

The CATHOLIC TIMES

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Diocese reinstitutes pastoral council

By Hannah Heil

Catholic Times Reporter

For the first time in several years, the diocese has once again established a Diocesan Pastoral Council.

The body was called together by Bishop Earl Fernandes, who presides over the council. Its existence will help the bishop gain practical wisdom on pastoral works in the diocese.

"I have high hopes for the pastoral council," said Father Michael Hartge, diocesan vicar general and moderator of the curia, "that it's not going to just be a report of various committees, but it's really going to be a way for the council to come together and talk about ... pastoral issues that are affecting the diocese that the bishop identifies."

Bishop Fernandes' four priorities include evangelization, vocations, Catholic education and formation, and social

outreach.

The diocese's council includes 22 members. Council members represent the diocese's geographic and multicultural diversity of Christian faithful. Members include lay faithful, clergy and consecrated religious sisters.

"The fact that we have a majority of lay people on it, as well as priests and deacons and religious, demonstrates that it's not meant to just be a lay pastoral council, but it's a pastoral council for all the Christian faithful in the diocese," Father Hartge said.

The new diocesan pastoral council is largely the result of a change in bishop.

The diocese's last council was under then-Bishop Robert Brennan, now bishop of Brooklyn, New York. The council ceased after Bishop Brennan's reassignment.

According to the Church's Code of Canon Law, a council can be reconstituted if a bishop recognizes a need.

"Now was a good time for Bishop (Fernandes) to reconstitute fresh with new

statutes and new members just because so much time had elapsed," Father Hartge explained. "The change in bishops was, I think, a big reason why we haven't had one."

The new council first met last month on Aug. 16.

Its main task is studying issues concerning pastoral works in the diocese indicated by Bishop Fernandes. Members will consider such matters and propose practical conclusions to the bishop.

"I think that's a way that will really use the gifts and talents of the members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council well and I think can really be advantageous to our ongoing pastoral planning," Father Hartge said.

In the first meeting, members addressed expectations for the pastoral council. They also discussed the pastoral planning process currently taking place in the diocese.

The council will be responsible for writing a purpose and vision statement for the pastoral plan, which will take place for the next five years. A subcommittee was formed from the council to draft the statement.

As part of the diocesan pastoral planning process, faithful in the diocese are asked to participate in a pastoral planning survey, which remains open through Oct. 17.

The survey is accessible online at <https://columbuscatholic.org/>. A Quick Response, or QR code, is also available to scan and complete the survey.

The council anticipates meeting quarterly. Subcommittees might take on additional work between council meetings.

According to the Code of Canon Law, diocesan pastoral councils must meet at least once a year.

The council's members include Emily Jaminet, who serves as chair, and Deacon Steve Petrill, director of the diocesan Office of the Diaconate.

Petrill, who also ministers at the Columbus St. Thomas More Newman Center near Ohio State University, said he hopes to bring his experience as a deacon to the pastoral council. He is hopeful the diaconate community can help with the council's recommendations and what the bishop decides to do moving forward.

"Whenever the bishop asks me to help him, I'm always happy to help him by virtue of being a deacon," Petrill reflected, "but also just for myself, I think it's a really wonderful thing that the pastoral council is being restarted."

Members were personally selected by Bishop Fernandes or highly recommended to him by the diocese's deans. Priests serving as deans oversee the diocese's

10 deaneries, which group parishes into regional areas according to geographic location.

Jaminet said she finds it "really beautiful" that the bishop assembled a team who is willing to serve and brings different perspectives.

"One thing that I really took away from the meeting is that there's 23 counties that we're serving," she explained. "I think it's very important, and we had some of the representation from the outer counties."

"You stand for so many more people than just central Ohio, and so, making sure that we listen to their voices and we see that larger vision."

"Father Hartge and Bishop Fernandes really, I think, tried to and successfully were able to pull a group together that represents many different parts of the diocese," Petrill concurred.

The council represents different diocesan regions, including rural and urban areas. It includes people of various ages – young and old – and its members are of various backgrounds.

"There was just a spirit of newness in the room," Jaminet said, reflecting on the council's first meeting, "and it aligned with why I was there as well."

Jaminet is a wife, mother to seven children and parishioner at Columbus St. Andrew Church. She is an author, speaker, radio personality and executive director of the Sacred Heart Enthronement Network.

Her eagerness to serve was largely the impetus for accepting the bishop's invitation to be on the council.

"Even though my schedule is already full, I immediately said, 'Yes,'" Jaminet recalled. "Any way that we can serve is really important in the Church right now."

Petrill said he is encouraged by the various kinds of expertise and gifts that council members bring to the table. He believes such gifts will serve the bishop well in offering feedback.

"You could tell everybody's trying to do this for the right reasons," he said of the first meeting. "I think it's going to be a place where we're going to be able to bring together these different perspectives, bring different needs together, make some recommendations and put those in front of the bishop for his consideration."

"His goals should not sit in a vacuum or on a document or at an evangelization summit," Jaminet added.

"They should be a part of how we witness and how we set up our goals – not just as a council but as a Catholic. It brought me a lot of hope and encouragement, and I think we'll do a lot of good."

PASTORAL PLANNING SURVEY



VOCATIONS



EVANGELIZATION



CATHOLIC
EDUCATION AND
FORMATION



SOCIAL OUTREACH



Please take the brief survey
with the QR code



Por favor complete el cuestionario
usando el en código QR

CORRECTION

In A Shepherd's Care column by Father Thomas Buffer in the Sept. 7 *Catholic Times*, the following sentence should have read: "After baptism, we still have only a human nature, unlike Christ, who had both a human and divine nature, and worked miracles by the power of his divine nature."

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President & Publisher

Bishop Earl K. Fernandes

Editor

Doug Bean

Reporter

Hannah Heil

Graphic Designer

Kaitlyn Gough



HCatholicTimes



CbusCatholic



cbuscatholic



columbuscatholic



@Columbuscatholic



Diocese of Columbus

FOCUS missionaries bring Catholic presence to Ohio Northern

By Hannah Heil
Catholic Times Reporter

"Want prayers? Help with your big questions? Or just want to talk and be listened to?"

The series of questions is posted on the Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) website. It is an invitation for college students to walk their faith journey with FOCUS missionaries, who are present at select campuses in the United States.

FOCUS, founded by Curtis Martin in 1998, forms Catholic missionaries rooted in Church teaching, prayer, Scripture and evangelization. Missionaries invite people into life with Christ and walk with them as they grow in faith.

A large team of missionaries in the diocese serve at Ohio State University. Perhaps unbeknownst to many, FOCUS missionaries are also present about an hour-and-a-half northwest at Ohio Northern University (ONU) in Ada, also part of the Diocese of Columbus.

A team of four missionaries at the university are working to bring souls to Christ, one student at a time.

Missionaries first arrived at Ohio Northern in the fall of 2023. Now in its third year at ONU, FOCUS serves as a Catholic presence on campus.

Ohio Northern does not have a Newman Center for Catholic students like some universities. The FOCUS team operates out of Ada Our Lady of Lourdes parish.

"We kind of walked into a university that, I would say, the Catholic club was familiar with FOCUS but not like super, super familiar, and the Catholic club was not thriving in any way, shape

or form. It was kind of stagnant," said Becca Joy Root, who has been a FOCUS missionary at ONU since its inception on campus.

"They didn't really do much, and there wasn't much involvement either, and I don't think a lot of people really knew that ONU Catholic existed."

The team of FOCUS missionaries was there to change that.

"I think it was within the first like two or three Sundays of us being here on campus, some of the parishioners, they were like, 'This is the most college students that we have seen since pre-COVID,' and it truly was the Holy Spirit," Root affirmed.

This year, between six and eight ONU students are projected to enter the Catholic Church at Our Lady of Lourdes through the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA). Last Easter, four students and an alumnus came into the Church.

"The parish hadn't had people enter the Church in multiple years – five years – and then, this year, already there's quite a few people in OCIA from the college as well," said FOCUS missionary Thomas Watza, who is a former seminarian and in his second year serving at ONU.

The missionary team collaborates with Father Ryan Schmit, pastor at Our Lady of Lourdes.

Holy Hour is offered to students five days a week at the church, Mass is offered four times weekly, and there are three times to receive the sacrament of reconciliation.

Father Schmit was present for the university's "Welcome Fest," where student groups on campus set up booths.

He also attends FOCUS events throughout the school year,



A women's Bible study group meets on campus at Ohio Northern University in Ada.
Photo courtesy FOCUS

helping students "see a priest as a normal person and build a relationship with him," said Sonja Ritze, the FOCUS team director at ONU and in her second year at the university.

Missionaries on campus participate in outreach each week. Outreach includes offering free coffee, engaging students in conversation and forming friendships.

"Last year, I think we really saw an explosion in ONU Catholic and just the community becoming more close-knit, but also people actually knowing that it exists," Root said.

Missionaries invite students to participate in FOCUS Bible studies. Attendance at Bible studies is on the rise.

Ritze said it is important for students to receive formation but also be equipped for missionary discipleship.

"We're in a place where we're seeing students actually go on mission, which is awesome," she noted.

"We have students leading Bible studies for the first time, like way

more than ever before, which is super exciting – starting to invest in their roommates, start to get bought into this idea of actual discipleship and mission, which has been really cool.

"When they come on mission with us, we can reach that many more souls, because there's more of us on the ground."

FOCUS missionaries attribute much of the success to being close in age to students. They can enter students' lives in a way that a campus minister might be unable to.

"I get to have normal day-to-day life interactions with a lot of the students or the guys I get to walk with," Watza said. "It's not just like Bible studies and discipleships and things like that, which are beautiful, but it's like, 'Hey, let's just go play sports, or just come over, have breakfast with me.'"

On a typical weekday, Watza added, he might go to the library and encounter students there. He explained that he is part of students' daily lives in a way that "feels very authentic."

Root said the FOCUS

discipleship model is entirely based on friendship.

"We get to spend so much time with the students and just enter into very, very, very normal life with them, which is really beautiful," she noted. "I think being similar in age is super helpful in that, but then, we also get to meet their friends, and they get to meet ours, and things like that."

Many students at ONU, Ritze added, are from small towns and do not have other youth in their home parishes. The missionaries help students learn how to be missionary disciples in daily life, which they can implement back home.

"The things that we do are maybe pretty ordinary," Ritze explained. "What would it look like for one day, when you're in the parish, to invite someone to have breakfast after Mass? Or what would it look like for you to go to your co-worker's kid's soccer game with them, to just spend time with them?"

"These little ways that we can witness to each other, and hopefully, make it more something that they could see themselves doing for the rest of their lives."

Ultimately, the FOCUS missionaries know it is the Lord Whose hand is at work. The missionaries see Christ working in significant and subtle ways.

"It's a great gift to see those big moments, like baptisms, but also, the small moments of like someone actually understanding something for the first time, or even just little things like our students showing up to a daily Mass," Ritze said.

"They're just such big wins."

Parishes provide outreach to students at non-Catholic colleges

By Hannah Heil
Catholic Times Reporter

Parishes located near non-Catholic colleges in the diocese have made outreach to students a priority.

Several area colleges are located near diocesan parishes, including Ohio Wesleyan University across from Delaware St. Mary Church, Otterbein University less than a mile from Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church and Denison University located near Granville St. Edward the Confessor Church.

The parishes have made efforts to provide community for Catholics on campus and incorporate them into parish life.

At Ohio Wesleyan University in Delaware, a Catholic group previously existed on campus but ceased to exist after the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2022, St. Mary Church helped restart a Catholic campus community.

"We kind of put together this idea of just connecting with students on campus and also connecting them with our young adults in the parish, so we kind of combined both of those things so that they could get to know each other," said



Denison University's Newman Club meets with Father Timothy Hayes (right), pastor at Granville St. Edward the Confessor Church. Photo/St. Edward

Kristin Story, development and communications director at St. Mary.

Outreach began with a Bible study for students in the university's community center. It became a weekly meeting using the Fellowship of Catholic University Students apostolate's Bible study materials.

"They really do appreciate, I think, the discussion-based (studies), where they can ask questions," Story said of students. "I thought for sure, like, they've

all been Catholic for years, most of them, that they would know a lot of this basic stuff, and that's not always the case. It's good to be able to have that touch point and to answer those questions."

To have an official Catholic group on campus, at least 10 student signatures were required. St. Mary Church helped support students in creating a group.

The church has also welcomed students to parish events.

A junior at Ohio Wesleyan is currently helping with St. Mary's

youth group. Another student has been participating in the parish's men's group at 7 a.m. on Saturday mornings.

"That's been one of the coolest things is just seeing them integrated into the parish community," Story noted. "They feel welcome enough to be there, but it was really just because we were connecting with them and then inviting them."

"We've also been noticing that a lot of the students that we've been doing the Bible study with, when they've graduated, or if they've gotten older, they've actually been participating in the parish itself."

A former Ohio Wesleyan student is now the St. Mary School music teacher and church music director.

The Catholic presence appears to be evolving.

At the beginning of the school year, the university had a welcome event for local churches to attend and meet the students.

"We're one of the few churches that was there that could say, 'Hey, you can walk to our church, and it's literally right next to your campus,'" Story explained. "It's across from where their stadium is."

Having clergy present and

available to students can be beneficial. Several students are fearful of openly professing their faith.

"We were noticing Ohio Wesleyan is just very, very secular on campus, like aggressively so," Story said. "A lot of the students have been kind of afraid to even show that they're Christian on campus."

Father Daniel Colby, parochial vicar at Marion St. Mary and Cardington Sacred Hearts churches, was assigned to St. Mary Church as a seminarian.

"We had him coming with us to the Bible study at Ohio Wesleyan, and then, when he became a deacon, he kept coming, too," Story recalled. "It was a huge impact to have some sort of clergy present as well."

St. Paul the Apostle Church has also been making efforts to engage students at Otterbein University in Westerville.

Nathan Forsthoefel, coordinator of youth and young adult ministry at St. Paul, said the church typically meets monthly with student leadership at Otterbein

Blue Mass brings together those who serve in public safety

A tradition continued on the 24th anniversary of the 9/11 tragedy with the annual Blue Mass celebrated on Thursday, Sept. 11 at Columbus St. Timothy Church.

The Blue Mass recognizes the commitment and sacrifices of police, firefighters, paramedics, emergency medical crew and all members of the public safety community who risk their lives or have given their lives in the line of duty.

Bishop Earl Fernandes was the principal celebrant and homilist for the Mass, which was concelebrated by Father David Poliafico, pastor at St. Timothy; Father Leo Connolly, chaplain for the Franklin County Sheriff's Office; and Father Joseph Yocum, a chaplain for the Franklin County Sheriff's Office, Grove City Police Department and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources.

"Having St. Timothy honor all first responders by holding the Blue Mass just shows the support by the faith-based community, which is to me the most important thing to help us to serve the community, serve God and serve humanity," Franklin County Sheriff Dallas Baldwin said after Mass, adding that Bishop Fernandes' homily drove home "what we should be doing as community servants. And that's what it's all about -- not serving ourselves but serving the community and doing it in the right way, the most moral and ethical way."

Honored guests and participants in the Mass included the Columbus Division of Police and Fire and the Franklin County Sheriff's Office Pipes and Drums units, Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus, Emerald Society, first responders and honor guards from the Columbus Division of Police, Columbus Division of Fire, Franklin County Sheriff's Office and the Ohio State Highway Patrol.

Jim Connors of the Knights of Columbus read the names



Members of law enforcement and public safety attend the annual Blue Mass at Columbus St. Timothy Church on Sept. 11. Photos courtesy Andy Long

of first responders who have died in the line of duty. Michael Woods, chief of the Hilliard Division of Police, addressed the representatives of the various agencies and guests after Holy Communion.

"What we have is more than a job. It's a calling, a vocation," Woods said. "Not one that everyone can understand, but yet we continue."

"Scripture tells us from the Gospel of John that there's no greater love than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends. It's lived out every day by the men and women gathered here, who know that they may be called to make the ultimate sacrifice ... every traffic stop, at every house fire, at every medical emergency."

"There are acts of bravery, large and small, that often go unseen and that rarely make the headlines. And yet we continue in the face of the tragedies that we've witnessed. We continue after the loss of a brother or sister in service."

Reflecting on the 9/11 anniversary, he said, "That day forever changed our nation. It reminds us of the worst of humanity, but it also shed light on the best. It showed us with

a historical clarity the meaning of courage and sacrifice. And it is our responsibility, our sacred duty to carry that legacy forward."

Chief Baldwin thanked the clergy for reminding first responders that their work has spiritual significance and that they bring order to chaos in difficult situations. And he thanked community members who support them with prayer.

The history of the Blue Mass dates to 1934 in Washington, D.C., where approximately 1,100 police and firefighters marched into Mass at St. Patrick Catholic Church in the nation's capital wearing blue uniforms for a special Mass.

The Blue Mass was popular through the years in the northeastern United States but expanded more widely after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks. Many of the Blue Masses now celebrated throughout the nation are organized by local Knights of Columbus councils.

"It's been a tradition here at St. Timothy when I arrived and hopefully it will continue even after I depart," Father Poliafico said. "It's a wonderful time once a year to remember and reflect



A color guard makes its way up the center aisle at St. Timothy Church during a procession at the start of the Blue Mass.



Pipes and drums from the Columbus Division of Police and Fire participate in the Blue Mass.



