

THE CATHOLIC
Spirit

Bishop Brennan Releases Pastoral Letter on Evangelization, 'Bringing People to Christ'

Read the Bishop's Letter on Pages 7-9 of This Issue

By Colleen Rowan

WEST VIRGINIA—In what he said may be the most important pastoral letter of his episcopacy, Bishop Mark E. Brennan has released "Bringing People to Christ." The bishop's focus in this letter is evangelization, stressing that all of us are called to evangelize.

"Dear brothers and sisters of my beloved Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, I have written quite a few pastoral letters in my five years as your Shepherd," the bishop writes in the introduction to his letter. "This may be the most im-

portant one, because it touches on the very reason we are a Church; so I ask you to take the time to read it and reflect on its message."

Catholics of West Virginia will receive that message in a number of ways. The bishop's letter can be read in its entirety on Pages 7-9 of this issue of *The Catholic Spirit*. Additionally, his letter will be published in a booklet which will be delivered to all parishes and missions of the diocese for distribution to members. Postcards encouraging the faithful to lead others to the Lord with guidance on how they can achieve

this through spiritual preparation and practical application will also be delivered to all parishes and missions for their members. The letter will also be available on the diocese's website at www.dwc.org and sent to parishioners by e-mail through Flocknote.

Bishop Brennan wanted the release of his letter to coincide with the beginning of Advent as we prepare our hearts and minds for the commemoration of Christ's birth at Christmas. The Season of Advent begins on Sunday, Dec. 1.

Plans for Holy Year 2025 Celebration in West Virginia Underway

By Colleen Rowan

WEST VIRGINIA — Plans are underway in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston for the kickoff of the Holy Year 2025. Pope Francis chose the theme "Pilgrims of Hope" for this Jubilee Year, which will be marked by pilgrimages, prayer, repentance, and acts of mercy.

The solemn opening will be on the Feast of the Holy Family (Dec. 29) with Bishop Mark Brennan celebrating Mass at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling at 10:30 a.m. and Very Rev. John Rice, vicar general, celebrating Mass at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston at 10:30 a.m. as well.

"The Holy Father has invited the entire church, for the 2025 Jubilee, to be on a 'Pilgrimage of Hope.' Every diocese, every cathedral, See "Holy Year" on Page 2

St. Mary's Medical Center Honors Pallottine Missionary Sisters



From left are Sister Amutha Arockiam, SAC; Angie Swearingen, chief operations officer of St. Mary's Medical Center in Huntington; Sister Joanne Obrochta, SAC; Sister Danuta Przybylek, SAC, provincial of the Pallottine Missionary Sisters; Sister Phyllis Carpenter, SAC; Sister Francesca Lewis, SAC; Sister Elisabeth Heptner, SAC; and Sister Mary Terence Wall, SAC. See story on Page 3.

Joyce Bibey photo

Inside: Hancock County Parishes Send Support to Devastated Western North Carolina, Page 10

Bluefield's Sacred Heart Church Celebrates 100th Anniversary, Page 12

Holy Year...

Cont'd from Page 1

every co-cathedral around the world on Dec. 29 will be holding these celebrations. As a diocese, it is our hope that each parish would send maybe two to five pilgrims to this celebration to carry that beginning of the 'Pilgrimage of Hope' back to their parishes, so they can carry it out to the streets."

This, he said, is evangelization in a nutshell. The pilgrimage provides a practical framework for evangelization, he added, which is a key vision of Bishop Brennan.

The Masses in Wheeling and Charleston being celebrated at the same time emphasizes the unity of the diocese, Father Rice said. "We may be in different places... but we can still be one body in Christ," he said.

There are aspects of this celebration that will almost mirror the Palm Sunday celebration, he added.

"We'll begin in one place and then process into the church like we do on Palm Sunday as pilgrims to begin the Mass," Father Rice said. "We want to celebrate that great theological virtue of hope in a grand way and carry it to all the world. That's the Holy Father's intention, so my hope is that we can do that."

Bernadette McMasters Kime, PhD., D.Min., director of the diocese's Office of Worship and Sacraments, said that throughout the year there will be special celebrations and gatherings for different groups in the diocese—clergy, reli-



CNS photo/Vatican Media

This is the logo chosen by the Vatican for the Holy Year 2025.

gious, musicians, parents, grandparents, and children to name a few.

The diocese will be issuing a special prayer card with the prayer written by Pope Francis for parishes in West Virginia. Kime added that a special hymn was written, titled "Pilgrims of Hope." To listen to a recording of the jubilee hymn performed by the Choir of the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington with Peter Latona, director, visit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7uXO8IUcEZI>

More information about Masses, spiritual opportunities, and other events for the Holy Year 2025 in West Virginia will be announced soon.

For more information, visit the Holy Year 2025 official website: <https://www.iubilaeum2025.va/en.html>

Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops requires all Dioceses/Eparchies have a Safe Environment Program for the protection of children and young people. The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's Safe Environment Program consists of the following components for persons seeking employment or to volunteer, directly or indirectly, with children: background check; receipt of the Diocese's Policy Relating to Sexual Abuse of Children; sexual abuse awareness training for adults. Training may be completed online or via live workshop. For information, go to www.dwc.org, click "Diocese", then "Offices," then "Office of Safe Environment."

The Catholic Spirit's Print Schedule for 2024

Christmas

Feast Day, December 25

The Catholic Spirit publication date for this issue is December 20

(Digital issues will continue to be published by date every Friday, delivered by e-mail and posted on thecatholicspiritwv.org)



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To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children: The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. We also encourage utilizing www.reportbishopabuse.org to make a report about any bishop in the U.S. If you have reason to believe that a bishop has engaged in sexual misconduct or has interfered with an investigation into sexual misconduct, please contact civil authorities in the applicable jurisdiction and visit www.reportbishopabuse.org. **To Report to Civil Authorities: Contact your local law enforcement:** numbers will vary based on your location. If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911. To confidentially report any incidence of suspected child abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse, contact the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families' Child Protective Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 800.352.6513. You may report anonymously to this hotline if you prefer. **To Report to Diocesan Authorities:** The diocese encourages reporting to the appropriate civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. The diocese also encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities. To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, contact one of the following designees at 1.888.434.6237 or 304.233.0880: Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; or Sr. Martha Gomez, ext. 264. You may also call the Diocese's Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504 or the Diocese's sexual abuse hotline at 833.230.5656. Additional methods of reporting are available at www.dwc.org, under "Accountability." Complaint forms are available online at www.dwc.org, click "Diocese" on the menu bar, then "Offices," then "Safe Environment", then "Download Files and Forms." The form is titled "Complaint Form for Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor." The form may be returned via U.S. mail to: Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003. **To Report to the Diocese's Victim Assistance Coordinator:** call Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, at 304.559.6742. The Diocese partners with Navex Global to offer EthicsPoint to report other concerns such as suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, religious, or lay employee of the Diocese or any Catholic parish or school in WV. EthicsPoint can be accessed via www.dwc.org, under "Accountability", then "Report Misconduct" or by calling 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint is a third-party reporting system that reports to civil authorities where applicable and Diocesan authorities, and the identity of the person reporting is protected. Links and information: WV Department of Health and Human Resources: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. West Virginia State Police, Crimes Against Children Unit: 304-293-6400.



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Centennial Celebration of God's Great Love Evident in the Pallottine Missionary Sisters in Huntington

By Joyce Bibey

God's will be done! Their story is one of fate, determination, courage, adventure, grit, and compassion.

These were the words used to describe Pallottine Missionary Sisters of the Catholic Apostolate (SAC) at a celebratory gathering on Nov. 6 in Huntington – the 100th anniversary of St. Mary's Hospital. The hospital exists thanks to the sisters whose motto is the bible verse their namesake – St. Vincent Pallotti – lived by – 2 Corinthians 5:14, "The love of Christ impels us."

More than 200 people gave a standing ovation for the sisters at the St. Mary's Medical Center Centennial Celebration, when they were honored with an induction to the hospital's Wall of Fame.

As Greg Creasy, vice president of mission integration for the medical center said, the sisters of the past faced unbelievable odds, but let God guide them, while thanks to their legacy the same holds true today for all connected with St. Mary's.

"Here we have a love that embraces the lost and broken knowing we can help them become whole once again," he said. "When I think about and see glimpses of what we do every day (I realize) this is a model of love – a model that has worked for 100 years."

In the Spring of 1912 four Pallottine Missionary Sisters from Germany were assigned to serve in West Virginia.

Ranging from 24-34 years of age the young nuns were doubly excited for the adventure, because they were about to be on the maiden voyage of the highly acclaimed Titanic. Thanks be to God, the papers of one of the young sisters were not in order, so they were denied access and had to take a later ship.

After nearly two weeks at sea, they arrived in America, but the traveling companion they were to meet there was delayed, once again changing the fate of the sisters. That inconvenience of the eager sisters was a God wink. The train they were originally to board derailed killing many on board. For four months the sisters studied English in Stella Niagara, N.Y., with the Sisters of Penance and Char-



Joyce Bibey photo
Sister Elisabeth Heptner, SAC (left), and Sister Amutha Arockiam, SAC, sign memorabilia after their induction to the hospital's Wall of Fame at St. Mary's Medical Center in Huntington Nov. 6.

ity congregation. That is where German born Father Nicholas Hengers a pastor of a school and parish in Nicholas County was introduced to the nuns in August of that year. Days later the group traveled to Richwood. It was there their mission as educators began. They served the families of immigrant lumber workers and coal miners. Despite prejudices both ethnic and anti-Catholic the young sisters donning their black dress and habits mustered grit and determination to focus on their mission. A year later they opened a hospital for the community.

