

THE CATHOLIC

Spirit

A Christmas Message from Bishop Brennan

Dear members of the household of the faith,

As we move into the last days of Advent and see the great feast of Christmas just ahead, I want to extend to you my hope that you and your loved ones will experience a renewal of your faith and love during this holy season.

Remember what we celebrate: *God so loved the world that He gave His only Son, that anyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life* [John 3:16]. This is no small matter. God became man in Jesus so that our twin enemies, sin and death, might be defeated and we might become by grace the holy children of God we were created to be and inherit the fullness of eternal life.

In a world full of conflict and suffering, what God has done – what Jesus preached and the Church continues to proclaim – is truly good news. It's too good to keep to ourselves. I urge you to **See "Message" on Page 2**

Bishop Brennan Rededicates Clarksburg's Newly Renovated Immaculate Conception Church



Bishop Mark Brennan blesses the faithful at the end of the rededication Mass at Immaculate Conception Church in Clarksburg Dec. 8.

By Pam Queen

Bishop Mark Brennan said Monday, Dec. 8, couldn't have been more appropriate for a rededication of Immaculate Conception Church and the consecration of its new altar.

The bishop celebrated the Mass that evening with Father Casey Mahone, pastor of the Clarksburg church, other religious guests and congregants filling the pews. Dec. 8 was the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

During the Mass, Bishop Brennan pointed out that Mother Mary is the patron saint of the United States and said the country is in need of prayers right now. During his homily, he talked about how Mary was born without original sin and chose to live her life in such a way as to not sin.

Prior to the Liturgy of the Word, the bishop blessed the new ambo and consecrated the new altar before preparing it for the Liturgy of the Eucharist. He placed several authenticated relics into the altar, praying over each: Pope St. Damasus, **See "Church" on Page 3**

Pam Queen photo

Wheeling Knights of Columbus Honor Veterans Laid to Rest in Diocese's Cemetery with Prayer Service and Christmas Wreath Ceremony

By Colleen Rowan

WHEELING — Veterans laid to rest at the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's Mount Calvary Cemetery in Wheeling were honored in a prayer service with a Christmas wreath laying ceremony by the Knights of Columbus Charles Carroll Assembly 1185 of Wheeling. Veterans, family members, knights, and friends gathered in front of the Bishop's Chapel for the Dec. 6 service, which was led by Bishop Mark Brennan.

The program began with Kenneth Staley, faithful navigator of Assembly

1185, speaking of Blessed Father Michael McGivney of New Haven, Conn., founding the Knights of Columbus in 1882 with the three guiding principles, which knights call "Degrees, of Charity, Unity, and **"Knights" on Page 4**

Raymond Blust, retired U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Colonel, salutes after placing the wreath for veterans in front of the Bishop's Chapel at Mount Calvary Cemetery in Wheeling. Also pictured are Knights of Columbus Honor Guard Richard Wilson and Art Bertol. Colleen Rowan photo



Inside: Stories from FaithInWV on the History of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, Pages 8-10



Diocesan Official Appointment

Bishop Mark Brennan has made public the following appointment:

Father Rayappa Kurakula is appointed pastor of St. Matthew Parish in Ravenswood and Sacred Heart Mission in Point Pleasant, effective November 26, 2025. His place of residence is not affected by this assignment.

Message ...

Cont'd from Page 1

speak to others of your faith in Jesus Christ when opportunities present themselves and tell them how your relationship with him within the Church he founded has brought you strength and blessings. *Do not be afraid, says the Lord; From now on you will be catching men* [and women and children, too! Luke 5:10]. If a fisherman, at times headstrong, at times timid, could tell others of Christ, so can you and I.

A beautiful Christmas carol begins: "It came upon a midnight clear that glorious song of old, from angels bending near the earth to touch their harps of gold: Peace on the earth, goodwill to men, from heaven's all-gracious King. The world in solemn stillness lay to hear the angels sing." It is Jesus our Lord who brings peace to human beings, both the inner peace that comes from a clear conscience and trust in God, and peace among people, who learn to forsake jealousy and violence and embrace friendship and mutual aid. It is that Lord whom we must serve and whom we must make known to others.

