

THE CATHOLIC

# Spirit

## Bishop Brennan Offers Reflection on Controversy Surrounding Vaccine Policies in West Virginia

August 27, 2025

To vaccinate or not to vaccinate, that is the question. And the answer is: vaccinate! I had measles as a boy and was fortunate it was a mild case; it can be fatal. I received the Salk vaccine against polio. It kept me from getting a disease that had paralyzed many children and adults up to that time.

My personal history as well as my concern for young people lead me to oppose the effort to weaken West Virginia's strong requirement to vaccinate children attending school. That effort tilts too far in the direction of personal liberty and away from the common good. Children pay the price for adults' decisions about their health. The simple truth is that children are more vulnerable than adults and need more protection. Proven vaccines provide that protection.

Why do some adults oppose vaccinations? Some parents sincerely believe that certain vaccines will harm their children. I ask them to consider the facts: there have been no polio or measles outbreaks in West Virginia for many decades and very few instances of other serious diseases like tetanus and diphtheria. These vaccines have prevented serious harm to children.

Other adults have moral objections because some vaccines are connected to human cell cultures developed from two aborted fetuses in the 1960's, even though new abortions are never performed for current vaccines [American Academy of Pediatrics, May 14, 2025]. I share their

**See "Bishop" on Page 2**

## Nation Reels as Catholic School Shooting in Minneapolis Leaves Two Children Dead, 17 Injured

Pope Leo Joins U.S. Bishops in Mourning Victims



Families and loved ones walk outside the police barricades following a shooting at Annunciation Catholic School in Minneapolis Aug. 27.

OSV News photo/Ben Brewer, Reuters

**By Maria Wiering, OSV News**

**ST. PAUL, Minn. (OSV News)** — A deadly mass shooting took place the morning of Aug. 27 at Annunciation Catholic School in Minneapolis shortly after the start of the school day during an all-school Mass at the adjacent Annunciation Catholic Church.

The gunman shot from the outside of the church through windows at the Mass attendees with a rifle, shotgun and pistol, killing two children, ages 8 and 10. According to Minneapolis Police Chief Brian O'Hara, 17 others are injured, including 14 children. Three adults who were shot were parishioners in their 80s.

While there were "a range of injuries" among

the injured children, they are all expected to survive, O'Hara said during an afternoon press briefing.

The suspected gunman is also dead and believed to have taken his own life in the parking lot.

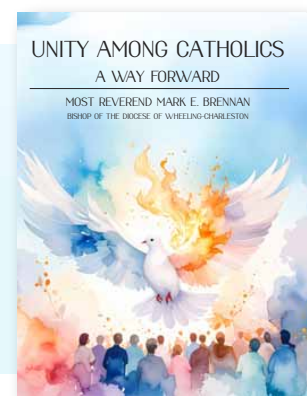
Local media is reporting the suspected shooter was 23-year-old Robin Westman, who formerly went by Robert, and that his mother had been an employee of Annunciation.

Court documents filed in Dakota County, accessed by OSV News on Aug. 27, indicate that Westman identified as female and petitioned to formally undergo a name change to reflect that identity. The request was granted on Jan. 15, 2020.

**See "Shooting" on Page 3**

Bishop Brennan has released  
'A Pastoral Letter on Unity Among Catholics,  
A Way Forward'

*Click here to read the letter*



# Bishop ...

Cont'd from Page 1

moral repugnance at any connection to the taking of an unborn child's life. But we do not live in a perfect world. Weeds and wheat grow together. Trying to pull up all the weeds will also pull up a lot of wheat (see Matthew 13: 24-30). We can accept a remote link to a moral evil, which we did not cause and do not endorse, because a far greater good can be obtained despite it.

Anti-vaccination advocates want schools to accept philosophical (or simply personal) and religious exemptions from the state's vaccination requirements for their children. Medical exemptions are already available for children who qualify for them but denying children the protection of proven vaccines because of parents' sincere conscientious objection to them will itself pose real health risks for their children.

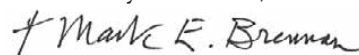
It is also highly problematic to allow a person to pose a religious objection to a vaccination policy that a religion adopts for the welfare of the children studying in its schools. This would result in an individual's conscience being allowed to override the communal conscience of the religion, whose faith has moved it to operate the school and form policies for children's safety. Imagine parents at a Catholic school insisting that the school not conduct prayer or cele-

brate Mass because their child is not Catholic. Do those parents have the right to nullify the school's policy? My Catholic Church believes that an individual's conscience must always take into account the common good, which the Church must define and defend. A religious body has the right to organize its inner life consistent with its beliefs, without interference from the state or individuals.

I affirm the right of parents to follow their conscience as the primary educators of their children. Yet if their conscience is wrongly formed – as is the case with those who sincerely but mistakenly deny the efficacy of proven vaccines – their decision may cause injury to their own children and to the children of other parents, who want their children protected against diseases.

I join many other West Virginians, both medical personnel and ordinary citizens, in urging our civil leaders to back away from weakening a childhood vaccination regimen that has done immense good in keeping our children healthy. I will certainly not allow a weakening of that safety policy in our Catholic schools. We will follow Jesus' example of welcoming children and blessing them (Mark 10:13-16).

Sincerely in Christ,



+Mark E. Brennan  
Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston

**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](http://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](http://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](http://www.dwc.org), under "Accountability." Complaint forms are available online at [www.dwc.org](http://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](http://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.

## 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](http://www.dwc.org), click "Diocese", then "Offices," then "Office of Safe Environment."



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Plus watch online at - [www.mydailyliving.com](http://www.mydailyliving.com) and YouTube

## The Catholic Spirit's Print Schedule for 2025

There are 10 print editions in 2025. Below are the names of the issues and the publishing dates. Please note, the publishing dates may or may not be on feast days. Digital issues are published every Friday, delivered by e-mail to subscribers, and posted on [thecatholicspiritwv.org](http://thecatholicspiritwv.org).

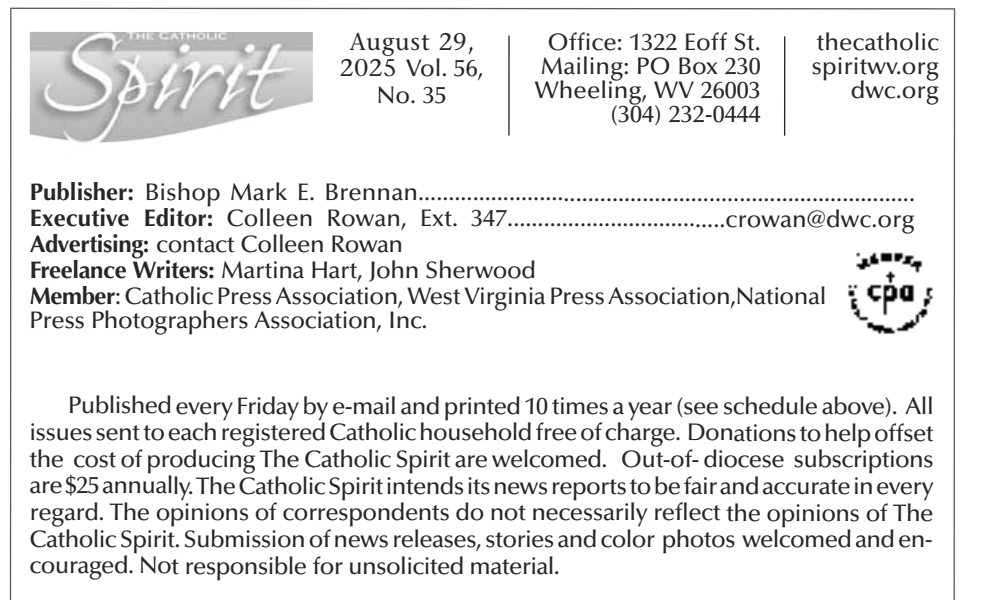
**2025 Print Issues and Dates:** Triumph of the Cross, September 12; Month of the Rosary, October 3; Advent, November 21; Christmas, December 19



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# Shooting ...