In 1921, they were called to Buckhannon to open St. Joseph's Hospital.

In 1923, Archbishop John Swint of the Diocese of Wheeling asked the sisters to expand to Huntington and open St. Mary's Hospital in the abandoned St. Edward's School. They opened the medical center on Nov. 6, 1924. The sisters did not shy away from daunting labor, and because of their genuine intentions to care for others in need, respected physicians and health care workers chose to bring their patients there for care – care that has been exceptional for many generations.

"What started out as a small number of pioneer sisters grew to 121 sisters here to work and serve the Huntington area," St. Mary's Chief Operating Officer Angie Swearingen said. "They have passed on the power of prayer and the amazing grace of God. No words can describe how it feels for one of

the sisters to come up to you and say, 'I'm praying for you.'

"If you stop and think for a moment all of the prayers that the sisters led and prayed every day for 100 years – it is truly awesome," she said. "We are so grateful for their grit, unwavering spirit, and courage in their tough decisions. Their spirit will live on in the hearts and minds of every physician and every staff member that walks through the doors."

Prior to the induction, a celebratory Mass was held in the sisters' chapel in the convent wing of the hospital.

"We look back in thanksgiving, and look forward with confidence" Bishop Mark Brennan said during his homily at Mass in the sisters' chapel at the hospital. "The sisters opened this hospital, providing healthcare to treat the whole person – flesh and spirit. Their compassion and love were healing not merely the body, but the soul as well.

"God gave our skillful health care professionals a great intelligence and a heart to love people. As St. Mary's moves forward do so with the love, gentleness, and patience the Pallottine sisters embody.



Joyce Bibey photo
Sister Phyllis Carpenter, SAC (left), and Sister Mary Terence Wall, SAC, present the gifts to Bishop Mark Brennan during the Mass he celebrated for the 100th anniversary of St. Mary's Hospital in Huntington in the sisters' chapel Nov. 6.

May you be his agents and trust he will give you what you need to do it."

He noted that one-fourth of health care in the world is provided by the Catholic Church, yet we are not one-fourth of the population or even close to that, but because of our faith we are motivated to care and love others like Christ taught us. The power of God gives us the instinct to serve trusting that "Jesus is the Divine Physician."

"The hospital we see today was built with many hands

and many hearts," said Sister Danuta Przybylek, SAC, provincial of the Pallottine Missionary Sisters. "Love can create beautiful things with one tiny seed despite prejudices and lack of finances.

"We came to serve God and his people," she said and added in closing to all the staff of the hospital present. "May the spirit of Christ be carried on.... Make time for relationships. Acknowledge each human being. We entrust the next 100 years to your good hands and assure you of our prayers."

Prayer for God's Guidance

By Sister Joanne Obrochta, SAC

God of Gentleness, be with us all to shine through the warm hearts that are hurting.

God of Strength, be with us all to be supportive of one another and to be good stewards to all in our care.

God of Peace, be with us all to be a mantle for those who are troubled and anxious.

God of Joy, be with us all, filling hearts to fullness.

God of Love, be with us all to reach beyond our walls with hope and love to help those in need, to remind us, and those who come after us, to always remember that what we do for the least of these, we do for God.

May Your love be with us.

Amen.

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Holy Day of Obligation for Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception Transferred to Dec. 9

By OSV—The Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception, which commemorates Mary's preservation from original sin from the moment she was conceived, is observed annually Dec. 8 as a holy day of obligation. However, this year the feast coincides with the Second Sunday of Advent, which in the ranking of liturgical celebrations takes precedence. As a result, the observance of the solemnity has been transferred to Dec. 9.

The Vatican's Dicastery for Legislative Texts affirmed that the obligation to attend Mass on the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception still stands. In a Sept. 4 letter of clarification to Bishop Thomas J. Paprocki of Springfield, Illinois — who chairs the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' canonical affairs and church governance committee — the dicastery said that “the feast must be observed as a day of obligation on the day to which it is transferred.”

St. John's in Summersville to Hold Advent Parish Mission on the Holy Eucharist

SUMMERSVILLE—This Advent, St. John the Evangelist Parish in Summersville invites all to its parish mission featuring Father Ben Cameron. The Fathers of Mercy priest will present “The Holy Eucharist: Shadows and Fulfillment” Dec. 16-19 at the church which is located at 1704 Webster Rd., Summersville.

The week includes daily confessions and evening talks with Exposition and Benediction of the Most Blessed Sacrament. Confessions will be at 6 p.m. each evening. Mission talks will be at 7 p.m. with a different topic each evening. Father Cameron will begin on Monday, Dec. 16, discussing “The Passover Lamb: The Holy Eucharist as Sacrifice.” On Tuesday, Dec. 17, he will focus on “The Manna: The Holy Eucharist as Communion with God.” The discussion on Wednesday, Dec. 18, is on “The Bread of the Presence: The Holy Eucharist as Real Presence.” Father Cameron's last talk will be on “The Eucharistic Sacrifice: Foretaste of Heaven” on the final night, Thursday, Dec. 19. He will then celebrate the closing mission Mass at 7 p.m. that evening.

The celebration will be followed by a reception and fellowship in the baptistry/cry room.

For more information, call (304) 872-2554.



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Pope Says He'll Canonize Acutis, Frassati, Host Meeting on Child's Rights

By Carol Glatz, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis announced that he will canonize Blessed Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati next year and that the Vatican will host a world meeting on the rights of the child Feb. 3.

The pope will canonize Blessed Acutis April 27, during the Jubilee for Adolescents in Rome April 25-27 and Blessed Frassati during the Jubilee of Young People in Rome July 28-Aug. 3.

The pope made the announcement during his general audience in St. Peter's Square Nov. 20, which is World Children's Day.

The annual celebration marks the date when the U.N. General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child in 1959 and when the assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989.

“On the occasion of the International Day of the Rights of the Child and Adolescents that is celebrated today,” the pope said he wanted to announce holding a world meeting at the Vatican.

The World Leaders' Summit on Children's Rights will be dedicated to the theme of “Let's love them and protect them,” and it will include experts and celebrities from different countries, the pope said.

“It will be an occasion to pinpoint new paths directed at better assisting and protecting children still without rights who live in precarious conditions. They are exploited and abused and suffer the dramatic consequences of wars,” he said.

A small group of children involved in preparing for the Feb. 3 meeting joined the pope for a photograph after the announcement along with Franciscan

Father Enzo Fortunato, coordinator of the church's first World Children's Day, which was held in Rome May 25.

Pope Francis also established a new papal committee for World Children's Day and named Father Fortunato its president.

The new committee, he said, will ensure that “World Children's Day does not remain an isolated event” and that “the pastoral care for children increasingly becomes a more qualified priority in evangelical and pedagogical terms,” he said in the decree, also known as a chirograph, published by the Vatican Nov. 20.

The aim of the world day, he said, is to make a concrete contribution toward carrying out “the church's commitment to children” by giving voice to children's rights and making sure the church's pastoral activities have the same kind of care and attention toward children Jesus had.

Other goals include helping the Christian community become more of “an educating community capable first of all of being evangelized by the voice of the little ones” and helping the church become more “like children” and let go of “signs of power” in order to become “a welcoming and livable home for all, starting with children,” the decree said.

Pope Francis said he wants the day to be celebrated at the universal, regional, national and local levels and, therefore, the committee will help promote and organize those celebrations with the universal event held “possibly every two years.”

“I entrust the preparation of World Children's Day to the regional and national bishops' conferences that will institute local organizing committees,” he said.

December 3, 2024

GIVING TUESDAY

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CATHOLIC SHARING APPEAL

Diocese's Clergy and Laity Help to Build a Christ-Centered Community for the Incarcerated

By Colleen Rowan

For the first time since the Covid pandemic, the Kairos Inside Retreat at the Mount Olive Correctional Complex in Fayette County was held in early November. Through this ecumenical initiative, inmates at the facility were invited to share in Christ's message of love and forgiveness brought to them by volunteers and representatives of many different Christian denominations in West Virginia.

"The emphasis is to bring about and build a Christ-centered community within the facility," said Deacon Anthony O'Leary, who serves as a permanent deacon at Blessed Sacrament Parish in South Charleston. He is passionate about prison ministry and was one of three representing the Catholic faith at the retreat which included a series of witness talks, discussions, presentations, chapel meditations, and music.

Deacon O'Leary was so happy to share that the 30 men who participated received a powerful message—roughly 100 people were praying for them non-stop. Prior to the gathering, Christian faithful had the opportunity to commit to praying for retreatants in 30-minute vigil time slots at Prayer Vigils.net for the duration of the retreat, day and night, from Thursday evening to Sunday afternoon. Every time slot was filled, and retreat leaders brought a printout of the prayer sign-up sheet to the gathering so the men could see that there are people out there who care about them.

