained to priesthood at Westerville St. Paul

Bishop Earl Fernandes will ordain Deacons Kevin Girardi, Joseph Rolwing and Samuel Severance to the priesthood at a 10 a.m. Mass on Saturday, May 17 at Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church, 313 N. State Street.

The ordination is taking place at St.

Paul to accommodate a large number of attendees. Ordinations to the Sacred Order of Presbyter have been moved from Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral in the past. Priesthood ordinations previously took place at St. Paul in 2018 and 2021.

This year's Mass is open to anyone

who would like to attend.

Deacons Girardi, Rolwing and Severance have spent their final year of studies at the Pontifical College Josephinum, located in north Columbus.

Deacon Girardi, 31, is from Columbus Our Lady of Victory Church and a grad-

uate of Hilliard Bradley High School and Purdue University. His assignments during seminary have included the Perry County Consortium, St. John the Baptist Parish (Danville St. Luke and Mount

See **ORDAINED**, Page 25



Front page photo

POPE FRANCIS, 1937-2025

Pope Francis, who was selected as the Roman pontiff in 2013 to lead the Catholic Church, passed into eternal life on Monday, April 21 after serving for 12 years as the successor to St. Peter.

Photo courtesy Catholic News Service

The CATHOLIC TIMES

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Pope Francis: the pope of the peripheries

Catholic News Agency

Pope Francis' death on Monday, April 21 marked the end of a historic 12-year papacy. The first Latin American and the first member of the Society of Jesus to be elected pope, his legacy will be shaped by his efforts to bring the Gospel to the peripheries of the world and the margins of society while shaking up — sometimes vigorously and uncomfortably — what he saw as an unacceptably self-referential, unwelcoming and rigid Catholic status quo.

After Pope Benedict XVI's unexpected resignation in February 2013, Cardinal Jorge Mario Bergoglio of Buenos Aires was given a mandate for reform on March 13, 2013, by the cardinals in the conclave convened.

Before the 2013 conclave, the 76-year-old Jesuit from Argentina was not initially considered a front-runner. However, after he presented his vision for Church reform in a speech to the cardinals leading up to the conclave, a majority of electors were persuaded that he would offer a strong response to the ongoing scandals and challenges roiling the Church and provide solutions to collapsing Church attendance and vocations.

Taking the name of the 13th-century Italian saint and founder of the Franciscan order, Francis of Assisi, who adopted a life of radical poverty as he served those in need and preached the Gospel in the streets, the new pope aimed at fostering a Church reaching out to the poor, marginalized and forgotten and capable of dealing with the complexities of the faith and human relationships in the world today.

"I prefer a Church which is bruised, hurting, and dirty because it has been out on the streets rather than a Church which is unhealthy from being confined and from clinging to its own security," Francis stated in *Evangelii Gaudium* ("The Joy of the Gospel"), his 2013 apostolic exhortation that called for pastoral engagement in slums and boardrooms.

Evangelii Gaudium was considered a manifesto for the new pontificate.

Speaking in 2013 at World Youth Day in Rio de Janeiro, he urged his youthful audience to be unafraid of shaking things up in order to evangelize.

"What is it that I expect as a consequence of World Youth Day?" he asked them. "I want a mess. ... I want to get rid of clericalism, the mundane, this closing ourselves off within ourselves, in our parishes, schools, or structures. Because these need to get out!"

In pursuit of this "messy" evangelization, Francis offered a grand vision of decentralization, listening and accompaniment, a Church of pastoral and merciful engagement over doctrinal precision and clericalism. The pope frequently declared "Todos, todos, todos" ("All, all, all") as an expression of how the Church must be a welcoming place of mercy.



(Clockwise from upper left photo) Pope Francis greets onlookers after his election in 2013, kisses a young boy, prays in St. Peter's Square during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and delivers his Easter greeting for the final time on Easter Sunday 2025. Catholic News Service photos

In December 2015, Pope Francis inaugurated an extraordinary Jubilee Year of Mercy, a special time for the Church to help the whole Church "rediscover and make fruitful the mercy of God, with which all of us are called to give consolation to every man and woman of our time." Missionaries of Mercy were commissioned in 2016 to preach the gospel of mercy and make that invitation concrete through the sacrament of confession.

The centerpiece of his final years was the ongoing pursuit of synodality for the Church embodied in the three-year Synod on Synodality (2021–2024), aimed at permanently recasting the global Church so that all its members, the people of God, "journey together, gather in assembly, and take an active part in her evangelizing mission."

Yet from early on, his pontificate brought to the surface existing tensions within the Church, beginning at the tumultuous 2014 and 2015 Synods on Marriage and the Family, where cardinals debated the controversial proposal to lift the Church's ban on reception of Communion for the divorced and civilly married. Francis' postsynodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* ("The Joy of Love") failed to dampen the controversy due to its unclear position on this contentious doctrinal issue.

These divisions deepened further in the years after as some Church leaders, particularly in Germany, seized on Francis' seeming doctrinal ambiguity to press for changes to Church teachings such as priestly celibacy, homosexual unions, and women's ordination.

Tensions mounted further in the re-

action across the Church to the 2021 decree *Traditionis Custodes* ("Guardians of Tradition"), which sharply curtailed the Traditional Latin Mass, and the 2023 decree *Fiducia Supplicans* ("The Supplicating Trust of the Faithful") that permitted forms of nonliturgical blessings to same-sex couples and couples in irregular situations.

The Holy Father, however, drew clear lines in the sand on key teaching areas. With the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith's 2024 document *Dignitas Infinita* ("Infinite Dignity"), Francis reaffirmed the Church's perennial opposition to abortion, euthanasia and gender ideology. He used a much-publicized CBS "60 Minutes" interview in May 2024 to state again categorically that women's ordination to the priesthood and the diaconate was off the table.

By the end, he had disappointed Catholic progressives and many in the secular media who had expected a full-scale doctrinal revolution rather than the process of pastoral reform he pursued.

Born on Dec. 17, 1936, in Buenos Aires, Argentina, Jorge Mario Bergoglio was one of five children of Italian immigrants. His father, Mario, was an accountant for the country's railways, and his mother, Regina Sivori, was a housewife.

The critical moment in discerning his vocation occurred on Sept. 21, 1953, when he experienced a life-changing encounter with God's mercy in the confessional.

After completing studies to become a chemical technician, he entered a diocesan seminary. He transferred to the Jesuit novitiate in 1958, was ordained a priest in 1969 and made a final profession in 1973.

In short order, he served in various roles with increasing levels of responsibility. He became provincial of the Jesuits in Argentina in the same year as his final profession, when he was just 36 years old.

Following his time as provincial, he served from 1980–1986 as rector of the Jesuit seminary in San Miguel.

After leaving his seminary post, he traveled to Germany in 1986 with the goal of finishing his doctorate. After his return, he initially maintained a position of influence among the local Jesuits. But in 1990, now in his early 50s and with his critics also now in a position of dominance, Father Bergoglio was sent away from Buenos Aires to serve as the spiritual director and confessor of the Residencia Jesuita community in Córdoba, Argentina. It was a disciplinary move.

In 1992, at the request of Cardinal Antonio Quarracino of Buenos Aires, Pope John Paul II unexpectedly plucked Father Bergoglio from his exile in Córdoba by appointing him auxiliary bishop of Buenos Aires. In 1997, John Paul II named him coadjutor archbishop of Buenos Aires with the right of succession. Upon Quarracino's death in February 1998, Bergoglio became the metropolitan archbishop of Buenos Aires. John Paul II elevated him to the College of Cardinals in 2001.

As archbishop, he famously eschewed the trappings of office, traveling on the subway, residing in a simple apartment, and devoting much of his time to the poor and those living in the city's slums.

Beyond Argentina, his major role at the 2007 Fifth General Conference of the Latin American episcopate in Aparecida, Brazil, thrust him into greater prominence in the global Church.

Eight years after reportedly finishing as the runner-up in the 2005 conclave that elected Pope Benedict XVI, Cardinal Bergoglio was picked by the College of Cardinals to succeed the German-born pope. The newly elected pontiff — the first non-European pope since Gregory III in 741 — immediately set the tone for his pontificate. "You know that the duty of the conclave was to give a bishop to Rome," he declared from the loggia of St. Peter's Basilica on the evening of his election. "It seems that my brother cardinals went almost to the end of the world to get him. But here we are."

Many of the concerns he pursued in Argentina and at Aparecida became foundations for his papacy. He shunned traditional papal garments and moved into the Domus Sanctae Marthae, the Vatican guesthouse, instead of the traditional papal apartments in the Apostolic Palace. He continually emphasized the need for a Church that "goes out of herself to evangelize," searching out and accompanying those on the "peripheries" of human existence. Important maxims from the Francis pontificate — the Church as a field hospital, "going out to the margins,"

See POPE, Page 12



Bishop Earl Fernandes speaks of Pope Francis' legacy during a Mass on Monday, April 21 at St. Joseph Cathedral. Photos courtesy William Keimig



Deacon Stephen Petrill incenses the Book of the Gospels during the Mass at St. Joseph Cathedral after the death of Pope Francis on April 21.

Bishop, diocese remember Pope Francis at Mass in Cathedral

Bishop Earl Fernandes reminded the congregation assembled at Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral for a Mass, which was organized immediately after the announcement of the death of Pope Francis, that his passing is a sad moment but should not rob them of their Easter joy.

Bishop Fernandes celebrated the Mass on Monday evening, April 21, less than 12 hours after the world learned the shocking news that Pope Francis had died that morning in his apartment at age 88. The bishop was joined by 21 concelebrating priests, 15 deacons, seminarians, women religious in the cathedral, which was at capacity, as well as others watching the livestream or listening to a live radio broadcast.

Commending the Holy Father to God and praying that he reaches the New Jerusalem, Bishop Fernandes exhorted all those participating to "remember the promises of Easter and remember the joyful proclamation, 'The Lord is risen. He is truly risen.'"

A portrait of Pope Francis stood simply on an easel next to the Paschal candle, which was still decorated with flowers from the Easter Sunday celebration.

"Tonight, we come before God to express our prayer for the many gracious blessings that have been poured out through Pope Francis upon the Church; to take stock of what he tried to teach us; and, to continue to read these events, including his death, in the light of the Resurrection," Bishop Fernandes said in his homily.

The Cathedral pews reflected the diversity of the Diocese, reflecting Pope Francis' legacy of reaching out to the margins of society. There were families with small children, young adults and

the elderly, and members of the different ethnic communities now present in the Diocese.

Shunseen Nowlin, who is Baptist, attended the Mass with a friend while visiting Columbus. She said she often goes to Mass with her friend and has learned a great deal about Catholicism.

What stood out to Nowlin about Pope Francis was his humanity and his concern for the common people and the poor.

"Being African American and living in Chicago, I've lived through some things," she said. "I was discriminated against and I know how that feels. And that's what I like about him and that's who he stood up for."

Heather Whitt, a member of the St. Joseph Cathedral choir, brought her three young children to the Mass. Like many people, she was moved by the late pontiff's humble example.

"I honestly always really admired how much he stood up for the poor and the marginalized of our society," she said. "I just thought that is really a testament to how we all should be living and how we should be caring for our fellow brothers and sisters."

Rick McMullen, wife Susan, and their 3 ½-month son, George, were among the families at the cathedral. Members of Columbus St. Patrick Church, they were attending a Mass with the bishop at the Cathedral for the first time.

"We were excited to come and hear the bishop, what he had to say, and to celebrate Pope Francis' life," Rick said.

The bishop emphasized Francis' legacy of mercy and reaching out to those on the fringes in his homily.

"I thought that was a beautiful way to

describe his papacy as dedicated to mercy to those either spiritually or materially poor," Rick said.

In the homily, Bishop Fernandes recounted to the faithful that Pope Francis "dreamed of a missionary church, a church that goes forth to the spiritual and existential peripheries, a church that goes out of its comfort zone ... a church that gets its hands dirty. He encouraged us to move from maintenance to mission."

The bishop later summarized what he believed were the key lessons from Francis' pontificate.

"One, that the Church is always missionary ... and the Gospel should be joyfully proclaimed," he said. Commenting on the women who announced the Resurrection, the Bishop noted that "a second thing we should learn is that it is everyone's mission to proclaim the Gospel."

Francis stressed repeatedly that Christ's followers are always missionaries and have a responsibility to evangelize in the spirit of solidarity and fraternity.

"The third thing he wanted to teach is that we are to be a poor Church for the poor," Bishop Fernandes said. "We need to be a poor Church for both the materially and spiritually poor."

Francis' legacy included a strong emphasis on being good stewards of earthly resources through the encyclical *Laudato Si*, and to protect the gift of human life in our "common home".

"In *Fratelli Tutti*, Francis called us to recognize how each and every person on the earth, made in God's image and likeness, is therefore a brother and sister to me," the bishop said, "and he used the

parable of the Good Samaritan to teach us about what it means to be brother or sister, to be a good neighbor."

"Pope Francis did say many times that we are living in a throwaway culture where everything is being discarded, including people," the bishop continued. "But we are the resistance to this throwaway culture through the virtue of solidarity and through the virtue of human fraternity."

The way to honor Pope Francis, the bishop said, is by being faithful to the values he taught, "by not being embarrassed or ashamed to boldly proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ; by not being embarrassed by a poor person or a sinner but to rather gaze upon them with a gaze of mercy and let that gaze melt their hearts."

Bishop Fernandes recalled that when the Jubilee Year of Mercy ended in 2016, Pope Francis stressed that mercy remain essential to the Church's mission. It cannot be a parenthesis in the life of the Church.

"Perhaps we could honor the Holy Father by being a little more patient, a little less judgmental, a little more merciful to people in our family, to people in our religious community, to our neighbors and co-workers, and to co-workers who don't share our politics ..." the bishop said.

Closing his homily with a prayer for Pope Francis, Bishop Fernandes said that "this evening, we commend our Holy Father to the successor of the Apostles, to St. Joseph, the patron of this cathedral who is the patron also of a happy death, and to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom the Holy Father dedicated his own priesthood."

Westerville St. Paul music director recounts meetings with pontiff

Editor's Note: Stephen Smith spent two years from 2022 to 2024 in Rome as the director of liturgical music at the Pontifical North American College. The following is a reflection on his encounters with Pope Francis, who died on April 21 at age 88.

By Stephen Smith

The first time I met Pope Francis was in January 2023. The faculty and seminarians of the Pontifical North American College had a private audience with Pope Francis in the Clementine Hall of the Apostolic Palace. I was also joined by my wife, Elizabeth, and my one-year-old daughter, Briella.

We were seated in the front row with the other faculty. As soon as Pope Francis walked in, he walked straight up to my daughter, Briella, and greeted her in Italian. Once he reached his chair, he joked, "Is she also a seminarian?"

Pope Francis then gave a short address in which he talked about three elements that he feels are essential to priestly formation: dialogue with Jesus, communion with God and the body of Christ, the Church, and living a life of mission, sharing the presence and love of Jesus to all we encounter.

Following the talk is when we all greeted him personally. My family had about a minute with him. He first asked the photographers to turn off the flash because of the baby. Then he shook our hands, gave a blessing over Briella, and then played with her for a little bit. He also motioned to one of his assistants, who brought over a beautiful white pearl rosary that the Pope gave to Briella. He was warm, gracious and kind.



Stephen Smith, his wife, Elizabeth, and their baby daughter, Briella, met Pope Francis at the Vatican in 2023. Smith is now the director of music ministry at Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church. Photos courtesy Stephen Smith

While he was greeting others, Briella kept wanting to walk around, but we were keeping her contained. One of the Pope's assistants motioned to us that it was OK to let her walk around, so we let her go and she walked right up to Pope Francis and stopped before his chair,



where he greeted her again.

Finally, as Pope Francis was leaving, he walked right up to us and greeted Briella one final time.

The second time I met Pope Francis was in August 2023. Pope Francis invited the first-year seminarians (of the Pontif-

ical North American College) to a private audience, just weeks after they arrived in Rome to begin their studies. I was able to accompany the first-year seminarians for this meeting.

Pope Francis spoke to the seminarians without any notes or a pre-written speech. He spoke sincerely and from the heart. It was a moment that I really saw the fatherly nature of Pope Francis.

He gave practical advice about how to live in community. He encouraged the seminarians to enjoy the food, drink the wine, but to avoid drinking too much whiskey (he said with a chuckle). But most importantly, he reminded them of the importance of fostering a daily relationship with Jesus. He encouraged them to meditate on the word of God, spend time before the tabernacle, and to entrust their life to the maternal care of the Blessed Mother.

I then had the opportunity to personally greet him. He asked where I was from and about my work as a faculty member. He thanked me for my role in preparing the seminarians for the priesthood. He was personable, kind and joyful. He could have been doing many other things with his time, but he chose to take part of his day to encourage and be present to us. That left a lasting impact on me and many of the seminarians as well.

Although Pope Francis spoke to us in Italian, he ended the meeting with one sentence in very clear English, "Please pray for me."

Stephen Smith is the director of music ministry at Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church.

Father Nimocks recalls surprise meeting with Pope Francis

By Hannah Heil

Catholic Times Reporter

Roughly eight months into his papacy, Pope Francis greeted a crowd of pilgrims who had journeyed to the Vatican and were eager to meet him. Among those pilgrims was Father Michael Nimocks, a priest from the Diocese of Columbus.

Father Nimocks participated in a November 2013 pilgrimage to Rome. He was accompanied by his sister and brother-in-law and others from the diocese. The pilgrims were eager to meet the pontiff, who had been elected earlier that year.

"It was a thrill that I thought that I would never have had," Father Nimocks said. "To see someone in pictures and then to actually be in their presence – it's a great thrill."

Father Nimocks recalled previously seeing Pope St. John Paul II, who served as pope from 1978 to 2005, while on pilgrimage. He also participated in a dioc-

esan retreat in Rome in 1975 when Pope St. Paul VI canonized the first American-born saint, St. Elizabeth Ann Seton.

This time, however, was different. Unlike his previous two pope observations, the 2013 pilgrimage was the first time Father Nimocks came in contact with a pope – specifically, he shook Pope Francis' hand.

The pilgrimage, while exciting, also showed a glimpse into the heart of the Holy Father and a characteristic that would define much of his papacy: concern for the marginalized and suffering.

Pope Francis' concern was particularly evident through his interaction with a man by the name of Bill, who was part of Father Nimocks' pilgrimage group. The Columbus pilgrims had combined with a small group from New York City.

Bill, a New York cab driver, had been previously shot in a robbery. The shooting left him crippled and needing two



Father Michael Nimocks (left) takes a photo of Pope Francis in St. Peter's Square during a November 2013 pilgrimage. Photo courtesy Father Michael Nimocks

See MEETING, Page 7

Father Fulton will never forget interaction with pope as seminarian

By Hannah Heil

Catholic Times Reporter

Miscommunications can easily happen, but a miscommunication with the Pope might be another story.