Cont'd from Page 1

O'Hara confirmed that Westman appeared to have barricaded at least two of the church's exterior doors with two-by-four wooden boards to trap Mass attendees inside.

Aug. 27 was the third day of the school year for the Catholic elementary school, which serves students in preschool to grade eight. Students were attending an all-school Mass that began at 8:15 a.m. Authorities were alerted at 8:27 a.m.

The mass shooting at Annunciation appears to be the first of its kind involving a Catholic school since the 1999 Columbine High School massacre in Littleton, Colorado.

Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey joined O'Hara in speaking to media on the scene during a mid-morning press conference. Dr. Thomas Wyatt, chair of emergency medicine at Hennepin County Medical Center, a Level 1 trauma center in downtown Minneapolis, also provided reporters an update on victims' status. He said 11 patients were taken to HCMC, among them two adults and nine children ages 6-14.

Father Erich Rutten, pastor of nearby St. Thomas the Apostle Parish, arrived on scene that morning to pray with and comfort distraught and grieving parents at the school.

The priest told NBC News that parents were in "great, great anxiety and grief," with some "wailing and crying, some stooping to the ground."

He told the news outlet that he hugged those he recognized; several of them joined in as he prayed the rosary.

Bishop Kevin T. Kenney, auxiliary bishop of St. Paul and Minneapolis, who grew up attending Annunciation Parish, rushed from the downtown Minneapolis parish where he serves as pastor to Hennepin County Medical Center to comfort families. He told local ABC affiliate KSTP, "It's just unbelievable that this could happen, still today."

It's "very sad for the com-

munity, for the families, and very sad for the families who have lost loved ones," he said.

"I have talked to a few (families) whose children are in surgery or being cared for," he added. "Just panicking, of course they're in shock and worried, asking, 'Why, why?' So I'm just here to comfort. They also have a wonderful staff inside as well to comfort the people and to just walk with them in these hours ahead."

He said, "It's a horrible, horrific way for all the students to begin the school year. Safety procedures were put in place, people come excited to go back to school, very excited about an academic year, feeling safe in south Minneapolis, and now look what happened."

Annunciation's former interim pastor Father Robert Hart, 77, told NBC News that the school shooting was "unbelievable."

"It's hard to believe that this could happen at a Catholic Mass," he said. The priest described Annunciation as a "very close-knit and very supportive" community.

President Donald Trump said on the X social media platform that he has "been fully briefed" on the shooting.

"The FBI quickly responded and they are on the scene," he said. "The White House will continue to monitor this terrible situation. Please join me in praying for everyone involved!"

Also on X, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz said that he has been "briefed on a shooting at Annunciation Catholic School and will continue to provide updates as we get more information. The BCA and State Patrol are on scene. I'm praying for our kids and teachers whose first week of school was marred by this horrific act of violence."

Kristi Noem, secretary of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, said on X that "DHS is monitoring the horrific shooting at Annunciation Catholic School in Minneapolis. We are in communication with our interagency partners, and will share more information as soon as it becomes available. I am praying for the victims of this heinous attack

Bishops and Catholic leaders across the country have issued their condolences and offered prayers in solidarity with the church in Minnesota and their families."

Pope Leo XIV also offered prayers, according to a message to Archbishop Bernard A. Hebda of St. Paul and Minneapolis from Cardinal Pietro Parolin, the Vatican secretary of state.

"His Holiness Pope Leo XIV was profoundly saddened to learn of the loss of life and injuries following the shooting that took place at Annunciation Church in Minneapolis, and he sends his heartfelt condolences and the assurance of spiritual closeness to all those affected by this terrible tragedy, especially the families now grieving the loss of a child," he wrote.

"While commending the souls of the deceased children to the love of Almighty God, his Holiness prays for the wounded as well as the first responders, medical personnel and clergy who are caring for them and their loved ones," Cardinal Parolin continued. "At this extremely difficult time, the Holy Father imparts to the Annunciation Catholic School community, the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis and the people of the greater Twin Cities metropolitan area his apostolic blessing as a pledge of peace, fortitude and consolation in the Lord Jesus."

In a statement, Archbishop Bernard said he was grateful for prayers and asked that they continue.

"I beg for the continued prayers of all of the priests and faithful of this Archdiocese, as well for the prayers of all men and women of good will, that the healing that only God can bring will be poured out on all those who were present at this morning's Mass and particularly for the affected families who are only now beginning to comprehend the trauma they sustained," he said.

"My heart is broken as I think about students, teachers, clergy and parishioners and the horror they witnessed in a Church, a place where we should feel safe," he said.

He noted that the shooting at Annunciation hap-

pened only a day after another shooting in South Minneapolis near Cristo Rey Jesuit High School, where one person was killed and six were injured.

The back-to-back shootings "increases the sadness about the pain and anger that is present in our communities," he said. "We need an end to gun violence. Our community is rightfully outraged at such horrific acts of violence perpetrated against the vulnerable and innocent."

Archbishop Hebda said a prayer service had been scheduled for 7 p.m. Aug. 27 at Academy of the Holy Angels in Richfield, about 2 miles south of Annunciation.

Archdiocesan staff members, he added, "are working with the parish and school teams to make sure they have the support and resources they need at this time and beyond."

## U.S. Bishops Offer Prayers

Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore, vice-president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, also mourned the tragedy in a statement.

"As a Church, we are following the tragic news from Annunciation School in Minneapolis with heartbreaking sadness," he said. "Whenever one part of the Body of Christ is wounded, we feel the pain as if it were our very own children. Let us all beg the Lord for the protection and healing of the entire Annunciation family."

Bishop Mark E. Brennan also asked for prayers in a statement: "It is with a heavy heart that I call upon all faithful of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to pray for the innocent lives lost and those who are in immense pain as a result of an unthinkable attack on Annunciation Catholic Church and School during their back-to-school Mass this morning."

"As always, we turn to God the Father, who sees us all as His beloved children.

"As a Catholic family, we pray for the precious souls of the children who died and call upon the intercession of Mary

to comfort and heal all of the victims."

Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, asked for prayers on X.

"Friends, this morning there was a shooting at Annunciation Catholic Parish in Minneapolis. Please join me in praying for all those who were injured or lost their lives — along with their families," he wrote. "Let us also pray for the students, faculty, and entire parish community," he wrote."

Bishop Patrick M. Neary of St. Cloud, Minnesota, also expressed his grief over the shooting.

"Today, our hearts are shattered by the horrific act of violence that occurred at Annunciation Catholic Church and School in Minneapolis. Children were gathered for Mass. Teachers were beginning a new school year. Families were entrusting their loved ones to the care of the Church," he said in a statement.