The gifts are brought to the altar during the Blue Mass on Sept. 11 at St. Timothy Church.

on all the stories we see every day on the news and everything else, and it's a time to thank (first responders), which we don't often get to do in the midst of chaos and tragedy."

As Americans continue to see shootings and stabbings and tragedies seemingly every day in the news, Father Poliafico said that it's important to remember Bishop Fernandes' message that "the peace that can only be found in Jesus is what keeps us going."



Michael Woods, chief of the Hilliard Division of Police, addresses the congregation at the Blue Mass.

Red Mass open to all at Cathedral

By Doug Bean

Catholic Times Editor

A tradition that was revived 40 years ago will continue next month when the Red Mass is celebrated at St. Joseph Cathedral.

The diocese's Red Mass, which was restarted in 1985 by the local Thomas More Society, will be held at 5:15 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 23 with Bishop Earl Fernandes as the principal celebrant.

The Red Mass is a tradition in the Catholic Church that dates to 1245, initiated by Pope Innocent IV, to pray for those serving in the legal profession, which today includes individuals involved in the legal, judiciary and government sector.

Attorneys, judges, legal aides and legislators are typically among the attendees, but the Mass is open to the public and all are encouraged to attend.

"The Red Mass is a Catholic Mass," said Kim Shumate, president of the central Ohio chapter of the Thomas More Society, "but everyone is invited. It's a Mass for the justice system, for our judges and legislators and people who are making law and helping citizens find their way through the law."

"It's a prayer for all of them, and that's not because they're Catholic. They could be any faith or no faith at all. We're trying to get away from the idea that you have to be Catholic to participate."

The Red Mass derives its name

from the color of vestments worn by the clergy at Mass. Liturgically, red is associated with the Holy Spirit and martyrdom. St. Thomas More, the patron of lawyers, served as lord chancellor of England in the 1500s and was martyred after he opposed King Henry VIII's separation from the Catholic Church.

"The Red Mass is unique, not just because of its long and rich history which dates back to the 13th century but because of the very visual actions within the Mass, such as the procession of judges in their judicial robes, the presence of the police pipe and drum corps, the celebration and preaching of Bishop Fernandes, and the presence of many others involved in the justice professions

paints a wonderful panorama emphasizing beautifully the way the Red Mass calls on the Holy Spirit to guide and inspire everyone present to seek and implement true justice -- God's justice -- in our society," said Deacon Tom Berg Jr., the diocesan chancellor.

The Thomas More Society, named in recognition of the saint, was established in 1998 as a national public interest law firm focused on defending life, family and freedom. The local chapter, which organizes the Mass at the Cathedral and a reception afterward for legal professionals, includes around 100 members.

In 1985, Bishop Emeritus James Griffin, a civil and Canon lawyer, was leading the diocese when

the Red Mass was restarted. The Mass was well attended for years until the COVID-19 pandemic hit in 2020.

"It's a day to celebrate the legal profession -- judges, lawyers, legislators, college presidents, paralegals ... those are the people it's always been aimed at," local Catholic attorney Tom Winters said. "At one time, we would almost fill the church."

In addition to the professionals, students have attended the Mass in the past, but in smaller numbers today, from Columbus St. Charles Preparatory School, St. Francis DeSales and Bishop Watterson high schools and Cristo Rey Columbus.

See RED MASS, Page 5

Local pilgrim witnesses canonizations in Rome

By Hannah Heil

Catholic Times Reporter

A diocesan woman said the canonization change in date to Sept. 7 for Ss. Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati might be because of her.

St. Carlo's canonization was originally set for last April but changed due to the death of Pope Francis. St. Pier Giorgio's canonization was set for early August. Both dates were changed to a joint canonization on Sunday, Sept. 7.

Marsha Forson, who recently moved to Columbus and serves as associate director at the Catholic Conference of Ohio, prayed that the two now-saints would be canonized together.

And, it appears, the Lord heard her prayers.

"Some people were maybe a little bit disappointed with having to change their travel plans, but I'm like, sorry, it was probably my fault," Forson said with a smile.

Getting to be present for the canonization of both of the Church's newest saints was a blessing.

Forson's first encounter with St. Pier Giorgio Frassati was nearly 10 years ago while working for the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) in Washington. The Dominican House of Studies next door, which provides theological education for ordained ministry in the Dominican order, had a relic of Frassati, a lay Dominican.

Forson later worked at the USCCB's migration and refugee services.

"Carlo Acutis' mother, Antonia, visited, and it was really convicting to hear her perspective on how her son's sanctity changed her life and the life of so many people," she recalled.

St. Carlo Acutis (1991-2006) was raised in Milan, Italy, and died of leukemia at age 15. He had a devotion to the Eucharist – attending Mass daily and spending hours in Eucharistic devotion.

He created a website documenting Eucharistic miracles around the world. The project became a traveling exhibit, inspiring many today to deepen their devotion to the Blessed Sacrament.

St. Pier Giorgio (1901-1925), also an Italian, had a deep spiritual life. He attended daily Mass, prayed fervently and practiced



Pope Leo XIV greets the crowd of people at the Vatican for the canonization of Ss. Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati on Sept. 7.

charitable works through organizations such as the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Frassati loved the outdoors and spent time mountain climbing and on excursions with friends. He died from polio at age 24, thought to be contracted by serving the sick.

Forson considers both young men an inspiration.

"Their mutual commitment to the Church, to the poor, their fidelity, and just their example as being saints in more modern times that we could relate to, has really impacted me very much," she said.

"Every year I pick a 'saint of the year,' and Pier Giorgio was mine (this year)."

Before arriving in Rome for the canonization, Forson spent time in Assisi, where St. Carlo Acutis is buried. Carlo's remains are covered in a wax coating and exposed for veneration.

Forson encountered many pilgrims from across the world who were equally inspired by St. Carlo. She then set off to Rome a few days before the canonization.

She recalled arriving at 6 a.m. for the canonization Mass set to begin at 10 a.m. Numerous people packed streets around the Vatican, waiting to enter St. Peter's Square, which was standing room only.

An estimated 70,000 people gathered in the square to witness the canonization. The atmosphere could be described as "very crowded, very hot, very uncomfortable," Forson recalled.



Pilgrims gathered at the Basilica di San Giovanni Battista dei Fiorentini for a prayer vigil in preparation for the canonizations.

"Despite the discomfort, it was truly a penitential experience. I joke that it might be my first and last canonization – at least in the summer."

The Mass was said in Italian with Latin Mass parts. The canonization formula was proclaimed in Latin. Some readings were spoken in English.

St. Carlo's younger brother, Michele, read the first reading, and his younger sister, Francesca, carried the gifts to the altar with her brother and parents. The twins were born four years to the day after Carlo's death.

Family members of St. Pier Giorgio Frassati, who died a century ago, including his 93-year-old niece, Giovanna Gilardini, attended a Mass in Turin, Italy, earlier this summer on Frassati's feast day, July 4.

During the canonization Mass, the Litany of the Saints was chanted. A cardinal read a short biography of the life of the saints and presented them to Pope Leo XIV. Relics of Ss. Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati were brought forward for veneration.

The saints were the first to be canonized by Pope Leo XIV since becoming pontiff.

"The moment that Pope Leo declared them saints, I just remember experiencing great peace and joy, like a happiness that I don't think I've known," Forson said. "I think it was one of the best moments of my life, even though it was super, super uncomfortable."

"At the moment of the consecration,



People wait to enter St. Peter's Basilica on the morning of the canonization.

Photos courtesy Marsha Forson

there was silence over the entire crowd, and that was really beautiful to remember the main thing and the unifying force that the Eucharist is. The reverence for that was really special – a tribute to the Lord – but I think also to these two men."

Forson admires how both saints placed the Eucharist at the center of their lives.

She said placing the Eucharist at the core is central to her work at the Catholic Conference of Ohio.

The Conference represents the Church's position before the Ohio General Assembly, various state departments, bureaus, agencies and other organizations. Eucharistic devotion is closely tied to its work.

Promoting justice and peace, which the Catholic Conference strives to do in the

Buckeye State, also aligns with the efforts of St. Pier Giorgio, who was involved in social causes. Forson wanted to attend the canonization, in large part, she noted, to ask for St. Pier Giorgio's intercession for her work.

She considers both saints to be signs of hope.

"In a time of so much difficulty and darkness and challenges, I think they shine a particular light," she said. "I've known them personally to be very powerful intercessors, so I think folks turning to them won't be disappointed."

RED MASS: Mass open to all, Continued from Page 4

"We're trying to rekindle that," Winters said. "COVID just knocked the wind out of everything like that."

"We're trying to get younger people. And, of course, getting younger people interested in anything to do with religion is getting harder and harder, but it's a great way for young people to find mentors."

Shumate is looking to generate a rejuvenation of sorts to attract more interest in the Red Mass and in the group.

"We're inviting a lot of people to attend and we're soliciting parishes directly this year and all of our attorneys in central Ohio," she said, "and we will be specifically inviting legislators and judges. We're looking for a robust turnout with Bishop Fernandes once again saying Mass for us."

With more attorneys and professionals working remotely or in suburban areas since the pandemic, they are not as connected as they once were to downtown offices that afforded easy access to the Cathedral. Consequently, it's not as convenient for some to make it to the Red Mass.

"And a lot of the Catholic attorneys who are new to the area aren't really aware," Shumate said. "We definitely need more visibility. The usual ways that we had of connecting and letting people know have really changed since COVID. That's why we're doing a push with email and we're thinking that we're going to establish a website for the organization."

A date change could also account for the dip in attendance. In 2022, the Red Mass was moved to the fall after being held for years in the spring. October is also campaign season for some elected officials.

The Red Mass is typically celebrated in many dioceses during October to coincide with the start of the Supreme Court's term.

"The late Chief Justice Tom Moyer really promoted it within the judiciary and past Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor did too," Winters said. "The Ohio Supreme Court has been supportive and even some of the federal district courts in Columbus and the municipal courts. At one time, it would be common for 30 to 40 judges to show up."

Franklin County Court of Common Pleas

Judge Julie Lynch, the mother of Father Timothy Lynch, pastor at Columbus St. Mary, Mother of God Church, is a Red Mass supporter. State officials who have attended in the past include Gov. Mike DeWine, when he was Ohio's attorney general, and current Secretary of State Frank LaRose.

Winters mentioned Bishop Griffin, the late Judge R. Patrick West and attorneys Tom Cavanaugh, Charles Schneider, Tom Morrison and Alphonse Cincione as driving forces in the 1980s to help build recognition for the Red Mass.

The efforts of West, Cavanaugh, Cincione and Moyer have been recognized in the past with awards from the local Thomas More Society. Other recipients have included attorneys John Conroy and Tom Bonasera, Msgr. Thomas Bennett, Msgr. Stephan Moloney and Judge Peggy Bryant. Bishop Griffin was presented a lifetime achievement award last year.

This year's honoree is attorney Tim Bechtold, the longtime treasurer of the local Thomas More Society.

Priests to attend convocation

The convocation for priests in the diocese that will take place Sept. 22-26 could alter daily Mass schedules at parishes depending on clergy availability.

Before attending daily Mass that week, the faithful are encouraged to check parish bulletins or websites for any changes in schedules.

The following parishes in the Columbus area, as reported to *The Catholic Times*, will continue their daily schedules during the convocation: St. Patrick, St. James the Less, Christ the King/St. Thomas the Apostle, Holy Family, Westerville St. Paul and Worthington St. Michael.

More than 120 priests will gather for the biennial convocation along with Bishop Earl Fernandes.

The diocese is encouraging the faithful to join in praying for priests during this time by offering a holy hour. Individuals are invited to sign up for an hour at <http://bit.ly/3Vb8yWV>.

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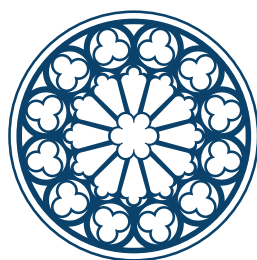
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Plain City St. Joseph celebrates church building's anniversary

By Tim Puet

For The Catholic Times

Plain City St. Joseph Church marked the 125th anniversary of the dedication of its church building at a Mass celebrated by Bishop Earl Fernandes on Wednesday evening, Sept. 3.

The church was formed in 1864 as a mission of Columbus St. Patrick Church in what was then known as Pleasant Valley. Mass there was celebrated in what had been a one-story frame house until the current church at 140 West Ave., costing \$9,000 to build, was dedicated on Aug. 28, 1900. It has been in use since then for Masses and devotions.

The parish also has a Sunday Mass in the auditorium of its activity center about a mile away at 670 W. Main St., which was built in 2006 and houses the parish offices and religious education classrooms.

Plain City, located in Union and Madison counties, was a mostly rural community for more than a century after the church was founded and continues to have a downtown reflecting that character. But the nearby city of Dublin in Franklin County has grown since the 1970s into one of



Clergy and servers meet outside St. Joseph Church after Mass.

Columbus' largest suburbs and that growth has spilled over.

Father Joseph Trapp, its pastor for the past 10 years, said the parish had about 100 families in 1971 and now has about 450. More growth is anticipated because of the housing development in nearby Jerome Township, a 1,400-acre planned community with more than 2,200 homes that



St. Joseph Church is observing the 125th anniversary of its dedication.

have been or are being built, plus shopping and recreation areas.

The transformation of the area has been obvious to anyone taking the Ohio Route 161 exit from Columbus to Plain City. Route 161, once a two-lane road at the exit, now has multiple lanes, traffic roundabouts there to serve several shopping centers, an indoor sports complex, office



Bishop Earl Fernandes celebrates Mass at Plain City St. Joseph for the 125th anniversary of the church's dedication. Photos courtesy Anna Lincoln

buildings and an Ohio University branch campus.

"You see the change every week at Mass," said Father Trapp, whose ministry staff includes Deacon Tony Bonacci, who has served the parish since 1997. "Just about every Sunday, I meet at least one or two young couples who have moved here to start a family. On the other end of the age spectrum, we're also getting a lot of senior citizens who have moved here to be close to their children."

He said parishioners started a campaign in 2013 to raise money

for future expansion. The money it raised is being held in reserve because the COVID pandemic of 2020 and the diocese's ongoing Real Presence Real Future restructuring program put a temporary halt to any expansion plans.

"We're waiting to see how things develop for the diocese as a whole and will be working in cooperation with diocesan officials to determine how to handle the growth that's going on

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COLLEGES: Parishes provide outreach to students at non-Catholic colleges, Continued from Page 3

to offer mentorship and guidance in the university's outreach to its Catholic student organization.

Otterbein Catholic Student Ministry (OCSM) is present on campus.

St. Paul provided the group with resources for weekly Bible study meetings on campus. It continues to provide guidance and mentorship for student leaders.

"Our mission at St. Paul the Apostle is to call, form and send missionary disciples of Jesus Christ, and it's crucial that we involve the youth," Forsthoefel said.

"We're in an interesting situation working with a campus that is obviously of a different faith tradition than we are, so it's a great opportunity for ecumenism and for collaboration and building bridges with our Christian brothers and sisters in Westerville."

St. Paul seeks to integrate college students into parish life. Forsthoefel said the church extends an invitation for students to join in the parish young adult group, parish Bible studies and small groups, and social events.

Male students are invited to participate in the parish's Men's Ministry.

This year, an Otterbein student is going through the Order of Christian Initiation for Adults (OCIA) at St. Paul to enter the Catholic Church.

A Mass is celebrated on campus typically a couple of times during the school year, especially for Holy Days of Obligation. Father Michael Haemmerle, the diocesan vocations director and former parochial vicar at St. Paul, previously celebrated Mass at Otterbein for students.

Several students in OCSM walk to St. Paul for the 10 a.m. Mass.

"Really we're trying to integrate them – because we're only three quarters of a mile away – into liturgies here," Forsthoefel said. "It's a balance with ministry with them, of going to where they are but also bringing them into what we're doing here at St. Paul's in the whole life of the parish."

Maria Tarbell, an Otterbein professor and parishioner at Sunbury St. John Neumann Church, serves as a co-advisor to OCSM. She has witnessed students desire greater spirituality.

"I have noticed that there has been a strong interest, especially with young men, concerning their faith, not just with Catholicism," she said. "It appears to me, from my vantage point as a part-time professor, there is a willingness to embrace something more solid, more traditional than what the current secular culture is providing to young adults."

Tarbell also serves as a leader for the Columbus Catholic Young Adult Conference. She said sharing her faith with students in the classroom, when appropriate, usually sparks questions.

"I will share my faith with anyone on campus if there is an opportunity to do so," she explained.

"Many already know I'm Catholic because of my involvement with OCSM over the years. In the classroom, I will share that I'm a co-advisor to OCSM, which generally will give one or more students a reason to chat with me."

St. Edward the Confessor Church has maintained a relationship with Denison University in Granville.

A 4:30 p.m. Sunday Mass is held on campus. A weekly gathering for students in the Newman Club, a Catholic student organization, is also offered.



The Otterbein Catholic Student Ministry provides information to students.

Steven Arias-Mosquera, youth minister at St. Edward, and Paul Radkowski, the church's music director, serve as co-campus ministers to the group.

"There's been a really strong connection between St. Edward's and Denison's Spiritual Life Office," Radkowski said. "The Spiritual Life Office has been very supportive of our ministry and providing the chapel space for the Mass, providing resources to help with the food and all those kind of things."