Diocesan priest Father Michael Fulton recalled meeting Pope Francis on New Year's Day 2019 while in seminary with a group of his classmates from the Pontifical College Josephinum. The interaction could be described as nothing short of unforgettable. As a young seminarian, he learned that the Pope could have quite a sense of humor.

While in the Vatican, the class of young men, set to be ordained to the transitional diaconate later that spring, were invited to serve Mass – the Solemnity of Mary, the Holy Mother of God – at St. Peter's Basilica. They gathered early New Year's morning in a back-side chapel at the basilica in preparation for Mass with Pope Francis.

"We were all lined up," Father Fulton recalled. "They told us no selfies, nothing weird with the Pope – 'Don't you dare' – and so, we're all waiting, and then, he appears out of nowhere."

The Holy Father had emerged through a back entrance in the right corner of the basilica. Clergy informed the Pope that seminarians were there to greet him.

With a smile, Pope Francis made his way down the line of seminarians, who were eager to meet him. Father Fulton remembered each seminarian had something to say to the Holy Father. Most spoke in English or shared a few



Pope Francis jokes with Father Michael Fulton (center) before a Mass at St. Peter's Basilica on New Year's Day 2019. Fulton was a seminarian at the time and was serving Mass with other seminarians from the Pontifical College Josephinum. Photo courtesy Father Michael Fulton

words in Italian.

Father Fulton, unable to speak Italian, was, however, fluent in Spanish – Pope Francis' native language.

"I didn't have anything funny or smart to say, so I just told him in Spanish that we're praying for him," he recalled, while shaking the Pope's hand.

"Estamos rezando por ti, Santo Padre. (We're praying for you, Holy Father.)"

"He's still shaking and squeezing my hand, and he responds back in Italian. He says a few words, and I was a little bit nervous. I giggle a little bit, and I just

said, 'Si, si' (yes, yes) to whatever he had asked me, and then he looked at me funny," Father Fulton remembered.

The Pope, continuing to shake the young seminarian's hand, repeated the question.

"I was like, 'Oh, shoot; he repeated himself. Oh, what's he saying? Oh, no.' And then I said, 'Si' again," he recalled. "He looked at me very seriously."

Unbeknownst to Father Fulton, the Holy Father asked, in Italian, "For or against me?" The Pope had jokingly inquired whether he was praying for or

against him.

Father Fulton said he then put two and two together. He understood Pope Francis' question and quickly tried to clarify his prayer intentions.

"I freaked out, said, 'Oh, I'm so sorry, Holy Father, of course we're praying for you,'" he recalled. "He's shaking my hand, and I'm sweating bullets, and he's laughing; he's pointing a finger. He's like, 'Ah!'"

The chapel full of seminarians, clergy and the Pope was filled with laughter. Pope Francis then joked that it took Father Fulton a second to think of his answer to the question.

His seminarian classmates, meanwhile, were equally terrified. They worried Father Fulton had uttered something bad to the Pope and was going to embarrass them, he recalled.

Later, after their meeting in the chapel, his classmates were eager to know what had transpired with the Holy Father.

"Everyone ran at me and said, 'What the heck did you say to the Pope, Fulton?' And I said, 'I'm not sure, but I know for sure that I'm never going to be a bishop.'"

Father Michael Fulton, a priest of the Diocese of Columbus, currently serves as parochial vicar at St. John Paul II Scioto Catholic Parish in Portsmouth. He was ordained to the priesthood in 2020 and met Pope Francis, who died April 21 at age 88, a year before his priestly ordination.

Father Hayes describes close encounter with Pope Francis

By Father Timothy Hayes

Throughout his papacy, Pope Francis has been known for his effort to reach out to people "beyond the margins." Other popes have done this as well, such as Pope John XXIII and Pope John Paul II, but it has been a hallmark of Pope Francis' time that he always hears the cry of the poor. This has, at times, led to judgments about his actions and many stories on social media about how whatever action he has done has pushed the envelope too far.

When I had the opportunity to attend a papal audience in St. Peter's Square in November 2017, I wanted to see him in action. My experience was truly of biblical proportions.

It is the custom after an audience is over for the Holy Father to greet individuals in particular sections around the steps into St. Peter's Basilica, such as brides and grooms, persons in wheelchairs and other special groups. I happened to have a seat in a section that was right in front of the basilica. There

was no plan for the pope to see the folks where I was sitting because they were fairly close to him through the audience. Most of the people in that section left, but I remained just to watch Pope Francis in action.

From a fair distance, I could see that the Holy Father was greeting mostly elderly people in one section on the other side of the platform. A gentleman standing in front of me started shouting: "Santo Padre, vengo da Boston. Dammi la mano!" That is, "Holy Father, I have come from Boston. Give me your hand!" He just kept shouting. Again and again, he said, "Santo Padre, vengo da Boston. Dammi la mano!"

All of a sudden, there was movement among the guards and the Vatican officials who were standing in the space beyond the barrier where we were now standing. I understood what was going to happen. With that, I put down my camera and just watched what was happening. Pope Francis had a big smile on his face. He turned around, moved di-



Father Timothy Hayes, pastor at Granville St. Edward the Confessor Church, happened to be in the crowd in St. Peter's Square when Pope Francis stopped to shake hands during a visit to Rome in 2017. Photo courtesy Father Timothy Hayes

See FATHER HAYES, Page 7

Pontiff's 'Please pray for me' request inspires priest's homilies

By Father Timothy Hayes

The day that Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio was elected as Pope provides many images of humility and invitations to be collaborative in spirit in the mission of promoting the Gospel to all nations. One moment in particular was very moving to me and has given me a practice that I find very helpful in my efforts to preach to the hearts of my people.

Just after he was presented, Pope Francis asked the people in St. Peter's Square to say a prayer for his predecessor, Pope Benedict XVI. When it was time to give his first Apostolic Blessing as Pope, he

asked the people first to say a prayer for him. Those present commented on how silent the crowd became, taking seriously his call for prayer.

This model has given me a custom that I follow before I preach to my people. Since my earliest days as a homilist, I have always bowed to the altar and said this prayer: "Lord, give me the homily You want me to have for this congregation."

Then, taking my cue from Pope Francis, I bow toward the people and invite them to pray: "Lord, give him the homily You want me to hear. Give me the ears to hear it, the heart to receive it, and the

grace to put it into practice in my life."

This creates a communion in receptivity for the Word that God wants to speak to us and through us. It allows the homily to be what it is meant to be, a moment when God is speaking to each heart personally. It is not external entertainment or merely intellectual explanation; it is a Word that has power to transform our lives.

Since I began this practice, there have been many times that people say, "Father, the prayer worked." This delights my heart. God wants to speak to your heart. At Mass and other liturgical functions, He uses the words of homilists to

offer you the Word that is meant for you.

You can try this prayer in your own parish, even if the homilist does not know you are praying it. Put your trust in God's Word. Pray for your priests and deacons and watch how God opens you to what He wants to say to you.

"Lord, give him the homily You want me to hear. Give me the ears to hear it, the heart to receive it, and the grace to put it into practice in my life."

Father Timothy Hayes is the pastor at Granville St. Edward the Confessor Church and a scripture columnist for The Catholic Times.

MEETING, continued from Page 5

canes to walk.

During the pilgrimage, Father Nimocks stayed close to Bill's side, helping him navigate and stay with the group. On the penultimate day of the pilgrimage, the group attended an audience with the Pope. To participate, Bill needed a wheelchair, and Father Nimocks was asked to push him.

The two were separated from their pilgrimage group and directed to the bottom steps of St. Peter's Basilica, where sick and injured individuals using wheelchairs and walkers were divided in two lines. The popemobile drove between the two rows of pilgrims before Pope Francis emerged and ascended the steps of St. Peter's to give his audience.

After a blessing from the Pope, the space between the rows of sick and injured pilgrims was widened.

"I thought that they were making room for the popemobile to go one more time by, but what Francis did was he walked down the steps of St. Peter's

and started on the far left side, and he greeted each one of the sick people and injured people who were there to see him," Father Nimocks recalled.

"About 20 minutes after he started, he was standing in front of Bill and me, and Bill was kissing his hands, and he reached over – because I was standing behind Bill – and shook my hand, and I said he was in my prayers, but it just showed how much compassion he had for those who were sick, and the folks who were there were thrilled, to say the least, that he took that time."

The brief interaction with the Holy Father is how Father Nimocks remembered Pope Francis nearly 12 years later and will remember his papacy.

"He really lived the Gospel of being concerned for the poor and the sick," the priest said.

Father Michael Nimocks is a retired diocesan priest and resides at the Villas at St. Therese in Columbus.

FATHER HAYES, continued from Page 6

rectly in front of our section and gave his hand to the man who had been shouting. I just stood there and smiled myself. I knew that the Holy Father had come there only for the man who was shouting and I just wanted to enjoy the moment. I also intuited something else that was happening.

After the Holy Father had greeted the man from Boston, he turned back to the group where he had been speaking to each person and he continued on his way. Someone on the other side of the barrier handed the man who had touched the pope's hand a card. It was from the Vatican photographer, L'Osservatore Romano. The gentleman did not know what it was for. I explained that he could go to the L'Osservatore Romano office the next day to see a photograph of what had just happened. I gave him my card and asked him to let me know if he had found anything.

Months later, the man's son sent me a text with pictures of the audience.

When I saw the pictures, I was at once delighted and horrified. I saw that I could clearly be seen with the Holy Father, both of us wearing smiles. I also noticed the crowd around us had not realized that Pope Francis was there only for the man with the audacity to keep shouting. Many hands were extended – but none of them is mine. I was pleased just to share a smile.

The whole experience suggested to me that Pope Francis' primary witness to us is God's love for each person and that that God hears our cry. We need to persevere in our efforts to reach out to others in God's name.

Father Timothy M. Hayes is the pastor of Granville St. Edward the Confessor Church and a scripture columnist for The Catholic Times.

OHIO ROMAN CATHOLICS BISHOPS' STATEMENTS AFTER THE DEATH OF POPE FRANCIS

Archbishop Robert Casey of Cincinnati

In the words of the Psalmist: "Hope in the Lord! Hold firm, take heart, and hope in the Lord!" (Psalm 27:14). May we, then, be filled with hope — hope that Pope Francis will receive the reward of a life poured out in selfless service and love for God's people and all creation; hope that Christ, who comforts us in our mourning, will send the Holy Spirit to be our Helper; and hope that this same Spirit will inspire and unite us as the Church to stand firm in faith, proclaiming the power of the Resurrection and the joy of the Gospel."

Bishop Edward Malesic of Cleveland

It is with a heavy heart that I acknowledge the passing of Pope Francis, who has shepherded the Catholic Church for the past 12 years. As the first pope from the Americas, Jorge Mario Bergoglio chose the name Francis in honor of St. Francis of Assisi, and like his namesake, he lived a humble, simple, and pious life, serving as an inspiration to the faithful around the world.

I was blessed to see Pope Francis in January in Rome and passed along the best wishes and prayers of the faithful from the Diocese of Cleveland. This was a highlight of a pilgrimage I led to Italy, during which our group was among those who enjoyed an audience with the pope. He responded, "Ah, Cleveland," so you can be sure he knew about our exceptional diocese.

His legacy of encouraging clergy and laity to work together to evangelize with the Good News of Jesus and to serve the least among us made an incredibly significant impression on me. He brought together clergy, religious and laity from around the world in his efforts to encourage church leaders to listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He championed environmental stewardship, promoted unity among Catholics, non-Catholics, and non-Christians, and called us all to be a global family that welcomes our brothers and sisters in need with open arms. Even as pope, he didn't put himself ahead of others, but embodied the term "servant leader," which made him beloved and respected throughout the world.

Pope Francis set an example for Catholic leaders everywhere by living the values of the Gospel, and by preaching the mercy of God. He once said, "The Lord never tires of forgiving. It is we who are tired of asking for forgiveness. A little bit of mercy makes the world less cold and more just." May we honor him by remembering God's mercy and seeking it out. And may we demonstrate our love and mercy to others, just as he did.

I ask all the faithful to pray for the peaceful repose of the soul of Pope Francis. May Pope Francis rest in the love and peace of Christ.

Bishop Edward Lohse, Apostolic Administrator, Steubenville

I join with all the faithful in the Diocese of Steubenville in offering prayers for the repose of the soul of Pope Francis. His impact on the Catholic Church during the twelve years of his pontificate has been immense. While we personally mourn his loss among us, we place our hope in the promise of eternal life, a hope which – as Pope Francis reminded us of so many times – does not disappoint. Christ is truly risen. Pope Francis will be known for calling the Church to reach out actively to our brothers and sisters who live "in the periphery," as he was accustomed to say. He will be remembered for his teaching, especially his four encyclicals including *Laudato Si* and his concern for our common home, but most especially I think that he will be remembered for his compassion toward those who find themselves struggling with life, faith, or hope. We were fortunate in this country to experience his 2015 Apostolic Visit to the United States, with his addresses both to Congress and the United Nations and his presence during the World Meeting of Families. During my years working in Rome, whenever I had the privilege to see or hear Pope Francis in person, his warmth and compassion and fidelity to the faith always came through clearly. During these days of mourning in which we find strength in the Easter message of resurrection and new life, I invite all people of good will to join us in prayer, asking God to welcome Pope Francis into the Heavenly Kingdom and giving thanks for the graces of his pontificate.

Bishop Daniel Thomas of Toledo

Together with all the priests, deacons, consecrated religious and lay faithful of the Diocese of Toledo, and united with all Catholics and people of goodwill throughout the world, with deep sadness we mourn the death of Pope Francis, after 12 years as our universal shepherd, the 265th successor to Saint Peter. We trust in the promise and saving power flowing from the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus Christ, and we beg the Lord to receive him into the company of Blessed Mary, Saint George and Saint Francis of Assisi his patrons, and all the Saints.

Bishop David Bonnar of Youngstown

The news of Pope Francis' death today is a cause of great sadness for the whole Church and certainly for me personally as a bishop chosen by him nearly five years ago. The Holy Father in word and deed brought a pastoral vision to the Church centered in the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He reintroduced to us the vocabulary of Jesus that includes such realities as joy, love, hope, mercy, encounter, accompaniment, listening, and compassion. In this Easter Octave we behold the great mystery of our faith that climaxes in the resurrection. May Pope Francis see the face of God today.



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Conclave cooperation: the cardinals, the Holy Spirit and you

"His office let another take."

St. Peter, our first Pope, quoted Psalm 109:8 to his fellow apostles after the Ascension as they appointed a successor for the position of Judas, the betrayer (Acts 1:20). Jesus had given the apostles his own authority, commanding them to baptize, celebrate the Eucharist in his memory, forgive sins, exorcise and heal. The Gospels do not record any plan for apostolic succession, but we know from the election of Matthias in Acts 1, using the same lots that determined the service of Jewish priests, that the apostles immediately embraced the necessity of drawing others into their ministry to perpetuate it until Christ would come again.

As we mourn the death of Pope Francis and commend his soul to God, we also must begin praying for a worthy successor to the ministry of Sts. Peter and Paul, the chief apostles whose martyrdom in Rome made the eternal city the center of the Catholic Church. St. Irenaeus lists early popes in his great work, *Against Heresies*, written in the 2nd century, testifying to the unbroken succession of Rome's bishops.

The election of popes, however, has developed over two thousand years, morphing from a local affair to one with global involvement and consequence. The Papal Conclave is less than a thousand years old, but it preserves the essence of the original method with expanded participation from the universal Church.

Bishops in the ancient world were elected by local clergy, with the people giving or withholding their assent through acclamation. This eventually developed into a group of priests, known as canons, who served at the cathedral and acted as the electors of bishops. This is also how the role of the cardinals emerged in Rome, with the key clergy of the diocese of Rome and the surrounding region — deacons, priests, and bishops — fulfilling crucial roles and participating in the election of the pope. It was not until the 12th century that clergy from outside the region of Rome were appointed Roman cardinals, eventually drawing in important bishops from throughout Europe. These cardinals, however, were appointed to titular churches, preserving the ancient custom of election through local clergy. Almost always, the cardinals would elect one of their own as pope, with a few exceptions throughout history.

The word "conclave," meaning "with key," points to

THE CATHOLIC CULTURALIST

Dr. R. Jared Staudt

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the gathering of cardinals who eventually needed to be locked up together to reach a timely decision. With an international body of electors, political factors inevitably made their presence felt. In fact, for centuries, the Roman Emperors (situated in Constantinople) approved the election of popes, and later Holy Roman Emperors often made their will known to electors (and occasionally imposed it forcefully). Cardinals often represented national interests and could even wield a veto on behalf of their monarch to be exercised once in each conclave, with the last being used in 1903 during the election of Pope St. Pius X (who then abolished the practice). To cut through political maneuverings and delays, cardinals would be locked into a room (eventually the Sistine Chapel) with limited food in order to make a timely decision without outside interference.

As spiritual head of Christendom, the election of the Pope carried enormous ecclesial and political consequences and hefty incentives for potential candidates. Unfortunately, contested elections and underhanded tactics often occurred, which is why strict rules were developed over time. After a dispute, the Lateran Council of 769 decreed that only cardinal-priests and cardinal-deacons could be elected pope. Nicholas II's 1059 bull, *In nomine Domini*, marked a watershed moment in regulating the gathering of cardinals in Rome and concentrating cardinal-bishops' powers in the election. After the longest interregnum in Church history, Pope Bl. Gregory X established the Papal Conclave in 1274, giving lasting shape to the procedures for election (despite some bumps later that century). The College of Cardinals was much smaller at that time, fluctuating anywhere between 7 and 30 for centuries, until gradually growing to its current size of 120 electors (although we currently have 135). Paul VI initiated a major change in 1970 by barring cardinals over the age of 80 from voting.

The conclave is not a sacrament; it's not even of di-

vine institution. Its history typifies how God governs the Church indirectly, calling forth our cooperation. God does not directly appoint bishops, including the pope, and the Church's methods have changed through the centuries, adapting out of necessity.

This is why proper cooperation with God's grace is so important, because it's easy to fall into worldly ways of thinking, factionalism and ambition. The cardinals invoke the Holy Spirit for guidance, and they need it, for they are the ones who bear the great responsibility of choosing the proper candidate. If they are open to the movement of the Holy Spirit and discern properly, we can say that God guides the outcome.

We know all too well from history, however, that the opposite can also happen. God always directs and works through his Church, and, even when unworthy candidates are appointed, he ensures that all things work for the good despite our own failings.