Hear the angels sing once again of our Savior's birth. Rejoice that God has not abandoned us even if we have so often abandoned Him. Love is at the core of God's being. Let us learn from Him to love and to share with others the faith that is fulfilled by love.

A merry Christmas and peaceful New Year to you all!

Mark E. Brennan

+Mark E. Brennan
Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston

DIocese of Wheeling-Charleston

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Contact your parish for Christmas Mass times

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."


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://dhhr.wv.gov/bss/services/Pages/Centralized-Intake-for-Abuse-and-Neglect.aspx> West Virginia State Police, Crimes Against Children Unit: 304-293-6400.

The Catholic Spirit's Print Schedule for 2026

There are 10 print editions in 2026. 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.

2026 Print Dates:


- Month of the Holy Family, February 20
- Lent, March 13
- Easter, April 10
- Month of Mary, Mother of God, May 15
- Month of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, June 12
- Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 14
- Triumph of the Cross, September 11
- Month of the Rosary, October 9
- Advent, November 20
- Christmas, December 18



Christmas
Vol. 55, No. 50

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thecatholicspiritwv.org
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Member: Catholic Press Association, West Virginia Press Association, National Press Photographers Association, Inc. 

Published every Friday by e-mail and printed 10 times a year. All issues sent to each registered Catholics free of charge. Donations to help offset the cost of producing The Catholic Spirit are welcomed. Out-of-diocese subscriptions are \$25 annually. The Catholic Spirit intends its news reports to be fair and accurate in every regard. The opinions of correspondents do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Catholic Spirit. Submission of news releases, stories and color photos welcomed and encouraged. Not responsible for unsolicited material.

Church ...

Cont'd from Page 1

St. Francis de Sales, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque and St. Bernadette Soubirous.

He then rubbed holy oil, or chrism, over the entire surface of the altar — from the middle to each of the four corners. This symbolizes the altar as a representation of Christ, making it a sacred place for sacrifice and prayer. The altar was then blessed with incense and lighted.

Father Mahone is proud of the new altar. He said it was made by a 500-year-old family-owned company in Italy. The legs were made to complement the original stone columns that line the aisles of the church. The top is made to look like black marble, also complementing other columns that surround the tabernacle.

The renovation began in fall 2023, when Father Mahone and others began talking about the need for such a project. Father Mahone said renovations are close to complete. "We are waiting for the organ and some other small details," the pastor said. "We are waiting for a statue of the Holy Family."

The pastor said he told the 700+ families in his church the project would cost more and take longer than anticipated so they wouldn't set an end date too soon.

"It's all be a learn-as-you-go project," he said. The pastor said he told the 700+ families in his church the project would cost more and take longer than anticipated so they wouldn't set an end date too soon.

"It's all be a learn-as-you-go project," he said.

The building was originally dedicated in October 1925 and the hope was to be able to re-dedicate it this past October, but it wasn't ready. From June to Oct. 31, Masses were held in the Parish Center.