"I grieve deeply with the families, students, staff and parishioners of Annunciation. I grieve with our neighbors in the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. And I grieve with every person who now carries the trauma of this senseless violence.

"As Catholics, we believe in the dignity of every human life. That dignity is destroyed when violence becomes routine," he continued. "May Christ, the Prince of Peace, bring healing to all who are wounded, and may Our Lady of Sorrows intercede for us in this time of grief."

(Maria Wiering is senior writer for OSV News.)

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# Bishop Brennan Announces \$10 Million Gift to WVU Medicine Cancer Complex in Wheeling

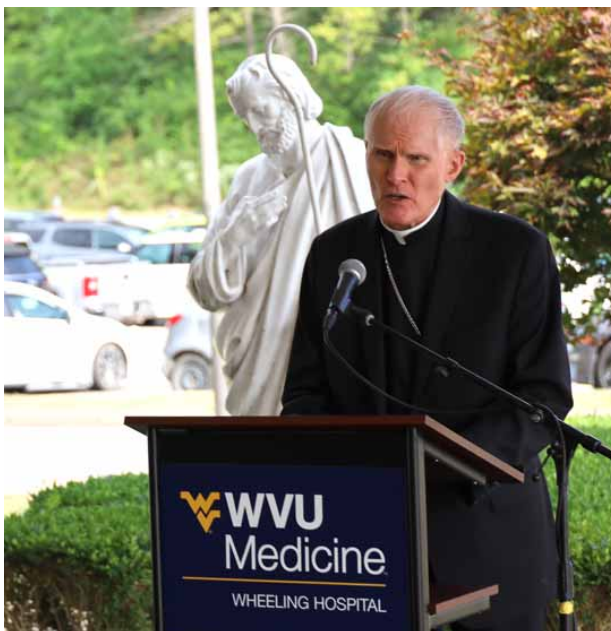
Facility Named WVU Cancer Institute, Saint Joseph Regional Cancer Complex

By Colleen Rowan

**WHEELING**—The Wheeling Hospital Foundation has gifted \$10 million toward the new WVU cancer complex to be constructed in Wheeling. Douglass Harrison, president and CEO of WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital, made the announcement at an Aug. 22 ceremony at the hospital. Joining him were Bishop Mark Brennan; Albert Wright, president and CEO of WVU Health System; Dr. Jondavid Pollock, radiation oncologist with WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital and member of the WVU Cancer Institute's team of specialists in radiation oncology; and Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston officials and hospital administration and staff.

"My hope is that this new regional cancer complex will continue to serve the needs of our market for generations to come and be a beacon of hope for many in our region and that they can continue to receive outstanding cancer treatments at a very local level," Harrison said.

Speaking in front of the statue of St. Joseph at the front entrance of the hospital, Harrison also revealed the name of the new facility—WVU Cancer Institute, Saint Joseph Regional Cancer Complex. Harrison then spoke of the long his-



Colleen Rowan photo  
Bishop Mark Brennan speaks at an Aug. 22 ceremony announcing the Wheeling Hospital Foundation's gift of \$10 million toward the new WVU Cancer Institute, Saint Joseph Regional Cancer Complex in Wheeling.

tory of the Sisters of St. Joseph and the diocese in West Virginia as they established the hospital 175 years ago. He also thanked Bryan Minor, director of Diocesan Administrative Services, for the idea of the name.

As he introduced Bishop Brennan, Harrison

said that WVU Medicine would not be in Wheeling if it was not for the bishop and his leadership.

"For 175 years this hospital has served this region, and we are very, very proud of our Catholic heritage and our Catholic background," Harrison told those gathered. "Bishop Brennan talks a lot in board meetings about the history of Catholic healthcare and the healing mission ... around the world for centuries and we are very proud to continue that legacy here today."

Addressing those gathered, Bishop Brennan said the cancer center will add to the impact the hospital has on this area and that it is an extension of the mission of the Catholic Church. The center, he said, is aptly named for St. Joseph, who took care of the infant Jesus, and is patron of the universal Catholic Church as well as the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston and the cathedral in Wheeling.

"To name this cancer center after him is very, very fitting," the bishop said. "I want to thank everyone who has been a part of this effort. It has been a number of years in the making. With God's blessing we will go forward and provide good health care for those suffering."

The bishop also explained the origin of the Wheeling Hospital Foundation.

"The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston continues to own the land they we're standing on and the building you're standing in front of," he said.

See "Gift" on Page 5

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Colleen Rowan photo  
Albert Wright, president and CEO of WVU Health System (left), and Dr. Jon-david Pollock, radiation oncologist with WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital and member of WVU Cancer Institute's team of specialists in radiation oncology, look on as Douglass Harrison, president and CEO of WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital, speaks at the ceremony.



Courtesy photo

Shown above is an artist's rendering of the WVU Cancer Institute, Saint Joseph Regional Cancer Complex in Wheeling.



Colleen Rowan photo  
Douglass Harrison, president and CEO of WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital, speaks at the ceremony.

## Gift ...

### Cont'd from Page 4

When Wheeling Hospital entered into the WVU Medicine System in April of 2021, the diocese sold the equipment to WVU Medicine and the money from that established the foundation "with the stipulation that foundation money has to be used for healthcare that is connected with Wheeling Hospital. So, the gift of \$10 million ... directly comes from that commitment to continue to use the resources we have as a church to provide good healthcare for this region," he said. "I am very proud to be part of that effort and I ask God's blessing upon it."

Offering the prayer for the ceremony that morning was Sister Mary Ann Rosenbaum, CSJ, director of Pastoral Care at WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital and the only Congregation of St. Joseph sister still working at the hospital. She prayed that God would bless this new facility and that it lives up to its namesake.

"May this name reflect the courage of those who walk through its doors, the compassion of those who will serve within its walls, and the unwavering commitment to life, dignity, and care," she prayed. "Bless this place of God as a sanctuary of strength for those facing illness, a refuge of peace for families in distress, and a beacon of light for all those who seek healing. May its name carry the resilience of spirit, the promise of renewal, and the legacy of love. We ask for your guidance upon all who will work there—physicians, nurses, chaplains, researchers, and staff. May they be instruments of your grace offering comfort, wisdom, and hope. And may this center, in its name and mission, always reflect your presence bringing healing not only to bodies but to hearts and souls. In

your holy name, we pray."

A cancer diagnosis is a very scary experience, Harrison said, and for many years people in West Virginia had to immediately look to Pittsburgh or Cleveland for exceptional care.

"What we're trying to do is bring that care home," Harrison said, "and that has been West Virginia University Health System's mission for many years — to keep care local."

West Virginians deserve great healthcare, and they deserve great facilities, Wright said in his remarks. Healthcare, he said, is a challenge especially in rural areas and he believes this new center is the exact

type of investment the WVU Health System should be making.

"Today is a great day," he said, "this is something the foundation and the diocese and the WVU Health System have been working on for years. And I want to make sure everyone realizes that this is happening because of Bishop Brennan. This was Bishop Brennan's idea ... and he is making this happen. So, my heart is full as I stand before you and I think about the Saint Joseph Regional Cancer Complex that we're going to be breaking ground on here soon and my heart is full thinking about the generosity of Bishop Brennan and the diocese and the great things" to come.