Even if we're not permitted to enter the Conclave after the "extra omnes" is proclaimed, we, too, can participate through prayer, becoming cooperators in this important decision. The faithful often gather for conclaves to surround the cardinals with their prayer, and the appearance of the new pope on the balcony continues the ancient role of the faithful in making their acclamation.

Prayer and penance truly can make an impact. We should embrace penance, asking for the Lord, in his mercy, to give us a shepherd after his own heart. A holy Church, faithful to her mission, requires the generous cooperation of leaders and the faithful alike.

The 2024 film *Conclave* came out just in time to capitalize on the anticipation of the expected papal election. In terms of understanding the nature of papal conclaves, however, it flopped. Its key line, "The Church is what we do next," represents a mundane view of how the Church operates.

"The Church is what Christ does next," we might say in response, and it's up to us to cooperate with his plan. That part is not guaranteed, for the Church always needs reform, an interior renewal that requires a response from everyone in the Church, clergy and laity together. What we do next can determine how much we allow Christ to act in and through us to bring about his most holy will.

Get ready for the goal of heaven

By Sister Constance Veit, Isp

Five years ago this month, life as we knew it came to a standstill.

COVID-19 cast a pall over the entire world, forcing us to face our radical vulnerability and our powerlessness in the face of death.

About a week after we had gone into lockdown, the COVID virus invaded the first of our Little Sisters' U.S. homes.

I was asked to go and help the Sisters cope with this tragic situation. "Was I sure I was willing to go? ... Would I like some time to think about it?" My provincial superior asked.

Despite a certain fear of the unknown, I didn't hesitate. I felt it was an honor to serve in this way, even if it might cost me my life!

Several residents passed away during my first few days in this home; 13 had died by Easter. At the same time, I received news of the first COVID-related deaths back home in Washington. I felt that I was surrounded by death, but I was not afraid.

I have been caring for the elderly since I was 15 years

old. Over the years, many residents have told me, without the slightest hint of depression, that they were looking forward to death. Some have spoken of a longing to see God; others of how much they were looking forward to being reunited with deceased loved ones.

A few told me they feared God had forgotten about them ... why else had he left them on earth for so long?

The seniors I have known, cared for and loved over these many years have taught me important lessons about living and dying. They have expressed their belief that death represents a passage to a better place.

As the pandemic stretched on from weeks to months, and then years, I have often thought of all these elders, drawing consolation from the countless faces that pass through my memory.

Now, as we look back at the pandemic, we were confronted with death in a new way as we watched Pope Francis struggle through a period of serious illness.

In a Sunday blessing written during his hospitalization, the pope wrote, "I feel in my heart the 'blessing' that is hidden within frailty, because it is precisely in these moments that we learn even more to trust in the Lord; at the same time, I thank God for giving me the

opportunity to share in body and spirit the condition of so many sick and suffering people."

In a series of talks on old age given in 2022, Pope Francis spoke confidently about death.

"Our existence on earth is the time of the initiation into life: it is life, but one that leads you towards a fuller life, the initiation of the fuller one; a life which finds fulfillment only in God," he wrote.

"Dear brothers and sisters," he continued, "Old age is the phase in life best suited to spreading the joyful news that life is the initiation to a definitive fulfillment. The elderly are a promise, a witness of promise. And the best is yet to come."

"When Jesus speaks of the Kingdom of God, he describes it as a wedding feast; as a party with friends; as the work that makes the house perfect. It is the surprise that makes the harvest richer than the sowing ... Our whole life appears like a seed that will have to be buried so that its flower and its fruit can be born ... Not without labor pains, not without pain, but it will be born (cf. Jn 16:21-23). And the life of the risen body will be a hundred

Betting on the next pope and can I still get an indulgence?

Dear Father,
I was planning to visit the Cathedral in order to earn the Jubilee Year indulgence, but I heard that one of the things you have to do to get an indulgence is to pray for the intentions of the pope. But what happens when a pope dies and there is no pope to pray for? Can you still get the indulgence? Should we pray for something else, or do we have to wait until we get a new pope?

-Inga Dulcis

Dear Father,
I'm not a gambling man, but I've seen websites for betting on the cardinal who will be the next pope. Also, I've seen many news stories forecasting the next pope. Do the cardinals who are voting already know who they will pick to replace Pope Francis?

-John W.

Dear Inga and John,

Yes, you may still obtain a plenary indulgence, even though Pope Francis has passed away. This applies to all indulgences, whether for the Jubilee Year or otherwise.

As you pointed out, praying for the intentions of the pope is an essential element for gaining a plenary indulgence. One does not need to know the particulars of the pope's intentions, especially since he has the entire world as his parish, so to speak.

There is a list of intentions of the pope that is tied to each month of the year. Even so, when we pray for the pope's intentions, we are not limiting ourselves to a particular monthly intention. We are simply making our own whatever the pope has in mind. It is the same

SACRAMENTS 101

Father Paul Jerome Keller, OP, S.T.D.

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when we pray for anyone's intentions. We can't possibly know everything in someone's mind, so we make a general intention to pray for whatever is needed by that person.

However, we are Catholic and we are still "connected" to Pope Francis and all the deceased. The Communion of Saints, which we profess every time we recite the Creed, means that we share a bond with everyone who has passed from this world to either heaven or purgatory. We can still pray for the pope's intentions. Simultaneously, we pray for all the Church's intentions.

I hasten to add that we now need to be praying for the repose of the soul of Pope Francis. We want him to be in heaven, enjoying the beatific vision of the Blessed Trinity and to be with all the saints. Just because a man is pope, he is not automatically canonized. (This goes for all priests and religious, too!) Whatever suffering in purgatory that Pope Francis may need to undergo can be expiated by our prayers and penances. We owe it to him as our earthly spiritual father to pray for him intensely.

There is a special novena called, in Latin, the novendiales. These are the nine days of mourning and prayer for Pope Francis that begin the day of his funeral on April 26. The prayers can be found at <https://www.usccb.org/novena-memory-pope-francis>.

Now, about that gambling bit.

It's not smart to place bets on who the next pope will or should be. It is not only indecorous, it's indecent and shameful, because it compares a most holy office and man with a horserace or roulette wheel.

The election of the next pope by the cardinals is not an infallible matter. Of course, the cardinals are obliged to put aside personal preferences and agendas and politics (both ecclesiastical and national). They must try to listen to the prompting of the Holy Spirit and be guided by Him. They will discuss the needs of the Church and the world. They will agree and disagree. They will vote, most likely multiple times, as they seek some consensus about this most important office.

Can they make mistakes? Of course. But God never makes a mistake. Divine Providence is guiding every split second of each of our lives. God's plan cannot ultimately be thwarted, including all that He permits to happen. He can and does bring good out of the worst circumstances and evils of our lives.

So, while there may not be infallibility in the papal election, God is infallibly working through the entire process. He will help us have the pope that is needed for our time.

It is most human to discuss what we need in the next pope and speak about it to each other. It is imperative to pray for the cardinals as they also speak about these matters with each other and that they may have the grace to bring about God's will.

However, to bet on who the next pope will be makes a mockery of God and the Church because one pretends to be God when one puts down money on God's providence unfolding for the Church. And, to mock God is a sin, a most serious sin!

Remembering Pope Francis: A fraternal hope

We are often reminded of our fragile humanity when we hear of someone's passing. But when reflecting on the long and service-led life of someone like Pope Francis, the emotions can feel more complex. When I heard the news early on Easter Monday, I was struck not only by sadness at the loss of our Holy Father, a beloved spiritual leader, but also by a deep sense of gratitude ... gratitude for his life, his witness and his enduring example. For me, Pope Francis was a formative figure in shaping my understanding of human fraternity.

Reaching out

A signature theme in Pope Francis' ministry was reaching out to the peripheries. His tireless efforts to reach the peripheries of human society, physically and spiritually, were grounded in what it means to be a neighbor. According to one of the many reflections published by the Vatican News on April 21, his travels to be with people were prominent in his ministry. Visiting 68 countries was not a duty but a sincere desire to express his "closeness" to others. There is something about being with others, in solidarity as a neighbor, that builds bridges across our differences and fosters reconciliation when we have fallen short. There is an old adage in conflict resolution, "get closer" to the challenge. If the friction happens via email, pick up the phone ... if by phone, go see the person ... if in person, grab lunch or coffee. For Pope Francis, this process simply meant being present with people who have historically been marginalized, as a step toward healing and understanding.

SERVING AS NEIGHBORS |

Kelley Henderson

Kelley Henderson is a Third Order Carmelite who serves as President and Chief Executive Officer of Catholic Social Services. He is a member of Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral and serves in volunteer leadership roles with Catholic Charities USA, Inter-Provincial Lay Carmelite Commission, and Mission and Culture Committee at Mount Carmel Health System.



Authentic witness

Another element of the witness of Pope Francis was his teaching. The teaching authority of the Church rests broadly on the shoulders of the bishops, and the Pope's voice through Apostolic Exhortations, Moto Proprio and Encyclicals bring lasting structure to the living Tradition of our faith. Francis issued many documents, and his encyclicals gave us much to consider for our troubled human family. He encouraged us to seek the light of our faith, Jesus, as our guide in times of darkness (Lumen Fidei). Francis also enjoined us to care for our common home early in his Pontificate (Laudato Si), only to challenge us later to strive for kindness as brothers and sisters to all (Fratelli Tutti). His last encyclical (Dilexit Nos) expressed a longing to return to the heart, where humanity mysteriously finds its connection beyond the actions that drive us apart. He was also a leader who believed in dialog, despite our divisions, and the need for an authentic synodal Church.

Human kindness

Of the many things I hope to remember about Pope Francis, his vision for human kindness left an impres-

sion on me. I gave a talk recently on *Fratelli Tutti*, and particularly how solidarity as neighbor has become the guiding theme in our ministry at Catholic Social Services. The parable of the Good Samaritan was the inspiration for this encyclical, and one that I believe will be one of the most referenced social encyclicals of our time ... because of its simple premise of kindness. Near the end of the document, there is a section devoted to the role of kindness in our relationships. Francis writes "Often nowadays we find neither the time nor the energy to stop and be kind to others, to say 'excuse me', 'pardon me', 'thank you.' Yet every now and then, miraculously, a kind person appears and is willing to set everything else aside in order to show interest, to give the gift of a smile, to speak a word of encouragement, to listen amid general indifference." (FT 224). This passage is one that I use to close every talk given about solidarity. We are called to love, but love is hard. We can begin with kindness, as a simple act that just may move us toward love.

By the time this is published, we will be closer to welcoming a new Bishop of Rome to take his seat on the Chair of Peter. We pray for this man to be guided by wisdom and the Holy Spirit, as humanity moves forward in time where the Kingdom of God is revealed to each of us through faith. It is a simple act of kindness, done from a genuine desire to be with another, that can begin the journey toward a more fraternal hope. This is what I will remember most about Pope Francis.

Learn more about getting involved with Catholic Social Services at www.colscs.org

Vicar of Christ's death unites world in prayer

By Father Nic Ventura

ROME -- *Omnes Sanctis et Sanctae, orate pro eo!* (All Saints, pray for him!)

There is an opportunity here. While I was waiting in line (for about two hours) on Friday to pay my respects to Pope Francis, I noticed so many people (young and old) were there for many different reasons. Most because it is a beautiful thing to pray for the repose of the soul of Pope Francis, others were there because they were already there for a "tour." However, the thing that struck me is this is a moment for the Lord to bring His grace to so many hearts.

All that we do, we should do from the heart and as though it were for the Lord (Col 3:23). Seeds of grace are planted. We wait in expectant hope. The Bride of Christ stands with her lamp in hand and extra oil at the ready. The Lord always supports His Church and no agenda, no political persuasion and no division is admitted. These days will be full of grace and many souls will come to Christ.

The next day on Saturday, the litany that was prayed at the funeral for Pope Francis had some different words than normal. As is always the case for prayers at the end of life, a litany may be prayed. Instead of saying the words after each saint's name, "pray for us," we say "pray for him/her."

This is what we did for Pope Francis. The entire Church prayed for him. For the repose of his soul. One should never be too quick to canonize anyone -- it's an injustice to that person! They deserve our help and our support as a member of the Body of Christ. All angels, saints, bishops, priests, deacons, professed religious, men, women, and children of all the faithful prayed for our Pope at his funeral.

What a beautiful expression of faith! No one is left outside of the communion of the faithful -- death cannot, does not, will not ever separate us those who are in the Body of Christ. It particularly struck me that the entire Church prayed for the

Vicar of Christ with one voice, with one language and with the one Spirit.

It was powerful to hear all voices say the same words. Yes, it is a wonderful experience to listen to the mosaic of languages that make up all of our different cultures, but at times, the Church should pray as one, and it was so powerfully done today.

What was also amazing came at the very end of the funeral. The Eastern bishops (those who are still part of the Catholic Church but are from different rites; they are their "own" (*sui iuris*) churches that are in communion with Rome) gathered near the casket and chanted the commendation hymns from their Divine Liturgy for the dead. Now, permit me some imaginative reflection here.

We know that the Apostles were martyred at different times. Yet, they loved one another as brothers. Deep love. A love that cannot be explained by simply stating "they all were together." This love is Jesus Christ, and these Apostles would have known this love intimately. When one of their own was killed for the faith, while they certainly believed in the resurrection, there is still sadness because of the separation.

The chant expressed by these Eastern bishops brought to mind -- how would have the Apostles reacted, those who were still alive, when the news of Peter's death was brought to them? I can't help but imagine it would have looked a little bit like this: the remaining Apostles, singing out their prayers both to the Lord and for affection of their brother.

As I've said before, this experience will bear much fruit for the Church. The Lord is in charge and will reveal more about His love for us in these moments, and how it is better to be unified by one Word, who is Jesus Christ.

We should entrust ourselves to the hands of the Blessed Mother, who even knowing that the sorrows of death would come to her spiritual children, urges us all on to welcome our crosses



Wait times to view the body of Pope Francis in St. Peter's Basilica were up to three hours. Photos courtesy Christopher Dixon



More than 200,000, including diocesan seminarians and priests from Columbus, were estimated to be in St. Peter's Square for the funeral of Pope Francis on April 27.

and to follow her Son, for that is where our true happiness lies.

Sancta Maria, Salus Populi Romani, ora pro eo! (Holy Mary, Salvation of the

People of Rome, pray for him!)

St. Peter, pray for us!

Father Nic Ventura is a diocesan priest studying in Rome.

POPE, continued from Page 2

and the need for Church leaders to "smell like the sheep" — were complemented by a series of powerful images, such as the Holy Father washing the feet of prisoners and a young Muslim on Holy Thursday, embracing a disfigured man in St. Peter's Square, and posing for selfies.

His first trip outside Rome after his election was to the small Mediterranean Italian island of Lampedusa, where he drew attention to the plight of undocumented migrants crossing deadly seas to enter Europe. He often spoke of the terrible plight of migrants and refugees, the divide between the global north and south and between the developing and

wealthy countries, warning against economic policies that exploit poorer nations, a reflection of his familiarity with capitalism from a Latin American perspective. He criticized sharply what he called a "globalization of indifference" — an attitude that ignores people's suffering on the margins of society and a "throw-away culture" that viewed the weak and vulnerable as disposable.

One similar recurring feature of this focus on the peripheries was his framing of efforts by wealthy nations to impose abortion, contraception, and gender ideology on developing countries in return for aid and development as manifesta-

tions of "ideological colonization."

The Holy Father's informal communication style — highlighted by interviews such as the ones he gave to the late Italian atheist journalist Eugenio Scalfari and his off-the-cuff comments, especially his press conferences on the papal plane — made possible the rise of a parallel, media-generated quasi-magisterium in which secular and progressive Catholic media used his comments to claim that he was calling for major changes to Church teaching.

One legacy-defining example occurred during an in-flight press conference on the way home from World Youth Day in

Rio de Janeiro in 2013, when he was asked to comment about a specific repentant Vatican official and the rumored existence of a gay lobby at the Vatican.

Francis offered a nuanced response to the query, distinguishing between a person simply being gay as opposed to participating in a lobby. "If someone is gay and is searching for the Lord and has good will, then who am I to judge?" he said. Instead of seeing it as a pastoral gesture toward homosexual persons, many news reports characterized the remark as a softening of the Church's moral prohibi-

See POPE, Page 12

Eternal City carries on after pope's death

By Father Tyron Tomson

ROME -- Most of us Americans were away from Rome for the Eastertime break when the Holy Father passed away on Monday morning. My return flight on Thursday night was delayed, but when we touched down, I jumped in a taxi and hoofed myself over to St. Peter's Basilica to check out the scene for his wake. It was well after midnight.

On the way, the restaurants in the piazzas were still teeming and roving clumps of smoking Roman teenagers were just mobilizing, as the next day was the observance of Italian Liberation Day, a major civic holiday. A local lady without the full use of her faculties was walking her mangy dog and loudly compelling the pathetic creature to kneel down with her and pray for the pope right there on the pavestone sidewalk over a mile away from the start of the line.

I was among the last to make it through the metal detectors before they cut off the entrance for the night. The security and volunteers were doing a great job spacing everyone out, so the wait was only about 45 minutes in the cool evening air, plenty of time to pray the Sorrowful Mysteries.

Earlier in the day, some people had waited for eight hours or more. Over a quarter million came in all, roughly the same number that would attend his funeral outside on Saturday.

The high marble of the cavernous Vat-



Long lines form at St. Peter's Basilica to view the body of Pope Francis.

Photo courtesy Christopher Dixon

ican Basilica always has a special way to hush massive assemblies; it was especially effective under these circumstances. The crowds were mixed in both nationality and piety, as per usual. We were funneled forward down the body of the building quite efficiently. Each person got just a brief pass by the front of the coffin, attended by Swiss Guards in full regalia, but we priests with a Roman celerbret ID card were allowed in through the barricade to stay in prayer very close

along either side of the confessio under the papal altar.

Seeing his mortal remains there right next to the tomb of St. Peter really impressed upon me what an historic moment this was to witness, and I thanked the Lord for the extra special grace. All around the dome above swirled the Latin mosaic: "TV ES PETRVS ... Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I shall build my Church, and I shall give thee the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 16:18-19).

I appreciated more than ever the onerous office to serve as the Vicar of Christ, to wield the ultimate ecclesial responsibility for getting souls to their salvation. It was impossible not to turn to thoughts of the impending Conclave. I commended it and its results to the Lord in the tabernacle before the altar of St. Joseph, the patron of the Universal Church, where a large number of people were silently praying.

Since our residence is adjacent to the government Quirinale Palace complex, we have heard the helicopters constantly carting dignitaries in and out. The tourism season has never much cooled with the weather, owing to the Jubilee Year pilgrims and various groups, but it has really ramped up for the Easter season and the cancelled canonization Mass of Carlo Acutis in a special way. The streets are mobbed. The vendors and entertainers are out beyond full force. As you wander through the sacred stones and sites soaked with the mar-

tyrs' blood, you can never veer off into rapturous spiritual reverie here for too long; the city sees to that.