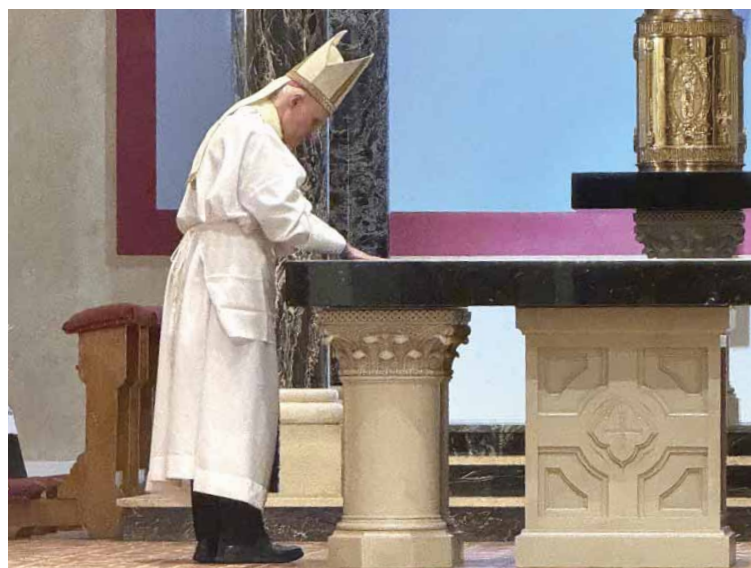
Gardiner and Hall Associates, a liturgical design firm, was chosen for the renovations. Father Mahone, who has been pastor at the church for 18 years, said work started on the roof. From there, pews were removed so they could be refurbished, lights were removed for restoration and a sound system was installed.

One of Father Mahone's favorite parts of the renovations is the new mural. Initially, he said he had no interest in having the mural. Then, talks with church members after a trip to Italy, changed his mind. The pastor said churches there have beautiful



Pam Queen photo

The new mural at the Immaculate Conception Church in Clarksburg is shown above.



Pam Queen photo

Bishop Mark E. Brennan consecrates the new altar at the rededication Mass at the Immaculate Conception Church in Clarksburg.

murals and many Catholic churches have a history of including murals.

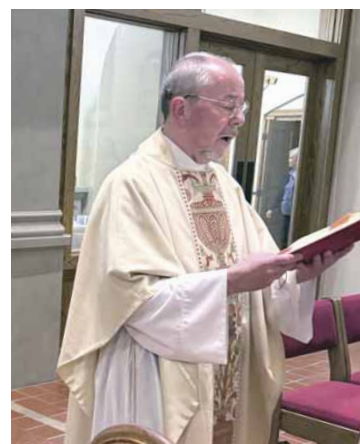
Immaculate Conception, which has been in this building for 100 years, had a mural behind the altar until the 1970s, when it was painted over. Father Mahone said through talking with area people, he learned the congregation was not happy about covering the original mural.

Deanne Lenehan, owner and artist of Lenehan Studios in Baltimore, Md., was contracted to paint the new mural. Based on Madonna of the Angels, a painting by William-Adolphe Bouguereau, it features Mother Mary holding an infant Jesus. They are surrounded by more than a dozen angels among the clouds.

Lenehan said this was the first church in West Virginia she has done work in and the

largest project she's done so far. There are now plans for her work to be part of a restoration project at St. Joseph's Cathedral in Wheeling next spring. At Immaculate Conception, the artist also painted what looks to be stone frames for the Stations of the Cross and restored the wording — "The Almighty Has Done Great Things for Me and Holy is His Name" — above the mural.

"I am honored to witness



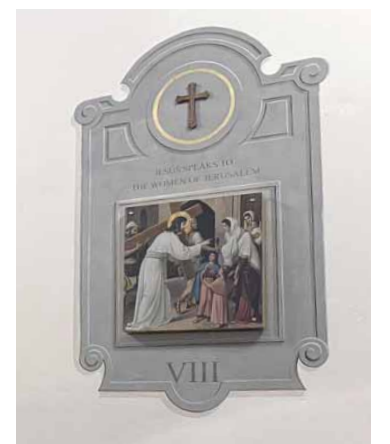
Pam Queen photo

Father Casey Mahone processes into the church at the rededication Mass.

the final product," said Lenehan, who attended the rededication Mass. "I never really get to see this part. I am blown away by how it all came together."

Other parts of the project include a gift shop, kitchenette and reception area, a new confessional and a glass wall between the entry and sanctuary.

"Together, we have done something truly beautiful for God," Father Mahone told the congregation at the end of Mass.



Pam Queen photo

The area around the Stations of the Cross at Immaculate Conception Church were painted with the look of stone frames.

The project — including the new \$300,000 roof — cost about \$2 million. That money came from donations, fundraising and a \$50,000 grant from the diocese.