Radkowski, Arias-Mosquera and St. Edward's pastor have worked together for nearly 10 years to be present on and off campus to students.

As a co-campus minister, Radkowski noted that current pastor Father Tim Hayes' presence is important.

"There are some things that he can provide that we just can't, and so, it's been really great to have him there, being willing to be so present," Radkowski explained.

"With Msgr. Paul Enke, prior to Father Tim, he was very, very involved as well and was on campus frequently with the Mass. We used to go up for lunch once a



A group of Ohio Wesleyan University students and Sister Janna San Juan, FMA (left) meet in Delaware. Photos courtesy Otterbein Catholic Student Ministry and Delaware St. Mary

week just to sit and have kind of an office hours in the student union."

The co-campus ministers meet with the university's Newman Club co-presidents on Thursday afternoons to discuss the Sunday gospel or another selected reading. While the campus ministers are present, the student co-presidents lead the gathering for the larger group of students.

"It's a good form of peer-to-peer ministry because so much relates to, how do we live the Gospel on campus? How do we deal with the challenges of being Catholic and remaining faithful on campus in college?" Radkowski explained. "The peers leading it is really a good model, and it also helps to form them, too."

Several students, throughout the years, have participated in St. Edward's parish life.

"We've had a number of students who have gone through OCIA or have been confirmed if they hadn't been confirmed. So they've received sacraments while they've been here, too," Radkowski added.

This year, a couple of Denison University students are interested

in becoming Catholic or finishing receiving the sacraments of initiation (baptism, Eucharist and Confirmation).

Students serve as musicians, lectors and altar servers for Mass at St. Edward. Others have served in the church's youth groups or parish school of religion.

The on-campus Mass can be beneficial in ministering to students "who might be less inclined to come all the way down to St. Edward's for Mass, but to have a Mass just conveniently on campus is a big plus," Radkowski noted. "It makes it kind of harder not to go."

"I think a lot of students want to grow in their faith, and they want to have that opportunity."

Other non-Catholic colleges in the diocese include Kenyon University in Gambier, near Mount Vernon, and Capital University in Bexley, on the east side of Columbus.

Catholic ministry at Kenyon University is currently in a time of transition. Capital University does not have an active Catholic campus ministry at this time.



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NBA coach shares importance of faith at St. Charles event

By Doug Bean
Catholic Times Editor

The Catholic identity of Boston Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla first came to light three years ago when he responded to a reporter's question about Prince William and Kate Middleton sitting courtside at an NBA game in Boston's TD Garden.

Asked what it was like to be in the presence of England's royal family, Mazzulla responded, "Jesus, Mary and Joseph? ... I'm only familiar with one royal family. I don't know too much about that one."

It was a beautiful response that flummoxed secular sports reporters who generally dislike writing about faith.

Mazzulla wasn't asked about that comment on Thursday evening, Sept. 11 as the featured guest for Columbus St. Charles Preparatory School's ninth annual An Evening With ... speaker series in the Walter Student Commons, but he provided a glimpse into how he lives out his Catholic faith as the coach of one of the most iconic sports franchises in the world.

After answering questions from St. Charles students earlier in the day, Mazzulla sat down for a Q&A session with Paul Keels, the radio play-by-play voice for Ohio State University football and men's basketball, as hundreds of guests in attendance listened attentively. Mazzulla then took several questions from the crowd.

In the sports world, few athletes and coaches are willing to openly talk about their Catholic faith because they fear persecution and backlash. Kansas City Chiefs kicker Harrison Butker and Notre Dame football coach Marcus Freeman are two exceptions that come to mind who aren't afraid to share their Catholicism in public.

Albeit Thursday's event was held at a Catholic high school with mostly Catholics or Christians in the audience, the typically reserved Mazzulla wasn't shy about expressing how his faith has set a foundation that allowed him to rise through the ranks from a college player at West Virginia University to a coach at two NCAA Division II schools and then in the NBA.

Speaking at a students-only session on Thursday afternoon reminded Mazzulla, 37, who attended a Catholic high school in Rhode Island, the importance of



Senior Jack Bakhshi (center) greets Boston Celtics coach Joe Mazzulla. Paul Keels (right) moderated An Evening With ... conversation with Mazzulla on Thursday, Sept. 11 at Columbus St. Charles Preparatory School. Photos courtesy Bryan Gluys, 222 Photography



St. Charles Preparatory School senior Hugh Robinson (left) serves as the master of ceremonies for a press conference-style interaction with Coach Joe Mazzulla, who answered questions from a panel of five students after being welcomed by principal Rick Ey (right).

education in his formation.

One of the most impactful relationships he developed in high school was with the chaplain, who became a mentor and friend. The two have stayed connected for the last 20 years.

"I developed healthy habits there and one of them was going to the chapel," he said in response to a question from the audience. "That's where I fell in love with the rosary and where I fell in love with the chapel was during my freshman year. And those were habits that shaped me."

Mazzulla shared that Catholic education afforded him an identity and the ability to develop a faithful relationship with Christ.

"You do need development with the spiritual courage to make great decisions," he said. "And then there is having the right examination and knowing who you are, knowing what your purpose is, knowing that we all have different gifts, abilities and purpose on this earth, but I think we have a responsibility to push that purpose as far as we can to make people better. ...

"We have a responsibility to the person next to you to help them win, but at the same time help them grow" whether it's a player, colleague, chef or janitor.

Mazzulla said he has developed healthy spiritual habits to carry him through difficult situations. He carries a rosary with him and spends at least 20 minutes a day in silence that helps him deal with the pressures of the job.

"I think the more that you can have small prayers, small moments of wisdom, humble yourself before the next opportunity," he said.

He prioritizes the sacrament of marriage and starts the day in prayer with his wife and two children.

"My main responsibility is my relationship to Christ and my second responsibility is to my wife," he said. "If I don't have the right relationship with Christ and I don't treat my wife the right way, (my kids) are not going to have an example."

He explained that anytime he and his wife buy or build a new house, it has to have a room that can be turned into a chapel.

"We start and end every day as a family in that chapel together," he said. "I think that developing a relationship and teaching your kids how to have a relationship with Christ is the biggest gift that you can give them."

Mazzulla came to the Celtics as an assistant in 2019 and not long afterward his father, Dan, a longtime high school coach, was diagnosed with cancer and died the following year at age 61. The juxtaposition of those significant events proved challenging.

"I had to really work spiritually to accept both of those things," Mazzulla said.

"As I shared with the kids today, I feel like in life you have five or six moments where you have to prove to yourself that you are the person you say you want to be. And that was a moment I had to prove myself."

Before the start of the 2022-23 season, Mazzulla took over as interim head coach when Ime Udoka was suspended. Later

that season, Mazzulla was named the 19th coach in franchise history at age 34.

The Celtics lost a seven-game series in the Eastern Conference finals that year to the Miami Heat after falling behind 3-0 in the series.

"I almost broke spiritually and really identity-wise because I have my dream job, we're down 3-0 and I'm letting the city down," he recalled, before his wife gave him a reality check, saying, "you really thought you were going to win a championship your first year as an NBA coach? She coached me through that."

The Celtics came back the following season and won the NBA championship in 2024. Mazzulla became the youngest head coach to win the title in more than 50 years.

His third year wasn't quite as successful. The Celtics lost in the Eastern Conference semifinals in 2025, but after the season he received a multiyear contract extension.

He'll begin his fourth season next month knowing that there will be ups and downs as the coach of a franchise with a proud legacy and high expectations. His Catholic faith helps him keep the big picture in perspective when the pressure becomes overwhelming.

"Just never shy away from the fact that I'm nothing without Him," Mazzulla said, "and it's all about trying to stay as close to Him as we can but really how quickly you can get back to Him when you do fall."

Bishop dedicates Brotherhood Center at St. Charles to start new school year



The new Columbus St. Charles Preparatory School Brotherhood Center includes spaces for gatherings and learning.



Classrooms and labs are located on the upper floors of the new Brotherhood Center. Photos courtesy St. Charles Preparatory School

Columbus St. Charles Preparatory School celebrated the completion of its new Brotherhood Center on Aug. 22 when Bishop Earl Fernandes visited campus to serve as the main celebrant of an all-school Mass that was followed by the facility's dedication and blessing and a guest reception.

St. Charles alumni Bob Corna (Class of 1963) and Brent Foley ('98) worked closely together as the design architect and architect of record of the new 30,000 square-foot facility.

The four-story center took 11 months to construct and is built over the footprint of the school's former gymnasium.

Its first floor is a library that provides spaces for large groups and small gatherings as well as flexible learning areas. This includes an amphitheater, large comfortable sitting areas, a school store and cafe.

The second, third and fourth floors are designed with classrooms, labs, learning spaces and offices that support the school's academic curriculum.

The building and its additional new classrooms and labs come at an opportune time for St. Charles. This year's freshman class (228 students) and overall enrollment numbers (678 students) are the largest in the school's history.

Priests provide Holy Land update at Cradling Christianity dinner

Two priests with the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land spoke about the past, present and future in the Middle East during the annual Cradling Christianity Benefit Dinner on Sept. 4 at Columbus Our Lady of Victory Church.

Father Peter Vasko, OFM, founding president of the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land (FFHL), and Father John Puodziunas, OFM, the current president, delivered keynote addresses at a dinner that followed a Mass with Bishop Earl Fernandes as the principal celebrant.

The evening included a Zoom call with two students from the Jerusalem area benefiting from the FFHL University Scholarship Program, which is supported by the Cradling Christianity group in the Diocese of Columbus and other benefactors.

An estimated 185 people attended the dinner sponsored by Cradling Christianity, the local non-profit that was founded in 2006 in Columbus to provide opportunities and education assistance for young people who live in the Holy Land.

The Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land was established in 1994 and has raised more than \$50 million in 30 years to help students obtain diplomas and degrees. Father Vasko thanked Cradling Christianity for funding scholarships for 70 Christian students in almost 20 years.

The average cost of a four-year degree in the Holy Land is \$24,000. Students benefiting from the scholarships have achieved a 97 percent graduation rate, earning bachelor's and master's degrees in fields including law, business, engineering and medicine. Upon graduation, 92 percent have secured professional employment.

Ayman Awwad, who is studying to be a medical doctor, shared his background on the Zoom call.

From a Christian family of six who went to church every Sunday, Awwad said his faith influences his daily life by giving him the ability to live in peace and love during troubled times in the region and also the capacity to care for others. He shared that even small, positive actions can lead to improved relations with others.

RosemarBassam Haroun, who is studying to be a dentist, told the guests that, like Awwad, she enjoys helping others and realizes people must work together to create strong communities.

Compounding the difficulties for students and their parents to obtain an education is the serious unrest that has gripped the region since October 2023.

Father Vasko, who has lived in the Holy Land for 39 years, offered his perspective.

"I've experienced two intifadas, I've experienced the Moslem suicide bombings, I've experienced the wall that was built that surrounded and closed the West Bank from Jerusalem, the hundreds of check points that are in and throughout the country, the confiscation of Arab land, the constant violent skirmishes between the IDF and the militant Moslems, the Gaza war of October 7, 2023, and the Iranian-Israeli 12-day war in June of 2025," he said.

"The other thing which has transpired is the great number of deaths, especially among the Gazan Palestinians. And the other areas of Gazan living quarters is 90% destroyed. If you've seen any of the photos, you don't even know where you are. And the problem of the distribution of the food supplies.

"There's propaganda on both sides -- on the Israeli side and on the Hamas side. You don't know who to believe. It's a very complicated situation over there."

He explained that before the war there were 1,200 Christians



Speaking at the annual Cradling Christianity Benefit Dinner at Columbus Our Lady of Victory Church were Fathers Peter Vasko, OFM (left) and John Puodziunas, OFM (center) from the Franciscan Foundation for the Holy Land after Mass celebrated by Bishop Earl Fernandes (right).
CT photos by Ken Snow



living in Gaza among two million Moslems. Now, there are only 500 Christians after the others were killed, died while in need of medical attention or have gone missing.

For the most part, Christians throughout the Holy Land have lost their livelihoods since the war began in 2023 after Israel shut down universities, schools, hotels, businesses, banks and the airport.

With Christians heavily dependent on tourists from the United States, pilgrims stopped coming to the region and jobs were lost in the hospitality industry after hotels, restaurants and travel agencies closed. Israel also rescinded work permits to Palestinians to come to their jobs, leaving 100,000 workers, mostly Christians, unemployed.

"They are hurting, they are suffering, and they are losing hope," Father Vasko said. "Your generosity over the years has been tremendous, but much more is needed. As the Latin Patriarch stated, 'We hope that all faith traditions who call the Holy Land home intensify their prayers so that a permanent cease fire is declared, leading to the end of

this devastating war, and a clear path emerges toward the peaceful conclusion to this decades-old conflict, which hopefully will lead to peace, justice and freedom for the Palestinians, and peace, justice and freedom for our Israeli neighbors."

Father Puodziunas stressed that support from groups such as Cradling Christianity plays an important role not only financially but in showing families in the Holy Land that someone cares and wants to help.

"The Friars' presence in the Holy Land, for centuries, has been one of hope," he said. "It's one of being with the people at the lowest points of their lives and to help them understand that there's something else possible."

"We may not know what it is; we may not be able to do it ourselves; but because of our faith in our God who is Creator of All, a God that we can trust, a God who doesn't promise to fix it for us, will enable us and accompany us to help make it better for people as we live through these moments. That's what we bring, as friars, to the Holy Land."

"If we think we're going to fix

it quick, it's not going to happen. It happens because we choose to accompany them. That's why this (video conference with the two students in the Holy Land) was so important, so that we can hear them, we can feel their story, that they realize that they are part of our story and we are part of their story."

Hope for the future comes through supporting education, Father Puodziunas said, and not taking sides but being Christians and offering prayers for peace and empathy for all those living in the Holy Land.

Looking to the future, Father Puodziunas hopes to build an endowment that will continue to support FFHL scholarships, schools, family centers and youth programs.

"But I think the greatest part of our mission is that we have to continue to identify opportunities of awareness where we don't focus on solutions to problems that we have to fix, but we focus on ways that we can have understanding and greater empathy," he said. "For that is where peace will come from."

ANNIVERSARY: Plain City St. Joseph celebrates, Continued from Page 7

now and will be coming to the parish," Father Trapp said.

The parish in late 2015 added an endowment fund, administered through The Catholic Foundation, which supports some parish operational expenses through an annual donation. Additional endowments administered through the foundation have been created for the parish religious education program and the Martin de Porres Center, across the street from the activity center.

The de Porres center was founded 30 years ago by longtime parishioners Jim and Gloria Butler as a place where people facing economic difficulty could pick up basic non-clothing items needed to start or maintain a household. It began at the church, grew out of spaces there, in people's homes and in the activity center and got its own building in 2009.

"The Butlers retired about four or five months ago and since then, we've helped set up or provide items for nine homes or apartments," said Debbie Foster, who with her husband Joe has taken over direction of the center. "We mostly collect furniture and other home goods, as well as necessities such as laundry detergent, soap, toothpaste, toothbrushes and mouthwash, plus gift cards for local stores and cash."

"We purchase new mattresses and small household appliances and receive donations of new or gently used things such as tables, chairs and couches."

The center raises money through fifth-Sunday collections four times a year, by operating a dessert table at the parish Knights of Columbus council's Lenten fish fries and through a Christmas Giving Tree

that provides gift cards and cash to needy families in cooperation with social service agencies in Madison, Union and western Franklin counties.

The Parish School of Religion has more than 120 students in grades one through eight and meets on Monday evenings. PSR director Maria Vonada said the school works throughout the year with nursing homes in the area, taking part in Halloween's trick-or-treating and Christmas caroling and providing placemats with encouraging messages for residents of the homes.

Other parish activities include a That Man Is You! Men's discussion group that meets on Saturday mornings, a Walking With Purpose women's Bible study group on Wednesday evenings and a newly formed organization known as Labours of Love, whose goal is to combine a spirit of Christian fellowship and service for women ages 14 and older.

A Divine Mercy image pressed to the original image was displayed for 24 hours daily for many years at the parish's former mission in Milford Center. When that church, which has since been torn down, was closed in 2007, the image was moved to Plain City, where it is displayed during Eucharistic Adoration from 6 to 11 a.m. and 6 to 9 p.m. Mondays through Thursdays and 6 to 8 and 9 to 11 a.m. and 4:30 to 6:30 p.m. Fridays in the West Avenue church and at a Divine Mercy Mass at 9 a.m. Saturdays in the activity center.

Masses are at 4:30 p.m. Saturday, 8:30 a.m. Sunday, 5:30 p.m. Mondays and Wednesdays and 8 a.m. Fridays in the church and 11 a.m. Sundays in the activity center.

Pregnancy, infant loss service to be held

Back In His Arms Again will host a Wave of Light service at Resurrection Cemetery, 9571 N High St., Lewis Center, at 6 p.m. Wednesday, Oct. 15.

The Wave of Light is an international Pregnancy and Infant Loss Remembrance event held annually on Oct. 15 at 7 p.m. in every time zone across the globe, creating a continuous "wave of light" in honor of the babies gone too soon. This tradition brings remembrance, support and awareness to families affected by pregnancy and infant loss.