Offering Holy Mass here is already unique, as we always omit the line about the local bishop. Now we skip mentioning the pope at that point, too. One of the antiphons the next morning, very fittingly during the Octave of Easter, began: "This day shall be a day of remembrance for you ..." (Exodus 12:14).

My very late walk back offered another quick snapshot of the city. The Pantheon and Piazza Navona were vacated, as the nightlife had moved on to less seemly quarters. Some visitors asked me for directions to a tobacco store, a gentleman near a portico couldn't get to a restroom in time, some professional evening escorts meandered by, and the recycling bags were set out along the alleys. Someone was washing his hair in one of the famous aqueduct-fed fountains. The homeless (no doubt exhausted from the particularly busy day of begging) had curled up in their Church-issued tents beside the colonnade and in parish doorways; I blessed them, as always, with the same Sign of the Cross gesture I had just used over the body of the pope. No doubt he of all people would appreciate that continuity.

The Eternal City really lives up to its nickname in these moments. Its bishop has died, but all its cobbled components carry on in life, by God's good grace.

Father Tyron Tomson is a diocesan priest studying in Rome.

POPE, continued from Page 11

tion of same-sex acts, with no meaningful clarification provided from the Vatican.

Pope Francis also sought to build bridges with the international community through his words and actions. The two encyclicals written entirely during his pontificate, *Laudato Si'* (2015), on caring for our common home, and *Fratelli Tutti* (2020), which emphasized fraternity and social friendship, were well-received by the international press.

In total, Francis authored four encyclicals during his reign, complemented by seven apostolic exhortations and 75 *motu proprio* documents, making him one of the most prolific popes in terms of magisterial teaching.

His March 2020 *urbi et orbi* address and blessing, delivered amid the COVID-19 pandemic as he stood in an empty, rainy St. Peter's Square, as well as playing the role of peacemaker by working to restore U.S.-Cuban diplomatic ties and offering to mediate an end to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, helped establish the pope as a spiritual father figure not only for the Church but also for the wider world.

The pope's desire for negotiation and dialogue also led him to sign a secret agreement with Beijing on appointing bishops in 2018 — for which he received

strong opposition.

Pope Francis' global missionary spirit was evident in his many papal travels. The late pope made 47 apostolic journeys outside Italy, visiting 61 total countries, averaging six countries per year. Francis' visits, which included places like war-torn Iraq, the Central African Republic, and South Sudan, indicated a preference for nations plagued by conflict.

This preference for the global margins was further reflected in Pope Francis' selection of many new members for the College of Cardinals. Through 10 consistories, he created 149 new cardinals, dramatically reshaping the college's composition. During his pontificate, the makeup of the college underwent a historic transformation, falling from 52% European at the start of his papacy to 35% today. The college now reflects a more global Church, with South America and Asia each representing 15% of cardinals, North America 17%, Africa 12%, and Oceania 7%. Pope Francis was responsible for 108 of the 135 cardinals who will vote for his successor.

He canonized three of his predecessors, John XXIII, Paul VI, and John Paul II. He also canonized a total of 942 saints.

Francis' outward emphasis was matched by efforts to reform the inner

structures of the Church to free it up for a greater focus on mission and service.

Francis tackled some aspects of Vatican finances, even as ongoing scandals overshadowed that progress.

Francis also undertook a series of reforms related to the scourge of clergy sexual abuse, beginning in 2014 with the creation of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors, headed by Cardinal Seán O'Malley of Boston, also a member of the pope's Council of Cardinals.

One of Pope Francis' most significant projects in the second half of his pontificate was his implementation of "synodality" in the life of the Church.

Reflecting the ecclesiastical vision that was articulated at Aparecida and in *Evangelii Gaudium*, Francis used the Synod of Bishops to craft a more listening Church, an "inverted pyramid" that took the people of God as its starting point and significantly raised the profile of the General Secretariat of the Synod under its secretary general, Cardinal Mario Grech.

But many critics feared that his approach departed from St. Paul VI's vision of a Synod of Bishops, could undermine Rome's authority, lead to further confusion among the faithful and open a path to change Church teaching in many areas.

Synods covering the family and marriage, youth and the Amazon featured unfettered discussions, with some leaders demanding a change to Church discipline to address new pastoral realities on the ground, and even calling for granting women access to a form of the diaconate.

Francis' 2016 postsynodal apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia* ("The Joy of Love"), following from the sometimes contentious 2014 and 2015 Synods on the Family, made headlines for what critics saw as the creation of conditions in which the divorced and civilly remarried could receive Communion. Church leaders and dioceses offered dueling interpretations of the document's pastoral guidance, and four cardinals' September 2016 submission of five questions, or "dubia," asking for clarity amid "grave disorientation and great confusion," went unaddressed by the pope. Subsequent dubia sent to Rome in 2023 were answered by Francis' new doctrine chief, Cardinal Victor Manuel Fernández, in terms that seemed to confirm the broadest interpretation possible.

Francis was consistently clear on key areas of Church teaching. Through the 2024 decree *Dignitas Infinita* ("Infinite

See POPE, Page 14

Church's universality on display after pope's passing

By Father Adam Streitenberger

ROME -- Earlier this semester in February, Bishop Earl Fernandes and Father Bill Hahn visited Rome for the jubilee of deacons and to meet with our diocesan seminarians at the North American College. At that time, we all thought that we might witness the death of our beloved Pope Francis.

As I would walk around Rome, Romans and tourists alike would bring up in conversation whether the Pope would make it or not. And he rallied. After he left the hospital, I was convinced that I would not be in Rome for his death and funeral. He seemed to have recovered and would continue to serve the Church.

During Holy Week, I attended the Chrism Mass, Good Friday service and Easter Vigil at St. Peter's Basilica. As the Holy Father was not strong enough to celebrate those days, various cardinals took turns as celebrants; however, I was still certain that Pope Francis would be back soon.

On Easter, I witnessed Vice President JD Vance's entourage as he went to the Vatican to visit the pope. That same day, Pope Francis emerged after Mass outside of St. Peter's. So, on the Monday of the Easter Octave, I turned my attention to schoolwork and began writing my doctoral dissertation. I was working and lost track of time.

After several pages in, I stopped to check my emails. I saw an email titled "Pope Francis dies at 88." I was shocked. I really did not expect it and, having been so focused on writing, I must have missed

the bells that tolled at his passing.

Later in the week, I woke up early and made my way over to St. Peter's to view Pope Francis's body and pray for him. I reached the security entrance and there were already thousands of people in line. After a three-hour wait, I was finally able to get close to the casket to pray. I was moved by the many people from all over the world. Most were Italians living in Rome coming to visit their local bishop and speculating who might be the next pope. But others I met were from the Philippines, Argentina, Brazil, and India. It was also moving to be able to pray for Pope Francis and to be near his mortal remains.

The canonization of Carlo Acutis was scheduled for Divine Mercy Sunday, and I had tickets for it. However, the canonization was canceled; nonetheless, thousands of young adults and teenagers from all over the world were in Rome for the canonization. Instead, they witnessed the historical funeral.

On Saturday, I again left early to make my way to St. Peter's for the funeral Mass. I sat between priests from Germany and France. The priest from Germany flew into Rome just for the funeral; the priest from France was in town for the canonization. Waiting for the start of Mass, we spoke about the Church in our respective countries, of the many baptisms at Easter in both the U.S. and France, and of the clustering of parishes in Germany and the U.S. It was another experience of the universality of the Church.

At the Mass, we were all moved by the beauty of the music and the Latin lan-



St. Peter's Square is filled for the funeral of Pope Francis on Saturday, April 27. Photos courtesy Christopher Dixon

guage, as most of the Mass was in Latin. The tradition binds us and preserves what Christ and the apostles have handed on to us. We were moved by the gospel for the Mass that was of the Risen Christ asking Peter to feed His sheep. Christ continues to feed His Church as Peter remains in the Church through the pope.

We were moved by the presence of many dignitaries, including Presidents Donald Trump and Joe Biden. The pope and the Catholic Church still have relevance in the world.

We were moved by the affection of Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re's homily as he eulogized the pope, especially how Pope Francis called us to be evangelists and the Church to reach out to everyone.

We were moved by the beautiful Greek chant as the Eastern Catholic patriarchs and major archbishops incensed the cof-

fin. The pope is the point of unity in the Church.

We were moved by the crowd of tens of thousands of people representing that Church stretched out across the world. The pope rightly should be a spiritual father to the whole world.

I frequently visit St. Mary Major, where Francis is now buried. It is a beautiful shrine to Our Lady. Francis frequently entrusted the Church and himself to Her. As he rests near the icon of Our Lady, may she continue to intercede for mercy upon his soul, the graces for the cardinals as they go into the conclave, and for the salvation and protection of the whole Church.

Father Adam Streitenberger, exexecutive director of Buckeye Catholic at the St. Thomas More Newman Center, is currently studying in Rome.

Seminarian provides perspective on atmosphere in Rome

EDITOR'S NOTE: The following are observations from Christopher Dixon, who is studying in Rome with fellow diocesan seminarian Michael Rhatican.

By Christopher Dixon

ROME -- I was able to visit the Pope Francis' coffin on Friday morning. It wasn't a particularly prayerful experience, as there was a large crowd being pushed through the path by security, around the square, past the holy door and then to his body. For me, this process took about 45 minutes, but others waited in line for three hours.

On Saturday, the seminarians and priests left the North American College at 7 a.m. There were two or three crowd control points and two layers of metal detectors to get into the square, which took about an hour and a half.

Once in St. Peter's Square, a Rosary began a little after 9:15. The square felt much like the closing Mass of World Youth Day in Lisbon two years ago -- lots of people, lots of clapping, teenagers sleeping.

As the Rosary continued, the screens of the broadcast in the square showed us



Seminarians Christopher Dixon (left) and Michael Rhatican attend the papal funeral.

the world leaders paying their respects to the late Pope Francis.

As Mass began, the cardinals began to line up to exit the basilica. This was one of the most powerful moments. The cardinals did not exit the basilica. They instead waited and watched their brother, Pope Francis, exit the basilica first. As the Pope's body exited the basilica, he was met with applause.



The Popemobile carrying Pope Francis' coffin travels down a Rome street to St. Mary Major Basilica, where the pontiff was interred. Photos courtesy Christopher Dixon

Another powerful moment took place at the end of Mass when the final condemnation was prayed over Pope Francis. We prayed the Litany of the Saints, but instead of "pray for us," we said "pray for him." Soon thereafter, the bishops and patriarchs of the Eastern sui iuris Catholic churches came out and sang the Paschal Troparion.

The final powerful moment took place

after Mass as I was walking back to the seminary. I desperately wanted shade and a seat (I had been standing in the sun in the black cassock for five hours). I saw some nearby crowds and unexpectedly saw the popemobile. It turns out the hearse for the deceased pope was the Popemobile. As his coffin passed by, applause erupted once more along with "A Dio Papa."

Pope Francis' funeral: A global farewell to a humble shepherd

Catholic News Agency

More than 200,000 people filled St. Peter's Square for the funeral of Pope Francis on Saturday as the world said goodbye to the first Latin American pope who led the Catholic Church for the past 12 years.

Under the bright Roman sun and amid crowds extending down the Via della Conciliazione, the funeral Mass unfolded within the great colonnade of St. Peter's Basilica. Heads of state, religious leaders, and pilgrims from across the globe gathered for the historic farewell.

Cardinal Giovanni Battista Re, dean of the College of Cardinals, presided over the Mass, delivering a homily that paid tribute to Francis' missionary vision, human warmth, spontaneity, witness to mercy and "charisma of welcome and listening."

"Evangelization was the guiding principle of his pontificate," Re said.

Pope Francis "often used the image of the Church as a 'field hospital' after a battle in which many were wounded; a Church determined to take care of the problems of people and the great anxieties that tear the contemporary world apart; a Church capable of bending down to every person, regardless of their beliefs or condition, and healing their wounds."

As bells tolled solemnly, the funeral rite began with the intonation of the entrance antiphon: "Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him."

The closed plain wooden coffin lay in front of the altar throughout the Mass.

"In this majestic Saint Peter's Square, where Pope Francis celebrated the Eucharist so many times and presided over great gatherings over the past twelve years, we are gathered with sad hearts in prayer around his mortal remains," Re said.

"With our prayers, we now entrust the soul of our beloved Pontiff to God, that he may grant him eternal happiness in the bright and glorious gaze of his immense love," he added.

Among the more than 50 heads of state present were U.S. President Donald Trump and First Lady Melania Trump, alongside former President Joe Biden. Also in attendance were Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky, Argentine



Pope Francis' coffin is positioned in front of the altar at his funeral Mass on April 26 in St. Peter's Square. Catholic News Service photo

President Javier Milei, Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni, French President Emmanuel Macron and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen.

Philippine President Ferdinand Marcos Jr. and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva joined the throng of international dignitaries along with representatives of religious traditions from around the world.

Royal families also paid their respects, with Prince William representing King Charles III and Spanish King Felipe VI and Queen Letizia seated near the altar.

Pilgrims arrived before sunrise to claim their spots in St. Peter's Square for the Mass with the first in line camping out the night before.

The funeral followed the Ordo Exsequiarum Romani Pontificis, the official liturgical order for papal funerals, which was updated at Francis' request in 2024.

More than 200 cardinals and 750 bishops and priests concelebrated the Mass.

In his homily, Cardinal Re reflected on key moments in Pope Francis' pontificate from his risk-defying trip to Iraq to visit Christians communities persecuted by the Islamic State to his Mass on the border between Mexico and the United States during his journey to Mexico.



St. Peter's Square is filled for the funeral of Pope Francis.

Catholic News Service photo

"Faced with the raging wars of recent years, with their inhuman horrors and countless deaths and destruction, Pope Francis incessantly raised his voice imploring peace and calling for reason and honest negotiation to find possible solutions," the cardinal said, causing the crowd to erupt in spontaneous applause.

"Pope Francis always placed the Gospel of mercy at the center, repeatedly emphasizing that God never tires of forgiving us. He forgives, whatever the situation might be of the person who asks for forgiveness and returns to the right path," Re reflected. "Mercy and the joy of the Gospel are two key words for Pope Francis."

The cardinal presided over the final commendation and farewell for Pope Francis, praying: "Dear brothers and sisters, let us commend to God's tender mercy the soul of Pope Francis, bishop of the Catholic Church, who confirmed his brothers and sisters in the faith of the resurrection."

After the crowd chanted the Litany of Saints in Latin, Cardinal Baldassare Reina, vicar general of the Diocese of Rome, offered a final prayer: "O God, faithful rewarder of souls, grant that your departed servant and our bishop, Pope Francis, whom you made successor of Peter and

shepherd of your Church, may happily enjoy forever in your presence in heaven the mysteries of your grace and compassion, which he faithfully ministered on earth."

A poignant moment followed as Eastern Catholic patriarchs, major archbishops, and metropolitans from the "sui iuris" Churches approached the coffin while a choir chanted a Greek prayer from the Byzantine Funeral Office.

Re blessed the coffin with holy water and incense as the choir sang in Latin: "I know that my Redeemer lives: on the last day I shall rise again."

At the end of the Mass, the traditional antiphon "In Paradisum" was sung in Latin, asking for the angels to guide the pope's soul to heaven.

In keeping with his wishes, Pope Francis was not buried in the Vatican grottoes alongside his predecessors. Instead, his body was taken in procession through the streets of Rome in a vehicle to the Basilica of St. Mary Major, a church he visited over 100 times in his lifetime to pray before an icon of the Virgin Mary, particularly before and after papal trips.

He was laid to rest in a simple tomb marked with a single word: Franciscus.

POPE, continued from Page 13

Dignity") issued by the Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, Francis reiterated the Church's perennial teachings on the dignity of the human person.

Undeterred by the critics, the Holy Father pushed ahead with his vision for a synodal Church launching in 2021 a multiyear, global consultative process, which ended in two "Synods on Synodality" in Rome in October 2023 and October 2024.

Francis made the unprecedented de-

cision to forgo writing a postsynodal apostolic exhortation at the conclusion, choosing instead to directly implement the synod's final document.

Pope Francis' health declined in his last years due to several medical challenges, including sciatica, respiratory issues, ligament damage in his knees, and two bouts of intestinal surgeries. Mobility issues forced him to use a wheelchair in 2022. Still, he remained active almost to the

end, maintaining a demanding schedule of audiences and travel, even while moderating his pace in his final months.

On Dec. 24, 2024, he opened the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica, inaugurating the 2025 Jubilee Year. In a historic first, he also opened a Holy Door within Rome's Rebibbia prison, demonstrating his commitment to those on society's margins.

The pontiff's final medical challenge was a bout of pneumonia that led to a

long hospitalization in early 2025 from which he ultimately never recovered. His last public appearance was on Easter Sunday, when he took part in the traditional urbi et orbi. He struggled to be close to the Church and its people until the end, pushing to be present in his frailty.

Pope Francis died on Easter Monday, in his apartment at Casa Santa Marta.

Chrism Mass includes special honor for Msgr. Hammond

By Hannah Heil

Catholic Times Reporter

Msgr. Mark Hammond said he is thankful that an announcement honoring him with the title “monsignor” was not a surprise.

Bishop Earl Fernandes announced the news that Msgr. Hammond had been named a monsignor after the Holy Week Chrism Mass – when sacred oils are blessed for the coming year – at Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church. He told the then-Father Hammond about the honor in a private meeting beforehand.

“It was nice that I knew ahead of time because I could invite a couple of my sisters who were able to be there, and nice to have family there when the announcement was made,” he explained.

Still, the news from the bishop was surprising.

“It was kind of out of the blue, and I was not expecting it, but I feel very honored that it happened,” Msgr. Hammond said.

The official ecclesiastical title of the monsignor designation, an honor from the Holy Father, is “chaplain of His Holiness.” There were previously three grades of monsignor: “chaplain of His Holiness,” “apostolic protonotary” and “honorary prelate of His Holiness.” The latter two titles were eliminated after changes made by the Vatican in 2014.

The designation recognizes long and dedicated service to the Church and its people. The title is limited to priests who have reached the age of 65 and for those who hold certain major offices in the Roman Curia or as a vicar general or chancellor in dioceses.

Msgr. Hammond, 69, added that, if nothing else, the title shows his age.

He said he “joked with people for a very long time that, when they would ask me, I would tell them, ‘Well, “monsignor” just really means “old priest,”’ and



Msgr. Mark Hammond holds the decree naming him a monsignor on Tuesday, April 15 at Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church during the Chrism Mass. Photo courtesy Andy Long

now I'm proving it.”