"We put it on the wall so that the residents could see that, yes, there are people on the outside who are taking time out to pray," Deacon O'Leary said. "That's another element of support that makes a very good impression on those who participate in the weekend."

The Kairos team, he said, is grateful to so many for contributing their prayers to this important ministry.

"We understand that the participants are there because they have



a civil debt to pay," Deacon O'Leary said. "But in the spirit of Matthew 25, we are there to share with them that the one who paid the ultimate debt for all our sins loves them and wants to have a relationship with them and those of us from the outside do care for them."

This was the 37th Kairos Inside Retreat at Mount Olive. Past retreats have always been conducted for 42 participants. However, only 30 participants could be accommodated this time because volunteer numbers were down. Deacon O'Leary said that 96 men at the facility had wanted to participate. "That demonstrates how the Word of God is sought by the inmates there," he said. "Mount Olive officials frequently say that a Kairos weekend retreat brings a noticeable calmness to the whole facility."

This was Deacon O'Leary's fourth Kairos Inside Retreat at Mount Olive and his first as an ordained member of the clergy of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

"To introduce myself as ordained clergy in the Roman Catholic Church in this Christian interdenominational setting was humbling and uplifting," he said. "It is truly a blessing."

Kairos Prison Ministry is an international lay-led, interdenominational Christian ministry that was established in 1976. Dave Haas, also of Blessed Sacrament Parish, led the music for the recent Mount Olive retreat and has been involved in this ministry since it came to West Virginia 22 years ago. The retreat is powerful for the inmates, he said, because different denominations come together to share God's love with them. This is instrumental in getting them to feel comfortable enough to open themselves up at the retreat.

"In prison, these folks live in an environment where there's a lot of fear," Haas said. "They're afraid for



their safety. They're afraid of sharing any information about themselves... We're asking them to put down their guard and to share their feelings and things about God and their experiences. And it's got to be the power of the Holy Spirit that allows that to happen, because there's just a feeling of safety being in that presence."

The retreat begins on a Thursday evening and is held for about three hours. Volunteers spend about 12 and a half hours on Friday and another 12-plus hours on Saturday with participants. The retreat ends on Sunday with an eight-hour session.

A large part of the ministry, Haas said, is homemade meals and cookies which are prepared by 20 teams and brought in for inmates and staff to share. One of these teams was from Blessed Sacrament Parish where youth group members and adults gathered at the church after Sunday Mass a few days before the retreat to bake the 110 dozen cookies needed. The kids also created artwork with uplifting messages for the retreat participants. These and other messages of hope from supporters of Kairos from around the world were shown to participants.

Also on the team representing the Catholic faith with Deacon O'Leary and Haas was Father Arthur Bufogle, pastor of St. John Neumann Parish in Marlinton, St. Mark the Evangelist Mission in Bartow, and St. Bernard Chapel in Snowshoe. He is also a long-time volunteer for Kairos.

"I participated in my first Kairos at Mount Olive Kairos #6 in October 2004, and I have been part of the movement ever since, with the Charleston area group that goes to Mount Olive," Father Bufogle said. At that time, he was an assistant at

the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston. He continued with the Mount Olive group even when he was serving at parishes in Summers County, Preston County, and now Pocahontas County.

"Kairos is an opportunity for the prisoner to experience the love of God through the love of the men and women on the team as well as those outside sending expressions of love (which we use the Greek word 'agape' to describe)," he said.

One of the things that impresses participants the most, Father Bufogle shared, is that the team is made up of men or women from different churches and denominations, "all working together and getting along so well and so friendly."

"I've seen a remarkable change in the attitude and openness of prisoners (who we call 'residents') during the weekend, and after the weekend in the monthly 'reunions' and the weekly 'prayer and share' groups," he said.

Father Bufogle said that Kairos now includes Kairos Inside (inside prisons), Kairos Outside (for those not in prison but affected because of loved ones in prison), and Kairos Torch (for offenders who are 25 or younger). In addition to Mount Olive, Kairos is in three other West Virginia prisons: the Huttonsville Correctional Center in Randolph County for men, Saint Marys Correctional Center in Pleasants County for men, and Lakin Correctional Center in Mason County for women. The program is not in any federal prisons in the state.

Father Bufogle noted that teams are comprised of all men for men's prisons, and all women for the women's prison.

Haas encourages anyone who is

See "Build" on Page 6



Courtesy photos

Above, youth group members and volunteers at Blessed Sacrament Parish in South Charleston bake 110 dozen cookies and create artwork with uplifting messages for the men incarcerated at the Mount Olive Correctional Complex in Fayette County who participated in the Kairos Inside Retreat in early November.

\$1,640,000 Awarded in Capital Matching Grant Program

WHEELING—Bishop Mark Brennan has approved the annual budget submitted by the Diocesan Finance Council, which includes a Capital Matching Grant Program of just over \$1,640,000.

Parishes and schools are eligible for one grant per fiscal year. Each location reviews its capital needs and, working with the Diocesan Office of Buildings & Properties and the superintendent of Catholic schools, projects

are submitted and reviewed, and grants awarded.

The maximum grant is fifty percent of the project cost, up to \$50,000. Projects must be completed by June 30, 2025, giving parishes and schools time to plan and raise their share of the cost. Many parishes rely on the Catholic Sharing Appeal as their preferred method for raising funds.

For fiscal year 2025, more than fifty parishes

and schools were awarded grants, ranging from \$3,000 to the maximum of \$50,000.

In order to qualify for a grant, parishes and schools must be current in fiscal and reporting obligations to the diocese and to the Priests' Health & Retirement Association.

The diocese plans to offer a Capital Matching Grant Program for fiscal year 2026 (July 1, 2025-June 30, 2026), with requests to be submitted in early spring, 2025.

Retirement Fund for Religious Collection Set for Dec. 7-8 in Parishes of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

WEST VIRGINIA — The National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) is announcing the annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection, scheduled in parishes throughout the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston on the weekend of Dec. 7-8. In 2023, parishioners contributed \$87,926.71 to the collection.

John Knutsen, director of the NRRO, expressed his gratitude: "The unwavering support of the Catholic faithful in the United States continues to inspire us. Every contribution to the Retirement Fund for Religious makes a tangible difference in the lives of those who have given so much to our Church and communities."

Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests have often worked for little

to no pay, leaving them with limited retirement savings. Today, religious communities face the challenge of caring for an aging population, with more than 20,000 religious being past the age of 70. The annual cost of their care exceeds \$1 billion, highlighting the critical need for the Retirement Fund for Religious.

Since its inception in 1988, the collection has raised over \$1 billion. Nearly \$870 million has been distributed for direct care, while over \$103.5 million has funded self-help projects like collaborative health-care facilities. The collection also supports educational programs, enabling religious communities to plan for their long-term needs.

"By contributing to the Retirement Fund for Religious," Knutsen empha-

sized, "members of the Catholic Church in America not only provide for the care of aging religious but also empower their communities to continue their vital ministries."

In 2023, the appeal raised \$29.3 million, providing financial assistance for the retirement needs of 286 U.S. religious communities.

The NRRO coordinates the annual national appeal for the Retirement Fund for Religious and distributes financial assistance to eligible religious communities. It is sponsored by the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

For more information, visit retiredreligious.org.



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Visit retiredreligious.org/2024photos to meet the religious pictured.

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Build...

Cont'd from Page 5

interested in volunteering or would like more information about this ministry to call him at (304) 382-2000.

"It's been a huge blessing in my life," he said. "You see miracles. You see God's hand at work in prison. The prisoners, their idea is that society locked them up, has thrown away the key, and could care less about them." But the ministry, he continued, the homemade meals and cookies, and all of the volunteers at the retreat "show them that they're loved, that people do care. And that really opens their eyes and really touches their hearts."

More information about Kairos in prisons around the state and how to get involved can be found at www.kairosww.org.

Father Bufogle and Haas suggest viewing an informational video about Kairos in West Virginia on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DMxBcPtbs10>

"We are always looking for volunteers," Deacon O'Leary said. "This is an incredibly rewarding ministry."

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Pastoral Letter on Bringing People to Christ

Most Reverend Mark E. Brennan
Bishop of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

Dear brothers and sisters of my beloved Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, I have written quite a few pastoral letters in my five years as your Shepherd. This may be the most important one, because it touches on the very reason we are a Church; so I ask you to take the time to read it and reflect on its message.

OUR IDENTITY AND MISSION

First of all, we must understand that we Catholics are not a religious club with periodic gatherings and quaint rituals. We are not a Fortune 500 company with branches called parishes and schools and corporate headquarters in Rome. The truth is that we are a movement going through history, proclaiming that Jesus, the carpenter from Nazareth, is the world's Savior from sin and death. We need such a Savior, for we are simply incapable of overcoming those twin evils by ourselves. The Lord Jesus himself founded our Church and will always sustain our effort to share his saving

Gospel with the world.

How do you handle challenges? Do you run away from them or try to meet them? Here's the challenge the Lord Jesus gives us: he commands us to make him known to other people and to invite them to put their faith in him. He said to his disciples before he ascended back to heaven: *Go make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, until the end of the age* [Matthew 28:19-20].