This year's service will take place at the Garden of the Holy Innocents in Resurrection Cemetery, where more than 4,000 babies have been laid to rest. The evening begins at 6 p.m. with music, activities and time for community connection. At 6:30, a short, uplifting program will be held, followed by the candle-lighting ceremony at 7 p.m.

The Garden of the Holy Innocents was a vision of Back In His Arms Again when the

organization began over 20 years ago. It offers a sacred place where families may lay to rest any baby born before 20 weeks' gestation or any baby who has been cremated — free of charge. Today, the ministry continues to serve between 75 and 100 families each month, primarily in central Ohio but also across the country and beyond.

Free votive candles will be available at the event. Personalized candles, with a baby's name, may also be purchased in advance. While the Wave of Light service is free to attend, registration is encouraged. Details, including candle orders, can be found at www.backinhisarmsagain.com or on the organization's social media pages. For more information or questions, e-mail Amy Tatz, amy@backinhisarmsagain.com.

Back In His Arms Again extends heartfelt gratitude to Resurrection Cemetery for its continued support of this event and its ongoing care for families experiencing pregnancy and infant loss.

CSS featured speaker revved up about faith, helping others

By Doug Bean
Catholic Times Editor

There's no denying the featured speaker at Catholic Social Services' annual Breakfast with the Bishop runs with fast company.

Cody Coughlin is a drag racing and stock car driver who has a last name familiar to many racing fans. Not only has the 29-year-old experienced his own success on the track, his family has been part of the National Hot Rod Association (NHRA) series for decades and his grandfather founded the auto equipment retailer JEGS High Performance.

After his presentation on Friday morning, Sept. 12 at the Renaissance Hotel grand ballroom in downtown Columbus, he hurried off to Pennsylvania to compete in the NHRA's Reading Nationals at Maple Grove Raceway in Mohnton, Pennsylvania.

Coughlin, 29, joined his family in NHRA for the first time this year after competing in stock car and truck series racing since he started in the sport in 2009. Along the way, he won a rookie of the year award, four national championships and 20 national events in late-model stock car series on oval tracks.

"Racing at all these different levels has taught me resilience, discipline and how to perform under intense pressure," he said during his presentation. "In fact, right after this event, I'll be heading to Pennsylvania to

compete, so if you don't mind, I'd appreciate your thoughts and prayers for a successful race. And you know, a few Hail Marys would be great, too."

But Coughlin, who went on to finish second in the Pro Stock division in Pennsylvania, didn't talk as much about his racing career at the Breakfast with the Bishop gathering as he did about his faith journey as a Catholic and the importance of contributing gifts and talents in the community.

"It goes without saying that's my most important journey," he said.

Coughlin was baptized as a Catholic and raised as a Protestant, "but just a few years ago, I felt the Lord really tugging at my heart, calling me back to the Catholic Church," he said.

"With the guidance of Bishop Fernandes, Father (Jonathan) Wilson and Father (Daniel) Olvera, I was able to receive the sacraments and be fully welcomed into the Catholic Church" at Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church.

"The decision has changed my life because I realized something important at the end of the day," he continued. "No matter how much we achieve or what we do at preparing this earth, everything is just temporary. Nothing here on Earth, at least for me, fulfills us in an eternal way (that) a relationship with God can. ... advance God's kingdom."

In addition to racing, Coughlin launched another career in 2022 as a real estate developer and



Bishop Earl Fernandes (left) chats with Cody Coughlin at Catholic Social Services' Breakfast with the Bishop on Sept. 12. Photo courtesy Catholic Social Services

entrepreneur who has built one high-end residential apartment community and has similar residential and commercial developments in the works.

"My journey into the Catholic faith has made me realize to be a disciple of Christ, you truly need to have a conversion of heart," Coughlin said. "We're called to genuinely love our neighbor as we love ourselves. My personal experience with becoming a practicing Catholic has been one that challenges me to advance beyond my comfort zone every day and to advance internally, not just externally. I believe that Christ taught us that we should truly be sincere and authentic in our good works."

Coughlin shared that he's

working with the diocese on several projects aligned with the mission of the Church and Catholic Social Services.

One of those is the rollout of mobile food pantry delivering meals directly to people in need throughout the diocese. His vision is grow the pantry into a fleet of vans going wherever there's a need.

"And maybe it's no coincidence, after spending so much of my life on four wheels, my service work is also being carried out on four wheels," Coughlin said.

A second initiative is the establishment of a mental health facility in Columbus.

"I don't often share this publicly that much, but I struggle with anxiety and it affects all aspects of

my life, whether it's relationships, work, peace of mind," he said. "And so I know personally how difficult that can be and how much of a true systemic problem it is in society not talking about mental health and getting to address the care that it needs."

Bishop Fernandes also spoke at the gathering after celebrating Mass at 7 a.m. at St. Joseph Cathedral and then led a question-and-answer session with Coughlin, who is engaged and will be married by Bishop Fernandes.

"When I look back on my journey, it's been more than racing and business, it's been about faith, about service and about answering God's call to use what I've been given, not just for myself but for others," Coughlin said. "And I'm grateful beyond words for the blessing of my life. I'm even more grateful for the chance to use those blessings toward servicing the needy and the Church as Christ instructed us to."

S. Kelley Henderson, president and CEO of Catholic Social Services, served as a master of ceremonies and encouraged guests to volunteer for its programs and to provide support spiritually and financially.

For more information on Catholic Social Services and opportunities to volunteer or donate, visit www.colcsss.org.

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Mass with
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ANTONYSAMY
*Archbishop Of Madras
Mylapore, India*

SUNDAY
OCTOBER 19, 2025
5:15 PM

*St. Joseph Cathedral
212 E. Broad St.
Columbus, OH 43215*



Join us as we celebrate World Mission Sunday (WMS) in the Diocese of Columbus.

Every year, WMS joins all Catholics of the world into one community of faith, as we recommit ourselves to the mission of the Church through prayer, the Eucharist, and financial support of the missions. This year's mission theme is
"Missionaries of Hope Among the Peoples."

Immediately after the Mass, all are invited to join us for food and fellowship in the undercroft of the Cathedral.



RSVP required. Please e-mail:
srzephrina@columbuscatholic.org

Immaculate Conception service project benefits St. Peregrine Fund

Columbus Immaculate Conception School made a donation in the name of former student Seth Jenkins to the diocese's St. Peregrine Fund in September with funds collected by students from a community service project during the 2024-25 school year.

A \$3,626.85 check was presented to Bishop Earl Fernandes and the diocese's Office for Pro-Life on Wednesday, Sept. 3 at the Chancery by Immaculate Conception principal Colleen Kent, teacher Margo Bjorkman and Todd and Wendi Jenkins, the parents of Seth Jenkins, a former Immaculate Conception student who died of cancer in 2010.

The St. Peregrine Fund was established in 2010 by Bishop Frederick Campbell and the Diocesan Council of Catholic Women as Catholics for Cancer Prevention and Cure. In 2016, the initiative was renamed the St. Peregrine Fund, which provides resources for cancer screening, ethical research and outreach to individuals and families in the diocese dealing with all forms of cancer.

Immaculate Conception's Student Leadership Council members began brainstorming during an after-school meeting last year to decide how they were going to make a positive difference in the lives of others in the community.

The sixth-, seventh- and eighth-graders came up with a variety of important causes and groups of people to help. Groups of students presented their ideas and explained why theirs should be chosen. After several groups made the case for supporting a cause related to cancer, the rest of the Student Leadership Council members agreed with them.

Most everyone in the council knew someone who has or had cancer. Students knew that people fighting cancer needed support from others and that they could make a difference through a service learning project.

The Student Leadership Council officers and advisers began to research cancer organizations in the community to partner with that would align with Catholic beliefs and values. It did not take long for them to discover the St. Peregrine Fund.

Mrs. Bjorkman, one of the advisers, remembered reading about it in The Catholic Times last year and found more information on the Diocese of Columbus website. On the website, there was a challenge to Catholic schools and parishes to create money-making events to raise funds for the St. Peregrine Fund.

This was a perfect opportunity for a service learning project.

Both Mrs. Andrea Smith and Mrs. Bjorkman, the student council advisers, have embraced service learning throughout their time at Immaculate Conception School both in the classroom and through the Student Leadership

Council. Several years ago, they both attended a summer professional development class titled "Making Learning Irresistible" along with about 10 other staff members. They gained valuable information about how to implement and guide students through service learning.

Mrs. Bjorkman and Mrs. Smith wanted to provide an authentic learning experience for the students by allowing them to empathize and understand what happens to individuals and families when someone has cancer. It was also very important to learn as much as possible about St. Peregrine, the patron saint of cancer patients.

The student council decided that on a school-wide penny war to raise money for the St. Peregrine Fund.

A successful service learning project involves an emotional connection with the recipients. In order to ignite the sense of empathy and compassion in the students, several guest speakers were invited to share their stories.

Mrs. Jenkins spoke to the Student Leadership Council about her son, Seth, the former Immaculate Conception student who died from leukemia when he was in eighth grade. The students learned about cancer, treatment and the toll it takes on families. She emphasized the importance of having a supportive community and how prayers help those dealing with cancer.

Carolyn Koncal Brenich, a childhood leukemia survivor, told the students about her cancer journey starting in eighth grade at Worthington St. Michael School. She has written a book called Faith, Hope and Cancer and shared many of the passages with the students.

She explained that cancer patients are often isolated and lonely. She encouraged the students to reach out to those who are suffering.

Carolyn shared how important her Catholic faith has been throughout her life. She was thrilled that the students already knew all about St. Peregrine when she visited.

Previously at an after-school meeting, the Student Leadership Council students had researched St. Peregrine and decided that it was important to teach the rest of the school about him and recite the St. Peregrine prayer together as a school during the penny war fundraising week.

After hearing from the guest speakers, students reflected upon what they learned.

"The guest speakers helped me understand what cancer does to you on a deeper level," Jude Connelly shared. "I know that cancer drastically changes your life but I didn't think about troubles with transportation or friends."

Sophia Henery added, "The guest speakers made the situation more real and showed what it



Grace Jenkins speaks to Immaculate Conception School students about her older brother who died of cancer at a young age.

was like from someone I met and talked to."

The Student Leadership Council officers created a presentation to teach the rest of the school about the St. Peregrine service learning project. They also organized and assigned the other members to various jobs and roles such as classroom teacher, morning announcements, prayer leader, advertising and money counter.

A week before the penny war began, Student Leadership Council members visited all the K-8 classrooms and explained the effects of cancer and many of the difficulties for individuals and families. They also taught them about St. Peregrine and the diocesan fund that they are supporting. They talked about Seth Jenkins, the boy whose signature is on the gym floor.

Each class was encouraged to help those with cancer through the St. Peregrine Fund by participating in the penny war the following week. At the end of the classroom visit, each student was given a St. Peregrine prayer card and the entire class prayed it together.

Through these classroom visits and daily morning announcements, the entire school had a sense of purpose: to bring in as much money as they could for the St. Peregrine Fund and to help those with cancer in any way.

A special guest came to IC the week of the penny war. Grace Jenkins, a former Immaculate Conception School aide and younger sister of Seth Jenkins, visited each classroom to talk about her passion -- bringing awareness to cancer and fundraising for research to end cancer. She showed students pictures of Seth and explained that he just wanted to be a normal kid. Grace encouraged the students to make a difference in their community by helping others and donating to the St. Peregrine Fund.

Through this service learning project, students were able to meet real people that had cancer or were affected by cancer. Not only did the students learn



Presenting a check for the diocese's St. Peregrine Fund to Bishop Earl Fernandes (center) are (from left) Margo Bjorkman, a teacher at Columbus Immaculate Conception School; Todd and Wendi Jenkins, parents of Seth Jenkins who died of cancer; and school principal Colleen Kent.

Photo courtesy Sarah Lightle



Students collected money to donate to the diocese's St. Peregrine Fund during the 2023-24 school year.

Photos courtesy Immaculate Conception

from them, they were able to empathize with those affected by cancer.

Students were deeply aware of the impact their efforts could make.

"This project makes a difference in the lives of those affected by cancer because it shows that they are not alone or forgotten and we are here to support them," Violet Reineck explained.

Seventh grader Mallory Burns added, "Since we raised over \$3,600, maybe someone's whole treatment could get covered."

Asked what she learned from this experience, Madalyn Steinbauer said, "I learned that everyone involved with cancer needs support, not just the cancer patient themselves."

Stella Frost said she "learned the importance of giving to others and how giving can help people in need."

Many students learned what happens to someone when they have cancer or how expensive the treatments can be.

Dylan Hernandez explained that "by donating to the St. Peregrine fund, we can help those with medical bills, transportation and medicine."

Through this experience, many students shared that they want to make a difference in the lives of others by continuing to serve others in the community.

"If I know someone that gets



Student Leadership Council members count money received from fundraising efforts at Immaculate Conception.

cancer, I will show them that I am there for them," Hayden Shea said.

Lola Bittner said, "I'm going to participate in more service projects so that I can help those in need." Mayce Baird added, "I am going to try to raise money for cancer and other causes." And Rowan Hand said, "I can pray for those with cancer."

For the students, the project was both educational and transformative.

"I learned that with the smallest things we do it can mean a lot to other people," Addison Zarco wrote. Violet Reineck shared, "It truly was an educational experience because it taught me the importance of service, love, applying faith into the community, and supporting people in need."

Looking back, students spoke about what they would carry with them.

"I will remember most how powerful we all are when we join in community with each other to make an impact," Kae'lyn Patridge reflected. "In the future, I will show more empathy towards those that have cancer or have had experience with it, because I never knew anything about cancer before this."

Foundation offers Your Catholic Retirement program

Throughout our lives, retirement conversations typically revolve around saving, investing and calculating financial implications — and rightfully so, as funding life in retirement requires careful, clear-minded planning. Yet as Catholics, we understand that retirement encompasses far more than financial security. After a lifetime of working, raising families, caring for parents and tending to life's countless responsibilities, retirement should unfold as a joyful season of living, giving and thriving in accordance with our faith.

Catholic teaching reminds us that every stage of life, including retirement, presents unique opportunities to grow in holiness and serve others. This season can become a profound expression of Catholic stewardship, where we integrate

our pro-life convictions, sacramental life, volunteer service and charitable giving into a cohesive vision of faithful living. Rather than viewing retirement as an ending, Catholic tradition invites us to see it as a continuation of our vocational calling in new forms.

Welcome to Your Catholic Retirement™ by The Catholic Foundation — a comprehensive approach that illuminates the path toward fulfilling retirement by weaving together essential Catholic teachings with practical planning. This integrated vision encompasses awareness of pro-life directives, deepened sacramental participation, meaningful volunteer opportunities and purposeful charitable stewardship, all grounded in the Church's wisdom about human dignity and our call to love and serve.

As you approach Your Catholic Retirement, The Catholic Foundation stands ready to help you assemble the right team of professionals. Our Professional Advisors Group (PAG) connects you with qualified professionals who can assist with estate and financial planning, ensuring your retirement years reflect both prudent preparation and faithful Catholic principles as you discern this next chapter of your life.

Founded in 1984, The Catholic Foundation is an authentically Catholic charitable organization dedicated to maximizing personal giving to transform lives through parishes, education, vocations and ministries throughout the Columbus diocese and beyond. Our growth reflects God's blessing on this mission: Assets under management have

increased from \$143 million in 2014 to over \$300 million today, while diocesan impact on the community has grown from \$5.8 million in grants in 2014 to over \$25 million now. We estimate that donor generosity touched approximately 5.4 million lives last year — a testament to the transformative power of Catholic stewardship.

As Catholics begin considering retirement and discerning how best to share their time, talents and treasures in this new season, The Catholic Foundation is here to guide you. Contact Scott Hartman at shartman@catholic-foundation.org or 614-443-8893 to explore how you can begin planning for Your Catholic Retirement that honors both practical preparation and faithful Catholic living.

Fall 40 Days for Life campaign set to begin

The fall 40 Days for Life campaign begins this month and Greater Columbus Right to Life is encouraging the faithful to participate with prayer, fasting and peaceful witness outside abortion centers.

In Columbus, prayerful witness will take place at the Planned Parenthood surgical center, 3255 E. Main St., from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m. Sept. 24 through Nov. 2.

Greater Columbus Right to Life will host a local campaign event at 1 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 28 on the sidewalk outside the center. Signs and swag will be available for pickup, and GCRTL team leaders will be available to answer questions.

For those 40 days, pro-life faithful will gather to pray in a special way for mothers and fathers, to offer hope for families

in crisis and to witness to the dignity of every human life.

What began as a small effort in Texas nearly two decades ago has become an international movement, uniting people in more than 1,000 cities across 64 countries. The results are breathtaking: more than 24,000 babies saved from abortion, hundreds of abortion workers leaving the industry and dozens of abortion centers closed for good.

While the international numbers are inspiring, the local fruits of this effort are deeply moving. During the first week of the Spring 2025 campaign, Greater Columbus Right to Life reported that at least three women turned away from their abortion appointments.

And the need — and the opportunity to make a difference — is growing. In June, four days of observation revealed more than 110 customers entering the center. Every one of those moments represents a life on the edge of a decision.

The heartbreaking reality is that both local and out-of-state abortions are increasing. More women and families are being drawn into the storm of fear and despair. That is why a pro-life presence matters so much in the form of a gentle smile, a prayer whispered from the sidewalk, or simply the knowledge that someone cares can be the anchor that speaks to a mother's heart long enough for her to choose life.