"We have some very generous people who gave us seed money," Father Mahone said. "We had one anonymous donor who gave us \$150,000. Before we started the fundraising, we had about \$500,000. I am so grateful for the support of the parish."



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Colleen Rowan photos

Left: Kenneth Staley, faithful navigator of the Knights of Columbus Assembly 1185, speaks at the prayer service. Right: Patrick Plunket, retired U.S. Air Force lieutenant colonel, plays "Taps."



Colleen Rowan photo

Bishop Mark Brennan (right) prays for God's blessing upon the Christmas wreaths for veterans' graves. With him are John Dudzik, retired U.S. Navy, presenting colors (left); and Deacon Douglas Breiding, diocesan director of cemeteries and director of Mount Calvary Cemetery.

Veterans ...

Cont'd from Page 1

Fraternity." In 1900, he said, the knights added the 4th Degree of "Patriotism."

"This degree recognizes that we, as Catholic Christians, should honor our country in a meaningful way—'love of God and love of country,'" Staley said. "I cannot think of a more fitting way to honor our country than to honor those men and woman who sacrificed so much of their lives in order that we can stand in this place and time as free men and women.

"This morning in a small but meaningful way, we honor those veterans laid to rest here at Mount Calvary Cemetery," Staley said.



Colleen Rowan photo

Some of the area residents who attended the service are pictured.

That morning, many came out to brave the cold to be part of the service.

"We gather today to pray for our brothers and sisters who served to protect our freedom and ideals that are buried here at Mount Calvary Cemetery," Bishop Brennan said as he began the service. "They have passed from death to life in company with the Lord Jesus, who died and rose to new life. Now, they await the fullness of resurrection life."

The Gospel reading (John 15: 9-13), Bishop Brennan said, brought to mind the two members of the West Virginia National Guard who were gunned down in an attack in Washington, D.C., on Nov. 26—Staff Sgt. Andrew Wolfe, 24, of Inwood, who is recovering and Spc. Sarah Beckstrom, 20, of Webster County, who was killed.

"In that last verse of our gospel reading—there is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends—we think of the young woman from this state who lost her life in my home city of Washington, D.C.," Bishop Brennan said. "I offered Mass for her last Sunday, and we pray for her eternal rest and for the full recovery of the young man who was also shot that day."

The bishop continued, saying, "To serve one's country is a great honor and it's a sacrifice." He saw this in his father, who served in the



Colleen Rowan photo

Standing by the wreath for veterans in front of the Bishop's Chapel at Mount Calvary are from left: Knights of Columbus Honor Guard Art Bertol and Richard Wilson, and Raymond Blust, retired U.S. Air Force Lieutenant Colonel.

U.S. Army Air Corps in World War II and then finishing up 20 years in U.S. Navy aviation.

"It is an honorable calling to give of oneself to something greater than yourself, a greater cause, which certainly is to defend and serve those who are of your own nation," he said. "So, we pray for those who have done that, whether they died in action or died later, that they may rest in peace; and we honor their commitment to their neighbor, showing their service to their country."

The bishop then prayed for God's blessing upon a large wreath held by Raymond Blust, retired U.S. Air Force lieutenant colonel, and more than 100 smaller wreaths for veterans' graves near by.

"Bless these wreaths," the bishop prayed before sprinkling them with holy water. "May they be for us a reminder of these, your children, who now sleep in death. May we honor their service and sacrifices for our sake by never taking the gifts and responsibilities of freedom for granted and honor their memories by ever keeping them before us in prayer."

Flanked by the Knights of Columbus Honor Guard (Richard Wilson and Art Bertol), Blust placed the large wreath in front of the Bishop's Chapel and saluted those veterans at final rest in the cemetery as "Taps" was played by Patrick Plunket, retired U.S. Air Force lieutenant colonel.

Rose Marie Carroll of the Cathedral of St. Joseph came forward and read the poem "I Am a Veteran" by Andrea C. Brett.