A priest of the diocese for nearly 36 years, Msgr. Hammond was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Emeritus James Griffin at Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral in June 1989.

A Newark native, Msgr. Hammond was born at the former Good Samaritan Hospital in Zanesville, but his family had moved from Zanesville to Newark before his birth. He grew up in Newark St. Francis de Sales Parish, where he also attended grade school. He later graduated from Ss. Peter and Paul Seminary High School, located southwest of Newark.

The Catholic high school seminary served the Pontifical Institute for Foreign

Missions. Msgr. Hammond attended as a diocesan priesthood student rather than for the missionary priesthood.

He had his heart set on the priesthood and continued pursuing the vocation after high school, but later left the collegiate seminary and attended Columbus Mount Carmel School of Nursing. He worked as a registered nurse for about four years at the former Mount Carmel West Hospital in Columbus. During that time, he dated a fellow nursing school classmate, and the two began a serious relationship.

However, the door to the priesthood remained cracked open.

“I never really said, ‘No’ to the priesthood,” Msgr. Hammond explained. “I

simply said, ‘Not yet.’ Discernment and spiritual direction and things like that, I eventually knew that God was calling me to be a priest, and that’s where I would be happiest.

“All of a sudden I came to the realization – that real sense of peace in my heart when I thought about becoming a priest. It was a hard decision because I was choosing between two good things: marriage and the priesthood.”

Msgr. Hammond returned to seminary in 1983. He completed a year at Catholic University in Washington and finished his theology studies at the North American College in Rome before returning to Columbus for his '89 ordination to the priesthood.

His vocation has continued to bring a sense of peace since then.

“I’m very glad that I finally made the right decision because it really was the right one,” he said. “The Lord has blessed me greatly through the priesthood.

“I really enjoy my work and enjoy being with people at the important moments of their lives, like when they celebrate new life – we do baptisms – or when they are in need of some consolation with sickness and death and those kinds of things,” he continued. “To be present there and bring the Lord to those moments is a real privilege.”

It seems the Lord also used his nursing background for work as a priest.

“It was helpful,” he said of his experience in nursing. “It certainly taught me some things and how to deal with the sick and families. Even though I couldn’t see it at the time, the Lord was showing me things that I was going to use later on as a priest.”

Msgr. Hammond has served as pastor at Mount Vernon St. Vincent de Paul Church since 2006. Eight years into his pastorate, in 2014, the Knox-Licking

See HAMMOND, Page 27



Bishop Earl Fernandes prays over the holy oils at the Chrism Mass on Tuesday of Holy Week.



Bishop Earl Fernandes elevates the host during the Chrism Mass on Tuesday, April 15 at Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church. He is joined at the altar by Bishop Emeritus Frederick Campbell (second from right) and Bishop Emeritus James Griffin (right). Photos courtesy Andy Long

Bishop shares Holy Thursday with incarcerated men

For the third consecutive year, Bishop Earl Fernandes visited one of the prisons in the diocese on Holy Thursday to begin the observance of the Sacred Triduum.

Joined by Father Joseph Trapp, a prison chaplain; Deacon Dave Bezusko, diocesan director of the Office of Catholic Charities; seminarians and members of the Order of Malta, the bishop led morning prayer from the Liturgy of the Hours, washed the feet of several men and heard confessions during his April 17 visit to the Pickaway Correctional Institution in Orient.

Bishop Fernandes has made multiple visits to the incarcerated during his three years as the shepherd in the diocese, following the example of the late Pope Francis. The late pontiff emphasized outreach to the marginalized on the peripheries, including the imprisoned, during his 12 years as pope.

Last June, the bishop had visited Pickaway Correctional when the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage made its way across the diocese on the way to Indianapolis for the National Eucharistic Congress in July. Bishop Fernandes shared with the men that exposition and a procession with the Blessed Sacrament through the compound was the only one of its kind on the four pilgrimage routes that started at opposite ends of the country.

"What was the meaning of this gesture? That God's mercy and love can penetrate even the walls of a prison," the bishop said on Holy Thursday. "And if it can penetrate the prison walls, then it can even penetrate the hardness of our hearts. The fire of God's love wants to melt and warm our hearts which sometimes grow cold under the burden of sin."

Gerardo Sosa, one of the men whose feet were washed by the bishop, also received a blessing. Originally from Brownsville, Texas, Sosa has been incarcerated for 25 months after working in a tomato cannery in Ohio as a warehouse manager.

"When the bishop washed my feet, I felt very special when he was doing it," Sosa said. "I felt like he brought a sense of inclusion to our facility that, because we are incarcerated and we often feel that we are helpless or we're in a difficult position — as we are — but when he did that act of washing our feet, it made me feel relieved it gave me a sense of freedom almost. I felt that I wasn't in prison during that moment."

James Troiano and Christopher Redwine received blessings from Bishop Fernandes.

Incarcerated for 16 years, Troiano said he grew up Catholic and attended Columbus Our Lady of Victory Church and was baptized at Columbus St. Christopher Church.

"It's really been inspiring to us, as inmates, that he (Bishop Fernandes) has come here the last three years and said Mass, heard our confessions, and has giv-

en us Christ's blessing," Troiano said.

Originally from Florida, Redwine has spent the last 25 years as an inmate. He had his feet washed by the bishop last year during a Holy Thursday visit to Madison Correctional Institution, where Redwine was housed before a transfer to Pickaway for medical reasons.

"I really felt it was beautiful that the bishop came here, into our facility, to celebrate morning prayer and wash the feet of our guys," Redwine said.

Bishop Fernandes told the men that the Church stands with them and that the Lord remains close to them despite their circumstances. He reminded them that Jesus showed his humility at the Last Supper on Holy Thursday.

"Normally, in Jesus' time, people went about walking and it was typical for the servant to wash his master's feet," the bishop said. "Instead, Jesus, who is the Lord, washed His disciples' feet which were all dirty."

"Each one of us has committed some sin or the other. I do not know why you are here, or what your whole history is, but the fact of the matter is you are here, and we are all here, and no one of us is perfect."

"Jesus, who was perfect, lowered Himself, humbled Himself and washed His own disciples' feet as a sign of what His apostles were supposed to do and what His Church was supposed to do: forgive sins, show mercy."

St. John's gospel recounts that Peter balked at Jesus washing his feet, implying that he could do that on his own and that he was unworthy.

"No one of us can make it through this world on our own," Bishop Fernandes told the men. "No one of us can forgive our own sins. We need God for that. And God acts through the priests and the bishops to offer the forgiveness of sins. And He wants the whole Church to be a church of mercy."

"And, so, this gesture is a sign of the Eucharist which transforms our lives but also a sign of forgiveness of sins to make us more fit to worship. And Jesus tells His apostles, 'What I have done you also must do. I have left you an example: Love one another."

"And, so, we are to be as servants to each other, washing each other's feet, forgiving each other, forgiving even our enemies."

On Good Friday, Jesus was put to death on a cross and descended among the dead in the netherworld to bring God's love. Then, on Easter Sunday, He rose from the dead to offer salvation to the world.

"It may seem at times like a prison or a jail is that underworld," Bishop Fernandes said. "But Jesus brought the Good News even there and He took the devil's trophies away. And by gloriously rising from the dead, He opened for us the gates of paradise."



Bishop Earl Fernandes washes the feet of incarcerated men at Pickaway Correctional Institution on Holy Thursday morning.
CT photos by Ken Snow



Bishop Earl Fernandes offers a blessing after the prayer service.



A procession led by seminarians enters the worship area for a prayer service on Holy Thursday attended by the incarcerated, staff, Order of Malta members and diocesan representatives.

Way of the Cross goes through downtown streets on Good Friday

By Hannah Heil
Catholic Times Reporter

The Way of the Cross, held in downtown Columbus on Good Friday, brought together approximately 100 people who carry various crosses each day.

The event was sponsored by Communion & Liberation (CL), a lay movement of the Roman Catholic Church. The effort began in the Archdiocese of Milan, Italy, in the 1950s and expanded to an international movement. A local group meets weekly in the Columbus area for catechesis and discussion. CL's founder, Servant of God Msgr. Luigi Giussani, noted that "the Way of the Cross happens in the heart of a city where millions of people carry their daily cross, most of the time, dreadfully alone."

On Good Friday afternoon this year, individuals in various vocations – seminarians, consecrated religious and married couples – and people of all ages – men, women, children and young families pushing strollers with infants – gathered to commemorate Christ's passion and death while carrying their crosses together.

The procession, led by Bishop Earl Fernandes, began outside Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral during the hours Christ spent crucified and made three stops downtown. The faithful processed around the city behind a large wooden cross.

Kelly Hanson, a mother of five, brought her children to the Way of the Cross. The Hanson family, who are members of Hilliard St. Brendan the Navigator Church, wanted to encounter the crucified Christ differently this year.

"We've never done Stations of the Cross outside," she said. "We do Stations of the Cross at home and at school but never with the bishop, so just opening our hearts in a new way to experience Christ's journey to Calvary."

At each stop, or "station," downtown, participants recited and chanted prayers,

sang hymns and read reflections by Servant of God Giussani. The bishop proclaimed gospel readings of Christ's passion and death.

The first station was held outside the cathedral.

Individuals then journeyed west and gathered along the Scioto River across from City Hall. They offered prayers and heard the story of Judas Iscariot handing Jesus over to death, recounted in the Gospel of John.

The procession continued east, marking its third station outside the steps of the Ohio Statehouse.

Participants sang a Gregorian chant and reflected on a poem by Charles Péguy (1873-1914), a French Catholic writer. His poem, "Poor Woman," contemplates the Blessed Mother's sorrow and suffering as she stood faithfully at the cross, not understanding yet trusting in God's will. A reading from the Gospel of John recounted

ed Pontius Pilate summoning and questioning Jesus while the crowd shouted, "Crucify Him!"

The faithful proceeded southeast to Columbus Holy Cross Church for the fourth station. Gathering outside of Columbus' oldest Catholic church, the group sang a Gregorian chant, contemplated another of Péguy's poems and read the Gospel of John's account of Christ's crucifixion.

Joey and Mikaela Fickes, a young married couple who are members of Columbus St. Christopher Church, were eager to participate in the Way of the Cross this year.

Mikaela had previously participated in a Stations of the Cross procession with her high school youth group at West Jefferson Ss. Simon and Jude Church. She said she wanted to participate in this year's procession downtown.

"What better way to reflect on the Stations of the Cross (than) through an ave-

nue like this and to evangelize by being in the streets of Columbus?" she noted.

For husband Joey, it was his first time participating in a procession like Way of the Cross.

"I've never experienced this before," he said. "I love Bishop Fernandes and the reflections that he has to offer, so I was excited to come. I wanted to do something intentional and make Good Friday

See CROSS, Page 27



Deacon Joey Rolwing venerates the cross on Good Friday at St. Joseph Cathedral.



The Way of the Cross begins at St. Joseph Cathedral after the Good Friday liturgy.



The Way of the Cross passes in front of the LeVeque Tower in downtown Columbus.



Bishop Earl Fernandes prostrates himself before the altar during the Good Friday liturgy on April 18 at St. Joseph Cathedral. Photos courtesy William Keimig



A procession making the Way of the Cross passes along the Scioto River on Good Friday.

Holy Week at St. Joseph Cathedral



Deacon Sam Severance incenses the congregation at the Holy Thursday Mass on April 17 at St. Joseph Cathedral with Bishop Emeritus James Griffin (right) and Bishop Emeritus Frederick Campbell in attendance.



Bishop Earl Fernandes carries the Blessed Sacrament up a side aisle at St. Joseph Cathedral en route to a side altar at the end of the Holy Thursday Mass commemorating the Lord's Last Supper.



Bishop Earl Fernandes, priests, deacons and altar servers reach their destination in the Cathedral and kneel in prayer before the Blessed Sacrament on Holy Thursday.
CT photos by Ken Snow



Bishop Earl Fernandes lights the Paschal candle held by Deacon Sam Severance outside St. Joseph Cathedral at the start of the Easter Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday in what is known as the Rite of the Lucernarium..



Bishop Earl Fernandes baptizes Leah Buczek, one of the Elect, with holy water during the Easter Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday at St. Joseph Cathedral. She was one of the new members welcomed into the Catholic Church.



Bishop Earl Fernandes, assisted by Deacon Stephen Petrill (left), confers the Sacrament of Confirmation on Rylee Cupp with holy oil during the Easter Vigil Mass on Holy Saturday at St. Joseph Cathedral.



Bishop Earl Fernandes sprinkles holy water on the congregants during the Mass on Easter morning at St. Joseph Cathedral.

Buckeye Catholic celebrates 44 new members at Easter Vigil



Buckeye Catholic at the Columbus St. Thomas More Newman Center serving Ohio State University welcomed 44 new members of the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil Mass on April 19. There were 16 baptisms and 28 confirmations. Pictured above are the catechumens, candidates, sponsors and godparents with Father Dan Moloney, assistant chaplain, and Will Kuehnle, director of the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults (OCIA). At right, Father Dan Maloney confirms freshman Luke Harlow. *Photos courtesy Buckeye Catholic*



U.S. bishops ask faithful to encourage Congress to back religious workers visa bill

U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops

An increasing number of priests, religious sisters and brothers, and others serving the Church throughout the United States will be forced to abandon their ministries if policymakers do not act soon. Unfortunately, many parishes, schools, and other Catholic institutions have already had to part with men and women who served them for years because of challenges with the Religious Worker Visa Program.

Under current law, foreign-born religious workers are permitted to live and work in the United States temporarily through the temporary religious worker (R-1) visa. The R-1 visa is limited to five years, after which the religious worker must depart the United States for at least one year before possibly returning on a subsequent R-1 visa. Previously, religious workers of many different faiths legally present in the country on an R-1 visa could apply for and receive permanent residency within those five years.

Unfortunately, there is now a significant backlog in the visa category relied upon by these religious workers, along with several other classes of immigrants, for that purpose. This backlog means a priest or other worker who applies today will be forced to wait more than a decade before being able to receive permanent residency in the United States. This is unsustainable for the religious organizations that depend on these workers, as well as the workers themselves who have committed to serving our communities.

The bipartisan Religious Workforce

Protection Act (RWPA) (S. 1298/H.R. 2672), recently introduced in both chambers of Congress, would provide relief for religious workers in this situation and further the free exercise of religion in the United States for the benefit of all Americans. The RWPA presents a targeted and limited response to this situation by authorizing the Department of Homeland Security to extend the R-1 visa for religious workers who have applied for adjustment of status until they can receive their green card. Furthermore, the bill would apply retroactively to those who have been forced to leave the United States prior to its enactment and remain subject to the one-year requirement.

Foreign-born religious workers provide a range of services and play a pivotal role in promoting religious exercise in our country. As Archbishop Timothy Broglio, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), and Bishop Mark Seitz, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Migration, recently said in their letter to Congress, "We would not be able to serve our diverse flocks, which reflect the rich tapestry of our society overall, without the faithful men and women who come to serve through the Religious Worker Visa Program."

Ask your members of Congress to join with legislators on both sides of the aisle in supporting this much needed source of relief for people of faith and communities nationwide. Please consider adding a personalized message regarding the positive ways these religious workers have impacted your life and why their contributions are important to you.

And now the rest of the story

By Michele Williams

In my previous article (March 23), I wrote about my hearing restoration journey. It spanned from my first doctor's appointment, through surgery and the early weeks of recovery.

I ended with three weeks to go and anticipating a gradual, yet complete healing. I was dearly hoping for an Easter Mass where the struggle of muffled words would finally be replaced by the blessing of auditory clarity and ease. This being our Year of Hope, I thought it was apropos. So, to quote Paul Harvey, the 1970s and 80s talk radio legend, "Here's the rest of the story!"

The halfway marker was a follow-up

with Dr. Zach, the ENT who gave me the original diagnosis, recommended surgery and was part of the surgical team. I was looking forward to comparing his expectations to my progress.

He and Dr. Schoo, the surgeon, had put three prosthetic hearing bones in my ear that needed time to settle. They'd ordered six weeks of limitations such as no running, lifting anything remotely heavy or exerting myself in general -- to go slow or just be still. That was going to be a challenge because despite being in prison, I have very busy, active days.

The one time I tried to do too much too fast, I felt wrong-footed and woozy and had to lay down. As I rested, God

See STORY, Page 22

TAKE ACTION:

Ask Your Members of Congress to Support the Religious Worker Protection Act

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Mount Carmel put faith at center of new Dublin facility

By Hannah Heil
Catholic Times Reporter

Mount Carmel Dublin Hospital, Mount Carmel Health System's newest hospital in central Ohio, was designed with the intention of making every encounter with a patient an encounter with Christ, the Divine Physician.

Mount Carmel, which began as Hawkes Hospital of Mount Carmel, was founded by the Congregation of the Sisters of the Holy Cross in 1886 and blossomed into a health system of 8,000+ employees serving more than 1.3 million patients each year. The health system is committed to serving in the spirit of the Gospel as a presence of compassionate and transformative healing. Its newest hospital, which opened April 22, is an extension of that mission.

Keeping Christ at the center of each patient-physician interaction translated to Mount Carmel Dublin Hospital's architectural design. The hospital features a chapel in the center of the building.

"It sits between the medical office building and the hospital campus, designed very intentionally that way," said William Hubbard, mission leader at Mount Carmel. "This is the heart of our campus, and so, it takes a very visible place no matter which door you're walking into, and it's accessible to everybody."

The hospital campus, located in the City of Dublin on Emerald Parkway, off of Sawmill Road at the I-270 interchange, includes three entrance points. A medical office building is situated on the far left of the hospital's main entrance. An emergency department (ED) is on the right side.

A large cross is featured on the building's exterior. The cross reflects the hospital's mission and is a nod to its founders.

"You see the campus, but it's the cross that stands out," Hubbard noted of the view of the hospital from the main road. "That's a very intentional landmark that we're using as a kind of 'way-finding' device ... that the cross helps us find our way, and also, that every time you see a cross, we're thinking Sisters of the Holy Cross as well – that legacy piece."

Bishop Earl Fernandes offered a benediction, or blessing, of the hospital on April 21, Easter Monday. The bishop's blessing was held before Mount Carmel Dublin's opening to the public.

Inside the hospital, the chapel, named Christ Our Hope Chapel, includes a crucifix, Stations of the Cross along the right-side wall leading to an altar and a tabernacle in the front center housing the Eucharistic Lord. Clergy will celebrate Mass in the chapel, and consecrated hosts can be distributed to patients.