This effort to bring other people to Christ and him to them is formally known as "evangelization." It is a word that conjures up for some Catholics zealots of other religions who shout slogans on the streets or knock on doors offering pamphlets with obscure teachings.

But it is really about sharing our faith in Christ with others to give them an opportunity to know him and believe in him.

Let me illustrate what evangelization is like in practice. A boy I knew was ambivalent about the Catholic faith but, when he encountered a fine teacher in his Confirmation class, he warmed up to it. He joined the parish's high school youth group and became a leader. By now enthusiastic about his faith, he went on to college and there began dating a young woman who was not Catholic. He shared with her how much his faith meant to him. She became interested and joined a group at the university that was looking into the Catholic faith (the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults, now called the Order of Christian Initiation of Adults). What she experienced resonated with her. She responded with faith and became a Catholic.

That young man had brought another person to Christ by his good example and his willingness to speak of Christ and the Church. But sometimes it is other Catholics we have an

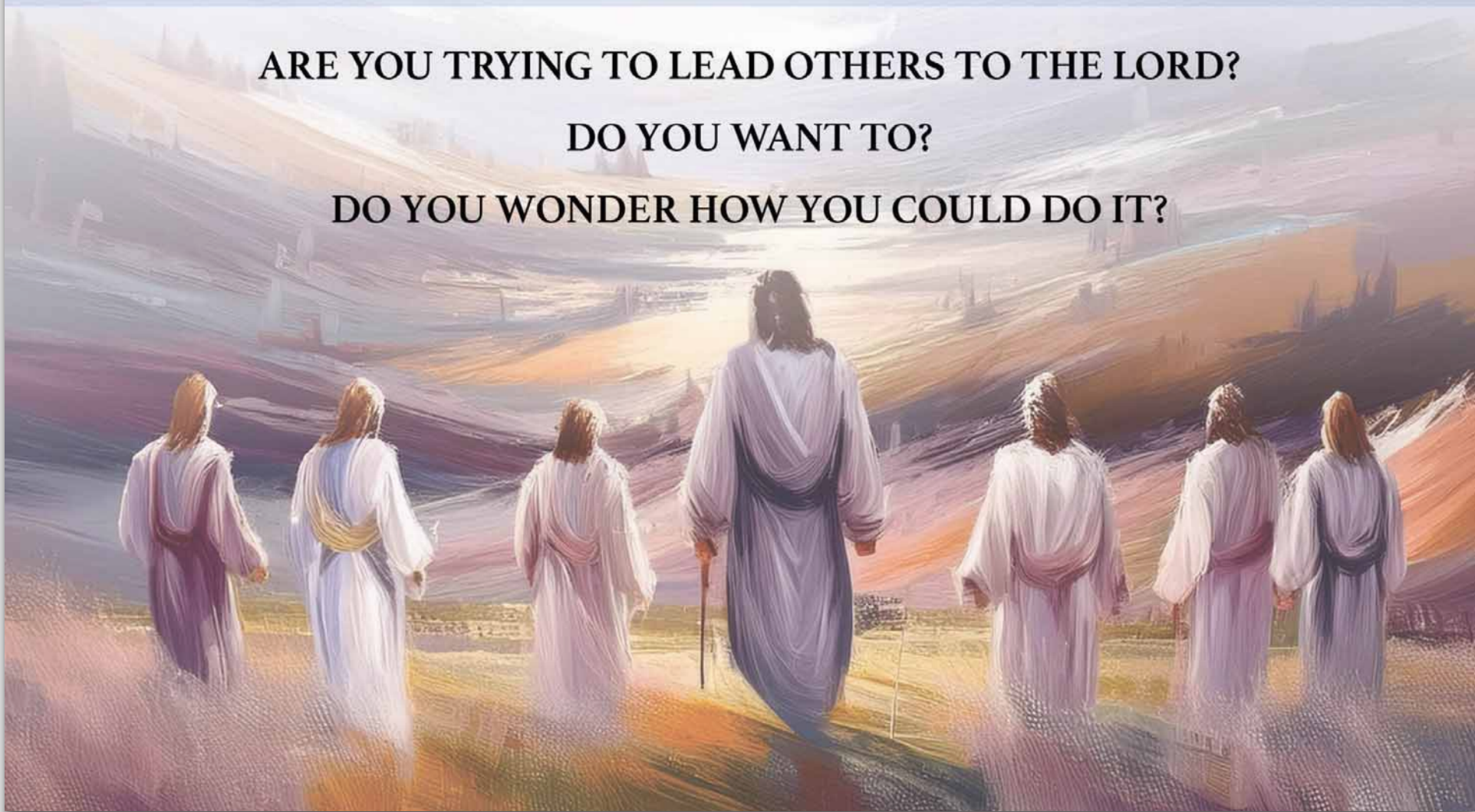
See "Letter" on Page 8

Jesus said: Go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you and, behold, I am with you always to the close of the age. Matthew 28:19-20

ARE YOU TRYING TO LEAD OTHERS TO THE LORD?

DO YOU WANT TO?

DO YOU WONDER HOW YOU COULD DO IT?



Graphic by Amber Chambers

Shown above is the postcard Catholics of West Virginia will receive for the bishop's pastoral letter, "Bringing People to Christ."

Letter...

Cont'd from Page 7

opportunity to influence. A young Catholic woman worked in an office and made it a point to go to Mass on her lunch hour at a nearby church on holy days of obligation (such as All Saints Day and the Immaculate Conception of Mary). Some of her colleagues noticed and asked her where she was going. Before long a couple of other workers, who were Catholic but not practicing, decided to go with her. Her good example helped those Catholics return to a regular practice of their faith.

Could you in a similar way help others to encounter Christ, either to know him for the first time or to renew their devotion to him? I know you could.

ALL OF US ARE CALLED TO EVANGELIZE

Hoping to stir the embers of an evangelizing faith in the Church, Pope St. Paul VI wrote an encyclical letter in 1975 called "Evangelii Nuntiandi" (Announcing the Gospel) in which he underlined the supreme importance of evangelization: "Evangelizing is in fact the grace and vocation proper to the Church, her deepest identity. She exists in order to evangelize, that is to say, in order to preach and teach, to be the channel of the gift of grace, to reconcile sinners with God and to perpetuate Christ's sacrifice in the Mass, which is the memorial of his death and glorious resurrection" [# 14].

Even so, you might say: "Don't we have priests and deacons and nuns to do that? Isn't it enough for me to live right so I can go to heaven?" Our clergy and religious often bring others to Christ but they aren't meant to work alone. Yes, you should observe God's commandments because that gives witness to the sincerity of your faith, but the Lord also calls you to join in the Church's great evangelizing mission. *The harvest is abundant but the laborers are few, he said, so ask the master of the harvest to send out laborers for his harvest* [Matthew 9:37]. You are one of those laborers for the Gospel. Your Baptism made you a missionary disciple. The grace of that sacrament, renewed by the Eucharist, intensified by Confirmation, restored by Penance, strengthens you to love God above all things and your neighbor as yourself. It prepares you to help bring in the harvest of souls for whom Christ thirsts.

Your prayer and worship honor God but the ways to love your neighbor are many and varied. Yet there is no greater form of love than to introduce another human being to his or her Savior. That love can make the difference between a person achieving the final destiny of eternal life in heaven or missing out on it. While the Lord will surely

make allowances for those who, through no fault of their own, have not known him, it is far better to know your Savior and to enter into a personal and life-giving relationship with him. But someone needs to get the journey started. That someone is you!

Remember: Jesus himself tells us to evangelize. Re-read the quotation from St. Matthew's Gospel early in this letter. The Lord is not content with us caring only for our own salvation; he wants us to be concerned about others' salvation, too. Second, we have truly good news to share with other people. We know who the Savior of the world is. There have been other great religious figures in history, such as Moses, the Buddha and Mohammed, but none of them claimed to be the world's savior from sin and death. Only Jesus credibly claimed that role.

Third, as I indicated above, Jesus teaches us to love our neighbor. Out of love, we should be willing to reach out to those who have never known Christ or known him only superficially, as well as to those Catholics who, for various reasons, have stopped practicing their faith. Love means truly caring about the welfare of others; caring for their eternal welfare is the highest form of spiritual love.

Finally, we should want to invite others to join us in the Church. *It is not good for the man to be alone* [Genesis 2:18]. That is a truth applied in Genesis to marriage but it is applicable to religion as well. The Lord gathers his disciples into his

Church so that they can support one another in living their faith and have greater strength and insight to speak of him to others. The Lord uses our social nature to build up the Body of Christ, the visible Church, on earth, so that we can fulfill our mission to announce his Gospel and infuse his goodness in the world.

WITNESS OF LIFE AND EXPLICIT PROCLAMATION

If we are to evangelize effectively, it is essential that our way of life be in harmony with what we say to others about Christ and the Church. That testimony of life is our witness to the truth of the Gospel. Saint Paul VI wrote: "Modern man listens more willingly to witnesses than to teachers and, if he does listen to teachers, it is because they are witnesses" [EN 41].