The prayer service ended with all praying together Mother Angelica's Prayer for the United States.

After the final blessing from the bishop, those gathered placed the 100 small Christmas wreaths on veterans' graves throughout the cemetery. The wreaths were purchased by the Charles Carroll Assembly 1185 of Wheeling.



Kenneth Staley photo

Mark Kemp, a member of the Knights of Columbus and Our Lady of Peace Parish in Wheeling, places a Christmas wreath on the grave of a veteran at Mount Calvary.

Be Encouraged by Our Lady of Guadalupe and Bring Christ to Others, Bishop Brennan Says

By Colleen Rowan

Be encouraged by the example of Our Lady of Guadalupe and bring Christ to others, Bishop Mark Brennan said to those gathered for Mass at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling on Our Lady's feast day, Dec. 12. The bishop celebrated the Mass in both English and Spanish with Central Catholic High School Spanish class students offering the reading and the intentions in both languages. Songs were sung in both languages as well.

At the beginning of Mass, each person present came forward to place a rose in front of the Our Lady of Guadalupe statue at the front of the church.

In his homily—the first part which he gave in Spanish and the second part in English—the bishop noted Mary's title of the Star of Evangelization. And Our Lady of Guadalupe, he said, initiated perhaps the greatest mass conversion of a people to the Catholic faith in the history of the church after appearing to St. Juan Diego at Tepeyac Hill near what is today Mexico City in 1531. Our Lady appeared to him four times that year asking for a

church to be built in her honor.

"In the 70 years after the apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe, between 5 and 8 million people were baptized and entered the church," the bishop said.

"My brothers and sisters, let's be encouraged by the example of Our Lady of Guadalupe," the bishop said. "We must bring Christ to those who do not know him or who have abandoned him. We have to evangelize."

By her obedience to God, the bishop said, Mary not only conceived of the Son of God in her womb but helped many people conceive him by faith in their souls. Catholics, the bishop said, must be like Juan Diego, who humble and lacking persuasive words, became a missionary of Christ to his native people.

"We have to obey Jesus who commands us to go and make disciples of all nations," the bishop said. "We can do it with the hope and the promise of God and the virgin to accompany us."

Bishop Brennan asked the faithful to pray every day for people they know who do not know God or live apart from him.






Colleen Rowan photo

Faithful place roses in front of the Our Lady of Guadalupe statue at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling during Mass for Our Lady's feast day on Dec. 12.

"Pray for them, fast once a week for them, ask God for opportunities to speak to them about why you follow Jesus Christ and why you belong to this church," the bishop said. "Trust in God, who never asks

the impossible but for whom nothing is impossible. If we commit ourselves to this great mission to make Christ known to others, we may reap a great harvest. Let's get to work."


 Join us as we celebrate the
Ordination to the Diaconate
 of
Clifton Mastran
 Saturday, December 20, 2025
 10:00 a.m.
 at the
 Cathedral of St. Joseph, Wheeling


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 -Matthew 25:40


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Jubilee & Hope Symphony Concert Celebrates Diocese's 175th Anniversary

Ensemble Included More Than 130 Choir Members and Musicians from Parishes across West Virginia and the 60-Plus Members of the Monongalia Symphony Orchestra



Courtesy photo

More than 130 choir members and musicians from parishes across West Virginia join with the 60-plus members of the Monongalia Symphony Orchestra to present the Jubilee & Hope Symphony Concert in Morgantown Nov. 16.

By Colleen Rowan
MORGANTOWN

— More than 130 choir members and musicians from parishes across West Virginia joined with the 60-plus members of the Monongalia Symphony Orchestra to present the highly anticipated Jubilee & Hope Symphony Concert in Morgantown Nov. 16. Held at St. Francis de Sales Church, the concert drew music lovers from around the area and state to mark a special moment for the church in West Virginia.