Last spring, more than 20 churches

and hundreds of individuals adopted days (or partial days) and filled hours on the sidewalk. Whether clusters of one or two or larger groups, with both seasoned advocates and newbies alike, it was beautiful to see so many standing on the sidewalk.

This fall, the goal is for 40 churches to participate and to have coverage each hour from 7 a.m. until 7 p.m. With that, 1,000 hours of prayers could be exceeded and more than 500 women reached.

So often, women who are hurting after an abortion or are grateful after choosing life have said, "I was looking for a sign and

See 40 DAYS, Page 15

YOU ARE INVITED

A Night at
The
Museum
WITH FR. TAD



Friday, October 10th 2025
5:30PM

OHIO HISTORY CENTER
800 E 17TH AVE, COLUMBUS, OH
43211

Join Greater Columbus Right to Life for exclusive after hours access to the Ohio History Center and Museum to hear from internationally renowned bioethicist and senior ethicist at the NCBC, Fr. Tad Pacholczyk, who will be speaking on end of life bioethics to support the work of our program, Faithful at the End of Life. Tickets begin at just \$100 with group discounts and sponsorship opportunities available.

Greater Columbus
Right to Life
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Please scan the QR Code, visit
gcrtl.org/frtad, call us at 614-445-8508,
or email us at RSVP@gcrtl.org.



Diocesan priest's faithful nephew makes it to big leagues as pitcher

By Tim Puet

For The Catholic Times

Houston Astros rookie pitcher AJ Blubaugh is striving for success as a major leaguer but wants to be known for more than that.

"More than just staying in the majors, my ultimate goal is to spread as much of the Good News of the Gospel as I can, whether it's to one or 1,000 people at a time, by whatever means," he said. "I want to make people think about God and His importance in their lives. If I can do that wherever I am, that's a win."

Blubaugh is part of a Catholic family with many members in Knox and Richland counties, including Father Homer Blubaugh, a great uncle and a priest of the Diocese of Columbus who lives in retirement in his hometown of Danville.

AJ (Alan Joseph) has pitched eight games with the Astros this season as of Sept. 14, posting a 3-1 record with a 2.45 earned run average, striking out 25 batters and walking six while giving up 11 runs and 13 hits in 21 innings.

He has spent most of the year with the Astros' Class AAA team, the Sugar Land (Texas) Space Cowboys of the Pacific Coast League, where his record was a somewhat deceptive 5-8 with a 5.27 ERA. He was the PCL's pitcher of the week for the week of Aug. 4-10 and was among the league's top pitchers in batting average against (.252) and strikeouts (97) when he was called up to Houston for the fourth time this season on Aug. 26.

He began the season in Sugar Land and made his first big-league appearance on April 30, starting against the Detroit Tigers at home and giving up seven runs (two earned) and five hits in four innings, striking out six and walking one.

He then was sent back to Sugar Land until early August, returned to Houston to pitch five innings of long relief and get the win at Miami in a 7-3 victory on Aug. 5, went back to Sugar Land the next day, was recalled again on Aug. 23 and was the winner in a four-inning relief stint at Baltimore that night in a 9-8 victory. He was sent back down after that game but was recalled once more the following day because of an injury to pitcher John Rooney, who himself had just been called up from the Space Cowboys.

40 DAYS: Fall campaign, *Continued from Page 14*

praying that someone could help me." While that encourages pro-life witnesses, it's also beautiful to serve as a visible sign of Christ's love in a place so often marked by sorrow, violence and discouragement.

Whether it's an hour a week, one afternoon or an entire day with a parish, school or group, everyone's role is vital. Visit www.gcrtl.org/40-days-for-life to sign up for an hour or to volunteer to sponsor a day or a partial day at your church. While drop-in prayer is welcomed,



Right-hander AJ Blubaugh, a great nephew of Father Homer Blubaugh, has a 3-1 record as a rookie pitcher with the Houston Astros.

He appeared in ninth-inning mop-up roles in Houston's losses at home to the Los Angeles Angels on Aug. 31 and the New York Yankees on Sept. 2 and followed that with two appearances for a combined six innings as the Astros' second pitcher in losses on Sept. 5 at Texas and Sept. 9 in Toronto. In the latter game, he struck out four, walked one and held the American League East-leading Blue Jays hitless. He pitched the fourth inning on Sept. 12 at Atlanta and picked up his third win.

Major-league rosters expanded to 28 after Sept. 1, so he has a good chance of staying in Houston for at least the rest of the regular season as the Astros try to win their fifth straight AL West Division championship and make the playoffs for the ninth consecutive time.

Blubaugh said it wasn't surprising that he started the season at Sugar Land and that he had hoped to be brought up to Houston at some point, but he was surprised at that call coming within a month of the start of the season.

"I'd had a couple of good outings in April and had just gotten back on a Sunday night from a road trip to Tacoma, sat down in my apartment after making dinner and was taking my first bite when I got a phone call from Mickey (Storey, Sugar Land's manager) asking how I felt about throwing tomorrow," he said earlier this month. "I thought he meant I'd be starting on Tuesday, but he said it was because the Astros wanted me in Houston on Wednesday to start against the Tigers."

signing up ensures that an hour has coverage and encourages someone who may not want to go alone.

Standing in prayer outside an abortion clinic is not easy. It takes courage and humility. Passage of Ohio's abortion amendment has made it more difficult for the laws to protect unborn children and their mothers. But again and again, God multiplies the smallest acts of faithfulness. The simple decision to show up for an hour can make the difference between life and death.

"I'm not sure what I said to him, but it seems my mind went blank after that and it took a good five minutes for the news to sink in after I hung up."

"I thought of all the times I was told I should give up, that I was too small, that no one from Bellville, Ohio would ever make it to the big leagues, yet here I was," said Blubaugh, who turned 25 on July 4 and is a 6-foot-2, 200-pound right-hander who was a baseball, football and basketball star at Clear Fork High School in Bellville, near Mansfield.

He played in college at Wisconsin-Milwaukee, was selected by the Astros in the seventh round of the 2022 draft and has worked his way steadily up the minor-league ladder since then.

"Once I got over the shock, I called my girlfriend in Milwaukee and told her I needed her to come to Houston right away to watch me pitch, and she broke down," he said.

"Then I called my parents and woke them up because it was around 11 p.m. I could hardly talk to them without crying. It still breaks me up to think about how much my mom sacrificed and how my dad would play catch and practice with me whenever I wanted, all to get me to this point," he said with obvious emotion in his voice.

"A bunch of my family members, probably more than 20, made it to my first game. The last few moments before the first pitch were like a montage of my baseball career, from 2 and 3 years old through T-ball, high school, college and the pros, all flashing through my head. Then I pitched my first strike and got into a groove."

"That first outing didn't go well, but it didn't concern me because I've always left everything up to God," Blubaugh said. "There was a period of about two months or so afterward when I think I tried to put matters too much into my own hands rather than trusting Him in all things. I had to remind myself to bear down and start from scratch and that here I am playing a kid's game at a high enough level that I'm being paid to do it."

His return to the big leagues was much more successful as he threw 70 pitches in five innings



Houston Astros rookie AJ Blubaugh pitches against the Detroit Tigers in April. Photos courtesy Houston Astros

against the Marlins, striking out five and not walking a batter until his final inning of a bullpen game — one in which a team's intention is to use several pitchers for short periods. He settled on a simple array of pitches, relying on his four-seamer, changeup and sweeper, with a velocity reaching a high of 98 mph while ignoring the curveball, cutter and slider he also threw against Detroit.

Astros manager Joe Espada had hoped for "some good innings" from him and Blubaugh filled that purpose, being presented after the game with the wrestling-style "Pitcher of the Game" belt the team awards after victories.

"He went to 98 frequently today," Espada said. "There was some conviction behind his pitches. There was a purpose. ... When you've got 98 in the tank and then you can throw a changeup and a sweeper, it makes the at-bat a little more complicated for the hitters. (His performance) was very encouraging to see. We needed that from him."

After returning to Sugar Land, Blubaugh followed that performance five days later with six shutout innings against the Sacramento River Cats, which earned him his second PCL pitcher of the week award in two years.

His third callup resulted in a performance in Baltimore similar to the one in Miami and was notable to him for another reason besides being his second big-league victory. "My grandmother was at that game and it was the first time she's seen me pitch since college," he said. "She's always been one of my greatest supporters."

Baseball keeps Blubaugh away from his family for much of the year, but when the baseball season ends, he heads for Bellville, where he is a member of Resurrection Parish in Lexington, part of the Diocese of Toledo, to spend as much time as he can with his family, including Father Blubaugh.

"Father has blessed me throughout my life," he said. "He's part of our Thanksgiving and Christmas gatherings and it's been great to have him visit the various places where I've pitched since signing with the Astros."

"AJ's always been very serious and humble," Father Blubaugh

said. "He doesn't push himself on people but is very laid back. He was a good student in high school and was very much fun to watch as an athlete."

"He started out as a catcher, but in his senior year his coach told him 'You're a pitcher' and that turned out to be a pretty good call. His dad was in sports, his mom was a great volleyball player and his sister was on a championship soccer team at Clear Fork, so it's no surprise he's so accomplished athletically."

AJ said that like many young people, his faith became less important to him in college. Friendships with fellow players in the Astros' system after he began his

professional career made him realize he was missing a significant part of his life.

"I became buddies with Tyler Guilfoyl and Ryan Wroblewski, who were in the same Astros draft class with me, and Shay Whitcomb, who's a couple years older. We're all in the same Bible study and it's helped all of us grow in our journey with God," he said.

"Last year on all my start days, I began wearing a T-shirt saying 'Jesus won' during warmups. It was cool how many people in the stands responded to that and that when kids asked, I was able to tell them what God has meant to me. I've adopted Luke 1:37 — 'For nothing will be impossible with God,' which the angel Gabriel said to Mary at the Annunciation — as my special Bible verse."

"I've faced so many batters so far in the majors that it's hard to tell who's been the hardest to pitch against. I can recall pitching against Mike Trout of the Angels the other day and thinking, 'Here's someone I admired while growing up because he plays so hard and with passion, and now he's in the batter's box facing me.'" Trout grounded out to shortstop in that appearance.

"Being up and down between Sugar Land and Houston these last few weeks and performing in all kinds of pitching roles this year has really helped strengthen my attitude of just talking things day by day and trusting God. I'm honored to do whatever I can for Him and whatever I can to help the team toward its ultimate goal of winning another World Series."

25th Sunday of Ordinary Time Year C

Mammon personified dehumanizes us and un-divinizes God

Amos 8:4-7
Psalm 113:1-2, 4-6, 7-8
1 Timothy 2:1-8
Luke 16:1-13

“Mammon” is found among that elite group of terms that we only recognize from the Bible, perhaps rendering it particularly challenging to contemplate well. Translators have treated it in various ways over the centuries (“wealth,” “money,” “riches”), but currently it has been left to speak for itself in its original language, much like “sabbath” or the units of measure like “ephah” and “kor.”

The word is curiously absent from the entire corpus of Biblical Hebrew, while it does occur in assorted Rabbinic commentaries, apparently with the general meaning of “something on which to rely.” Our American currency famously rejoins against this idea with the motto, “In God we trust.”

Since Christ explicitly pits mammon against God, the Christian tradition has always understood it in the negative sense of avarice, even imagined to have its own sentient individuality. The parable of the dishonest steward includes an explanation that offers the strange advice, “I tell you, make friends for yourselves with dishonest wealth,” wherein money can apparently have moral character and human relationships. His famous injunction corroborates the notion: “No servant can serve two mas-



SCRIPTURE READINGS
Father Tyron Tomson

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

ters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other.”

We should of course trust, believe in, and love persons, not objects, and therefore not objectify persons, but also not personify objects. “If, therefore, you are not trustworthy with dishonest wealth, who will trust you with true wealth?” conveys solid logical reasoning along these lines: If one can’t act like a person with an object, then how can one act like a person with another person? We degrade our own high nobility, for we humans alone possess a worth that is inestimably worthwhile.

Throughout history, luminaries from the

Church Fathers to scholastic masters and literary giants construe the figure of mammon as some kind of demon, associating it with a supposed Syriac deity of the same name. Our vices often do seem to act like conscious entities, and the sinister beings behind them indeed can appear to portray personal malice in opposition to “... God our savior, who wills everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth.” The extreme domination of materialism upon an individual and by extension to whole prosperous societies appears tantamount to possession, as does the degree of evil perpetrated by it. This is irreconcilable with “a quiet and tranquil life in all devotion and dignity.”

The poverty-stricken become the usual victims of greed. So universal is the danger that it’s no wonder that St. Paul pleads, “I ask that supplications, prayers, petitions, and thanksgivings be offered for everyone.” The prophet Amos bids, “Hear this, you who trample upon the needy and destroy the poor of the land” in preface to his condemnation of manipulating the instruments and practices of commerce by those who “buy the lowly for silver and the poor for a pair of sandals.” The Psalmist promises that God “raises up the lowly from the dust; from the dunghill he lifts up the poor to seat them with princes.” The downtrodden were apparently truly trodden down, not just accounted as material possessions, but as the worst of the refuse ... manure.

We hear a most ominous warning issued for this behavior: “The Lord has sworn by the pride of Jacob: never will I forget a thing they have done!”

Self-serving pursuit of fortune can grow to insatiable proportions. Acquiring property easily becomes an all-encompassing obsession. Filthy lucre disgraces the charity for which our souls were designed, as evidenced in the ignored plight of the destitute. Mammon undermines our worship of God, so the Psalmist must remind us, “Praise, you servants of the Lord, praise the name of the Lord.” We “should pray, lifting up holy hands” in a gesture of empty poverty before “our God who is enthroned on high.”

In divine riposte to the problem of mammon, the Savior of the world paid the infinite cost of our redemption: “Christ Jesus, who gave himself as ransom for all.” Economic imagery collapses considering the greatest debt that could ever exist, the incalculable value of an immortal soul created in God’s own image but fallen from His priceless grace. No amount can suffice; the sacrifice of a person is required, like in exchange for like. How senselessly we equate success with riches, how absurd to anthropomorphize cash, how dangerous to let materialistic desires control us, trying to serve God and anything else at the same time. “For there is one God.”

26th Sunday of Ordinary Time Year C

Lessons on life and faith from parable of Lazarus and the rich man

Amos 6:1a, 4-7
Psalm 146:7, 8-9, 9-10
1 Timothy 6:11-16
Luke 16:19-31

Today’s gospel presents a story by which Jesus reminds us of a couple of very important truths of life and of faith. In his book, the evangelist had previously pointed out who the main target audience for Jesus’ teaching was: “No servant can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

The Pharisees, who loved money, heard all these things and sneered at him. And so he said to them, “You justify yourselves in the sight of others, but God knows your hearts; for what is of human esteem is an abomination in the sight of God” (Lk 16:14-15). Then, Jesus provides us in today’s gospel “The Parable of Lazarus and the Rich Man,” that closed with an ominous tone: “Abraham said, ‘If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead.’”

Jesus’ teaching was not entirely new for Jewish society of his time. The prophets for-



SCRIPTURE READINGS
Father Ervens Mengelle, IVE, SSL

Father Ervens Mengelle, IVE, SSL, is an Assistant Professor of Scripture and Dean of Men in the School of Theology at the Pontifical College Josephinum. He holds a licentiate in biblical exegesis from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome with further biblical studies at the Toronto School of Theology.

ever insisted on the necessity of assisting those who did not have the means to live. At that time, certain categories of people were deprived of virtually all support because of the nature of society (without any form of institutionalized social assistance as we have today).

Today’s responsorial psalm echoes the prophets and lists those categories: the hungry, the captives, the handicapped (blind), the strangers (foreigners), orphans and widows. The Jews at that time were particularly sensitive to these appeals from the prophets after they had come to acknowledge that the situation in which they were living (that is, the dispersion of the tribes after the two kingdoms were successively destroyed, the Northern Kingdom in 725 B.C. by the Assyrians and the Southern Kingdom in 586 B.C. by the Babylonians, as well as the lack of political freedom) was a consequence of their own behavior. It is recalled in today’s Entrance Antiphon: “... we have sinned against you and not obeyed your commandments” (Dan 3:29, 30).

Today’s first reading, taken from Amos, considered to be the first of the writing prophets around the middle of the eighth century B.C., is very explicit about the meaning and content of Daniel’s self-accusation. Notice that the indictment of Amos does not describe what we may call “crimes” but rather their attitude of complacency regard-

ing their own situation without thinking of those who were deprived of the most basic goods.

The excerpt used for today’s liturgy is not the strongest in the prophetic book. Also, an excluded line is very poignant: “You who would put off the day of disaster, yet hasten the time of violence!” (Amos 6:3). Their lack of justice cried to Heaven (catechetical teaching of former times included a category called “sins that cry out to Heaven,” which included oppressing the poor, especially widows and orphans, and defrauding workers of their wages).

Today’s gospel strongly echoes the teaching of the prophets with the addition of a further element, namely the perspective of eternal life as conceived by some Jews in Jesus’ times (the idea of Abraham’s bosom as a place of comfort, security, and peace for the righteous dead, which represents the tender care and presence of God, akin to a child being held by a parent; see Psalm 131).