"Hospital chapels are places where you want people to feel compassion,



Bishop Earl Fernandes blessed the altar in the chapel at the new Mount Carmel Dublin Hospital on Monday, April 21.
Photo courtesy William Keimig



Msgr. Joseph Hendricks blesses the New Mount Carmel Dublin Hospital that opened April 22.
Photo courtesy William Keimig



A cross is prominently displayed on the exterior of the New Mount Carmel Dublin Hospital that includes a chapel in the center of the building.
Photo courtesy Open Image Studios

welcome, consolation, mercy, hope," Hubbard said. "You're coming, mainly, here because you have a loved one here, because you are injured or sick and have to put yourself before the Lord in that moment ... for strength, consolation.

"Sometimes even our colleagues and caregivers just need to get away, just

need some silence. The chapel, I think, is the inspirational place that we want them to be."

Mount Carmel Dublin can broadcast services from the chapel to patient rooms on channel 95.1.

The hospital offers a separate prayer and meditation room next to the chap-

el. The space can be used by individuals of non-Christian faiths, Hubbard noted, such as its Muslim colleagues or physicians.

Beyond the chapel, the 35-acre campus offers an array of cardiology, neurology, orthopedics, primary care and surgical services.

"This is where Jesus, as Divine Physician, is inspiration for everybody who works here – and really, just that sense of healing beyond the bodily injury," Hubbard explained. "We're always looking at body, mind and spirit together. That's this space."

The hospital's first-floor emergency department offers 14 beds with an ability to overflow into an additional 10 beds.

"This area has a very robust emergency medical services business – our 9-1-1 providers – and so we anticipate the ED is going to be pretty busy," said Monica Treinish, Mount Carmel's vice president of operations and chief nursing officer.

Procedures will take place on the second floor of the hospital, which contains operating rooms and neurology and cardiology services. Services include nuclear medicine stress testing and neurodiagnostics, such as electroencephalogram tests, that detect abnormalities in brain waves, Treinish explained.

Primary care is also stationed on the second floor of the building. Central Ohio Urology Group and Central Ohio Primary Care will have office space in the hospital's medical office building as well.

Rooms for patients admitted to the hospital are located on the third floor. The floor contains 30 beds, four of which make up the intensive care unit (ICU).

An additional 30 beds will be offered on the fourth floor of the hospital, set to open later this summer. The ICU will then expand to seven rooms.

The campus also features technology in patient rooms for a virtual nurse, who can partner with nurses on the floor, part of the hospital's "together team model," Treinish explained. The virtual nurse can offer education, ask medical history questions or answer patient questions, and provide discharge instructions.

The back end of the hospital includes an administrative conference room, which can hold more than 60 people and be split into two rooms. A smaller conference area is also included in the area.

Hubbard said the hospital could offer community-facing education, such as seminars, in the space. He explained that a goal of Mount Carmel Dublin is being a health campus.

A schedule for Masses offered in Christ Our Hope Chapel has not yet been released. A schedule will be added as the hospital begins seeing patients.

Is there any reason I shouldn't do yoga?

In the United States, there are roughly 30 million practitioners of yoga alongside an expanding industry providing yoga-related products and services, classes, workshops and equipment. But many Christians ask whether Christians should be practicing yoga. Are there any spiritual issues raised by the practice?

The concerns regarding yoga largely revolve around whether one has a partial or a full understanding of what yoga is. A partial understanding of yoga is likely to support the notion that yoga is merely a physical posturing and stretching regimen with deep breathing intended to relieve anxiety and stress. A fuller understanding of yoga, however, recognizes that it is a spirituality, extending beyond mere exercises to certain aspects of Eastern spirituality ranging from meditation to mantras to physical posturing and symbolic hand gestures designed to "awaken the power of the divine," where "divine" is often construed and pursued in a self-referential way.

Yoga is a philosophical and spiritual practice developed in India and has its roots in Hinduism. It is often associated with Eastern spirituality, even if it is not always practiced in an explicitly religious way.

Certain yoga traditions still retain strongly spiritual or religious components. Some yoga teachers or studios, additionally, may incorporate elements of Hinduism or other Eastern spiritual traditions into their practice, which can make it difficult to separate yoga from religion.

Dave Fetcho, formerly of the Ananda Marga Yoga Society, has argued, "Physical yoga, according to its classical definitions, is inheritably and functionally incapable of being separated from Eastern religious metaphysics."

It is precisely those metaphysical and spiritual beliefs that raise concerns for faithful Christians. The Christian faith differs in fundamental ways from Eastern religious beliefs; ultimately, the two perspectives make highly divergent claims about the nature of God, the human person, their relationship, and the person's ultimate destiny.

MAKING SENSE OUT OF BIOETHICS | Father Tad Pacholczyk

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



One example involves the notion of "kundalini." Yoga scholar Hans Rieker declares, "Kundalini (is) the mainstay of all yoga practices." Researcher John White describes a problematic "elevation" of man and an intense focus on man himself through the kundalini experience, which he describes as something akin to "divinizing" a person: "The word itself may not appear ... but the concept is there ... as a key to attaining godlike stature."

A popular image of kundalini is of a serpent slithering as divine energy from the lower regions of the spine through all the subtle body centers and making its way to the crown. This Kundalini energy is portrayed as an awakening of a dormant spirit, said to be coiled at the base of the spine waiting to be released through yoga.

Swami Vivekananda summarizes the experience of kundalini as follows: "When awakened through the practice of spiritual disciplines, it rises through the spinal column, passes through the various centers, and at last reaches the brain, whereupon the yogi experiences samadhi, or total absorption in the Godhead."

In describing this kundalini awakening of the coiled snake energy in himself, Gopi Krishna writes: "It was variable for many years, painful, obsessive. ... I have passed through almost all the stages of ... mediumistic, psychotic and other types of mind; for some time I was hovering between sanity and insanity."

For Christians, this may call to mind the biblical and cunning serpent who flattered our first parents by assuring them that through their disobedience they would "be like God" (Gen 3:5). The pursuit of kundalini

through yoga can be mentally and spiritually dangerous, as these practices induce altered states of consciousness that can render practitioners more susceptible or available to demonic deception.

Approaching the question from another angle, the meditative dimensions of yoga also do not appear to be compatible with authentic Christian belief and prayer, which is a personal, communitarian and transcendent, seeking of the person of Christ.

Yoga embodies an impersonal approach that concentrates on the interior self. For example, a common mantra repeated in yoga is "So'ham," which roughly translates "I am the universal self." As noted in a 1989 Vatican Letter To The Bishops of The Catholic Church on Some Aspects of Christian Meditation, there is the risk that such forms of meditation "can create a kind of rut, imprisoning the person in a spiritual privatism" that excludes or locks out any real openness to the transcendent God.

Catholics ought to avoid yoga because of these many significant spiritual concerns. Yet some say that yoga helps them physically and psychologically. Jenny Dubai, a fitness professional and former avid yoga practitioner, has pointed out how we can get the benefits of yoga-like physical activity without the risks or harms.

"Catholics," she said, "can and should stretch their bodies. There are many stretching techniques and movements that help enhance flexibility, release muscle tension after an intense workout, and promote relaxation. There's no need to engage in a yoga practice in order to gain these benefits."

Among the alternatives to yoga are ballet, water ballet, simple stretching, Pilates, Barre classes (which use modified ballet and Pilates movements), or low-impact or water aerobics, as well as newer approaches which rely on explicitly Christian spiritual angles, such as PrayerMotion (developed by a Catholic physician who claims its roots come from Benedictine monastic practices), PraiseMoves, Pietra Fitness, SoulCore and Catholic Fit.

STORY, continued from Page 19

said, "Just be still and let Me take care of you." It was a valuable lesson in God's perfect plan for my recovery as well as my life.

After an encouraging conversation, Dr. Zach put a scope in my ear. He saw something that needed to come out, so he rummaged around with some tweezer-sized forceps, pulled out what seemed like a lava rock and dropped it in a stainless-steel dish. It landed with a light "tink," so I just had to look. But then it dawned on me: I looked because I heard that teeny-tiny tink! It was the last of the icky, post-surgery remnants, yet it made the most beautiful sound. I was struck by the irony of how God can make beauty out of anything -- even scabs, stitches, and scars.

That was the tipping point of my recovery. I had not known how much it was impeding sound, but once the 'rock' was removed, I was amazed by what else I could hear. I felt like Lazarus when the stone was removed from his tomb: I was experiencing a life-changing gift -- I could hear clearly! I was so overjoyed that if I hadn't been cuffed and shackled, I would've jumped up and done the Happy Dance!

The day after my appointment, I went for a longer than usual, leisurely walk on the track (no running yet. Sigh). Every single sparrow, dove, pigeon and starling within the fences seemed to have something to say

or sing about. It was music to my ears, so together we praised and thanked God for His great gift.

A few days later, there were strong storms from Friday night into Saturday morning. For the first time in years, I was woken up from a sound sleep by the sound of rain on the window.

It was 5:50 a.m., so my brain wasn't working yet. Eventually, it registered that it was raining outside and I could hear it inside! I sat straight up and put Simon, my cat who'd been awake for a while already, in my lap. We were transfixed by the raindrops falling against the barred window; wind howled, lightning cracked and thunder boomed, all in perfect cadence. I didn't expect to go back to sleep but was lulled by the heavenly harmony and woke up two hours later feeling more refreshed and alive than ever, courtesy of God's early morning symphony.

My recovery limitations were for six weeks, so at six weeks plus one day, I went for my first run. It was literally a test run to check the stability of my new ear parts. Praying every step of the way, I ran a half mile -- it felt like a half marathon. I was exhilarated, excited and, to be honest, a little off-balance. God was telling me another week of going slow or being still was necessary.

I'm glad I listened to Him because I needed the extra time. That is something I never say; I'm a "now,

please" not a "take all the time in the world" kind of girl. Nonetheless, it brings me to Easter Sunday's successful multi-mile run. After watching Mass on TV, I celebrated Jesus' resurrection by being outside in the glorious sunshine, listening to the birds sing their special songs of praise and running my little heart out! The extra 'go slow or be still' time paid off and I know God was smiling.

We had our Easter Mass on Monday and it was everything I'd been hoping for. (Prison scheduling is no easy feat.) I sang with such joy! Finally, I could hear everyone else, my own voice and the accompanying music all in sync. I didn't have to rely so much on the visual cues I'd needed for too many years to play on time. Perhaps most significantly, I heard the Gospel and Father Trapp's homily from my perch on the piano bench. No more sidling up the aisle during the Gospel, hoping no one would notice. Truly, I felt whole again. My hearing restoration is a perfectly timed Easter blessing that I will treasure for the rest of my life, no matter where I am.

And that, my friends, is the rest of the story!

Michele Williams is incarcerated at the Ohio Reformatory for Women in Marysville.

Diocesan high schools set graduation, baccalaureate dates

Eight of the 11 high schools in the diocese will hold graduation ceremonies in May for the Class of 2025.

Commencement and baccalaureate dates and times for diocesan high schools are:

Portsmouth Notre Dame – Commencement, 1 p.m. Sunday, May 18, school gymnasium; Baccalaureate, 7 p.m. Friday, May 16, Portsmouth Holy Redeemer Church.

Columbus St. Charles Preparatory – Baccalaureate and Commencement, 6:30 p.m. Friday, May 23.

Columbus Bishop Hartley – Commencement, 9 a.m. Saturday, May 24, Ohio Dominican University; Baccalaureate, 7 p.m. Friday, May 23, Columbus Christ the King Church.

Columbus Bishop Ready – Commencement, 10 a.m. Saturday, May 24, school gymnasium; Baccalaureate, 7 p.m. Friday, May 23, Grove City Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church.

Columbus Bishop Watterson – Commencement, 9:30 a.m., Saturday, May 24, school gymnasium; Baccalaureate, 7 p.m. Thursday, May 22, gymnasium.

Zanesville Bishop Rosecrans – Commencement, 10 a.m. Saturday, May 24, school gymnasium; Baccalaureate, 7 p.m. Friday, May 23, Zanesville St. Thomas Aquinas Church.

Newark Catholic – Commencement, 2 p.m., Sunday, May 25, high school; Baccalaureate, 6 p.m. Tuesday, May 20, Granville St. Edward the Confessor Church.

Columbus St. Francis DeSales – Commencement, 9 a.m. Saturday, May 31, Alumni Stadium; Baccalaureate, 6 p.m. Thursday, May 29, New Albany

Church of the Resurrection.

Lancaster Fisher Catholic – Commencement, 2 p.m. Sunday, June 1; Baccalaureate, 4 p.m. Saturday, May 31, Lancaster St. Bernadette Church.

New Philadelphia Tuscarawas Central Catholic – Commencement, 3 p.m. Sunday, June 1, school gymnasium; Baccalaureate, 1:30 p.m. June 1, gymnasium.

Cristo Rey Columbus – Commencement, 1 p.m. Saturday, June 7, Columbus St. Charles Preparatory School gymnasium; Baccalaureate, 5 p.m. Wednesday, June 4, Columbus Holy Cross Church.

LOCAL NEWS AND EVENTS

Cradling Christianity sponsoring pilgrimage to Maria Stein

Cradling Christianity, a Columbus-based group that has been supporting Christians in the Holy Land since 2016, is sponsoring a one-day pilgrimage to the historic Shrine of the Holy Relics and St. John the Baptist Church at Maria Stein in west central Ohio on Thursday, June 5.

The shrine is the home of one of the largest documented collections of holy relics in the United States, consisting of more than 1,200 relics of saints and five relics of the True Cross.

A bus for the pilgrimage will board at Columbus St. Andrew Church, 1899 McCoy Road, at 8 a.m. for the two-hour drive and return by 7 p.m. The day will include lunch; a talk by Father John Puodziunas, president of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land; time to explore the grounds, museum and gift shop; and a wine tasting with local wine expert Dan Tarpy, paired with charcuterie meat and cheese items.

There will be no fundraising at the event. The cost of \$115 per person includes a bus tour, guides, a light breakfast, lunch, the wine tasting and tips.

To register, go to www.ffhl.org/regions/columbus/rsvp. For more information, call Sharon Hess at (614) 204-5111.

Bridgettines sponsoring retreat, euchre party

The Bridgettine Sisters will host a mini-retreat on "The Power of Mary's Intercession" from 9 a.m. to noon Saturday, May 3. The speaker will be Father Daniel Bowen, O de M.

The program will begin with Mass at Columbus Holy Family Church, 584 W. Broad St., followed by a light breakfast at the Bridgettine convent adjacent to the church, before the talk.

There is a suggested donation of \$40 per person. For more information, email BridgettineSisters@gmail.com.

The Bridgettines also will sponsor

"Cards for a Cause," a euchre night, from 7 to 10 p.m. Friday, June 20 at Columbus Our Lady of Victory Church, 1559 Roxbury Road. Doors open at 6 p.m.

The cost of \$50 per person includes a taco bar, beer and wine. Cash prizes of as much as \$250 each will be awarded to the top two winners.

Shepherd's Corner announces coming events

The 19th annual Shepherd's Corner 5-kilometer run and walk will be a highlight of summer activities at the Shepherd's Corner Ecology Center, 987 N. Waggoner Road, Blacklick, an outreach of the Dominican Sisters of Peace.

The sisters are offering programs for homeschooled children on the third Wednesday of each month. Activities for middle-school aged children will be presented from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m., with a program for those of elementary-school age from 1 to 3 p.m. The cost is \$5 per student. Activities for 3- to 6-year-olds also are being planned. For more information, go to the center's website, www.shepherdscorner.org.

Other activities scheduled at Shepherd's Corner are:

Tuesday, May 20, 7 to 8:30 p.m., labyrinth walk. Cost \$5. Theme: "April Showers Bring May Flowers."

Wednesday, June 11, 7 to 8:30 p.m., labyrinth walk. Cost \$5. Theme: "Summer Solstice."

Saturday, June 14, 10 a.m. to noon, soap making. Make cold process soap with lye. Cost \$20. For ages 12 and older.

Saturday, June 14, batik, 1 to 4 p.m. Cost \$25. Create a 36-by-12-inch project consisting of three 12-by-12-inch designs.

Mondays, June 23 to Aug. 25, 10 a.m. to noon, gardening volunteer days. Registration required. See website for more details and to register.

Friday, July 11, 7 to 8:30 p.m., labyrinth walk. Cost \$5. Theme: "Summer

Refresh."

Friday, Aug. 1, 7 to 8:30 p.m., labyrinth walk. Cost \$5. Theme: "Breath."

Saturday, Aug. 2, 1:30 to 3:30 p.m., felting. Cost \$20. Learn how to transfer wool and prefelt into a garden mosaic using the wet felting technique.

Friday, Aug. 8, 9 to 11 a.m., yoga and Ayurvedic tea making. Cost \$20.

The sisters' annual Shepherds Fest will be from noon to 2 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 13 and will give those in attendance a chance to walk the trails of one of eastern Franklin County's few farms in an area surrounded by suburban housing and to meet and feed the farm's sheep and other animals.

Registration is required for all programs. To register, call (614) 866-4302 or visit the website.

Check the website or Facebook to see when the site is open to the public. A donation of \$2 per person is requested. The sisters also request that visitors bring shelf-stable food that will be donated to the food pantries receiving produce from the farm. The site also is

open on demand to small groups.

Rental of the site's barn or labyrinth is offered to groups whose mission is compatible to that of Shepherd's Corner. Check the website for details.

Hartley Class of 1965 to gather

The Columbus Bishop Hartley High School Class of 1965 will celebrate its 60th anniversary reunion from 5 to 8 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 17 in the Paddock Pub of the Links at Groveport, 1005 Richardson Road, Groveport.

The cost is \$45 per person and reservations and money are due by Tuesday, July 15. Checks should be made out to John Loeffler and mailed to 11604 Canterbury Ave. N.W., Pickerington, OH 43147.

For more information, call Loeffler at (614) 284-0434 or email him at jjloeffler3@gmail.com or contact Mary Hollern Fricke at (740) 973-8189 or twaman4947@aol.com.

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Third Sunday of Easter Year C

Accept invitation during Easter season to follow Risen Lord

Acts 5:27-32, 40b-41
Psalm 30:2, 4, 5-6, 11-12, 13
Revelation 5:11-14
John 21:1-19

The Acts of the Apostles supplies the first reading for Masses of the Easter season. We see the Apostles begin to follow through with the mission entrusted to them. We see the men who abandoned Jesus the night before He died now speaking boldly in the name of the Lord.

Jesus testified before the Sanhedrin; the Apostles are questioned by the same council. They were told to stop teaching in Jesus' name. Peter responds boldly: "We must obey God rather than men." This is the Mission given to them by Jesus that they are to pursue, following Him to the end. Peter proclaims the kerygma, the preaching of the paschal mystery, the key message of the Gospel: "The God of our ancestors raised Jesus, though you had him killed by hanging him on a tree. God exalted him at his right hand as leader and savior to grant Israel repentance and forgiveness of sins. We are witnesses of these things, as is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey him."