“On behalf of our Bishop, Mark Brennan, I welcome all of you to this evening for this concert of jubilee and hope as our diocese is celebrating its 175th anniversary year,” said Diocesan Chancellor Chad Carter to begin the concert. He thanked the parish for their hospitality and gave a special thanks to Conductor Shaun Hancher, music director of the Monongalia Symphony Orchestra, and the members of the orchestra “for their willingness to participate in this concert of combined forces of orchestral, vocal, organ, and handbell music.” Hancher is also music director and conductor of the Wheeling Symphony Youth Orchestra and music director at Our Lady of Peace Parish in

Wheeling.

Carter, who was also part of the ensemble, introduced the West Virginia composers and arrangers participating and whose compositions were included in the performance. They are Donna Kinsey of St. Francis de Sales in Morgantown who arranged the pieces “Attende Domine” and “Wondrous Love”; Stephen Pishner, music director of All Saints Parish in Bridgeport who composed the song “Come Follow Me”; Scott Green of Morgantown who then scored Pishner’s composition for orchestral accompaniment; RJ Nestor, music director of St. Luke Parish in Cheat Lake, who composed the orchestral parts for the Appalachian hymn tune “Beachspring”, which was the melody used when attendees sang the official Jubilee Hymn from the Vatican during the concert; and Jack Holt, a 16-year-old student from Sacred Heart Parish in Bluefield. The concert ended with Holt’s “skilled and joyous” arrangement, Carter said, of the familiar “Hymn to Joy” which featured the text of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston’s 175th Anniversary Hymn.

“It was a pleasure to have my piece performed by the Monongalia Orches-

tra and choir,” Holt said. “The choir sounded wonderful, and the build-up at the finale of the work was well expressed through the orchestra conducted by Mr. Hancher. I am very thankful to have been given this opportunity to arrange this work.”

Father Michael Joncas, a composer who is known for his composition “On Eagles Wings,” was one of many who were able to view the concert on livestream.

“It was an honor to have my composition ‘No Greater Love’ chosen to be performed...,” he said. “The performance by orchestra, vocalists and chorus gave me new insights into what I composed so many years ago. The entire event seems to me to be a worthy way to praise God and to honor

both the parish and the diocese. I would personally like to thank my friend and fellow church composer, Stephen Pishner, for alerting me to this concert and its livestream recording.”

Paulist Father Ricky Manalo was also tuning in to watch the broadcast and listened to the ensemble perform his composition “On This Day” and his setting of “Pange Lingua.”

Rhonda Williams of All Saints Parish in Bridgeport was among the many faithful who attended the concert.

“It was a memorable and rewarding experience because I had never been to see a symphony,” she said. “It helped to increase my knowledge of the voices and the instruments.”

Many of those who participated in the concert

represented parishes of the Morgantown and central regions of the state—39 of them were members of St. Francis de Sales alone. Also performing were students from Notre Dame High School in Clarksburg. Wheeling parishes brought almost 20 choir members and musicians to participate and another 11 came from the Charleston area. Parishioners from Our Lady of Grace Parish in Romney and St. Patrick Parish in Mannington participated as well.

At the end of the concert, Bishop Mark Brennan spoke of God’s gift of music and thanked all for attending.



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Accepting New Patients

Jubilee Year of Hope to Close with Masses in Wheeling & Charleston

By Colleen Rowan

WEST VIRGINIA — Faithful in the northern and southern regions of the state are invited to Masses, joining with the church worldwide, for the closing of the Jubilee Year of Hope.

Just as the opening, the closing Mass for the Holy Year will be celebrated simultaneously at 10:30 a.m. on Dec. 28 at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling by Bishop Mark Brennan and at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston by Very Rev. Donald X. Higgs, Assoc. V.E., V.F., rector.

All dioceses in the world will be celebrating the closing on this day, which is the Feast of the Holy Family of Jesus, Mary and Joseph. The official Vatican Jubilee Year formally closes on Jan. 6, 2026.