Jesus’ parable presents an additional de-

See SCRIPTURES, Page 17

DIOCESAN WEEKLY RADIO AND TELEVISION: Mass Schedule: Weeks of September 21 and 28

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 Breezeline 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. Saturdays, 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).

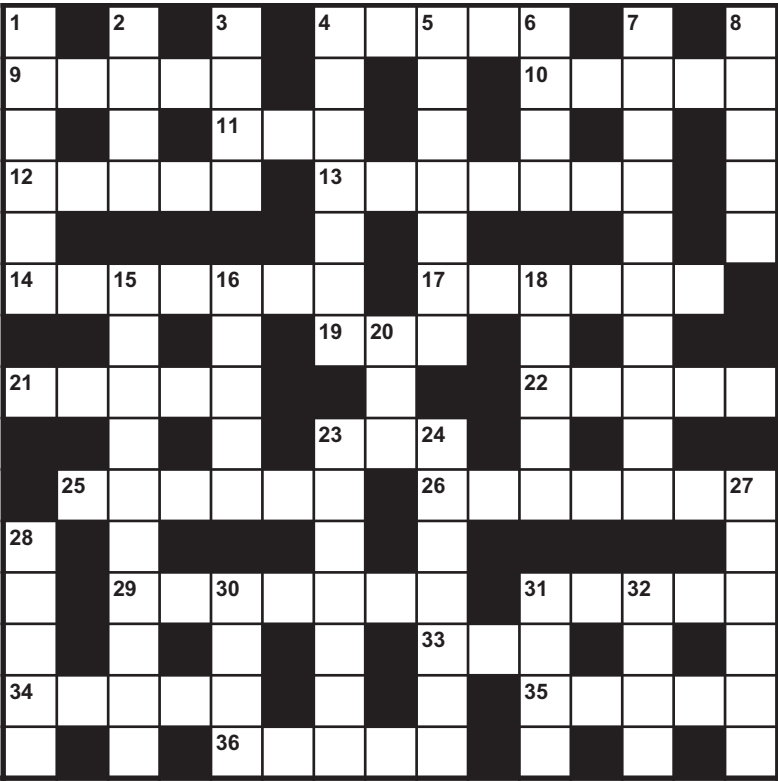
Videos of Masses are available at any time on the internet at these and many other parish websites: Mattingly Settlement St. Mary (www.stannstmary.org); Columbus St. Patrick (www.stpatrickcolumbus.org); Delaware St. Mary (www.delawarestmary.org); Sunbury St. John Neumann (www.saint-johnsunbury.org);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

We pray the propers for Weeks I and II of the Liturgy of the Hours

THE WEEKDAY BIBLE READINGS

9-22/9-27 MONDAY Ezra 1:1-6 Psalm 126: 1b-6 Luke 8:16-18	THURSDAY Haggai 1:1-8 Psalm 149:1b-6a,9b Luke 9:7-9	9-29/10-4 MONDAY Daniel 7:9-10,13-14 or Revelation 12:7-12ab Psalm 138:1-5 John 1:47-51	THURSDAY Nehemiah 8:1-4a,5-6,7b-12 Psalm 19:8-11 Matthew 18:1-5,10
TUESDAY Ezra 6:7-8,12b,14-20 Psalm 122: 1-5 Luke 8:19-21	FRIDAY Haggai 2:1-9 Psalm 43:1-4 Luke 9:18-22	TUESDAY Zechariah 8:20-23 Psalm 87:1b-7 Luke 9:51-56	FRIDAY Baruch 1:15-22 Psalm 79:1b-5,8-9 Luke 10:13-16
WEDNESDAY Ezra 9:5-9 Tobit 13:2-4,7-8 Luke 9:1-6	SATURDAY Zechariah 2:5-9,14-15a Jeremiah 31:10-12b,13 Luke 9:43b-45	WEDNESDAY Nehemiah 2:1-8 Psalm 137:1-6 Luke 9:57-62	SATURDAY Baruch 4:5-12,27-29 Psalm 69:33-37 Luke 10:17-24

CATHOLIC CROSSWORD



- ACROSS**
- 4 God loves a cheerful one
9 Mission to remember
10 Abbey sound
11 Holy ____
12 Administrative arm of the Catholic Church
13 Noah took them into the ark
14 Catholic opera singer Pavarotti
17 The Diocese of Baker is here
19 The father of Saul's general, Abner
21 ____ of the Mass
22 One of the 10 plagues
23 ____ culpa
25 Simon, the apostle, was one of these
26 Catholic Academy-Award winning actress Young
29 Time for some Easter services
31 Pope before Benedict III
33 Chi follower
34 California governor who attended a Jesuit seminary
35 Catholic actor of "The West Wing" fame
36 Jesuit missionaries compiled an atlas of this country

- DOWN**
- 1 Catholic apologist and mathematician
2 Eastern Catholic who played Klinger on M.A.S.H.
3 Sub ____ (secret appointment)
4 Catholic actor, "The Great One"
5 Our Sunday ____ newspaper
6 Religious instruction for converts (abbr.)
7 Member of an order founded by St. Paul of the Cross
8 Where 11A is
15 Essential element of the Sacrament of Reconciliation
16 Declare a marriage invalid
18 Church days
20 Famous outcast
23 Peak in Exodus
24 Home of the Archdiocese of Edmonton
27 Season during which the Joyful Mysteries are prayed
28 Title for Jesus
30 "____ Dimittis"
31 "For whoever wishes to save his life will ____ it" (Mk 8:35)
32 Father of Jesse

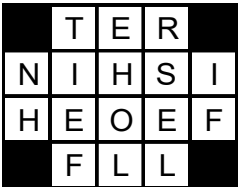
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Words of Wisdom

by Pat Battaglia, aka Dr. Fun

Draw a path from letter to letter to spell the words given in capital letters that completes the wisdom statement. Move one square at a time, up, down, right, left or diagonally until all letters are used once. Ignore any black squares.

No one chills out ...



IN THE FIRES OF HELL

Sister Annie Killian professes perpetual vows

Sister Annie Killian, OP, made her perpetual profession of vows as a member of the Dominican Sisters of Peace on Sunday, Aug. 3 in the chapel of the congregation's Columbus motherhouse. Her discernment began in 2014. She entered the congregation as a candidate in 2017, joined the novitiate in 2020 and made temporary vows in 2022. She recently was appointed as an assistant professor of English at the University of Notre Dame and will be instructing undergraduate and graduate classes this semester in medieval poetry and drama. She had been an assistant professor of English at Ohio Dominican University (ODU). Her profession ceremony

featured musicians, including Emily Strand, ODU director of campus ministries, and students from Salt and Light, the ODU campus ministry Organization. The university's chaplain, Father Dan Millisor, presided at the liturgy, with concelebrants Father Carlos Quijano, OP, motherhouse chaplain, and Father Tony Davis of Columbus St. Josephine Bakhita Parish. While at ODU, she also was the inaugural public humanities postdoctoral fellow for the Medieval Institute at Notre Dame. She has taught with the Inside Out prison exchange program and the Moreau College Initiative. She is an elected national council member for Pax Christi USA and a leader and presenter at

the Dominican Youth Movement USA's "Preaching in Action" conferences. She is also a member of the futuring leadership team for the Dominican Sisters Conference and has volunteered with the Kolbe House Jail Ministry, an outreach for men and women after their release from incarceration. She holds a doctorate and a Bachelor of Arts degree in English language and literature from Yale University and a Master's degree in philosophy from the University of Oxford. The Dominican Sisters of Peace have four women in formation for consecrated religious life; two made their temporary vows in late August.

SCRIPTURES: Lessons on life and faith, Continued from Page 16

tail that is ironically remarkable because of the lack of it. I am referring to the fact that while we know the name of the poor man (Lazarus, which means "God helps"), the rich man goes unnamed, anonymous, as if his name is not worth remembering. Very subtly, Jesus is here pointing out another important Jewish tradition, which is the requirement that the name be written in the Book of Life, present to God's eyes, in order to be accepted into the eternal dwelling (Rev-

elation 3:5: "The victor will thus be dressed in white, and I will never erase his name from the book of life but will acknowledge his name in the presence of my Father and of his angels"; 20:15: "Anyone whose name was not found written in the book of life was thrown into the pool of fire.") We will do well to follow the second reading's advice: "You, man of God, pursue righteousness, devotion, faith, love, patience and gentleness" (1 Timothy 6:11). Thus,

we will be imitators of Jesus described thus in the alleluia verse: "Though our Lord Jesus Christ was rich, he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich" (2 Corinthians 8:9).

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Sister Lucianna Derus, OSF

Funeral Mass for Sister Lucianna Derus, OSF, 91, who died Wednesday, Sept. 3, was celebrated Saturday, Sept. 6 at the Holy Family Convent Chapel in Manitowoc, Wisconsin. Burial was at the sisters' cemetery.

She was born Lucille Derus on Jan. 6, 1934 to Hubert and Mary (Lederhofer) Derus.

She earned a Bachelor of Music Education degree from Silver Lake College in Manitowoc, and a Master of Science degree in teaching music in 1953 from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh. She entered the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity in 1949 and professed her vows in

1953.

In the Diocese of Columbus, she was a music teacher at Delaware St. Mary (1968-1969) and Wellston Sts. Peter & Paul (1973-1976) schools. She also was a teacher at schools in the Diocese of Steubenville and in Michigan, Illinois, Arizona and Wisconsin and was a church organist, gave private music lessons and was part of her congregation's prayer apostolate. She had been a resident of the St. Rita Health Center in Manitowoc since 2023.

She was preceded in death by her parents; a brother, Edward, and a sister, Patricia Youngworth. She is survived by a sister, Irene, and many nieces and nephews.

Linus B. "Lenny" Losh

Funeral Mass for Linus B. "Lenny" Losh, 100, who died Wednesday, Sept. 3, was celebrated Friday, Sept. 12 at Westerville St. Paul the Apostle Church, where he was one of two 100-year-old World War II veterans honored at a Mass on Sunday, July 20. Burial was at Holy Cross Cemetery in Cleveland.

He was born in the Cleveland suburb of Lakewood on March 12, 1925 to John and Cecilia Losh.

He served in the U.S. Army from 1943 to 1946 with the 97th Infantry Division, 386th Regiment in Europe and occupied Japan. He said the highlight of his service was helping liberate the Flossenburg concentration camp in Bavaria.

After the war, he received a Bachelor of Science degree in agronomy in 1949 and a Master's degree in 1951 from Ohio State University and was employed by the U.S. Soil Conservation Service (SCS) for 30 years, beginning in Columbus for eight

years before taking positions in Wisconsin, Nebraska and Washington, D.C.

He then spent 12 years advising Republican members of Congress on farm issues. He retired in 1992 and moved to Columbus with his wife in 1996 to be near a daughter. He was inducted into the Ohio Agricultural Council's hall of fame in 2007.

He was preceded in death by his parents; his wife of 63 years, Jeanette (Hippler) and a great-granddaughter. Survivors include a daughter, Lynnette Losh-Eisentrou (Richard Hoechstetter); a son, Clifford (Chakameh Habibi); two granddaughters and seven great-grandchildren.

Several members of his family have been members of religious communities. Three cousins belonged to orders of sisters and a niece is a Carmelite sister. An uncle, Father Joseph Losh, died in 2017 after 52 years as a priest of the Diocese of Columbus.



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St. Joseph Church, Dover

BLAZER, Linda, 82, July 19
St. Andrew Church, Columbus

BUSHUE, Sandra, 74, Sept. 3
St. Joseph Church, Sugar Grove

CASPER, Paul J. Jr., 79, Sept. 4
Our Lady of Peace Church, Columbus

CYGAN, Barbara "Barb," 71, Aug. 28
St. Brigid of Kildare Church, Dublin

DOOLEY, Joseph G., 86, Aug. 13
St. Andrew Church, Columbus

FOLTZ, Arthur F. "Art," 91, Sept. 1
St. Francis de Sales Church, Newark

FORGRAVE, Anna, 87, Sept. 4
St. Francis de Sales Church, Newark

GIALLUCA, Nancy J. (Beswick), 75, Aug. 22
St. Elizabeth Seton Parish, Pickerington

HUGHES, Patricia (McNulty), 89, Sept. 1
St. Christopher Church, Columbus

HULL, Beverly Anne, 88, June 20
St. John the Baptist Parish, Mount Vernon

JARVIS, Alexander Lee "Alex," 41, Sept. 7
St. Paul the Apostle Church, Westerville

KEMMER, Mary Karen, 78, May 23
St. John the Baptist Parish, Mount Vernon

KING, Stephen E. Jr., 84, Sept. 4
Resurrection Cemetery Chapel, Lewis Center

KOENIG, Mary Jo, 74, Aug. 27
St. Paul the Apostle Church, Westerville

KRIVDA, Thurman J. "TJ," 95, Aug. 31
St. John the Baptist Parish, Mount Vernon

LOLLI, Dorothy J., 86, Aug. 30
Our Lady of Victory Church, Columbus

LUDWIG, Patricia A., 97, Sept. 5
St. Agatha Church, Columbus

LYNCH, Robert V. Jr., 91, Aug. 23
St. Agatha Church, Columbus

MANN, Sara L., 84, Aug. 30
St. John the Baptist Parish, Mount Vernon

MARTIN, Nancy, 82, Aug. 29
St. Peter St Joan of Arc Parish, Columbus-Powell

McFADDEN, Robert Martin, 74, Aug. 15
St. Andrew Church, Columbus

MORIARTY, Daniel P., 88, Aug. 30
St. Matthew the Apostle Church, Gahanna

NEIGHBARGER, Martha J. (Piar), 83, May 29
St. John the Baptist Parish, Mount Vernon

PORTER, Lorle A., 87, May 15
St. John the Baptist Parish, Mount Vernon

POWERS, John R., 71, Aug. 24
St. Paul the Apostle Church, Westerville

ROBINSON, Donald, 94, Sept. 2
St. Joseph Church, Dover

SHAFER, Timothy Scott, 63, June 2
St. John the Baptist Parish, Mount Vernon

SHREMSHOCK, Gerald Stephen "Jerry," 81, Aug. 22
St. Paul the Apostle Church, Westerville

SMURR Thomas M., 95, Aug. 31
St. Andrew Church, Columbus

THOMAS, Roberta J. "Bobbie," 88, Aug. 16
St. John the Baptist Parish, Mount Vernon

WELLNITZ, Harry M., 76, Aug. 29
St. Andrew Church, Columbus

WILKS, Thomas E., 76, June 6
St. John the Baptist Parish, Mount Vernon

WILLKE, Thomas A. "Tom," 93, Aug. 21
St. Andrew Church, Columbus

ZIMMERMAN, Doreen, 68, Sept. 4
St. Brigid of Kildare Church, Dublin

ZUPAN, Leo T. "Lee" IV, 44, Aug. 26
St. Michael Church, Worthington



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LOCAL NEWS AND EVENTS

Ohio March for Life set for Oct. 3 in Columbus

The fourth annual Ohio March for Life, presented by the national March for Life organization in partnership with the Columbus-based Center for Christian Virtue (CCV), will take place in downtown Columbus on Friday, Oct. 3.

The program will begin with a Mass at 9 a.m. in St. Joseph Cathedral, 212 E. Broad St., followed by a concert at Capital Square around 10 a.m., a rally outside the Ohio Statehouse at 11 and a march through downtown at noon.

The keynote speaker will be Melissa Ohten of the Abortion Survivors Network. Also speaking will be Bishop Daniel Thomas of the Diocese of Toledo, Ohio, Rep. Adam Mathews (R-Lebanon), CCV president Aaron Baer and others.

More information is available at oh.marchforlife.org.

Diocese sponsors marriage enrichment conference

To promote greater formation for couples, the Diocese of Columbus and the St. John Paul II Foundation will present the inaugural Together in Holiness marriage enrichment conference from 10:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. Saturday, Oct. 4 at Gahanna St. Matthew the Apostle Church, 807 Havens Corners Road.

In announcing the event, Bishop Earl Fernandes said, "I invite all engaged and married couples in the Diocese of Columbus to attend the conference and set aside a day for prayer, conversation, and community. It is a great gift for the Diocese of Columbus to partner with the St. John Paul II Foundation to support marriage and family.

"The fruits that flow from this conference and the subsequent formation series foster the graces of the sacrament of matrimony. You are the fathers and mothers of the next generation who are going to be called upon to hand on the faith."

The conference will include scheduled presentations and prayer time, as well as opportunities for couples to spend time alone together and with other couples.

The three main talks will be "The Holy Eucharist and the Domestic Church" by Dr. Roland Millare, vice president of curriculum and director of clergy initiatives at the St. John Paul II Foundation; "Honor Thy Spouse: Marriage and Conversion" by Kevin and Kathi Lowry, a married couple from the diocese; and "Sacrificial Love is Sanctifying Love" by national speakers Renzo and Monica Ortega, co-founders of Two Become Family.

Mass and a marriage blessing will be offered by Bishop Fernandes at the end of the conference. The cost is \$64 per couple or \$40 per person. On-site child care will be available for \$5 per

child. Full and partial scholarship opportunities also are available. Exhibitor spots are available for \$95 for a ministry or non-profit table and \$165 for a vendor or for-profit table.

A full schedule, list of speakers and registration information are available at togetherinholiness.org/columbus. Information also is available from conference coordinator Nancy Ariza at nancy@forlifeandfamily.org.