A non-Catholic family had several Catholic neighbors, who sometimes talked about their involvement in their parish and their love for their faith. The non-Catholic family's home burnt down. Their Catholic neighbors gave them food, clothing and many other kinds of help as the family struggled with their loss. Touched by the faith-inspired witness of life of those Catholic families, the non-Catholic family wanted to know more about Catholicism. Eventually that family entered the Church. As St. Paul VI said, "The Church is evangelized by constant conversion and renewal in order to evangelize the world with credibility" [EN 15]. Those neighbors

brought a family to Christ because they were living their faith. Are you living yours? If you need to reform your life, pray hard, seek wise counsel from your priest or a trusted friend and never doubt that the Lord loves sinners and will always forgive those who repent.

PERSONAL EVANGELIZATION

How do you engage personally in evangelization? You need to prepare spiritually. Begin by praying daily for specific people to be open to the gift of faith or of a renewed faith. Make a list if you need to but don't just pray in general; pray by name for people you know. Then add weight to your prayer by fasting for them at least once a week. Friday is a traditional day for fasting. You can fast from a meal or from some form of entertainment or favorite activity. You deprive yourself of some temporal good for a brief time as a sacrifice to win God's grace for others for eternity. A third form of spiritual preparation for evangelization is to offer to God your good works and sufferings on behalf of those for whom you are praying. God loves all absent Catholics and religiously unaffiliated people more than we do but He wants to see how much we love them. Following these steps shows Him our love.

Yet we cannot stop there. As St. Paul VI says, "The Good News proclaimed by the witness of life sooner or later has to be proclaimed by the word

See "Letter" on Page 9

SPIRITUAL PREPARATION



1. **PRAY DAILY** for persons you know to respond to Christ's gift of faith



2. **FAST WEEKLY** from a meal, internet, video games, or other wholesome activity to back up your prayer.



3. **OFFER TO GOD** your good works and sufferings on behalf of those for whom you are praying.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1. **ASK GOD** for opportunities to speak of your faith to persons who will listen.

2. **TELL WHY** following Jesus Christ and belonging to His Church matter to you. You're an expert on your faith life.

3. **OFFER HELP** if the person needs it: prayer, a Catholic website, a pamphlet or book, or a talk with a priest.

YOU CAN DO YOUR PART TO LEAD OTHERS TO JESUS CHRIST!

YOUR REWARD?

**WELL DONE, GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT.
ENTER INTO YOUR MASTER'S JOY [MATTHEW 25:21].**

Graphic by Amber Chambers

Shown above is the postcard Catholics of West Virginia will receive for the bishop's pastoral letter, "Bringing People to Christ."

Letter...

Cont'd from Page 8

of life. There is no true evangelization if the name, the teaching, the life, the promises, the kingdom and the mystery of Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God, are not proclaimed" [EN 22]. We have to seek opportunities to speak of Jesus Christ and why we follow him as members of his Church. Ask the Lord to give you opportunities to give witness to your faith in him. You know why you follow him. You do not need a theological degree to tell others your reasons. You are an expert on your life of faith.

If the person has questions you cannot answer, consult the Catechism of the Catholic Church or a reliable online website to understand the matter and be able to respond. If the person needs help beyond what you can offer – he or she is divorced and remarried or is gay or lives in a household that is hostile to the faith or poses a question you have not found the way to answer – arrange for the person to speak to your priest or deacon or call the appropriate office at the diocesan Chancery for help. Obstacles must be recognized but obstacles can be overcome. Pick up one of the glossy cards at your parish to keep these principles of personal evangelization in mind.

People will often give you opportunities to engage them in that conversation: moments of great joy, such as the birth of a child, a wedding or a new home; moments of sadness and tragedy, such as the death of a loved one, the breakup of a marriage, the loss of a job or some other serious disappointment. These are openings to speak of how Christ has been your strength and joy when you have dealt with times both sad and happy.

A woman raised by virulently atheistic parents met and married a practicing Catholic. Seeing his joy, experiencing his kindness, watching how he dealt patiently with their children, knowing that he prayed every day, she wanted what he had and, after much interior struggle (she went through the

RCIA three times), she finally became a Catholic. The husband gave an excellent witness of life to balance his gentle encouragement of her desire to be Catholic and the RCIA team provided clear knowledge of the faith.

**NOW IS THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,
NOW IS THE DAY OF SALVATION
(II CORINTHIANS 6:2)**

We have been engaged for the past three years in a Eucharistic Revival and are now in the Year of Mission. This is a favorable time to invite people to come back to the Church or to taste for the first time how good the Lord is. As part of the Revival, the "Walk with One" effort is an approach to personal evangelization, similar to the one I have been describing. Go to www.eucharisticrevival.org for an in-depth description how this effort can be carried out.

Be willing to step out in faith, trusting in the Lord's words: *Do not worry beforehand about what you are to say but say whatever will be given to you at that hour, for it will not be you who are speaking but the Holy Spirit* [Mark 13:11]. Speak simply and personally. You can do it. A young man in an airplane revealed to the Catholic passenger seated next to him that he was having trouble dealing with his girlfriend's decision to end their relationship. The Catholic knew a priest where the young man lived. "Why don't you go talk with him? He gave me good advice once." The man did contact the priest and found his counsel helpful. It led him to explore Catholicism and eventually he decided to come into the Church.

I've heard people say, "It shouldn't be about numbers." But I notice that the Church has always been concerned with numbers. St. Luke notes that, after St. Peter's proclamation to the crowd on Pentecost, *those who accepted his message were baptized and about three thousand persons were added that day* [Acts of the Apostles 2:41]. Luke says later: *The Church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria was at peace. It was being built up and walked in the fear of the*

Lord, and with the consolation of the Holy Spirit it grew in numbers [Acts 9:31]. Why do numbers matter? Not so we get more money in the collection or can brag about our size but because it means more people are responding to the Lord's saving message and growing in his grace. Numbers matter to God: *God our Savior wills everyone to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth* [I Timothy 2:3].

My brothers and sisters in Christ, many of you have spoken to me about your sadness that family members and friends have walked away from the Church. Some of you lament that your parishes are aging with few young families and single persons in sight. I don't think any of us wants our Church to shrink and disappear. Our Catholic Church is the original Christian Church and by far the most universal. Don't we want it to embrace as many of those hundreds of thousands of West Virginians, *who are troubled and abandoned, like sheep without a shepherd* [Matthew 9:36], and assure them that they have a true Shepherd in Jesus Christ? Our Church – meaning all of us working together – must fulfill our mission and not settle for just hanging on, sad and listless.

Our state may be losing population but we can be growing as a Church. You all know Catholics

who have walked away from us. You know some of those West Virginians with no religious affiliation. They are your relatives, friends, neighbors, fellow workers, people with whom you recreate. If your faith matters to you, do your part. Join with other Catholics around the state to reach out to those we have lost and those we never had. It is for their good and for ours as well. It may take years to see the full fruit of our efforts but we must begin. This is the challenge the Lord gives us here and now.

The season of Advent is a season of hope. In fact, Pope Francis has announced that the central theme of the Jubilee Year in 2025 will be hope. Jesus wants us to share our hope for forgiveness and eternal life with others. If you are willing to do so, you may confidently hope to hear these words from the Lord when you die: *Well done, my good and faithful servant . . . Come, share your master's joy* [Matthew 25:23]. Be the good, faithful servant Jesus calls you to be and you will be rewarded beyond measure by the Lord with a joy that will never end.

If your faith matters to you, do your part.

Mark E. Brennan

Bishop Mark E. Brennan

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Monica prayed for Augustine. Ambrose accompanied him. Who will you walk with?

Everyone is called to evangelize, and it's not as hard as you might think. *Walk With One* is your opportunity to be God's instrument in the life of another person—someone whom Jesus longs to bring into relationship with himself and his Church.

Learn more about this initiative, access resources, and receive prayer support at eucharisticrevival.org/walk-with-one.

Scan the QR code to get started!



Hancock County Parishes Send Support to Devastated Western North Carolina

By Colleen Rowan

NEW CUMBERLAND — When Father Bill Matheny, Jr. announced at a Sunday morning Mass that Immaculate Conception Parish in New Cumberland was participating in a collection of needed, every-day items for the victims of Hurricane Helene in devastated Western North Carolina, the response from the faithful community was immediate.

"There was a couple there from Tennessee visiting at the parish, and on my way out of church the woman stopped me and gave me \$50 and told me to use it for whatever we needed," said Nancy Rettinger, whose family spearheaded the collection. Nancy is a member of Immaculate Conception which participated in the collection along with its sister parish of Sacred Heart in Chester.

"The people were just so generous," Nancy said. "It's just unbelievable."

Their generosity filled a van load of first aid items such as instant cold packs; Band-Aids; travel-size packets of Benedryl, Tylenol, Ibuprofen, and Bacitracin; hand sanitizer, and gauze pads. The load also included other requested items such as batteries and matches along with hygiene products that included toothpaste and toothbrushes, soap, shampoo, deodorant, and razors.

"You think of people without water and no electricity and without food and the general necessities like soap and shampoo and first aid items, it makes you think you need to really reach out and do something for these people," Nancy said.

The idea for the collection came about through the connection of an Ash-

ville, N.C., couple who are friends of the Rettinger family. And when they told Nancy of the devastation in their community in the aftermath of the hurricane that caused catastrophic flooding that left the area in ruins, her family wanted to help.