Realizing that they cannot move the disciples of Jesus to cease, the Sanhedrin sends them off, repeating the order that has been "disobeyed" in favor of obedience to the Risen Lord. The disciples depart, "rejoicing that they had been found worthy to suffer dishonor for the sake of the name." The mission entrusted to the first disciples of Jesus is already beginning to flourish. The Sanhedrin, at the start of the proceedings, admitted that "you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and want to bring this man's

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Father Timothy Hayes
Father Timothy M. Hayes is pastor of St. Edward The Confessor, Granville.



blood upon us." Now, the disciples themselves have begun to learn the cost of following through, and they rejoice.

The Acts of the Apostles recounts how the mission continues to grow from Jerusalem to Samaria and to Rome, even as their willingness to pay the price through suffering continue to increase. The Church is formed in men and women of faith who do not shrink from proclaiming the truth.

In the Book of Revelation, John recounts his vision of how the Gospel will reach its culmination in all of creation sharing in the capacity to worship the Living God. Human beings drawn into this mystery, and along with them, every creature glorifies and worships God. "Then I heard every creature in heaven and on earth and under the earth and in the sea, everything in the universe, cry out: 'To the one who sits on the throne and to the Lamb be blessing and honor, glory and might, forever and ever.' The four living creatures answered, 'Amen,' and the elders fell down and worshiped."

What can account for this transformation? How did the Apostles become so bold in their proclamation and willingness to suffer for the name of the Lord? Today's Gospel shows us how. The call of Peter is renewed by His walk along the shore with the Risen Lord after a breakfast supplied by Jesus and the Apostles working together.

Jesus repeated the miraculous catch that first alerted Simon to His power;

THE WEEKDAY BIBLE READINGS

5-5/5-10 MONDAY Acts 6:8-15 Psalm 119:23-24,26-27,29-30 John 6:22-29	THURSDAY Acts 8:26-40 Psalm 66:8-9,16-17,20 John 6:44-51	5-12/5-17 MONDAY Acts 11:1-18 Psalm 42:2-3;43:3-4 John 10:1-10	THURSDAY Acts 13:13-25 Psalm 89:2-3,21-22,25,27 John 13:16-20
TUESDAY Acts 7:51-8:1a Psalm 31:3cd-4,6ab,7b,8a,17,21ab John 6:30-35	FRIDAY Acts 9:1-20 Psalm 117:1b-2 John 6:52-59	TUESDAY Acts 11:19-26 Psalm 87:1b-7 John 10:22-30	FRIDAY Acts 13:26-33 Psalm 2:6-11 John 14:1-6
WEDNESDAY Acts 8:1b-8 Psalm 66:1-3a,4-7a John 6:35-40	SATURDAY Acts 9:31-42 Psalm 116:12-17 John 6:60-69	WEDNESDAY Acts 1:15-17,20-26 Psalm 113:1-8 John 15:9-17	SATURDAY Acts 13:44-52 Psalm 98:1-4 John 14:7-14

DIOCESAN WEEKLY RADIO AND TELEVISION: *Mass Schedule: Weeks of May 4 and 11*

SUNDAY MASS

10:30am Mass from Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral on St. Gabriel Radio AM820, Columbus, FM88.3, Portsmouth, and FM106.7, Athens., and at www.stgabrielradio.com and diocesan website, www.columbuscatholic.org.

Mass from St. Francis de Sales Seminary, Milwaukee, at 7:30 and 10 a.m. on WWHO-TV (the CW), Channel 53, Columbus. Mass with the Passionist Fathers at 10:30 a.m. on WHIZ-TV, Channel 18, Zanesville. Check local cable system for cable channel listing.

Mass from Our Lady of the Angels Monastery, Birmingham, Ala., at 8 a.m. on EWTN (Spectrum Channel 385, Insight Channel 382, or Breeze-line Channel 378). (Encores at noon, 7 p.m., and midnight). Mass from the Archdiocese of

Milwaukee at 6:30 a.m. on ION TV (AT&T U-verse Channel 195, Dish Network Channel 250, or DirecTV Channel 305).

Mass from Massillon St. Mary Church at 10:30 a.m. on WILB radio (AM 1060, FM 94.5 and 89.5), Canton, heard in Tuscarawas, Holmes, and Coshocton counties.

DAILY MASS

8 a.m., Our Lady of the Angels Monastery in Birmingham, Ala. (Encores at noon, 7 p.m. and midnight). See EWTN above; and on I-Lifetv (Channel 113, Ada, Logan, Millersburg, Murray City, Washington C.H.; Channel 125, Marion, Newark, Newcomerstown and New Philadelphia; Channel 207, Zanesville); 8 p.m., St. Gabriel Radio (AM 820), Columbus, and at www.stgabrielradio.com. 12:05 p.m. weekdays, 8 a.m. Satur-

days, Mass from Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral on St. Gabriel Radio (AM 820), Columbus, and at www.stgabrielradio.com and diocesan website, www.columbuscatholic.org. (Saturdays on radio only).

Videos of Masses are available at any time on the internet at these and many other parish websites: Mattingly Settlement St. Mary (www.stannstmary.org); St. Patrick (Columbus) (www.stpatrickcolumbus.org); Delaware St. Mary (www.delawarestmary.org); Sunbury St. John Neumann (www.saintjohnsunbury.org); and Columbus Immaculate Conception (www.iccols.org). Check your parish website for additional information.

We pray the seasonal propers for Weeks III and IV of the Liturgy of the Hours.

when the disciples came ashore, they saw that some fish were already being prepared on a charcoal fire. "Jesus said to them, 'Come, have breakfast.'" The meal was shared, including some of the fish they just caught.

After the meal, Jesus spoke to Peter's heart: "Simon, son of John, do you love me?" Three times, the question is put to him, always at a deeper level. Jesus is asking, "Will you love Me as I have loved you?" and giving Peter a chance to complete his repentance for the denial that happened at another charcoal fire. When Peter responds with his whole be-

ing, Jesus tells him how his own life will be poured out and gives one last invitation: "Follow me."

As we continue the journey through the Easter season, we are invited to follow Jesus, the Risen Lord, giving Him our all. We must consider whether we are willing to follow through with our commitment to the end, accepting suffering and rejection "for the sake of the Name." As we mourn the death of Pope Francis, we pray that the Mission of the Church to proclaim mercy and hope will continue in our time.

Fourth Sunday of Easter Year C

Acts 13:14, 43-52
Psalm 100:1-2, 3, 5
Revelation 7:9, 14b-17
John 10:27-30

After initially drawing big crowds, Paul and Barnabas ended with a frigid exit from Antioch, but they were not deterred. Their messaging wasn't exactly complimentary to the locals as they presented the kerygma to them by saying, "... you reject it and condemn yourselves as unworthy of eternal life." But their bold tone was appropriate in the sense that they were praising those who had accepted the Gospel and challenging those who had not. "The Gentiles were delighted when they heard this," naturally. Then trouble was stirred up among

The messy church on earth

SCRIPTURE READINGS

Father Tyron Tomson
Father Tyron Tomson is a priest of the Diocese of Columbus pursuing a Licentiate in Sacred Scripture in Rome.



the obstinate leaders (a "persecution"). The missionary heroes seemed unfazed by their messy, mixed success, as "they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them, and went to Iconium. The disciples were filled with joy and the Holy Spirit."

Contrast this partial victory on earth with the apocalyptic revelation of Heaven: "I, John, had a vision of a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people and tongue." The full throng of the blessed in glory

"stand before God's throne and worship Him day and night in His temple." It's a triumphant yet peaceful scene, distinguished by tranquil, prayerful focus on the divine, free from life's troubles. "They will not hunger or thirst anymore." We pray that we, too might be among "the ones who have survived the time of great distress."

Perhaps our earthy messiness warrants the Gospel's preference for agrarian metaphors. Our Lord never seems content with a straightforward analogy; there's always an unexpected twist, just like the regular disruptions on cluttered farms. "My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life." But normal sheep are not raised to live forever. They have a kind

of built-in expiration date. So do we. Also, this fold is strangely convoluted in its leadership structure. Ironically, "the Lamb who is in the center of the throne will shepherd them." We are also assumed to be much more theological-ly astute and spiritually inclined than these notoriously simple animals generally are found to be: "Know that the Lord is God; He made us, His we are; His people, the flock He tends." The willier and more stubborn goats, on the other hand, might grasp the central concepts better, but don't always play too well with the other beasts (and their keeper). Ewes and rams can be naively overly trusting, but their cantankerous counterparts

See CHURCH, Page 25

CHURCH, continued from Page 24

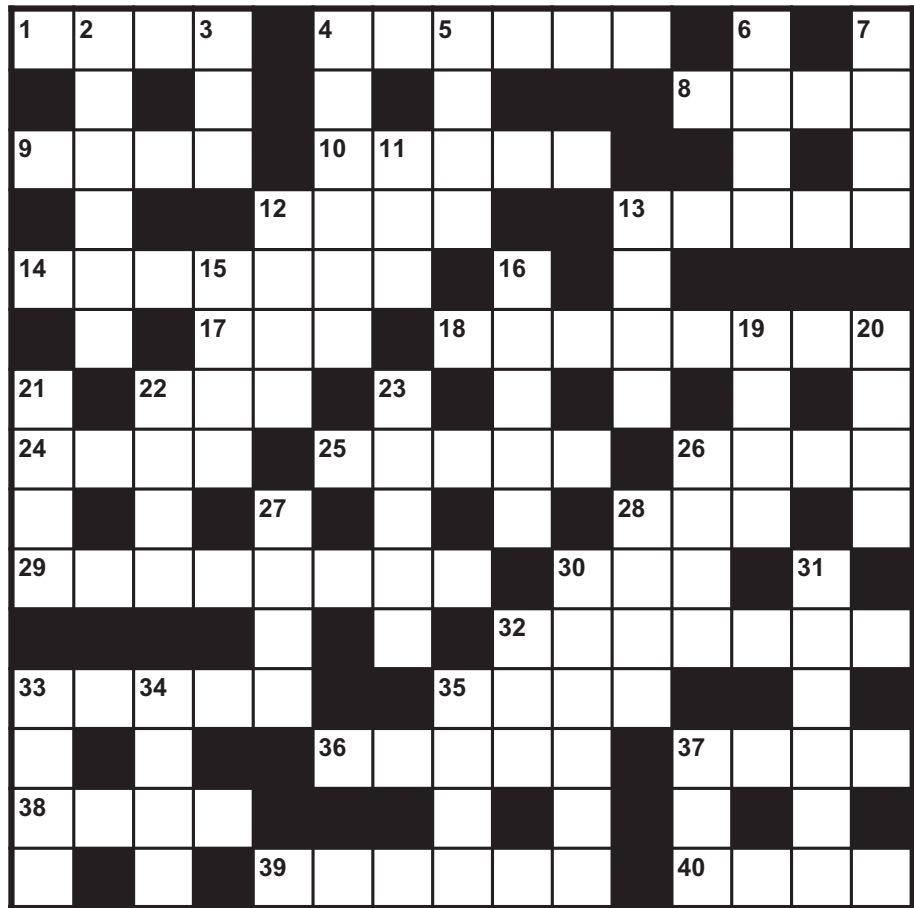
lack in following instructions. Chaos in the grazing ground can arise just as easily as in our own experience of interpersonal tensions and social disorder.

The Good Shepherd has become one of the sheep in Christ, God-made-man. He pastors on the ground, compassionate with our needs and experiences. In no way does that compromise His divinity: "The Father and I are one." Without the unity of the Father and the Son (as well as the Holy Spirit), the Messiah quickly devolves into a sort of illusionist wisdom guru. The miracles get explained away, doubted or dismissed. If He hasn't been raised from the dead, all the teachings and parables are clever but sharp-tongued infighting with Pharisees, Sadducees, etc. ... the opposite of the conversion He desired for His beloved flock. No more drinking from murky wells, just "springs of life-giving water." They need His promise that "they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand." Otherwise, the poor creatures are doomed to have their lovely white wool forever matted

with the gross slop of sin, a far cry from the Church in her full serene splendor.

We need not await the Lord's return and definitive final judgment to sort out and clean up this wild herd to appreciate His plan of providence. These imperfections might not feel pristinely sacred when conditions are less than copacetic, but He never intended His Church to be a sterilized environment. It would then be sterile. The pasture would be pasteurized. Think more along the lines of a muddy stockyard, teeming with activity, filled with lively adventure and charming countryside bustle. When our efforts at evangelization aren't as wildly bountiful as we hoped, or we have family members struggling to practice their faith, or parish life seems to be lagging in fervor, or our own interior prayer needs improvement, we have good precedent: The apostles cleaned their boots but went trudging along their way to continue their holy work. The sloppy barnyard lifestyle of the Church defies our pat preconceptions, but it is destined for peaceful perfection in eternity.

CATHOLIC CROSSWORD



www.wordgamesforcatholics.com

ACROSS

- 1 Lot's wife was turned into a pillar of this
- 4 The Diocese of Baker is here
- 8 "There is a ___ in Gilead"
- 9 French clergyman
- 10 St. Frances of Rome is the patron saint of people who do this
- 12 "...how will it end for those who ___ to obey the gospel of God?" (1 Pet 4:17)
- 13 Our Lady of Czestochowa and La Bruna
- 14 The Diocese of Thunder Bay is here
- 17 "For us ___, and for our salvation..."
- 18 Return of our Lord
- 22 Holy ___
- 24 First murderer
- 25 Archdiocese in Morocco
- 26 "___ wide the doors to Christ"
- 28 Winter hrs. in the Diocese of Cheyenne
- 29 John XXIII's surname
- 30 "___ to you, scribes and Pharisees..." (Mt 23:13)
- 32 Ecclesiastical hat
- 33 Parable of the ___ of great price
- 35 Moses' was radiant after he spoke with the Lord
- 36 Catholic author, Mary Higgins ___
- 37 Sacred Roman ___
- 38 Holy ___
- 39 Be present at Mass
- 40 "...that I have sinned exceedingly in thought, word and ___."

DOWN

- 2 Given name of Pope John Paul I
- 3 "Keep them fastened over your heart always; ___ them around your neck." (Prov 6:21)
- 4 Perform the sacrament of Holy Orders
- 5 "I fear no ___, for you are with me" (Ps 23:4)
- 6 Angel's hat?
- 7 Shepherd-turned-prophet
- 11 There is a 250-foot statue of Jesus overlooking the bay of this city
- 12 ___ will
- 13 It's after Rom
- 15 "So be it!"
- 16 Mother of Ishmael
- 19 Birth month of Mary (abbr.)
- 20 Prophet in Luke (Lk 2:36)
- 21 Association of heads of women religious in the US
- 22 A sacrament is an outward ___
- 23 One of the faces in Ezekiel's vision
- 26 Hosea, formerly
- 27 The apostles were put in this for preaching about Jesus
- 28 St. Thomas' surname
- 30 According to Psalms, they flourish like grass (with "the")
- 31 The Infant of Prague, for one
- 32 Hebrew for "son of"
- 33 Chalice covering
- 34 ___ Domini
- 35 Catholic actress Dunaway
- 37 ___ of Jesse

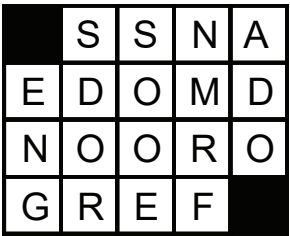
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by Pat Battaglia, aka Dr. Fun

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PRAY FOR OUR DEAD

ABRAHAM, Mitchell C., 93, April 12
Resurrection Cemetery, Lewis Center

ADAMICH, Thomas E., 88, April 11
Sacred Heart Church, New Philadelphia

ALBAUGH, Richard J., 80, April 5
Immaculate Conception Church, Dennison

DEVLIN, Lillian, 83, April 9
Sacred Heart Church, New Philadelphia

DUNN-LIGGET, Anita M., 72, April 5
Immaculate Conception Church, Dennison

CRIST, Lucille (Dandera Denman), 94, April 11
St. Francis de Sales Church, Newark

DAVIS, Mary Lorane, 95, March 27
St. Colman of Cloyne Church, Washington Court House

EBERSBACH, Sarah Jane (Cooper) "Sally," 82, April 13
St. Nicholas Church, Zanesville

EPPICK, Joan H. (Kondik), 84, April 19
St. Paul the Apostle Church, Westerville

ESSELBURNE, Peter C., 80, April 16
St. Colman of Cloyne Church, Washington Court House

HAMILTON, David M., 73, April 12
St. Francis de Sales Church, Newark

HASELWOOD, Barbara J. (Banks), 93, April 8
St. Paul the Apostle Church, Westerville

HOUGHTON, Virginia (Scardina), 72, March 29
St. Andrew Church, Columbus

JENTGEN, James J., 93, April 12
St. Agatha Church, Columbus

KEYES, Marlene C., 88, April 13
St. Cecilia Church, Columbus

KRIMM, John J., 91, April 7
St. Margaret of Cortona Church, Columbus

McCRATE, Mary Beth, 58, April 9
St. Paul the Apostle Church, Westerville

MEHRABAN, Abbas "Ben," 80, April 15
St. Andrew Church, Columbus,

MONE, Robert P., 90, April 7
Our Lady of Victory Church, Columbus

OHRSTROM, Ellen (Aken), 72, March 25
Sacred Heart Church, New Philadelphia

ORGANISCAK, Melissa (Kondik), 69, April 3
St. Brigid of Kildare Church, Dublin

RAUCH, Norma Jean, 91, April 22
St. Francis de Sales Church, Newark

REGAN, Joseph T., 91, April 11
St. Mary Magdalene Church, Columbus

REHL, Barbara A., 84, April 14
St. Francis de Sales Church, Newark

STEPHENS, Gloria J. (Delewese), 70, April 20
St. Margaret of Cortona Church, Columbus

VAN ALSTYNE, Carolyn (Bongini), 80, April 22
St. Joseph Church, Dover

WEBB, William L., 81, March 21
St. Paul the Apostle Church, Westerville

WILLIS, John M., 69, April 18
St. Mary, Mother of God Church, Columbus

WOODS, Jo Ellen, 77, April 19
St. Bernard Church, Corning

David M. Roby

Funeral Mass for David M. Roby, 73, who died Wednesday, March 19, was celebrated Friday, March 28 at Reynoldsburg St. Pius X Church. Burial was at Holy Cross Cemetery, Pataskala.

He was born on March 5, 1952 to Andrew and Donna (Dutton) Roby and graduated from Reynoldsburg High School in 1971.

He served as a custodian for more than 10 years at Columbus St. Agatha

Church and was a sacristan at St. Pius X Church.