A Together in Holiness formation series will be offered in the weeks following the conference for couples who wish to continue enriching their marriage, whether or not they attend the conference.

The series is designed for couples in their early years of marriage or with children in the home to gather as a small group throughout the year to explore a particular theme based on the life, teaching and witness of St. John Paul II. The gatherings will include a meal and fellowship, a short video, time for prayer and discussion and practical follow-up activities.

There will be two ways to participate: spouses can serve as a host couple trained by the St. John Paul II Foundation to facilitate the small-group gatherings or spouses can join a Together in Holiness group as participants.

If you would like to participate in or learn more about Together in Holiness, contact THFormation@forlifeandfamily.org.

Portsmouth festival will include motorcycle ride

The Portsmouth St. Mary Church International Festival will include a charity motorcycle ride for the first time. The ride will take place this coming Sunday, Sept. 21, with registration beginning at 11 a.m. and the ride starting at 12:30 p.m. from the church, 515 Fifth St.

"This is a meeting of faith and fellowship," said Father Stephen Smith, pastor of the St. John Paul II Scioto Catholic Community, who plans to ride his motorcycle. "From little bikes to big engines, all are welcome. Come celebrate community, enjoy the open road and let your miles become a prayer of service."

All proceeds will benefit the St. Francis Catholic Outreach Center in Portsmouth, a ministry providing Scioto County residents in need with food and clothing.

The ride is being sponsored by Wheelersburg Knights of Columbus Council 14346.

Cathedral announces music schedule

Columbus St. Joseph Cathedral, 212 E. Broad St., began its 2025-2026 music schedule on Sunday, Sept. 7 with the return of the cathedral choir at the 10:30 a.m. Solemn Mass from its summer break. The choir will be part

of this Mass every Sunday until late May.

The cathedral's music schedule for the program year also will feature several concerts by individual organists and many programs that have become traditional under Dr. Richard Fitzgerald, cathedral organist and music director.

The schedule will include organ concerts by Rhonda Sider Edgington, music director and organist at Hope Reformed Church in Holland, Michigan, on Sunday, Sept. 21; David Briggs, artist in residence at the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in New York City, on Oct. 19; Dr. Fitzgerald and tenor H. Lee Rose on Jan. 18 and Maurice Clerc, organist emeritus of St. Benignus Cathedral in Dijon, France, on April 26. All these concerts will be on Sundays at 3 p.m.

The Office of Compline, the Catholic Church's official evening prayer, will be sung at 8 p.m. on Oct. 5, Dec. 21, Feb. 8 and April 12, all Sundays. The program will last about 40 minutes and consist of psalms, short passages from Scripture, a hymn, a canticle, a responsory, a collect and additional prayers.

Programs to be presented again this year are the Requiem of Maurice Durufle with the choir and cathedral organist Nicole Siemental, Sunday, Nov. 2, 3 p.m.; the Gold Mass asking for the Holy Spirit's blessing on all who work in music ministry, Sunday, Nov. 16, 5:15 p.m.; Advent lessons and carols, Sunday, Dec. 7, 3 p.m.; Dr. Fitzgerald's fifth annual improvised organ meditations on the Stations of the Cross, Sunday, March 22, 8 p.m.; the Office of Tenebrae, designed to recreate the sense of betrayal, abandonment and agony related to Good Friday, Friday, April 3, 8 p.m.; and a private concert for donors to the cathedral's music program, Sunday, May 17, 3 p.m..

The program relies on donor support for its concert presentations. If you are not already a donor, consider making a gift to help sustain world-class sacred music in central Ohio. For more information, go to www.cathedralmusic.org or call (614) 241-2526.

Father Hahn to speak to men's luncheon club

Father William Hahn, diocesan vicar general and director of priestly life and vocations, will speak at the next meeting of the Catholic Men's Luncheon Club on Friday, Oct. 3. His subject will be the state of vocations in the Diocese of Columbus.

The meeting will follow the 11:45 a.m. Mass at Columbus St. Patrick Church, 280 N. Grant Ave.

No reservations are necessary. A \$12 donation covers the lunch and meeting.

The club's next meeting will be on Friday, Nov. 7 with Bishop Earl Fernandes giving his annual address to the organization.

St. Gabriel Radio is sponsoring the October luncheon. If you are interested in sponsoring a luncheon, contact Dave Kilanowski at dkilano@aol.com.

Bereavement ministry to meet at St. Michael

The Seasons of Hope bereavement ministry's fall sessions will take place each Sunday from Oct. 12 to Nov. 2 from 2 to 4 p.m. at Worthington St. Michael Church, 5750 N. High St.

The ministry, sponsored by the Northland/North High Deanery, meets periodically at one of the deanery's churches and invites anyone mourning the loss of a loved one to take part in its open discussions led by trained counselors.

Space is limited. To register, contact Debbie Kennedy at ken-

nedydeborah@yahoo.com or (614) 937-0516. The registration deadline is Sunday, Oct. 5.

White Mass scheduled for Oct. 9 at Newman Center

The annual diocesan White Mass for health care workers will be celebrated at 6 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 9 at the Columbus St. Thomas More Newman Center, 64 W. Lane Ave.

After Mass, Catholic Times columnist Father Tad Pacholczyk of the National Catholic Bioethics Center will speak. Priests are encouraged to concelebrate, especially those ministering as hospital chaplains. Deacons are invited to attend and join the congregation for prayer, worship and reflection.

SPICE Mass of Inclusion will be Sept. 28

The annual Mass of Inclusion sponsored by Special People in Catholic Education will be celebrated by Bishop Earl Fernandes at 11 a.m. Sunday, Sept. 28 at Columbus St. Catharine Church, 500 S. Gould Road, followed by a reception in the parish undercroft.

The Mass is a celebration of people with special needs who are engaged in learning in Catholic schools and parishes. It also honors the programs, teachers, intervention specialists and other resources that enable the schools to successfully include, nurture, and support all students and proclaim the inherent human dignity of every person.

Organizers of the Mass are looking for volunteers to greet, read or carry the gifts. See your parish bulletin for more details.

St. Timothy School Mass recognizes new saint



At a Columbus St. Timothy School Mass this month, the canonization of the first millennial saint, Carlo Acutis, was celebrated. Father David Poliafico, the parish pastor, emphasized to the students the importance of encouraging their families to attend Mass as Acutis did. St. Carlo Acutis was canonized Sept. 7 in Rome. Photo courtesy St. Timothy

Blessed to be able to hear world-class leaders offer inspiration

By Michele Williams

For two glorious days in August, I attended a livestream of the 2025 Global Leadership Summit. The Ohio Reformatory for Women was once again a host site and I was among 50 inmates selected to watch the summit in our air-conditioned chapel. An absolute blessing and utterly delightful break from this summer's wickedly hot prison routine.

The actual conference is in a suburb of Chicago with host sites around the world, literally from Australia to Zimbabwe, and over 110 countries in between. Talk about being part of something bigger than yourself! What an incredible experience to sit at the feet -- virtually speaking -- of some of the country's best leaders and learn how to improve my own leadership skills.

The fascinating and diverse lineup of presenters included a football coach, country music star, scientist, choreographer, several CEOs, pastors, psychologists, researchers and authors. The humility and honesty with which they shared their leadership journeys and lessons made them so relatable and genuine; by the end of the conference, I felt like I could call any one of them for a chat!

To be clear, though, cellphones are major contraband, our "approved phone number list" is capped at 15 and mine is full, so there is zero chance of that happening! Nevertheless, I came away inspired, thankful, energized and better equipped to lead right where I am.

The overarching message of this year's summit was Galatians 6:9: "Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up."

Every presenter had experienced some version of it. They had faced challenges yet

continued to do good, work hard and grow, making this conference an opportunity to share their harvest, so to speak.

Galatians 6:9 is in my top-five favorite verses list; it's a reminder to continue pushing myself further in all aspects of my life: spiritually, physically, psychologically and emotionally.

By participating in groups, programming and therapy, having integrity, being trustworthy and responsible and staying the course, I have become a good leader. Yet, by remembering to remain faithful, work hard and trust God despite the vortex of chaos and uncertainty that swirls through the prison often, I have become a better person.

One of my best qualities is persistence (although my parents prefer to call it plain 'ol stubbornness). When I set my mind to something, whether it's affecting change in my surroundings, my personal journey of growth or building stronger relationships, I'm 101 percent dedicated. Sometimes the harvest is fruitful and joyous, sometimes it's dry and disappointing, sometimes it takes more than one or two or four tries. I do my part to the very best of my abilities -- the result and timing are up to God.

At the Global Leadership Summit (GLS), Craig Groeschel, founder and pastor of Life Church, spoke of the quiet power of persistence. He said to be the best leader, you have to be consistent. Charisma and immediate results only get you so far. Consistency and faithfulness, with time, will create a lasting impact.

He even created a fun math equation: $(C+F) \times T = I!$ As a secret math nerd, I loved the formula and have committed it to memory. I am positive it will serve me well both inside and outside of prison.

I reflected on my job as program aide (inmate manager) of the Stitching Post where we make, among other things, over 500 going home tote bags per year for women being released from prison. I'm

very passionate about our cause -- I believe it's important for women to step into their new lives with a strong (and cute!) tote bag made with love and care instead of a flimsy, clear trash bag. My standards are high and it takes time because this is a good way I can consistently and faithfully serve the Lord as well as my peers.

The lasting impact? Leadership lessons for me and a great bag for them, whether it ends up as an everything-goes-in bag, a gift for their child or reminder to not come back to prison.

Legendary former Alabama football coach and 2025 Hall of Fame inductee Nick Saban took the stage, and as a huge football fan, I couldn't wait to hear his message! I'm a Buckeye through and through but was surprised when he referenced his time as an OSU assistant coach under Earle Bruce more so than head coach for Alabama. But that's where he learned some of his best lessons.

On Senior Tackle Day, right before the Michigan game in 1981, he along with the other coaches addressed the team. He said the mental toughness, stamina, self-determination and passion of every individual would become the fuel and fight for the entire team, and they needed a lot of it to beat Michigan. Then he quoted the late, great Woody Hayes: "There are no great victories without tremendous adversity." I wonder if Woody realized he was paraphrasing Galatians 6:9?

Coach Saban said that game was one of the tremendous challenges of his career. Ohio State won 14-9.

Coach and his wife, Miss Terry, are devoted Catholics whose faith has guided and grounded them. He talked at length about leaving a legacy that lasts far beyond football championships. He has seven by the way, so he's serious!

They want to use their resources and influence to truly make an impact on people's lives. He explained what he prays

for -- ways to share what they've been blessed with in order to be a blessing to everyone they meet. "It's what you give back, not what you got, that matters," he said.

The Nick's Kids Foundation and the Saban Learning Center in Alabama are two examples. They focus on education, particularly STEM and the arts, "with a little football thrown in, too." He also said, "It's OK to be proud of what you accomplish as long as you don't get complacent."

"There are times after a big accomplishment or project that people get relief syndrome -- thinking they have the right to coast indefinitely because one success will carry them. Wrong!" he said. "Losing regard and respect for what it took to be successful is a sure way to affect future performance and will ultimately lead to failure. I'm careful to limit how much time I rest after a success; it can be a slippery slope that I don't want to slide down because the landing is usually hard, embarrassing and ..."

There are no secret failures on the prison grapevine! I'm very cognizant of who gives me the strength or insight to achieve anything. God does. I never want to let Him down by getting uppity. My accomplishments mean more due to the adversity and obstacles God leads me through.

I have learned that leadership, like discipleship, is not for the faint of heart. Jesus said as much to His followers and He was the greatest leader of all! I get it and I will continue to listen to His words in the myriad ways they're phrased. I want my leadership to show my discipleship and trust. Remaining consistent and faithful, over the arc of time, I believe I will reap a great harvest because I will not give up.

Michele Williams is an inmate at the Ohio Reformatory for Women.

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Can lay people give blessings?

Dear Father,

I've seen lay ministers of the Eucharist give blessings during Communion, especially to children. When I asked my brother, a deacon, if that's OK, he said parents can bless their own children but not other children. I thought only priests could give blessings. Can you please write about this?

-Terry

Dear Terry,

A blessing is a prayer by which we ask God to look favorably on someone or something. It is part of God's nature to bless and He is pleased to associate us with His work of blessing persons and things.

A formal blessing in the Catholic Church is connected to authority and service, especially as a person shares in God's authority. The greater a God-given authority to serve others that a person exercises, the greater the power to bless, or ask God to bless.

The pope is the supreme pastor of the Church and has the greatest authority to care for all people. Part of his authority means that he can give blessings of all kinds. For example, there are rarer blessings, such

as Urbi et Orbi, to the City (Rome) and to the World, blessing, which carries with it a plenary indulgence. This type of blessing is reserved to the pope because he has the responsibility to serve every person.

Bishops, priests and deacons, on account of being ordained by God to serve certain groups of persons, have the God-given power to bless persons and objects according to the responsibility entrusted to them. A bishop is responsible for every person in his diocese, even those who are not Catholic. A special blessing reserved to the bishop is the dedication of an altar where the Sacrifice of the Mass takes place.

Likewise, priests and deacons have their responsibilities and as a result have the authority to bless all those for whom they must care.

Finally, lay persons have various responsibilities given to them by God, such as being a parent. Mothers and fathers have the special authority to care for their children, part of which is to give their children blessings. Many parents bless their children at bedtime or when they set off on various outings. Husbands and wives ought to bless each other frequently.

Not everyone has the same authority and responsibility in the Church, and therefore, not everyone has the power to bless persons



SACRAMENTS 101

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

Father Paul Jerome Keller, O.P., S.T.D., director of the diocese's Office of Divine Worship, is a priest of the Dominican Province of St. Joseph. His doctorate is from Rome in sacramental theology. He currently assists at Columbus St. Patrick Church.

and things, especially in the context of the Mass. At Mass, only bishops and priests give blessings.

The lay person who distributes Communion is properly referred to as an Extraordinary Minister of Holy Communion (EMHC). The EMHC has a very restricted realm of authority and service and does not have the power to give special blessings at

Mass or when taking Communion to the sick.

Every EMHC must first be authorized to distribute Communion. This person is "extraordinary," not in the sense of a wow factor, but because he/she is out of the ordinary. Extraordinary refers to being out of the usual order of things. The ordinary minister of Holy Communion is the bishop, priest, or deacon because it is part of his main responsibilities.

Moreover, these extraordinary ministers are not to be used at Mass unless there is a genuine need and there is not a sufficient number of priests or deacons to distribute Holy Communion.

It is most inappropriate, therefore, for the EMHC to make the sign of the cross over someone in the Communion line. Nor is it right for the EMHC to lay hands on the head or shoulders of someone in the Communion line.

I urge you to read the Vatican instruction "On Certain Questions Regarding the Collaboration of the Non-Ordained Faithful in the Sacred Ministry of Priest" to learn more about the kinds of blessings that may be given by a lay Catholic.

Questions about the sacraments should be sent to sacraments101@columbuscatholic.org.

Backaches+baby burps+diapers=joyous vocation of grandparenting

Recently, my grandchildren stayed with my wife and me for a few days. Our daughter and son-in-law were away, and, of course, eager grandparents that we are, we agreed without hesitation to take care of them. We had taken care of our grandson, the older of our two grandkids previously, but this year there are now two of them, our granddaughter being the newest family member.

My wife and I divided each day they were with us in half, me caring for the children in the morning and my wife caring for them in the afternoon, with each of us going to work and putting full workdays in with staggered schedules. We did that for four days.

Easy enough, right? No. I have not been double-teamed by a toddler and an infant in more than 30 years. My morning shifts with the grandkids were flurries of feeding, picking up toys, keeping our very energetic grandson busy and entertained, changing my granddaughter's diapers (which she does not enjoy and causes her to be fussy), feeding her with her bottle, and carrying her around because she likes to be held and is fussy when put down.

When I arrived at the office those days, I walked in a little tired with an aching back and a bit of baby burp evidence on my clothes. The work of those chores was much easier in my 30s. I also grinned from "ear to ear," to quote the old adage, with that deep joy that only a grandparent knows after spending time with his or her grandkids.

That joy I've just described is rooted in my firm belief that being a grandparent is a vocation, something to which God called me. It is one of a number of vocations in my life, others being husband, father, brother, son and deacon, to name a few. Just as God placed my beloved children in my life several decades ago, He has now gifted me with beloved grandchildren and all that goes with that newest vocation, both the joys and responsibilities.

Sacred scripture describes vocations



THE CHANCELLOR'S ARCHIVE

Deacon Tom Berg Jr.

Deacon Tom Berg Jr. has served the Diocese of Columbus as its Chancellor since 2012 and as a deacon at Columbus St. Andrew Church. He holds bachelor's and master's degrees in journalism and a master's degree in Catholic pastoral studies.

as real and divine callings for which the Lord gives us the grace to fulfill those vocations. The word "vocation" is from the Latin word "vocatio," which means a "call" or "invitation."

In the Gospel of John, Jesus tells us, "It was not you who chose me, but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain ... (Jn 15:16)."

When God calls us to a vocation, He is drawing us into something that is more than a career choice or commitment to a cause or hobby. A vocation is transcendent and serves to fulfill the Lord's wishes for our lives and enables us to know and love Him fully and to know and love others fully. A vocation leads us toward God and His Kingdom. A vocation challenges us to serve through the gifts with which God has blessed us.