WVU Health System announced the new cancer center, which will be built on the site of the former Ohio Valley Medical Center in Wheeling, earlier this year. The center will build a four-story, 127,000-square-foot state-of-the-art outpatient cancer center affiliated with the WVU Cancer Institute. The center will consolidate cancer services from WVU Medicine Wheeling and Reynolds (Glen Dale) hospitals and include infusion therapy, radiation oncology, imaging, labs, specialty clinics, and space for future expansion.

According to WVU Health System, the completion of the WVU Cancer Institute, Saint Joseph Regional Cancer Complex is expected to be in October 2028.



Colleen Rowan photo  
At the ceremony are, from left: Bryan Minor, director of Diocesan Administrative Services; Very Rev. John Rice, V.G., V.F.; Sister Mary Ann Rosenbaum, CSJ, director of Pastoral Care at WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital; Father Cyprian C. Osuegbu, chaplain at the hospital and the Continuous Care Center; and Deacon Paul Lim, vice president of Mission Integration, Administration at the hospital.

# West Virginians for Affordable Health Care, Catholic Charities West Virginia Announce Cuts & Consequences Town Halls

**CHARLESTON**—West Virginians for Affordable Health Care (WVAHC), in partnership with the Catholic Charities West Virginia (CCWVA), is pleased to announce three “Cuts & Consequences” Town Halls next month in Wheeling, Morgantown and Princeton to educate residents on the impending cuts to Medicaid and the Affordable Care Act (ACA), potential hospital closures, and the impact on our communities.

“H.R. 1 – also known as the “Big, Beautiful Bill” – is arguably the worst piece of health care legislation to come out of Washington,” said Ellen Allen, executive director of West Virginians for Affordable Health Care. “The new law ushers in the biggest cuts to Medicaid in history and coupled with its cuts to the ACA, the budget reconciliation package threatens the health and financial security of West Virginians in every community. West Virginians deserve to know the truth about the cuts...and the consequences.”

On July 4, 2025, President Trump signed H.R. 1, the budget reconciliation package, into law - cutting \$1.1 trillion from Medicaid and putting the health and lives of West Virginians on the line. The law slashes Medicaid, the ACA marketplaces, Medicare, and public health initiatives - programs that tens of thousands of West Virginians depend on every single day. With nearly one in three West Virginians relying on Medicaid, these cuts mean fewer families will qualify for coverage, benefits will shrink, and more rural hospitals will be pushed to the brink of closure. Seniors could see their out-of-pocket costs skyrocket because of cuts to Medicare, while working families face rising premiums as the ACA marketplace is undermined. Meanwhile, deep cuts to public health

funding will cripple efforts to fight the opioid epidemic and weaken support for community health clinics - leaving the state’s most vulnerable residents with nowhere to turn.

“At Catholic Charities West Virginia, we do not support legislation that deepens hardship or forces people living in poverty to make impossible choices between rent and groceries, medicine and heat,” said Mark Phillips, President & CEO of CCWVA. “We feel a deep responsibility to ensure that the concerns of everyday, working-class West Virginians are heard in this dialogue.”

The “Cuts & Consequences” Town Hall Series will launch on Monday, September 15, at the Ohio County Public Library in Wheeling. The series continues Tuesday, September 16, at Hazel’s House of Hope in Morgantown, and will conclude on Wednesday, September 17, at the Chuck Mathena Center in Princeton.

Each town hall will take place from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and will provide community members with the opportunity to engage in important discussions regarding the impacts of proposed cuts.

**ABOUT YOUR TOWN HALL HOSTS**

West Virginians for Affordable Health Care brings a consumer voice to public policy so that every West Virginian has quality, affordable health care and the opportunity to lead an informed, healthy, and productive life.

Catholic Charities West Virginia provides essential services to assist the poor and vulnerable in all 55 counties of West Virginia, addressing a wide range of needs — from food and emergency assistance to long-term case management, behavioral health support, child and family services, and disaster response.

## 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.

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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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# Carroll Council 504 Marks 125 Years as West Virginia's First Knights of Columbus Council



Courtesy photo

Members of the Knights of Columbus Carroll Council 504 are pictured with Bishop Mark Brennan and clergy following the Mass celebrating the council's 125th anniversary at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling Aug. 26.

In 1900, a group of Catholic men in Wheeling came together to form a new council of the Knights of Columbus. With faith, fraternity, and charity as their guiding principles, they established Carroll Council 504—the very first Knights of Columbus council in the State of West Virginia.

In 2025, Carroll Council 504 celebrates 125 years of service to the Church and community, marking a milestone not only for Wheeling but for the entire Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

Since its founding, Carroll Council 504 has been closely tied to the faith life of Wheeling. The council has supported parish ministries, provided aid to families in need, and served as a consistent presence in diocesan Catholic life. In particular, the Knights have worked in partnership with

St. Michael Parish, St. Vincent de Paul Parish, St. Alphonsus Parish, and the Cathedral of St. Joseph. From parish festivals to Catholic school activities, from diocesan celebrations to charitable outreach, the Knights have been at the service of the Church's mission. Generations of pa-

rishioners in Wheeling have seen the Knights as an extension of parish and diocesan family life, living out the Catholic faith in practical ways.

The Knights of Columbus, founded in 1882 by Blessed Michael J. McGivney, was established to support Catholic families

and communities. Carroll Council 504 quickly embraced that mission when it was chartered in Wheeling. Over the decades, members of the council have sponsored youth programs, supported pro-life initiatives, contributed to parish festivals, raised funds for Catholic education, and reached

out to those in need both locally and abroad. Always guided by the Order's first principle — Charity — the Knights have remained a vital part of the Church's outreach in the Ohio Valley.

As the first council in West Virginia, Carroll

**See "Knights" on Page 9**



Courtesy photos

Members of the Knights of Columbus Carroll Council 504 and Bishop Mark Brennan are shown during the Mass celebrating the council's 125th anniversary at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling Aug. 26.

## Knights ...

**Cont'd from Page 8**

Council 504 has been a leader and example for councils that followed throughout the state. Its history is one of continuity: fathers, sons, and grandsons carrying forward the mission of fraternity and service. "The Knights are more than just an organization," said one longtime member. "They are brothers in faith, working together to strengthen the Church and to serve those who need us most. That's been true for 125 years, and it will continue to be true for the next 125."

While 125 years is a remarkable legacy, the work of Carroll Council 504 is far from complete. Today's Knights continue to support the Catholic parishes of Wheeling and the wider mission of the Diocese, ready to meet new challenges with the same spirit of faith and charity

that guided their founders. The council also invites Catholic men from across the Diocese to consider joining the Knights of Columbus, continuing the tradition of service and strengthening the Catholic witness in West Virginia.

Carroll Council 504 will mark its 125th anniversary throughout 2025 with parish and community celebrations, inviting parishioners, families, and fellow Catholics from across the Diocese to join in honoring this historic milestone. As the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston looks to the future, the legacy of Carroll Council 504—rooted in St. Michael, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Alphonsus, and the Cathedral of St. Joseph—stands as a reminder of what is possible when faith, fraternity, and charity come together.

Here's to 125 years of Catholic brotherhood in Wheeling—and to the many more still to come.