He was preceded in death by his parents; wife, Barbara (Schrader); and brothers, Kevin and Richard. Survivors include his children, David Roby, Cary VanHorn, Tina Bissel and Devon Westbrook; siblings, Cynthia Gervais, Cheryl Back and Phillip Roby; 13 grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

Deacon Jack W. Elam

Funeral Mass for Deacon Jack W. Elam, 86, who died Wednesday, April 23, was celebrated Tuesday, April 29 at Newark Blessed Sacrament Church. Burial was at St. Joseph Cemetery, Newark.

He was born on May 1, 1938 in Kitchel, Indiana to Frank and Ella (Berry) Elam. He grew up in New Hope, Ohio, graduated from Springboro High School, studied business administration at Ohio State University and earned a Bachelor of Science degree in management and human resources from Park College, Parkville, Missouri.

He served in the U.S. Air Force from 1957 to 1960. He was employed by Inland Container Corp. in Middletown,

the Clinton County (Ohio) Air Force Base and the Newark Air Force Base.

He was ordained to the diaconate at Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral on Feb. 15, 1992 by Bishop James Griffin and served as a deacon at Blessed Sacrament and St. Francis de Sales churches in Newark. He retired from active ministry in 2007.

He was preceded in death by his parents; brothers, Donald and Roger; and sisters, Opal Ketron and Jill Evans. Survivors include his wife, Mary Cecilia; a son, Chip (Carmen); daughters, Helen (Eric) Morris and Anita (Larry) Nethers; a brother, Michael (Sharon); 13 grandchildren and four great-grandchildren.

Dr. Seiji Shikina

A private funeral Mass will be celebrated at the Resurrection Cemetery Chapel, Lewis Center, for Dr. Seiji Shikina, 85, who died Sunday, April 13.

He was born on March 2, 1940, in Okinawa, Japan, graduated from Ryukyu University there and moved with his wife, Shigeko, to the United States, where they lived in Lincoln, Nebraska; Missouri; and Lafayette, Louisiana. He spent 15 years as a graduate student, earning multiple degrees and a doctorate in English literature before coming to Columbus in 1987.

He was an English professor, the founder of the Bilingual Columbus translation company and provost of the former Tokyo campus of the University of Rio Grande (Ohio). After retiring, he and his wife did volunteer work in 15 nations on five continents.

He is survived by his wife; sons, Father Edward Shikina, pastor of Marion St. Mary and Cardington Sacred Hearts churches, and Robert; daughters, Alice and Helen; a sister, Ikuko Ishigaki; and four grandchildren.

Sister Dolores Ann Pfeiffer, OP

Funeral Mass for Sister Dolores Ann Pfeiffer, OP, 95, who died at the Mohun Health Care Center in Columbus on Thursday, April 10, was celebrated Thursday, April 24 at the Motherhouse of the Dominican Sisters of Peace. Burial was at St. Joseph Cemetery, Columbus.

She was born on Oct. 9, 1930 in Astoria, New York to Edward and Ella (Olesnovich) Pfeiffer and earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in 1961 from the College of St. Rose, Albany, New York; a Master of Arts degree in 1972 from St. Mary's College, Moraga, California; and a Master of Science degree in pastoral counseling in 1990 from Loyola College, Baltimore.

She entered the Dominican Sisters of St. Catherine de Ricci (now the Dominican Sisters of Peace) in 1955 and professed her vows on Feb. 13, 1958. She served as a staff member at retreat houses, in parish ministry and pastoral counseling, and as a teacher in New Mexico, Maryland, Virginia and Pennsylvania before coming to the Motherhouse in 2021 and entering the Mohun center the following year.

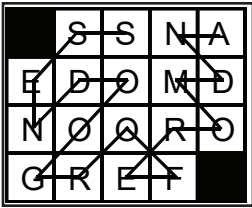
She was preceded in death by her parents and a brother, George. She is survived by a brother, Edward, and nieces and nephews.

HEAVEN, continued from Page 8

and a thousand times more alive than we have tasted it on this earth (cf. Mk 10:28-31) ... The hand of the Lord is always there carrying us forward and beyond the door there is the party."

In this year celebrating the virtue of Christian hope, may the words and example of Pope Francis in the midst of suffering encourage us to reflect on the reality of death, strengthening our assurance that the best is yet to come, because heaven is the goal.

Sister Constance Veit is the communications director for the Little Sisters of the Poor in the United States and an occupational therapist.



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ORDAINED, *continued from Page 2*

Vernon St. Vincent de Paul), St. Paul, Newark St. Francis de Sales and Sunbury St. John Neumann churches. He served at Columbus St. Charles Preparatory School for a school year and spent summers assisting at Holy Family Soup Kitchen and with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal in New York. His first Mass is set for 1:30 p.m. Sunday, May 18 at Our Lady of Victory Church, 1559 Roxbury Road.

Deacon Rolwing, 27, is from New Albany Church of the Resurrection and a graduate of New Albany High School. He has served in assignments at Columbus St. Cecilia, Zoar Church of the Holy Trinity, Dover St. Joseph, Columbus Christ the King, Marion St. Mary and Cardington Sacred Hearts churches. A first Mass is planned for 3:30 p.m. Sunday, May 18 at Church of the Resurrection, 6300 E. Dublin-Granville Road.

Deacon Severance, 29, is from Columbus Holy Family Church and a graduate of Columbus Bishop Watterson High School and the College of Wooster. His assignments have included Columbus



Deacon Joseph Rolwing

Our Lady of Peace Church, Zanesville St. Nicholas and St. Thomas Aquinas churches and two summer Hispanic ministry immersions – one in Columbus and another in Mexico City. He will



Deacon Kevin Girardi

celebrate a first Mass at 11 a.m. Sunday, May 18 at Holy Family Church, 584 W. Broad Street.

Individuals interested in attending the candidates' ordination Mass on May



Deacon Sam Severance

17 are encouraged to RSVP to the diocesan Office of Vocations at 614-221-5565 or email Vocations@ColumbusCatholic.org. For information on vocations, visit www.ColumbusCatholic.org/Vocations.

HAMMOND,
continued from Page 15

Consortium was formed consisting of St. Vincent de Paul, Danville St. Luke and the former Utica Church of the Nativity, which closed in 2015.

A pastor typically is limited to 12 years in a parish. With the formation of the consortium in 2014, Msgr. Hammond said his "clock" reset then, and he became pastor of the three churches, which was considered a new assignment. In 2024, St. Vincent de Paul and St. Luke parishes merged to form one parish, known as St. John the Baptist, of which he currently serves as pastor.

Other parish assignments included pastor at Columbus St. Mary Church in the German Village neighborhood (2000-2006) and associate pastor at Pickerington St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish (1989-1995). He also served for several years in the diocesan Tribunal, which hears cases of marriage nullity, serving as judicial vicar and defender of the bond, and lived at Columbus St. Andrew Church (1995-2000).

Msgr. Hammond currently serves as the diocese's promoter of justice, on the College of Consultors and vicar forane of the Tuscarawas-Holmes-Knox-Coshocton Deanery.

Only 10 percent of diocesan clergy can hold the title of monsignor at a given time. In the diocese, including Msgr. Hammond, others currently holding the title are Msgrs. John Cody, John Dreese, William Dunn, Craig Eilerman, Paul Enke, Anthony Frecker, Joseph Hendricks, John Johnson, Frank Lane, Anthony Missimi, Stephan Moloney and James Walter.

CROSS, *continued from Page 17*

special."

The group returned to St. Joseph Cathedral for the fifth and final station. They prayed, contemplated and listened to the story of Christ's death recorded in the Gospel of Mark.

The event concluded with a blessing from Bishop Fernandes. The crowd sang

hymns "Were You There?" and "Lift High the Cross" outside of the cathedral steps. While it could be considered a somber ending, individuals departed with the hope of Christ's Resurrection on Easter Sunday.

Hanson hopes that her children gained a deeper understanding of Christ's sacri-

fice from the Way of the Cross.

"That they recognize how much Jesus loved them – that no matter what they do that He will always love them, and there's no sin that's greater than His love," she said. "That's my ultimate hope for them: to know why He did this for us."



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Delaware SVDP hopes to provide housing for men in transition

The St. Vincent de Paul Society of Delaware St. Mary Church wants to meet an urgent need in Delaware County by providing transitional housing for Delaware County men who are re-entering society after spending time in jail, prison or a treatment center.

A fundraising dinner for the project, titled New Beginnings, will take place Saturday, May 3 at Sunbury St. John Neumann Church, 9633 State Route 37 East.

The event will include talks by Delaware County Sheriff Jeffrey Balzer on the problems of men returning to society and by Kenneth Craycraft, a professor of moral theology at the Athenaeum of Ohio in Cincinnati and author of the book "Citizens Yet Strangers: Living Authentically Catholic in a Divided America." Dinner will be catered by Carfagna's Italian Market, with music by the Jan Eschelman Trio. There also will be a silent auction.

The cost is \$60 per person. For more information, go to the New Beginnings website, www.stvincentnewbeginnings.org or call Liz Curtis at (614) 989-4838.

"The project got its start a few months

ago when representatives from the Delaware County Jail Ministry got in touch with the St. Vincent de Paul Society to ask for help," said Curtis, New Beginnings board chairman.

"They told us that their biggest unmet concern involved what happened to men after they had finished their navigation meetings while imprisoned or in rehab and were ready to go back to society.

"They were anxious to turn their lives around, but in Delaware County their options are very limited if they don't have someone to take them in. On release, they immediately must do things like finding a job, getting clothing and maybe a driver's license, and just getting accustomed to life in general again and any changes that may have happened while they were in an isolated situation.

"The people in the jail ministry tried to continue their relations with these men, but in many cases the men ended up living in their cars, a hotel or the woods, and often they just sort of faded from sight.

"When such men have no place to go, it's easy for them to go back to what

got them into trouble in the first place. Having transitional housing for them is important because it's been proven that the recidivism rate (the percentage of prisoners incarcerated again after release) is much lower for men provided with transitional housing than for those who don't have that choice."

Curtis said returning to productive lives after a setback is much more of a problem for men than for women in Delaware County. "In that regard, women are much more fortunate because the county has shelters for women and their families who are homeless or need to flee abusive relationships and for women returning from incarceration or rehab," she said. "People have responded to their needs. Now they need to do the same for men."

Curtis said a site for the proposed men's transitional housing hasn't been found, but the New Beginnings committee is looking for a house near downtown Delaware to rent and is eager to hear from anyone aware of the availability of such a property.

She said the building would be staffed at all times every day through partnerships set up with more than 20 government, social service, faith-based and other organizations, including the Delaware County Mental Health and Recovery Services Board, Delaware Public

Health District, Goodwill, and the United Way of Delaware County.

A mixture of paid staff and volunteers is anticipated. Curtis said no interviews for possible staff members have been conducted yet. She anticipates the site will have an operating budget of around \$250,000 a year.

"We at St. Vincent de Paul reached out to local agencies right away to help because we didn't want to duplicate what someone else was doing," Curtis said. "We want to let the professionals do what they do best while we and others in the community provide food and other items and the support which residents of transitional housing will need.

"We hope to start with five beds, with a goal of ultimately building a larger facility for as many as 16 men, as well as including a warming center providing temporary winter housing for homeless men.

"The St. Vincent de Paul organization in the diocese and nationwide has adopted the goal of not just meeting immediate needs but being an agent for systemic change, addressing the root causes of poverty," she said. "The opportunity to provide transitional housing in Delaware is our way of responding to that initiative by giving men a safe environment in which to rebuild their lives."



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OLB celebrates St. Kateri Habitat site designation

By Hannah Heil
Catholic Times Reporter

Columbus Our Lady of Bethlehem School and Childcare had much to celebrate on Tuesday, April 22: It was students’ first day back to school after Easter, known as “Alleluia Day,” and Earth Day, which came with a special announcement.

Our Lady of Bethlehem received national recognition as a St. Kateri Habitat site, which is a designated healthy habitat for people, plants and wildlife. The school received the designation from the St. Kateri Tekakwitha Conservation Center, a non-profit organization.

St. Kateri Habitats are sanctuaries that provide essential resources for people and wildlife. The habitats offer food, water, shelter and space for wildlife, and serve as places of prayer and contemplation for individuals. The spaces embody the coexistence of faith and ecological stewardship, according to the St. Kateri Conversation Center’s website.

St. Kateri Habitats must meet at least two of five criteria, including: food, water, cover and space for people and wildlife; native trees, shrubs and wildflowers; ecosystem services; clean, renewable energy and sustainable practices; and sacred and sacramental places, such as Marian gardens, prayer gardens or shrines. Each habitat must include a statue of the Blessed Mother, a saint or cross as a reminder of God’s presence in every corner of creation.

Our Lady of Bethlehem’s St. Kateri Habitat is located on the campus’ front yard. The school sits on 1.5 acres of land, said principal Lori Dulin. The habitat site includes a bird bath, food for animals, plants and a statue of Our Lady. Dulin estimated that about 60 percent of plants in the space are native species.

She said the school is blessed with “a green space and to have a place where boys and girls can come and really flourish among God’s creation.” Students also participate in the caretaking of the St. Kateri Habitat.

“It’s really showing them what we’re supposed to do as the stewards of God’s creation,” Dulin said. “To have that here and part of their everyday faith and learning experience, it was invaluable to us and a real blessing.”

The site began as a Marian garden created by former student Andrew Ferris. He attended Our Lady of Bethlehem, Columbus St. Agatha and St. Charles Preparatory schools and created the garden as an Eagle Scout project. The garden was blessed by Bishop Earl Fernandes in October 2023.

A family whose children previously attended Our Lady of Bethlehem believed that, given the vast amount of green space, it could qualify as a habitat site. They encouraged the school to apply.

The application was accepted and the

space is now listed in the national registry of St. Kateri Habitat sites. As part of its designation, the school will receive a St. Kateri Habitat yard sign.

Habitat sites can be established at homes, schools or churches. Other sites in the diocese include Hilliard St. Brendan the Navigator Church, the Catholic Schools of Zanesville (Bishop Fenwick School and Bishop Rosecrans High School) and St. Joseph Montessori School.

Our Lady of Bethlehem, the diocese’s newest St. Kateri Habitat site, announced the news to the community on Earth Day. St. Kateri Tekakwitha (1656-1680), the first canonized indigenous woman of North America, is the patron saint of ecology.

To celebrate the school’s designation, kindergarten students made “St. Kateri crosses” out of tree branches and distributed them to their families. Each cross included a St. Kateri quote and picture of the saint. St. Kateri was known to make simple wooden crosses, which she placed around forests for people to find and as a testament to her faith.

Coinciding with Earth Day, Our Lady of Bethlehem students celebrated “Alleluia Day” on April 22. The day marked students’ return to school after time off during the Sacred Triduum and Easter Monday.

Classes visited the school’s multipurpose room for Alleluia Day activities to celebrate. Students received a “Happy Easter” sticker, participated in a “Jesus is Alive” freeze dance and made “He is Risen” headbands. Each headband included a colored graphic of the tombstone rolled away after Christ’s Resurrection. The activity concluded with an “Alleluia, He is Risen” video.

Our Lady of Bethlehem School includes Infant and Toddler, Totally Terrific Twos, Preschool, Pre-Kindergarten and Kindergarten programs. The school was founded in 1956 by the Sisters of the Poor Child Jesus and is the only Catholic school in central Ohio with a complete emphasis on early childhood education.



Columbus Our Lady of Bethlehem announced that its school grounds (above) received St. Kateri Habitat recognition on April 22, the same day that its students participated in “Alleluia Day” activities. Photos/Our Lady of Bethlehem



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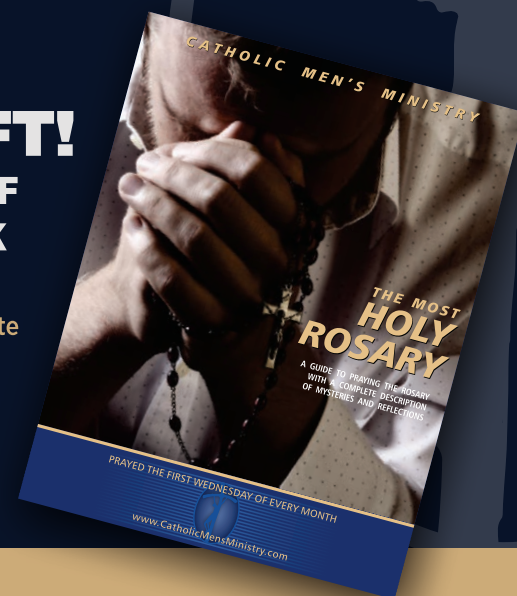
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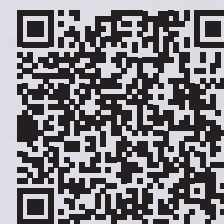
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Watterson seniors commit to play college sports

Twenty-five Columbus Bishop Watterson High School seniors committed to play college sports at a spring signing day in April. The are (front row from left) Cal Mangini, football, Case Western Reserve University; Clare Feehan, softball, Trine University; Chloe Voelkel, dance, Point Park University; Amber Regan, lacrosse, Ohio Northern University; Lauren Festi, stunt and cheer, Walsh University; Marie Bakle, synchronized skating, Trine University; Angelo Ginocchi, soccer, Mercyhurst University; (second row from left) Landon Johnson, basketball, Otterbein University; Chloe Moreland, volleyball, Florida Southern College; Anna Frost, rowing, Merrimack College; Alexa Ray, softball, Ohio Northern University; Michael Watkins, soccer, Capital University; (third row from left) Penelope Foley, volleyball, John Jay College; Anthony DeMassimo, baseball, Wilmington College; Tommy Haley, football, John Carroll University; Ben Gabrich, football, John Carroll University; Cameron Sparks, basketball, Otterbein University; (back row from left) Joe Wheeler, baseball, Baldwin Wallace University; Carter Schilling, cross country, Kent State University; Javier Serantes, baseball, Wilmington College; Michael Antry, soccer, John Carroll University; (back row) Dominic Theado, basketball, Otterbein University. Not pictured are Vance Graney, football, John Carroll University; Chance Strausbaugh, baseball, University of Northwestern Ohio; and Mia Tipple, lacrosse, Thomas More University.

Photos courtesy Bishop Watterson High School



Five DeSales students recognized



Columbus St. Francis DeSales High School juniors (from left) Charlie Brunelle, Emma Hahn, Benjamin Reither, Ava Manfresca and Rebecca Gebhart received recognition for the 2026 National Merit Scholarship Program based on their performance on the 2024 Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test. From more than 1.3 million program entrants, each of the students is among the 50,000 highest-scoring participants who will be recognized as semifinalists or commended students in the fall.

Photo courtesy St. Francis DeSales High School



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