"The people were very isolated," Nancy said, adding that help could not reach people because the roads were washed out. "They were pack-muling a lot of stuff in on horses. They were in the process of giving (items to) people with ATVs so that they could reach these people up in the mountains. And of course, there was no communications for a while, so it was just local people that were making an effort to find out what was needed."

Nancy's friends were in touch with Asheville-area fire departments which

gave them a list of items the people needed.

"We were asked for matches and lighters ... because people didn't have any way to start a fire to cook," Nancy added.

Nancy's daughter, Gretchen Myzk, took the helm and organized the collection at the parishes, and news of the effort quickly spread through Hancock County. When the manager at Dollar General in New Cumberland heard what Nancy was shopping for in her store, she put a box out and collected items from customers to help with the effort.

"It just sort of snowballed," Nancy said, adding

that the Davis Bothers Pharmacy in Chester also responded with first aid kits for the collection.

A large amount of donations came into Immaculate Conception Church Oct. 12 and parishioners assembled bags with the personal items for individuals. The children in the parish school of religion program along with adult volunteers finished filling the bags the next morning after the 8:30 a.m. Sunday Mass.

On Oct. 13 and 14, volunteers took the van load of supplies from New Cumberland and Chester down to Western North Carolina hoping it would help the people as they recover from the devastation.



Courtesy photo
Children in the parish school of religion program at Immaculate Conception Parish in New Cumberland stand with boxes of necessities they helped to pack for victims of Hurricane Helene in Western North Carolina Oct. 12.



Courtesy photo
Volunteers at Immaculate Conception Parish in New Cumberland assemble bags of necessities for victims of Hurricane Helene in Western North Carolina Oct. 12.

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Feed Your Soul Outside

Stir Love and Joy of God

By Joyce Bibey

If what St. Augustine said is true that when prayer and praise of God are sung, “A song is a thing of joy; more profoundly, it is a thing of love,” then Matt Maher has helped stir the love and joy of God and the Church into holy habits of our West Virginia faithful.

Maher performed this Fall in Charleston. Among the crowd that filled the arena were faithful from Charleston, Bluefield, and Princeton who saw the performer at the National Eucharistic Congress.

Maher’s music can be described as fuel for the soul to help us fill our minds and hearts with God. Christ said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.” (Matthew 22:37)

Proverbs 4 loosely translated reminds us to be wise because what we intentionally feed our minds becomes our thoughts, those thoughts become words, those words actions, and actions define our character. Character is precious so feed your mind with the Word of God not the words of an evil world.

To be stronger in faith our pastors and deacons encourage us to bring Christ into every moment of our daily lives. Bishop Mark Brennan has inspired us to be “fully alive” in the Church and be the Body of Christ in our homes and communities.

We want the Synodal Church – a united Church as Pope Francis initiated.

We want a Revival of our Church and all within it, as our U.S. bishops have guided.

We want others to join us or come back, as we in the pews hope to take on the Walk with One mission.

Maher and other plan clothed evangelists like him, whether through their music, art, writings, pod-

casts, etc. etc., remind us that life is a crazy lot of challenging, sad, happy, uncertain, and lonely times, but we are never alone, God is always there for us. So share that!

Be like Deacon Tony O’Leary of Blessed Sacrament Parish in South Charleston, and Lorin Albin of Sacred Heart Parish in Princeton, who organized groups from their area to attend a revival concert featuring Maher and others. A fun evening out, sure, but a moment to feed the soul outside of the church building – absolutely.

Deacon O’Leary arranged for his group to also have a meet and greet with Maher.

For Gerri Wright, director of St. John XXIII Pastoral Center, it was extra meaningful to have the chance to have a conversation with the artist who brought out a ton of emotions for her at the congress – enthusiasm, gratefulness, humility, empathy, hope, and peace.

“Whether at the NEC, a concert in our capitol city, or in our parishes, music



Photo illustration by Joyce Bibey

praising God, helps us to pray, and draws us into a deeper relationship with each other and with the God who loves us unconditionally!”

Albin, Youth Ministry coordinator at Sacred Heart Parish in Princeton, organized a group that included elementary, middle, and high school students along

with several adults from her parish and also a few from Sacred Heart Parish in Bluefield. “Matt Maher has a special way of leading us to an encounter with our Lord through his music,” Albin said. “Our goal with youth events is to help as many students (and their families) encounter our Lord and feel all the love He has

for each of us. Matt demonstrates that worship music is one of the most unifying ways to come together in the love of Christ.”

When we find resources to complement our catechism it certainly pleases Christ and brings about countless blessings, she said.

“It was such a blessing for our group to experience a Catholic artist playing songs so rich in scripture and all the beliefs we share,” she said, and added, “As Matt sings, ‘I just wanna be in the room when You move’ (from his song In The Room recorded with Ben Fuller and Ellie Holcomb), I thank God for all the ways He is moving in our youth and our families!”

Taking advantage of concerts like Maher’s is a great way to fulfill our mission as Church – “to bring everyone together for activities so the kids can see us all living our faith together outside of the walls of (the church building).”

Editor’s note: To hear In the Room go to: youtu.be/sFUw5MwZg0?si=VQG5cvKJ8TVnR9Ur



Matt Maher poses for a group photo with South Charleston’s Blessed Sacrament parishioners.

Courtesy photo

Bluefield's Sacred Heart Church Celebrates 100th Anniversary



Courtesy photo

Bishop Mark Brennan (center) celebrates Mass for the 100th anniversary of Sacred Heart Church in Bluefield Nov. 3. From left are concelebrants Father John McDonough; Father Jojan Joseph, CST; and Very Rev. Sebastian Devasya, V.E., pastor of Sacred Heart; Bishop Brennan; and concelebrants Father Paul Wharton, former pastor; Very Rev. Leonard Smith, V.F.; and Father Rey Landicho.

Sacred Heart Church in Bluefield celebrated the 100th anniversary of the church building Nov. 2-3 with tours of the church and school building and a special centennial Mass followed by a dinner for parishioners and guests. The tours were conducted Nov. 2 highlighting the history of the church and school as well as the unique architectural features and religious symbolism found throughout the church. Mass was celebrated Nov. 3 by Bishop Mark Brennan with concelebrants Very Rev. Sebastian Devasya, V.E., pastor of Sacred Heart; Father Paul Wharton, former pastor; Very Rev. Leonard Smith, V.F.; Father Jojan Joseph, CST; Father Rey Landicho; and Father John McDonough. A celebration dinner was held at Fincastle in Bluefield, Va., following Mass.

The celebration brought current and former parishioners, family members from out of town, and guests together for one of the most beautiful services ever held at the church. The church was filled to capacity and attendees were thrilled that Bishop Brennan was able to celebrate Mass for this once in a lifetime occasion. Likewise, the

dinner was very well attended with over 200 people participating.

Bob Buzzo, chairman of the Parish Pastoral Council said, "the turnout this weekend truly demonstrates the love we have for our church and our church family. While we are celebrating the centennial of the church building, we can't help but also celebrate 129 years as a parish serving the Bluefield area. As a church, we are blessed to have a great mix of long-term members and families as well as younger members and families. For some, our church has been generational. I think it is interesting to note that this weekend, we have participants whose family lineage goes back to 1924, when the church was built, and even longer. In fact, we have nine families represented at Mass and dinner whose church heritage goes back to the early 1900s."

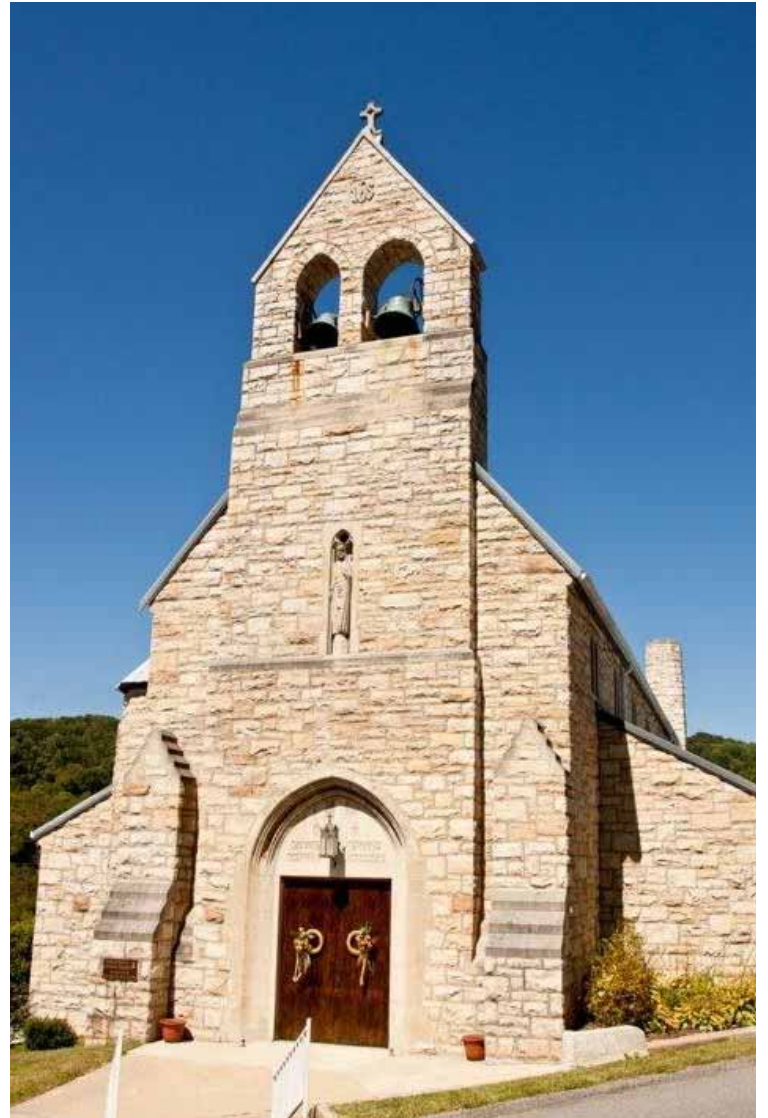
The tours of the church were well attended with many parishioners and non-Catholics taking advantage of the opportunity to learn about the beautiful Gothic designed church. Theresa Bales, chairperson of the Centennial Committee said, "Our church is beautiful and has

some unique architectural features reminiscent of European churches. Many of the tour participants were members of our parish and some commented that they had learned things about the building that they never knew. It was gratifying to share our proud history with those in attendance."