# Knights of Columbus®

**Carroll Council 504**  
OF WHEELING, W.VA.

— Since 1900, West Virginia's first Knights of Columbus Council — Carroll Council 504 — has been committed to *Charity, Unity, Fraternity, and Patriotism.*

*Guided by these Principles, we will continue to serve the parishioners of St. Michael, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Alphonsus, and the Cathedral of St. Joseph, and the Wheeling community today and tomorrow.* —

To learn more and to join us,  
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project rachel

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# Congratulations

The West Virginia Knights of Columbus State Council proudly congratulates

## Carroll Council 504

on the joyous occasion of its

## 125th Anniversary

For one and a quarter centuries, Carroll Council 504 has embodied the values of faith, service, and fraternity—standing as a shining example of Catholic knighthood in action. Your enduring legacy of charity, unity, and fraternal dedication enriches both Church and community.

With fraternal best wishes,

West Virginia State Council, Knights of Columbus

# Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Confirmation Schedule, Fall 2025

## Bishop Mark E. Brennan, Celebrant

Sunday, Sept. 28: St. James the Apostle Parish, Clarksburg, 11 a.m.

Thursday, Oct. 9: St. Anthony Parish, Fairmont, 6 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 18: St. Anthony Parish, Charleston, 5 p.m.

Sunday, Oct. 19: Sacred Heart Parish, Huntington, 9 a.m.

Saturday, Nov. 15: St. Francis Xavier Parish, Parkersburg, 5 p.m.

Tuesday, Nov. 18: St. Patrick Mission, Bancroft, 6 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 6: St. Anthony Parish, Follansbee, 4 p.m.

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6:30 P.M. INFORMAL DINNER  
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DISCUSSION

Saturday, September 13  
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Gathering of Catholic Men's Conference  
Noon to 4:30 p.m. (Mass at 4:30 p.m.)

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# Compassionate Care Makes a Difference

When George, a 74-year-old gentleman living alone, was referred to Catholic Charities West Virginia's Hospital Transition Program by a hospital social worker, he was facing multiple challenges—recovering from a stroke, struggling with food insecurity, mounting utility bills, and limited mobility.

From the moment Sister Jen met George in his hospital room, she found him warm and welcoming, ready to accept help. Over the course of his hospital stay and subsequent two-week rehabilitation at the Continuous Care Center, Sister Jen remained a steady source of support through daily visits and ongoing communication.

Upon George's return home—a small, older house with two apartments—he was honest about the disorder in his living space and the overwhelming bills piling up. Together, they organized his home to create a peaceful place to rest and sorted through his financial obligations, prioritizing essential payments.

Recognizing his difficulties with food preparation and mobility, Sister Jen connected George to our Hot Meal Delivery program and food pantry services, ensuring he had reliable access to nutritious meals while applying for SNAP benefits. George also began using a new transportation service to keep up with medical appointments and, with the help of a friend, has resumed grocery shopping.

Weekly visits from Sister



Courtesy photo

Sister Jen and George are pictured.

Jen provided not only practical assistance but also companionship, helping George regain confidence and reduce his feelings of overwhelm. Today, George is doing much better—grateful for the steady, compassionate care that has helped him rebuild stability and independence.

George's story is a testament to the power of personalized support and community rooted in Catholic social teaching—meeting people with dignity, accompanying them through hardship, and walking alongside them toward healing and hope.

Join in Our Mission to Reduce Poverty in West Virginia

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Courtesy photo

George stands on the front porch of his house.

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# St. Paul School Celebrates '101 Years of Pawsitivity!'

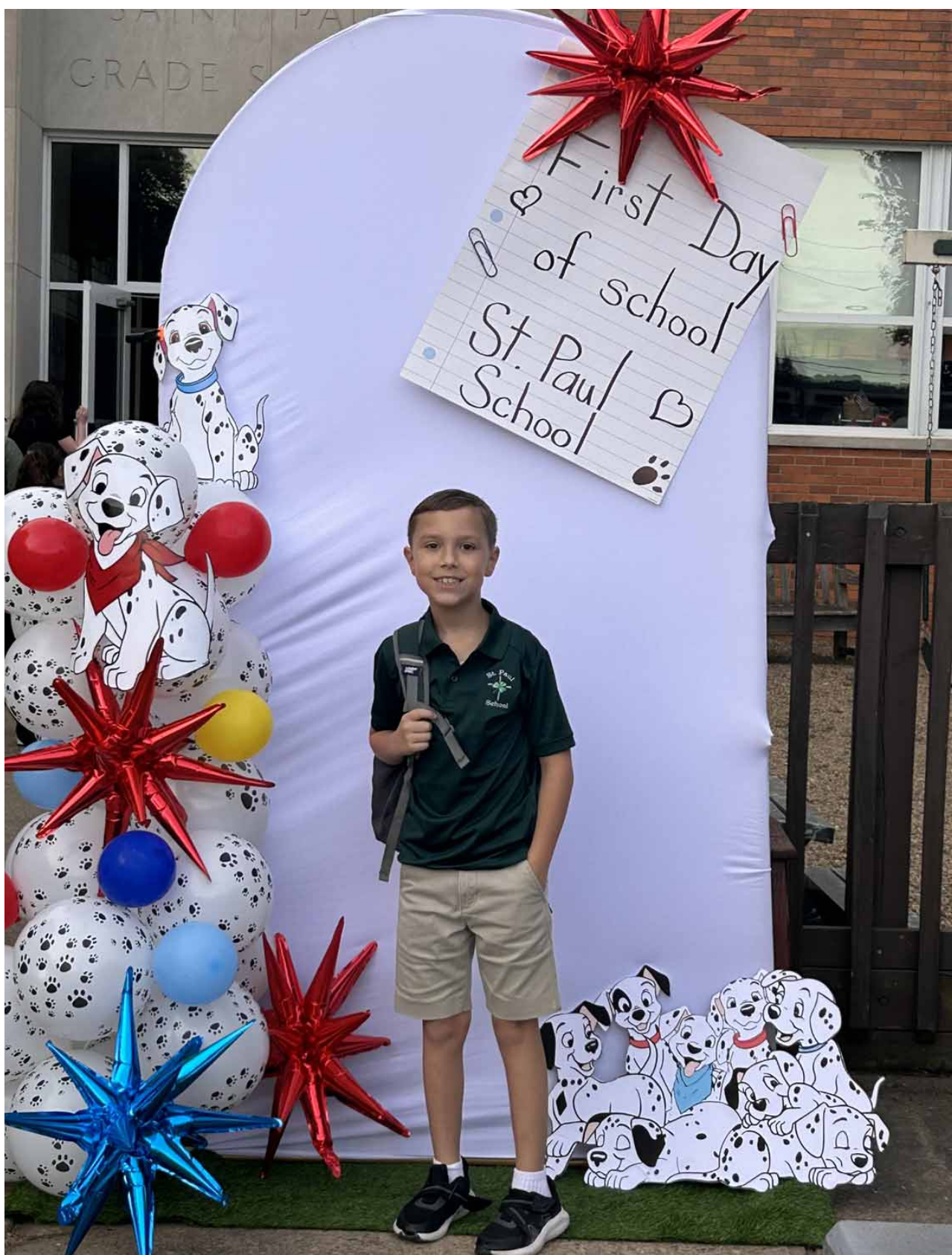
Monday morning, August 18, started like any other "First Day of School" for the students of St. Paul School (Weirton), or so they thought!

As the students in first through sixth grades pulled into the parking lot with their parents, they were greeted by "pawsitive" vibes and music and 101 Dalmations everywhere!

"The theme this year could not have been more fitting as we opened our school doors for the 101st time!" school officials said. "Dalmations are very loyal protectors of their leaders, just as we are of St. Paul School. Their spots, each unique to their identity, represent the uniqueness of each of our students. Each is different, but when together, they represent a bond that can withstand any obstacle thrown their way!"