This is true for all people in all walks of life and in all places. Each, through his or her vocations, have wonderful opportunities to walk more closely with God and with one another, no matter what one's place in life may be.

When I spend time with my grandchildren, it is not, as you can see from what I wrote above, all fun and play and then handing them back

to their parents when I am weary. Embracing this particular vocation means to be called to model for those newest children in my family what a good granddad, dad, brother, son, and friend is. And that occurs through a conscious decision, through words and, even more importantly, action. It means being a reflection of Jesus Christ. To love and support those youngsters in the same manner that our Lord and savior would.

Not spoiling them. Not trying to be their special pals. Not to be a constant supplier of toys and candy. No. While there is a lot of fun to this vocation, work and dedication are an absolute part of it too. In the midst of the joy, letting the children also see how we are Christlike toward their parents (our daughter and son-in-law), how we support their parenting and discipline, how everyone in the family worships God consistently, to name a few.

This is why I refer to grandparenting as a joyful vocation, even though it is so much more than just playing and having fun with the "kiddos." There is

a profound peace and joy that comes from pursuing the vocations to which God calls us with all our minds, hearts and souls. This peace and joy cannot be given to a person by the world. Only turning to God accomplishes what

I am writing about today.

During the World Day for Vocations in 2001, St. John Paul II said, "The word vocation is a very good definition of the relationship that God has with every human being in the freedom of love, because every life is a vocation."

Every life is a vocation. I cannot say it better than that. And, from our lives flow invitations to specific working vocations that can enrich our lives, enrich the world, and honor God. Today, let us pray to the Lord to see our vocations clearly, to support more effectively one another in their vocations, and to be really, really open to hearing what God's call to vocation means in our own lives. Amen!

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Why I'm Catholic

St. Paul certainly could not boast about his conversion. He didn't read his way into the Church. He wasn't compelled by the witness of charity. He was knocked off his proverbial horse on the way to lock up Christians in prison. It was grace.

At age 13, I had my own "Road to Damascus" experience. I grew up a non-practicing Catholic, having been baptized (somehow) and receiving my First Communion only after the third attempt for failing to come to enough classes. But then I was expelled from the public school in seventh grade for bringing a scouting knife in my backpack. My mother desperately sought another school for me, and only our last resort worked: Holy Name of Jesus parochial school.

The pastor took a chance on me, despite the principal's objections, and my life would never be the same. Immediately, I felt welcomed into a family, unlike the institutional feeling of public school. A month in, I received an invitation to serve morning Mass on the pastor's ordination anniversary. Although I wasn't attending Sunday Mass, my mom and I both felt it was important to honor the priest who had given me a second chance. Kneeling at the altar early that morning, I heard the Lord calling me: "This is where you belong. This is what you've been looking for."

As a restless adolescent, I had been looking for something — curious, perhaps often in the wrong way — but seeking something deeper, looking to perceive and enter life's mystery. Having encountered this mystery not as a thing but as a Person, I immediately began attending Sunday Mass, and, not



THE CATHOLIC CULTURALIST

Dr. R. Jared Staudt, Ph.D.

R. Jared Staudt, Ph.D., is a Catholic writer, speaker, scholar, educator and the director of content for the Exodus 90 program.

long after, daily Mass, to be close to him.

In the fall of my eighth-grade year, I was given an assignment to learn about the Divine Mercy devotion. Once again willing to help, my mom took me to the Catholic bookstore, where I found the little white pamphlet detailing the devotion.

"How about that big red one?" my mom suggested. "You like to read."

St. Faustina's Diary, therefore, was the first Catholic book I read, followed by Pope St. John Paul II's Crossing the Threshold of Hope, the Bible, the life of my Confirmation saint, Pius X, Story of a Soul, and then the newly released Catechism. My life was taking a clear trajectory toward the study and teaching of the Catholic faith.

My Confirmation at the end of eighth grade culminated this whole process of coming back to the home I hardly knew. The ceremony was powerful, with a visible burst of light manifesting the

grace we received. From that moment, I had a sense of mission, a calling. I knew I was supposed to teach the faith, and I was given a grace of being able to answer questions. I continued reading that year about the lives of the saints, Church history, the development of the liturgy and two other books that would lead me onto my next step: the life of Pope St. John Paul II and the Letters of St. Maximilian Kolbe.

My freshman year of high school was a busy one, as I took on responsibilities at Holy Name, including training our altar servers, at my high school, and also at the local Byzantine Catholic Church.

But God already called me to begin my itinerant Catholic life.

I received a letter in the mail from the Rotary Club asking for applications for its international student ambassador program. I asked my mom if I could respond, and without really paying attention to what I was asking, she nodded her head. No one had ever responded to that annual letter sent to students of my high school before, so the Rotary Club promptly called me, and the next thing I knew, I was going through a vetting process to be sent to Poland the following year. When my mom realized what was happening, she was somewhat terrified but still allowed me to continue (I was a determined young fellow). And so, in the summer of 1997, as a sophomore in high school, I flew across the globe, not quite knowing what to expect. What would the Church and society there be like there after decades of Communism?

It was one of the best years of my life, an extended retreat with Mass at any time of day and an immersion into Catholic culture. I wandered daily

through Poznań's narrow streets until I had visited every church, soaked in its Gothic or Baroque architecture, listened to its many organs of various size and volume and prayed with its many religious orders. I studied European and Polish history, travelled to other cities, hiked, skied, prayed before Our Lady of Częstochowa, and even made my way to Rome for the first time.

I was a long way from my conversion at Holy Name only two years prior, yet still at home, still belonging to a much greater family. I found that the faith I was called to study was grounded in a great and beautiful tradition that has survived unfathomable onslaughts and was ready to inspire a new generation to rebuild.

I am Catholic because God plucked me out of darkness, out of the purposelessness I experienced in modern American culture, one of unending entertainment and distraction. He set me on the path of learning and teaching his Truth, while surrounding me with his love through friendship, mentorship, marriage, family, colleagues and students, within a worldwide communion of believers.

There have been many ups and downs, and it took two difficult years of seminary to prepare me for the vocation of marriage. In the lay apostolate, I know that I am continuing a great legacy, helping others to rediscover their Catholic patrimony, and working with others to find new ways to live the faith today. Despite hardships, I have always felt at home in the Church, and would answer any difficulty along with Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68).

A heroic example

America needs the example of a real hero: a dedicated hero who enhances natural talents by hard work and takes pride in a craft; an unselfish hero who places team above self; a modest hero who shares the credit for wins and accepts the blame, sometimes unnecessarily, for losses; a sportsmanlike hero who wants his opponents to be at their best so that victory means something; a stoic hero who overcomes pain and frustration because making a good effort is what counts; a well-mannered hero who treats both admirers and detractors courteously; a hero who isn't punch-drunk with presumed infallibility and who listens to sage counsel; a hero who knows the history of his profession and esteems those who practiced it well before him; an articulate hero who speaks in complete sentences, as if he had actually thought about what he's about to say; an imperfect hero who nonetheless strives for excellence in all facets of life — in brief, a hero with a noble character, who exemplifies the classic virtues associated with heroism.

America, I give you Calvin Edwin Ripken Jr.

On September 6, Baltimore's Camden Yards was packed with 42,612 fans who wanted to honor Cal Ripken, the "Iron Man" who, 30 years before, had broken Lou Gehrig's seemingly insurmountable record of 2,130 consecutive major league baseball



THE CATHOLIC DIFFERENCE

George Weigel

George Weigel is the Distinguished Senior Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, D.C. George Weigel's column 'The Catholic Difference' is syndicated by the Denver Catholic, the official publication of the Archdiocese of Denver.

games played. That sold-out crowd was there, not only because Cal had reinvented the position of shortstop, previously identified with physically slight men; not only because of his 431 home runs, 3,184 hits and 1,695 runs batted in; not only because of his two Most Valuable Player awards and 19 All-Star Game appearances; and not only because he garnered 98.5% of the first ballot votes and was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 2007 (who were the eight boobies who didn't vote for Cal?). No, that crowd was there — and many, many more were watching on TV — because of Cal Ripken, the man.

Who then proceeded to demonstrate why he is such a respected, even beloved, figure.

In his brief remarks, he didn't talk about himself a great deal. He talked about the enduring wisdom of his parents: craggy Cal Sr., a former Orioles coach and manager whose features might have been chiseled from a Louisville Slugger ("Take it one day at a time.") and his quietly demanding mother Vi ("You better show up."). On an evening dedicated to him and The Streak, he got the crowd to applaud another September 6 anniversary: September 6, 1996, when his longtime teammate and pal Eddie Murray hit his 500th home run at Camden Yards. And then he waxed a bit homiletic.

The Streak, which eventually extended to 2,632 games, embodied what Cal believed were important principles that undergirded the approach to baseball once known as the "Oriole Way." "We show up each and every day, we meet whatever challenge is thrown our way, we count on each other." The Streak was not without its ups and downs, but it had taught him that "it's in the bad times that you learn the most about yourself. Persevering and pushing forward are not just traits in baseball but in life ... and that's the real meaning of The Streak."

It had often been said, Cal noted, that The Streak would last forever: that he was an immortal because no

one would ever come close to 2,632 consecutive games played. (Matt Olson of the Atlanta Braves has the current longest active streak — 761 — and to top Ripken, he would have to play every game between now and the middle of the 2037 season.) But Cal was having none of it. His constant response to the claim that The Streak was unbreakable had been that, "If I could do it, someone else could do it." And then came a coda that spoke volumes about the man: "I hope someone passes me someday and that I and all of you have the pleasure of seeing it."

The game that followed the anniversary ceremony was itself remarkable: Jackson Holliday's home run broke up Yoshinobu Yamamoto's no-hitter with two outs in the ninth inning, the Los Angeles Dodgers' bullpen imploded, and five batters later, the Orioles had an utterly improbable 4-3 win. Even more remarkable, though, in this age of cheap and vulgar celebrity, is Cal Ripken. And the most remarkable thing about him, an acquaintance of his once told me, is that "he doesn't realize just how good a man he is."

The real heroes don't. America has had such heroes in the past. America badly needs such men and women of character today. Thank you, Cal.

How Catholics should understand discernment of spirits

“Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, for many false prophets have gone out into the world” (1 John 4:1).

“And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ” (Philippians 1:9-10).

For centuries, Christians have followed the advice given by the apostles John and Paul in these scripture passages, practicing “discernment of spirits.” Great saints like Augustine of Hippo, Bernard of Clairvaux and Ignatius of Loyola taught on this topic. The basic idea is that many different impulses or spiritual influences are at work within each human soul. The Christian, sometimes with the help of a spiritual guide, attempts to determine where they come from: good spirits? Evil spirits? The body? The world? God? One’s own spirit? The purpose of the discernment of spirits is sanctification and spiritual growth.

Recently, many non-Catholics have been talking about discernment of spirits but with a different meaning. They use the phrase to describe the believer using his own spiritual authority to sense what spiritual forces are at work around him in the “invisible realm” or “second heaven” where angels and demons operate, and then acting to control those forces. This action is called “shifting atmospheres.” This view is summed up in the slogan, “be a



A SHEPHERD’S CARE
Father Thomas Buffer

Father Thomas Buffer is the pastor at Columbus St. Cecilia Church.

thermostat, not a thermometer.”

This teaching was popularized by Dawna De Silva of Bethel Church in Redding, California. For her, discernment of spirits is part of spiritual warfare. Operating of the “dominion theology” I wrote about previously in this space, De Silva sees discernment of spirits and “shifting atmospheres” as a way “to discern, dispel, and displace negative spiritual forces around them and to partner with and release heaven on earth.”

Helen Calder of Enliven Ministries and Planetshakers Church in Melbourne Australia, teaches, “You can be a thermostat and, you can set the temperature.” She says that discernment includes “perceiving the spiritual realm” and “the ability to discern the demonic realm and spiritual realities.”

These ideas have been seeping into the

Catholic Church. A 2022 post in the blog of the National Catholic Register, called “10 Truths I Learned from Encounter Ministries,” put it this way:

“Thermometers measure the temperature. Thermostats change the atmosphere. ... With the gift of the Holy Spirit, we are thermostats where we can change the temperature in our lives and those around us by the way that we pray in faith for the miraculous change that God wants to do through us.”

This new definition of “discernment of spirits” is very different from the traditional Catholic understanding, in which discernment of spirits is not just about seeing into an invisible realm, or having power to “change the spiritual temperature,” but about looking into one’s own soul, seeking the will of God and accepting it, finding consolation by making the right decision. We practice discernment, not to assume authority over the spirits, but to make God the only authority over our lives. We practice discernment, not in order to become “thermostats” who “shift atmospheres,” but to be able to lead a holy and blameless Christian existence, allowing God to set the temperature and direction of our lives.

This, in fact, is how the Letter to the Romans describes the purpose of discernment: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing

you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect (Rom 12:1-2).”

Furthermore, St. Paul tells the Colossians that Christ, triumphing on the cross, has disarmed the demonic principalities and powers (see Col 2:15). Changing the spiritual atmosphere is his job, and he has accomplished it, once and for all.

In sound Catholic teaching, discernment of spirits is not about enabling us to take charge, or become world changers, or planet shakers, but about becoming saints by heeding and responding to impulses that come from the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit, God’s good angels who do his will, his revealed truth, the accumulated wisdom of the Church, the experience of prayer, human wisdom, and an accurate knowledge of one’s self.

In July, the prayer intention for the Pope’s International Prayer Network was “for formation in discernment.” Pope Leo XIV asked us to pray “that we might again learn how to discern, to know how to choose paths of life and reject everything that leads us away from Christ and the Gospel.” By that criterion, we should reject the false definition of discernment of spirits that leads us away from confidence in Christ’s victory and tells us to focus on our alleged authority to be world-changers, atmosphere shifters, and thermostats.

Alleluia moments: Praising the Lord in the ordinary

It never ceases to amaze me what small things our toddler will get excited about. From picking zucchini in the garden and exclaiming “Whoa! That’s a big one” to finding a toy that he hasn’t seen in a few days, he exudes joy. Recently, when he gets excited about something, he will sometimes tag on an “Alleluia!” to the end of his sentence. The most recent of these occurrences came from trying to put his shoes on the correct feet. After a few attempts of switching feet and shoes around, he got them on and proclaimed “Alleluia!” while half-throwing his hands up in the air in excitement.

Putting the right shoe on may not seem like a big deal to us as adults, but to my three-year-old, it is a big deal when he gets it. He can grow frustrated trying to get them on, especially when we need to correct him more than once. When he finally gets his shoes on, he is excited because he accomplished that task and because that usually means it is time to go somewhere. To him, even going to the grocery store is an adventure, so shoes on means that good things are coming!

The whole interaction made me laugh and smile, but also caused me to sit and think about how often I praise the Lord in my own life. It is easy to praise the Lord when we have big, happy moments, and I would venture that most of us do in those times. But what about the small moments? I know for myself that the “shoes on the right feet” moments are at times taken for granted because I don’t think about those as new or exciting.

There is a temptation to let things like



LOADS OF LAUNDRY AND LOVE

Rachel Romantic

Rachel Romantic is a wife and mom of two who loves to spend time with her family and make memories together outside in the garden. She is also the Communications Coordinator at New Albany Church of the Resurrection.

getting to go grocery shopping, going outside to check on the garden or even going to Mass become just a part of our regular routine. We live out our lives week to week and sometimes don’t pay attention to these activities, let alone count them as blessings.

We read in 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 to “Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.” I believe we often forget to do this, especially as adults. Praising the Lord in all we do and for all we have is a habit that needs to be built. I am definitely not perfect at this, but things like prayers of gratitude at the end of the day are one thing we practice in our house to build that habit. Each night, my husband and

I pray together before bed and thank the Lord for many of these small things. We know that quality time with each other, watching our children grow and even feeling rested are blessings from the Lord. Sometimes these sorts of daily things may seem inconsequential, but it is important to recognize even these small blessings.

Some days are harder than others, admittedly. In days of sleepless nights with little children, supporting a friend in their sorrows or mourning the death of a loved one, it can feel really difficult to find something to be grateful for at the end of the day. These moments challenge us beyond all measure at times and it is easy to ask, “Where was God in this?”

We must never forget, though, that the Lord is there with us in those times and again take heed from how our children live life. The Lord calls us to this childlike way of life, even going so far as to say “... unless you turn and become like children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 18:3). Even in these painful moments, our children are showing us how to respond. When they’re hurting or overwhelmed, they instinctively seek the arms of someone who loves them. A father’s hug or a mother’s kiss can

instantly change how a child is feeling.

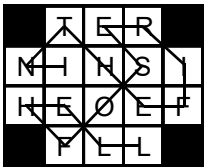
In the same way, we are called to seek the Lord in our own pain and suffering. When life is hard, we need to turn to our Lord as His children. His love for us is unceasing and he is always there, ready to embrace us. This doesn’t mean that things won’t hurt sometimes, but we can rest in the comfort of our Lord until we are at a place where things are better.

Perhaps we could all take a lesson from a three-year-old putting on his shoes and recognizing the goodness of the Lord. In the little victories, in the mundane routines, and even in the hard days, let us remember to lift our eyes and give our own “Alleluia” building our habit of gratitude in the works of the Lord. Not because everything is perfect, but because we know we are not alone.

CROSSWORD SOLUTION

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