The school building, which was built in 1926 and closed in 1961, was an integral part of the parish while operating. The building was added onto in the 1950s and provided the young people of the parish with an excellent educational opportunity.

The construction of the church building began with the laying of the cornerstone in October 1924 under the leadership of Father Wilbert Burke and was solemnly dedicated in September 1925. The church was designed by acclaimed architect Edward E. Weber in the Spanish Gothic tradition and built from locally quarried sandstone block.

While this is the centennial of the church building, the roots of Sacred Heart Parish go back to the late 1800s. Father John McBride began ministering to Catholics in the Bluefield area in 1889. In-



Courtesy photo

Sacred Heart Church in Bluefield is shown above.

terestingly, this was also the year that the City of Bluefield was incorporated. This small group of Catholics were the nucleus of the community of believers that is Sacred Heart Parish today. In the early days of the parish, services were held in various meeting places around Bluefield, such as the Bluefield Inn, which later became the site of the Norfolk Southern Divisional Offices. As the number of Catholics in the Bluefield area grew, mainly from an influx of European immigrants moving to America to work in the coalfields and on the railroad and seeking a better way of life, it became imperative that a permanent church was needed. After raising funds from the members of the parish, and from the personal funds of the pastor, Father Emile Olivier, a small church was built on North Mercer Street in Bluefield in 1895. The Catholic population of Bluefield continued to increase as the City of Bluefield grew and the church on

North Mercer Street became too small for the expanding population. In 1924, Father Wilbert Burke, Sacred Heart's pastor at the time, spearheaded the construction of the current structure at 1003 Wyoming Street.

Over the last 129 years as
**See "Anniversary" on
Page 13**

MJ T

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Catholic Charities Holds First Charity in Action Awards for the State's Southern Region



Courtesy photo
Lori Bishop, a Charity in Action Award recipient, speaks at the ceremony.

PRINCETON—Catholic Charities West Virginia (CCWVa) held its 2024 Charity in Action Awards at the Karen Preservati Center in Princeton Nov. 13 honoring Monica Mills, Lori Bishop, and the Mommy Ministry of Sacred Heart Parish in Princeton. This was the inaugural Charity in Action Awards event in Princeton, celebrating exceptional individuals and groups dedicated to the

service of others.

Mills, a retired licensed practical nurse and dedicated volunteer at CCWVa, was recognized for her unyielding compassion, hope, and advocacy. As a member of Princeton's Sacred Heart Parish, the church choir, and the Mommy Ministry Group, her commitment to the less fortunate and uplifting presence have made a significant impact in the community.

"Monica treats everyone with kindness and respect," said Matt Atwood, Southern Regional director of CCWVa. "She has a positive and uplifting personality that remains constant, and if anything needs to be done, she's always willing to step up."

A lifelong resident of McDowell County and member of Powhatan's Sacred Heart Church, Bishop was honored for making a lasting mark on her community through her roles on the Catholic Char-



Courtesy photo
The Mommy Ministry of Sacred Heart Parish in Princeton was a Charity in Action Award recipient. Renee Green (sixth from left) and Monica Mills (holding the award) stand with those involved in the ministry and Catholic Charities West Virginia officials. Mills was also a recipient of the award.

ities Board of Directors and the CCWVa Southern Regional Advisory Council.

Bishop's commitment to ensuring the food pantry at her church is always stocked and staffed has been invaluable, along with her ongoing support of fundraising and client services.

"Too many times to name, Lori's been willing to step up and help with fundraising, community awareness, and direct service to clients," said Atwood. "We're grateful to know we can count on Lori's faith-

ful support."

The Mommy Ministry was honored for its work in providing essential supplies and resources to new and expectant mothers. In collaboration with CCWVa's Princeton office, the Mommy Ministry offers a baby supply pantry stocked with items like diapers, wipes, formula, and baby food, creating a much-needed support system for families with young children.

"The Mommy Ministry offers hope and seeks to

share love and joy through their visits with mothers and participation in community baby showers," said Atwood. "Having access to essential baby items provides comfort and reassurance, helping mothers feel more secure and supported as they anticipate the arrival of their baby."

Proceeds from the event support programs in 11 counties in Catholic Charities' Southern Region, which includes Princeton, Hinton, Beckley, and surrounding communities.

Anniversary...

Cont'd from Page 12

a parish and 100 years in its present church building, Sacred Heart Church has been very fortunate to have been served by fourteen dedicated priests.

The current pastor, Father Devasya, has been at Sacred Heart for the last eight years. He is a native of India but recently became a proud citizen of the United States of America. Father Devasya is not only the beloved spiritual leader of the parish, but he has also overseen many of the more extensive renovations to the church building. During Father Devasya's tenure the church has replaced its roof and guttering, painted the entire interior, installed a new lighting system, reworked the entire electrical system, replaced dilapidated sidewalks and railings, and most recently, refurbished the original church bells. The pastor, the Parish Pastoral Council, the Par-

ish Finance Council, and the church Maintenance Committee are all dedicated to keeping the church that has served generations of Catholics in Bluefield in excellent condition so that it will be here to serve generations to come.

Throughout its rich history, Sacred Heart Church has been serving the needs of its parishioners and the Bluefield area community. Currently, Sacred Heart has 23 different ministries working inside and outside the church to make a difference in people's lives. One of the most visible outreach ministries is the Sacred Heart Food Pantry. Since 1990 the food pantry has been operating continuously, even through the Covid pandemic, to provide food to those in need. Funded entirely by donations from parishioners and grants from generous foundations, the food pantry provides food to approximately 400 families or 950 individuals per month. In addition to food, ap-

proximately 500 articles of clothing and 800 hygiene products are distributed monthly. Also, Sacred Heart was one of the founding church sponsors of the Bluefield Union Mission in 1931 and continues to support this wonderful ministry.

Sacred Heart Church is extremely proud to be one of the oldest churches in Bluefield. Through the years, our parishioners have not only served our church but also as leaders in business, civic, and community organizations. The church has always had one mission, to be Christlike in all we do. One hundred twenty-nine years and going strong.

George McGonagle speaks during the 100th anniversary celebration of Sacred Heart Church in Bluefield Nov. 3.

Courtesy photo



El Papa dice que canonizará a Carlo Acutis y Pier Giorgio Frassati y organizará un encuentro sobre los derechos del niño

Por Carol Glatz, Catholic News Service

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS) — El Papa Francisco anunció que canonizará a los beatos Carlo Acutis y Pier Giorgio Frassati el próximo año y que el Vaticano acogerá un Encuentro Mundial sobre los Derechos del Niño el 3 de febrero.

El Papa canonizará al Beato Acutis durante el Jubileo de los Adolescentes en Roma del 25 al 27 de abril y al Beato Frassati durante el Jubileo de los Jóvenes en Roma del 28 de julio al 3 de agosto.

El Papa hizo el anuncio durante su audiencia general en la Plaza de San Pedro el 20 de noviembre, Día Mundial de la Infancia.

La celebración anual marca la fecha en la que la Asamblea General de la ONU adoptó la Declaración de los Derechos del Niño en 1959 y en la que la asamblea aprobó la Convención sobre los Derechos del Niño

en 1989.

"Con ocasión del Día Internacional de los Derechos del Niño y del Adolescente que se celebra hoy, deseo anunciar que el 3 de febrero tendrá lugar aquí en el Vaticano el Encuentro Mundial sobre los Derechos del Niño", dijo.

La cumbre de líderes mundiales sobre los derechos de la infancia estará dedicada al tema "Amémosles y protéjámosles", y en ella participarán expertos y personalidades de distintos países, dijo el Papa.

"Será una ocasión para señalar nuevos caminos dirigidos a asistir y proteger mejor a los niños aún sin derechos que viven en condiciones precarias. Son explotados y maltratados y sufren las dramáticas consecuencias de las guerras", dijo.