"Here's to 101 Years of Pawsitivity!"

The photos on this page show just a few of the fun moments.



# Nación conmocionada tras tiroteo en una escuela primaria católica de Minneapolis que dejó 2 muertos y 17 heridos

Por Maria Wiering, OSV News  
ST. PAUL, Minnesota (OSV News)

— Un tiroteo mortal tuvo lugar en la mañana del 27 de agosto en la escuela católica Annunciation Catholic School de Minneapolis, poco después del inicio de la jornada escolar, durante una Misa para toda la escuela en la adyacente Iglesia de la Anunciación.

El tirador disparó desde afuera de la iglesia a través de las ventanas a los asistentes a la Misa con un rifle, una escopeta y una pistola, matando a dos niños, de 8 y 10 años, según la policía. Según el jefe de policía de Minneapolis, Brian O'Hara, otras 17 personas han sido heridas, incluidos 14 niños. Tres feligreses adultos, personas de la tercera edad, también fueron disparados.

Aunque hubo "un rango de heridas" entre los niños heridos en el tiroteo, se espera que sobrevivan, dijo O'Hara durante una conferencia de prensa en la tarde.

El presunto tirador también está muerto y se cree que se quitó la vida en el estacionamiento.

Los medios locales informan que el tirador era Robin Westman, de 23 años, anteriormente conocido como Robert, cuya madre había trabajado para la parroquia o escuela de la Anunciación.

Documentos de la corte en Dakota County, que fueron accedidos por OSV News el 27 de agosto, indicaban que Westman se identificaba como mujer y pidió formalmente cambiarse de nombre para reflejar

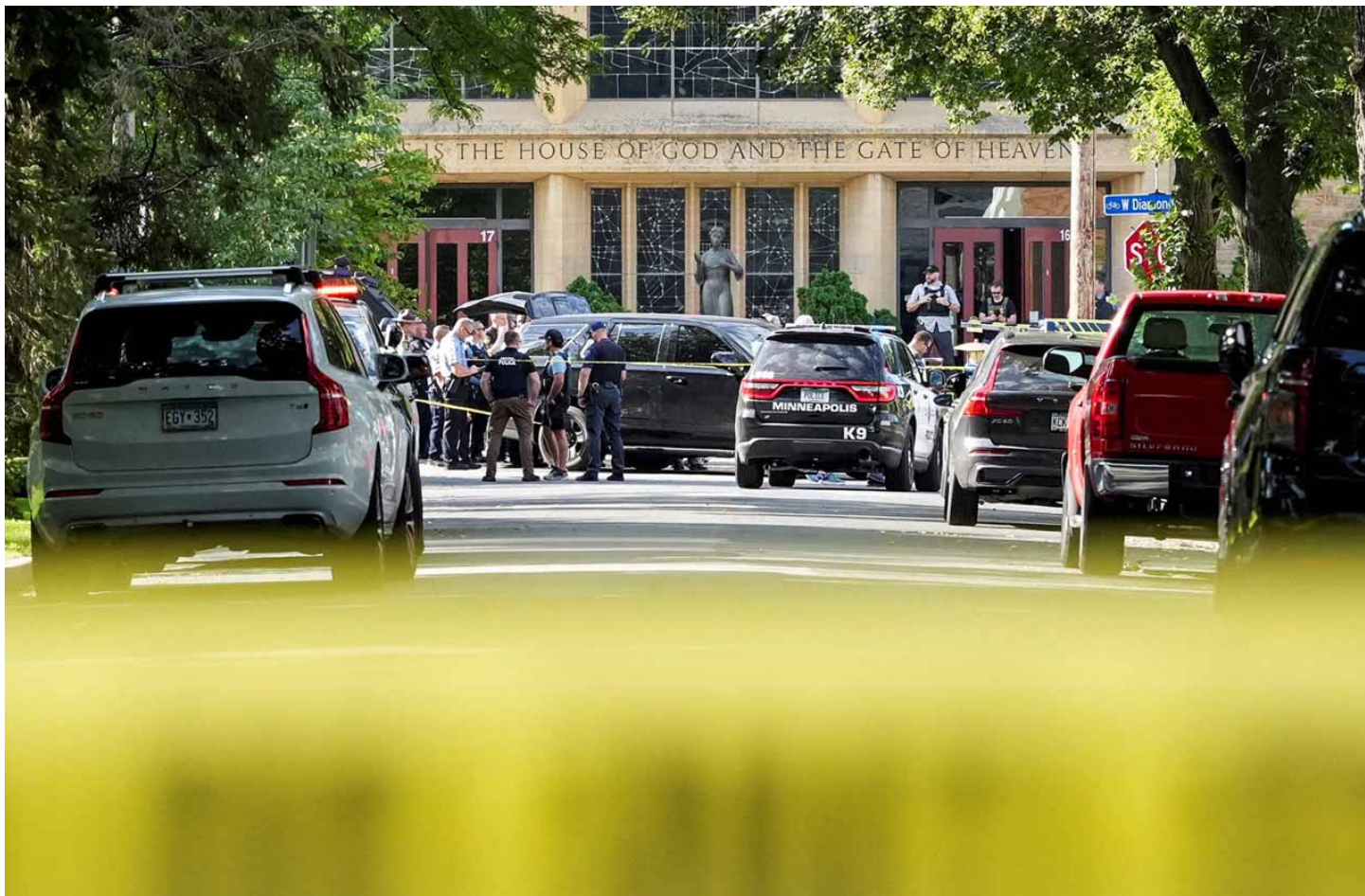


Foto OSV News/Tim Evans, Reuters

Socorristas y policía bloquean la escena del crimen tras un tiroteo en la escuela católica Annunciation en Minneapolis el 27 de agosto de 2025. El Departamento de Policía de Richfield informa de que hay hasta 20 víctimas y que el tirador ha fallecido.

esa identidad. Esta petición fue concedida el 15 de enero de 2020.

El 27 de agosto era el tercer día del curso escolar para la escuela primaria católica, que acoge a alumnos desde preescolar hasta octavo

grado. Los alumnos estaban participando de una Misa para toda la escuela que empezó a las 8:15 a.m., hora local. Las autoridades fueron alertadas a las 8:27 a.m.

O'Hara confirmó que al menos

dos de las puertas exteriores de la iglesia habían sido bloqueadas con tablas de madera de dos por cuatro.

El tiroteo masivo en Annunciation Catholic School parece ser el

**Ver "Tiroteo" en la página 14**

## Para denunciar presuntos casos de abuso sexual de menores:

La diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston te exhorta a denunciar cualquier delito ante las autoridades civiles. Para realizar una denuncia en contra de cualquier obispo en todos los Estados Unidos, favor de reportarlo en la página web [www.repostbishopabuse.org](http://www.repostbishopabuse.org). Y si, además, existen motivos para creer que un obispo ha cometido alguna conducta sexual inapropiada favor de comunicarse con las autoridades civiles de la jurisdicción correspondiente y también puede realizar un reporte en la página web antes mencionada.

**Para informar a las autoridades civiles:** comuníquese con la policía local; los números varían según su ubicación.

Si considera que alguien está en peligro inmediato, favor de llamar al 911.

Para informar de forma confidencial sobre cualquier sospecha de abuso o negligencia infantil, incluido el abuso sexual, favor de comunicarse con la Oficina de Servicios de Protección Infantil de Niños y Familias de West Virginia, llamando a la línea directa de abuso infantil al 1-800.352.6513.

**Para informar a las autoridades diocesanas:** La diócesis exhorta a informar primeramente a las autoridades civiles correspondientes, cuando la denuncia incluye un delito, y también alienta a informar a las autoridades eclesiales correspondientes. Para reportar casos sospechosos de abuso sexual de menores por parte del personal de la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston, comuníquese directamente con la diócesis a los teléfonos 1.888.434.6237 o 304.233.0880 para hablar con cualquiera de las siguientes personas asignadas: Sr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Sr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; y si desea hablar en español con Sor Martha Gómez, ext. 264. También puede llamar a la Oficina de Am-

biente Seguro de la diócesis al 304.230.1504 o a la línea directa de abuso sexual de la diócesis al 833.230.5656.

Los formularios de quejas están disponibles en línea en la página web [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org), favor de hacer clic en "Diócesis" en la barra de menú, luego en "Oficinas", en "Ambiente seguro" y en "Descargar archivos y formularios". El formulario se titula "Formulario de queja para denuncias de abuso sexual de menores". El formulario se puede enviar por correo en Estados Unidos a: Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003.

**Para informar al Coordinador de Asistencia a Víctimas de la Diócesis:** Favor de llamar a Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, al 304.559.6742. Además de las vías mencionadas anteriormente para denunciar el abuso sexual, la diócesis se ha asociado con la compañía Navex Global que ofrece la plataforma EthicsPoint para informar cualquier inquietud adicional, como sospecha de mala conducta financiera, profesional y personal de un sacerdote, diacono, religioso, o empleado laico de la diócesis o cualquier parroquia o escuela católica en West Virginia. Puede acceder a la plataforma EthicsPoint a través de la página web [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org), en "Rendición de cuentas", luego "Informar mala conducta" o llamando al 844.723.8381.

EthicsPoint es una herramienta de denuncia confidencial y anónima, ellos se encargarán de transmitir su denuncia directamente a las autoridades civiles y a las autoridades diocesanas correspondientes, y lo más importante al denunciar a través de ellos, la identidad de la persona que denuncia está 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 a menores: 304-293-6400.

## Tiroteo ...

primero de su tipo que involucra a una escuela católica, basado en estadísticas desde la masacre de la escuela secundaria Columbine en 1999 en Littleton, Colorado.

El alcalde de Minneapolis, Jacob Frey, y O'Hara hablaron con los medios en la escena. El Dr. Thomas Wyatt, jefe de medicina de emergencia del Centro Médico del Condado de Hennepin (Hennepin County Medical Center), un centro de traumatología de nivel 1 en el centro de Minneapolis, también informó a la prensa sobre el estado de las víctimas. Informó que 11 pacientes fueron trasladados allí, entre ellos dos adultos y nueve niños de entre 6 y 14 años.

El padre Erich Rutten, párroco de la cercana parroquia de Santo Tomás Apóstol, llegó al lugar esta mañana para orar y consolar a los padres angustiados y afligidos de la escuela.

El sacerdote declaró a NBC News que los padres estaban "sumidos en una profunda ansiedad y dolor", y que algunos estaban "llorando y gimiendo, y otros agachándose hasta el suelo".

Declaró al medio que abrazó a quienes reconoció; varios de ellos se unieron a él mientras rezaba el rosario.

El obispo Kevin T. Kenney, obispo auxiliar de St. Paul y Minneapolis, quien creció asistiendo a la parroquia Annunciation, dijo en declaraciones a una estación de noticias local (KSTP, afiliada de ABC), "Es simplemente increíble que esto haya sucedido, hoy en día".

"Cuando me enteré del tiroteo esta mañana, estaba muy cerca (del hospital)... Decidí ir a apoyar a las familias y estar aquí con ellas", dijo.

Es "muy triste para la comunidad, para las familias y muy triste para las familias que han perdido a sus seres queridos", dijo el obispo Kenney.

"He hablado con algunas familias cuyos hijos están en cirugía o bajo cuidado", añadió. "Están en pánico, por supuesto, en shock y preocupados, preguntando '¿por qué?', así que estoy aquí para consolarlos... y simplemente acompañarlos".

"Es una manera horrible, terrible, para todos los estudiantes comenzar el año escolar. Se implementaron medidas de seguri-

dad, la gente viene emocionada por regresar a la escuela, muy emocionada por el año académico, sintiéndose segura en el sur de Minneapolis, y ahora miren lo que sucedió", dijo.

El padre Robert Hart, de 77 años y expárroco interino de Annunciation Church, declaró a NBC News que "es difícil creer que (el tiroteo) pudiera ocurrir en una Misa católica", y describió a la parroquia como una comunidad "muy unida y solidaria".

El presidente Donald Trump dijo en X que ha sido "informado detalladamente" sobre el tiroteo.

"El FBI ha respondido rápidamente y se encuentra en el lugar", dijo. "La Casa Blanca seguirá pendiente de esta terrible situación. ¡Únanse a mí para rezar por todos los afectados!".

También en X, el gobernador de Minnesota, Tim Walz, dijo que ha sido "informado sobre un tiroteo en la escuela católica Annunciation y seguirá proporcionando actualizaciones a medida que obtengamos más información. La BCA (Bureau of Criminal Apprehension) y la Patrulla Estatal se encuentran en el lugar de los hechos. Rezo por nuestros niños y profesores, cuya primera semana de colegio se ha visto empañada por este horrible acto de violencia".

Kristi Noem, secretaria del Departamento de Seguridad Nacional de los Estados Unidos, dijo en X que "el DHS está siguiendo de cerca el horrible tiroteo en la escuela católica Annunciation de Minneapolis. Estamos en comunicación con nuestros socios interinstitucionales y compartiremos más información tan pronto como esté disponible. Rezo por las víctimas de este atroz ataque y por sus familias".

Obispos y líderes católicos de todo el país han expresado sus condolencias y ofrecido oraciones.

"Como Iglesia, seguimos con profunda tristeza la trágica noticia de la Escuela de la Anunciación en Minneapolis", declaró el arzobispo William E. Lori, vicepresidente de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos, en un comunicado. "Siempre que una parte del Cuerpo de Cristo resulta herida, sentimos el dolor como si fuera el de nuestros propios hijos. Pidamos al Señor la protección y la

sanación de toda la familia de la Anunciación".

El Papa León XIV también ofreció oraciones, según un telegrama del cardenal Pietro Parolin, secretario de estado del Vaticano.

"Su Santidad, el Papa León XIV, se entristeció profundamente al enterarse de la pérdida de vidas y heridos tras el tiroteo ocurrido en la Iglesia de la Anunciación en Minneapolis, y envía sus más sinceras condolencias y la seguridad de su cercanía espiritual a todos los afectados por esta terrible tragedia, especialmente a las familias que ahora lloran la pérdida de un hijo", dijo.

"Al encomendar las almas de los niños fallecidos al amor de Dios Todopoderoso, Su Santidad ora por los heridos, así como por los socorristas, el personal médico y el clero que los atienden a ellos y a sus seres queridos", leía el telegrama, dirigido al arzobispo Bernard A. Hebda de St. Paul y Minneapolis. "En este momento extremadamente difícil, el Santo Padre imparte a la comunidad de la Escuela Católica de la Anunciación, a la Arquidiócesis de Saint Paul y Minneapolis, y a los habitantes del área metropolitana de Twin Cities, su bendición apostólica como prenda de paz, fortaleza y consuelo en el Señor Jesús".