Un pequeño grupo de niños que participaron en la preparación del encuentro del 3 de febrero se unió al Papa para una fotografía tras el

anuncio junto al padre franciscano Enzo Fortunato, director de comunicación de la Basílica de San Pedro y coordinador de la primera Jornada Mundial de los Niños celebrada en Roma el 25 de mayo.

El nuevo comité, dijo, se asegurará de que "la Jornada Mundial de los Niños no se quede en un evento aislado y para que la pastoral para los niños se convierta cada vez más en una prioridad cualificada en términos evangélicos y pedagógicos", dijo en el decreto, también conocido como quirograma, publicado por el Vaticano el 20 de noviembre.

El objetivo de la jornada mundial, dijo, es contribuir de forma concreta a llevar a cabo el compromiso de la Iglesia con los niños, dando voz a los derechos de la infancia y asegurándose de que las actividades pastorales de la Iglesia tengan el mismo tipo de cuidado y atención

hacia los niños que tuvo Jesús.

Otros objetivos incluyen ayudar a la comunidad cristiana a ser más "una comunidad educativa capaz ante todo de ser evangelizada por la voz de los más pequeños" y ayudar a la Iglesia a ser más como los niños y a desprenderse de "signos de poder" para convertirse en "una casa acogedora y habitable para todos, empezando por los niños", dijo el decreto.

El Papa Francisco dijo que quiere que el día se celebre a nivel universal, regional, nacional y local y, por lo tanto, el comité ayudará a promover y organizar esas celebraciones con el evento universal celebrado "posiblemente cada dos años".

También dijo que confía la preparación de la Jornada Mundial de la Infancia a las conferencias episcopales regionales y nacionales que instituirán comités organizadores locales.

El Papa insta a los jóvenes a comprometerse en la vida y en la sociedad civil

Por Justin McLellan, Catholic News Service

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS) — El Papa Francisco instó a los jóvenes a abrazar la esperanza y desempeñar un papel activo en la creación de un futuro más brillante, al tiempo que contrarresta el pesimismo que tantos de sus compañeros parecen experimentar.

"A menudo nos encontramos con personas desanimadas porque miran al futuro con escepticismo y pesimismo", dijo a una delegación del Consejo Nacional de la Juventud italiano, un órgano consultivo que representa a los jóvenes adultos italianos, instándoles a "no perder la capacidad de soñar".

Cuando un joven deja de soñar, se convierte en un "pensionista de la vida", dijo el Papa el 16 de noviembre. "Por favor, jóvenes, no sean 'jubilados de la vida', ¡y no dejen que les roben la esperanza! ¡Nunca! La esperanza nunca defrauda".

Los jóvenes, dijo, están "llamados a ser testigos

de la belleza y la novedad de la vida", una belleza que "va más allá de las apariencias" y que tiene sus raíces en el compromiso de servir a los demás.

"Su servicio desinteresado por la verdad y la libertad, por la justicia y la paz, por la familia y la política, es la contribución más hermosa y necesaria que pueden aportar a las instituciones para construir una nueva sociedad", dijo.

El Papa Francisco pidió al Consejo, que representa a los jóvenes ante los órganos de gobierno locales, nacionales y europeos, "ser voz de todos, especialmente de los que no tienen voz".

"Hoy hay mucha gente que no tiene voz, tantos excluidos, no sólo socialmente por los problemas de pobreza, de falta de educación, por la dictadura de la droga... sino también de aquellos que no saben soñar. Hagan 'red' para soñar, y no pierdan esta capacidad: soñar", dijo.

El Papa animó a los jóvenes a tener fe en el amor de Dios por ellos y en su presencia viva entre ellos.

"Si Él vive, entonces la esperanza no es vana", dijo.

"El mal, el pesimismo, el escepticismo no tendrán la última palabra. Y tantos jóvenes son presa de este escepticismo", incluso a causa de la droga, les dijo el Papa. "En el inicio del ser cristiano no hay una decisión ética o una gran idea", dijo, sino el encuentro con una persona, es el encuentro con Jesús, "que da vida a un nuevo horizonte" y es la encarnación de la esperanza.

El Papa Francisco pidió a los jóvenes que mantengan esa esperanza cuando encuentren desafíos en su vida y en su trabajo, y que estén abiertos a buscar ayuda en los demás para superar los problemas.

"No tengan miedo de atravesar incluso conflictos. Se necesita paciencia para transformarlos en capacidad de escuchar, en reconocimiento del otro y en crecimiento recíproco", dijo, explicando que superar los conflictos "es señal de que hemos apuntado más alto, más allá de nuestros intereses particulares".

Para denunciar presuntos casos de abuso sexual de niños:

La Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston alienta a informar ante las autoridades civiles ante todo si se ha cometido un delito. También alentamos a utilizar www.reportbishopabuse.org para hacer un informe sobre cualquier obispo en los EE. UU. Si tiene motivos para creer que un obispo ha cometido una conducta sexual inapropiada, comuníquese con las autoridades civiles de la jurisdicción correspondiente y visite www.reportbishopabuse.org.

Para informar a las autoridades civiles: comuníquese con la policía local; los números variarán según su ubicación. Si cree que alguien está en peligro inmediato, llame al 911. Para informar confidencialmente cualquier incidencia de sospecha de abuso o negligencia infantil, incluido el abuso sexual, comuníquese con la Oficina de Servicios de Protección Infantil de Niños y Familias de West Virginia llamando a la línea directa de abuso infantil al 800.352.6513. Puede informar anonimamente a esta línea directa si lo prefiere.

Para informar a las autoridades diocesanas: La diócesis alienta a informar a las autoridades civiles apropiadas, ante todo, si se ha cometido un delito. La diócesis también alienta a informar a las autoridades eclesásticas apropiadas. Para reportar casos sospechosos de abuso sexual de niños por parte del personal de la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston a la Diócesis, comuníquese con uno de los siguientes designados al 1.888.434.6237 o 304.233.0880: Sr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Sr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; o Sor Martha Gómez, ext. 264. También puede llamar a la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro de la Diócesis al

304.230.1504. También puede llamar a la línea directa de abuso sexual de la Diócesis al 833.230.5656. Los formularios de queja están disponibles en línea en www.dwc.org, haga clic en "Diócesis" en la barra de menú, luego en "Oficinas", luego en "Ambiente seguro", luego "Descargar archivos y formularios". El formulario se titula "Formulario de queja para denuncias de abuso sexual de menores". El formulario se puede devolver por correo de EE. UU. A: Office of Safe Environment, Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003.

Para informar al Coordinador de Asistencia a Víctimas de la Diócesis: llame a la Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, al 304.559.6742.

Además de los métodos enumerados anteriormente para denunciar el abuso sexual, la Diócesis también se ha asociado con Navex Global para ofrecer la plataforma EthicsPoint para informar otras inquietudes adicionales, como sospecha de mala conducta financiera, profesional y personal de un sacerdote, diácono, religioso, o empleado laico de la Diócesis o cualquier parroquia o escuela católica en West Virginia. Se puede acceder a la plataforma EthicsPoint a través de www.dwc.org, en "Rendición de cuentas", luego "Informar mala conducta" o llamando al 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint es un sistema de informes de terceros que informa a las autoridades civiles cuando corresponda y a las autoridades diocesanas, y la identidad de la persona que informa esta protegida. Enlaces e información: Departamento de Salud y Recursos Humanos de WV: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. Policía Estatal de Virginia Occidental, Unidad de Crímenes contra Niños: 304-293-6400.

Employment Opportunity

High School Principal, St. Joseph High School, Martinsburg

New position! The new St. Joseph High School in Martinsburg has begun the search for the ideal leader to serve as principal for the school opening for the 2025-2026 school year. DEADLINE IS DEC. 15!

We are searching for a dynamic, mission-driven, forward-thinking principal who will work with our team to create a new Catholic high school for students in grades nine to 12 that will open for the 2025-26 academic year.

We are an equal-opportunity employer committed to excellence through diversity.

The position will begin in January 2025.

Candidates must be practicing Catholics in good standing with church precepts and act as examples

and motivators toward the fulfillment of the Catholic philosophy of the school. The ideal candidate will have a master's degree in educational leadership or administration; begin the process of completing that degree requirement; or hold a valid educational leadership certificate from the state of West Virginia or be eligible for such certification.

Candidates also must have a minimum of three years of successful educational experience; administrative experience is preferred.

A résumé, cover letter and three letters of reference may be emailed to Deacon Patrick Michel, Ed.D., at deaconpat@stjosephwv.org.

Applications will be accepted until Dec. 15.

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8:30 WVNS FOX 59	Beckley-Bluefield-Oak Hill (Lewisburg)
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A message from the West Virginia Knights of Columbus State Council

Deep within the heart of every man is a call to live with purpose and meaning; a call to lead, to protect, to serve and to defend. Men today need a band of brothers – other Catholic men to share in that call, who walk together on the journey towards something better.

You are invited to put your **faith in action**
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The **Knights of Columbus** is a trusted name, tried by time, present where men are, providing inspiring resources and support for strengthening your faith and living a life of virtue. Knights lead with faith. Knights protect our families. Knights serve those in need. When the world says men should step aside, Knights of Columbus step up. We are Catholic men. We live by principles informed by faith. We are sons, fathers, husbands, and grandfathers. Join us on life's greatest adventure to discover the man God calls you to be.

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