En un comunicado el arzobispo Hebda dijo que estaba agradecido por las oraciones y rogó que continuaran.

"Pido las las oraciones constantes de todos los sacerdotes y fieles de esta Arquidiócesis, así como las de todos los hombres y mujeres de buena voluntad, para que la sanación que solo Dios puede brindar se derrame sobre todos los presentes en la Misa de esta mañana y, en particular, sobre las familias afectadas que apenas ahora comienzan a comprender el trauma sufrido", expresó.

"Me duele el corazón al pensar en los estudiantes, maestros, clérigos y feligreses y en el horror que presenciaron en una iglesia, un lugar donde deberíamos sentirnos seguros", dijo.

También dijo que este tiroteo tuvo lugar solo un día después de otro tiroteo en el sur de Minneapolis cerca a la secundaria jesuita Cristo Rey, donde una persona había sido asesinada y seis resultaron heridas.

Estos dos tiroteos "aumentan

la tristeza por el dolor y la ira presentes en nuestras comunidades", dijo. "Necesitamos el fin de la violencia armada. Nuestra comunidad está indignada, con razón, por estos horribles actos de violencia perpetrados contra personas vulnerables e inocentes".

El arzobispo dijo que un servicio de oración estaba programado para las 7 p.m. ese mismo día en Academy of the Holy Angels en Richfield, alrededor de 2 millas al sur de Annunciation.

El personal arquidiocesano, añadió, "está trabajando con los equipos parroquiales y escolares para asegurar que cuenten con el apoyo y los recursos necesarios en este momento y en el futuro".

El obispo Robert E. Barron de Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, pidió oraciones por X.

"Amigos, esta mañana hubo un tiroteo en la Parroquia Católica de la Anunciación en Minneapolis. Les pido que se unan a mí para orar por todos los heridos o fallecidos, junto con sus familias", escribió. "Oremos también por los estudiantes, el profesorado y toda la comunidad parroquial", escribió.

El obispo Patrick M. Neary, de St. Cloud, también en el estado de Minnesota, también expresó su pesar por el tiroteo.

"Hoy, nuestros corazones están destrozados por el horrible acto de violencia ocurrido en la Iglesia y Escuela Católica Anunciación en Minneapolis. Los niños estaban reunidos para la Misa. Los maestros comenzaban un nuevo año escolar. Las familias encomendaban a sus seres queridos al cuidado de la Iglesia", declaró.

"Me duele profundamente la pérdida de las familias, los estudiantes, el personal y los feligreses de Anunciación. Me duele la pérdida de nuestros vecinos de la Arquidiócesis de Saint Paul y Minneapolis. Y me duele la pérdida de cada persona que ahora carga con el trauma de esta violencia sin sentido", dijo.

"Como católicos, creemos en la dignidad de toda vida humana. Esa dignidad se destruye cuando la violencia se vuelve rutinaria", continuó. "Que Cristo, Príncipe de la Paz, sane a todos los heridos, y que Nuestra Señora de los Dolores interceda por nosotros en este momento de dolor".

(María Wiering escritora sénior de OSV News.)

# West Virginians Take Top Honors at 2025 National Championship of Irish Road Bowling

Ben Putnam, of Ireland, W.Va., and Paul Henry of Wheeling took top honors in the national championship of Irish Road Bowling, Aug. 1-3.

In Wompatuck State Park, Hingham, Massachusetts, south of Boston, the two West Virginians, in Grade 3 and Grade 4, took home championship trophies in the grandly named BolChumann na hEirean North America Region Finals.

Irish road bowling is one of the world's oldest sports and now it is old in West Virginia, having been played in Ireland since 1995.

Putnam, in Grade 3, and Henry in Grade 4, which is reserved for newcomers or beginners, are two of the best players in West Virginia.

Irish road bowling is similar to golf but more athletic. A start line and a finish line are drawn a mile to two miles apart. The iron and steel "bowl" is about the size of a baseball. Throws are made from a sprint. The players or team who can cover that distance in the fewest throws wins the match (called a "score").

Throws can roll 250 or even 300 yards on a narrow country road. These "milers" are amazing to see.

Ben Putnam learned the game at the Irish Spring Festival in Ireland where the sport appeared for the first time in America, since the Civil War. His father Jerod was one of the founders in March 1995.

Paul Henry plays at the Wheeling Hibernians Ohio Valley Irish Bowling Championship each year in September. In 2019, before Covid, 1,051 bowlers made the Wheeling AOH the largest team tournament in the world.

Ben Putnam is able to generate huge "monster" bowls with a smooth and easy delivery. He defeated two veteran Boston bowlers, both born in the country of Ireland, for the win. Ben has just accepted a



Courtesy photo

Pictured is Paul Henry (right) and his father and coach, Patrick Henry.

basketball scholarship from Davis and Elkins College, as a Lewis County High School graduate.

Paul Henry learned the game at Wheeling AOH tournaments. He is able to roll very long shots with only a one or two step delivery. With his father Patrick Henry as his coach and "road shower," Paul threw a controlled and efficient score for the win.

In 2026, the Boston-New York-West Virginia finals rotate back to West Virginia. The best players in the United States will be coming to West Virginia the first weekend in August 2026. West Virginia previously hosted the finals in 2006 (Buckhannon), 2009 (Ireland), 2012 (Coopers Rock), 2015 (Buckhannon),

2018 (Blackwater Falls), and 2024 (Glennville).

Winners in Grades 1 and 2 advance to the All-Ireland Fi-

nals, in the Country of Ireland. Because of these wins, Ben

will go up to Grade 2 in 2026, and Paul up to Grade 3.

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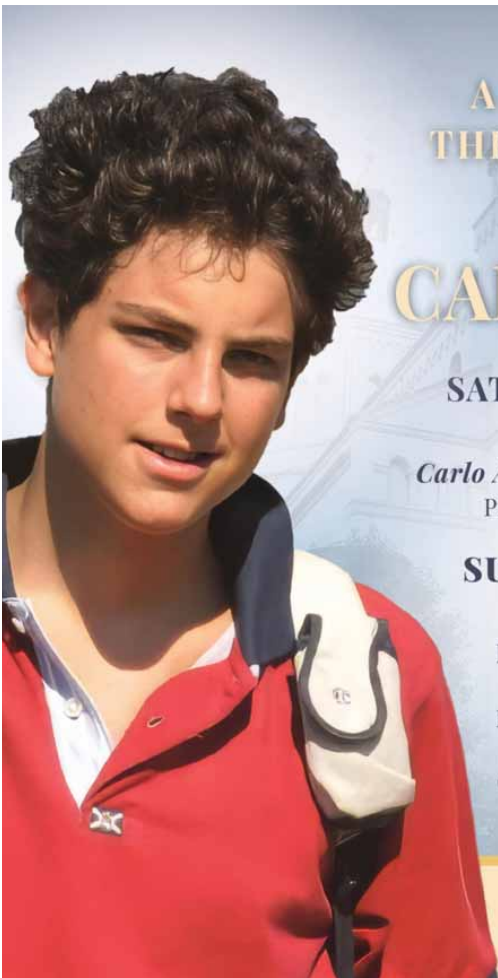
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