In West Virginia and around the world, the Holy Year has brought many enriching, faith-filled opportunities. Attending the closing Mass offers Catholics the opportunity to be in solidarity with Pope Leo and the world church as the Holy Year comes to a close, said Bernadette McMasters Kime, PhD., D. Min., director of Worship and Sacraments for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

"It was a year filled with pilgrimages, indulgences, concerts, celebrations, and special liturgies that gave us, here in West Virginia, opportunities to focus on hope," she said. "We know in our troubled world with so much suffering and violence that we need to cling to that message of hope, that the church reminded us about during this special year. Just because the Jubilee Year is over, we Catholics must still hold on to that hope that Jesus Christ offers to the world."

'Hope Does Not Disappoint:' A Jubilee for the History Books



CNS photo/Lola Gomez

Pope Leo XIV carries the Jubilee Cross as he walks toward the altar before the start of the vigil with young people gathered in Tor Vergata, Rome, on Aug. 2 during the Jubilee of Youth.

By Junno Arocho Esteves, OSV News

(OSV News) — In his papal bull proclaiming the Jubilee Year, the late Pope Francis emphasized the theme of hope, a much-needed virtue in a time of uncertainty, war, and tribulation.

Yet in "Spes Non Confundit" ("Hope Does Not Disappoint"), the pope unknowingly described what many Catholics would feel in the year to come.

"Everyone knows what it is to hope. In the heart of each person, hope dwells as the desire and expectation of good things to come, despite our not knowing what the future may bring," he wrote.

In 2024, the pope's health was already a cause for concern due to a persistent flu at the beginning of the year, as well as limited mobility that required the use of a cane and a wheelchair.

While the intense monthly schedule of Jubilee events was worrisome, there was still the hope that the ailing pontiff would be able to participate.

However, those hopes were dashed once his health took a turn for the worse in February, and on April 21, just one day after delivering what would be his final Easter Sunday "urbi et orbi" blessing, Pope Francis died.

For Archbishop Rino Fisichella, organizer of the

Jubilee 2025 events and pro-prefect of the Dicastery for Evangelization, the pope's death "created a silence that was felt in the streets of Rome and the world, as well as in every Christian community."

In an interview via email Dec. 3, Archbishop Fisichella told OSV News that it was in those days of mourning that "the motto of the Jubilee took on a different light."

"The faithful understood that Christian hope is not a sentiment, but a promise. I saw people crossing the Holy Door with tears in their eyes and yet with a new inner strength," he said.

"One cannot forget that hope strongly recalls eternal life, a promise that was realized in the resurrection of Jesus Christ," Archbishop Fisichella added. "An everlasting life is the true announcement of the Christian faith and of this Jubilee."

Interregnum

Despite his ill health, Pope Francis' death still came as a shock to many and triggered a series of events that occurred only once in the Catholic Church's history.

See "Jubilee" on Page 12

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From St. Francis' First Crèche to West Virginia's Nativities

A Treasured Story of Faith, Hope, and Humble Beginnings

By Joyce Bibey (courtesy of FaithInWV)

The Nativity is among the most treasured sights in our parishes and homes at Advent and Christmas. More than a seasonal decoration, it stands as one of the sweetest and most honest tools of evangelization. In a single scene, it reveals history and our Christian beginnings, brings the prophetic words to life before our eyes, pointing us toward our hope of eternal life with God.

Even a young child, barely able to speak, can understand and share the simple truths of the Nativity: a baby welcomed by the whole world as the Prince of Peace with a blessed loving mother and a courageous father, and the reverent awe shown by animals, shepherds, and the wise and royal. The scene teaches without complexity, inviting hearts gently into the mystery of Christ.

As the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston honors its 175th Anniversary, look with gratitude at Nativity scenes from both present and past. In doing so, acknowledge not only their beauty, but also their history and profound purpose. These scenes unite generations of faithful across West Virginia with the universal Church and with a tradition that stretches back more than eight centuries.

Archbishop John Swint, the third Bishop of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, reflected deeply on this mystery in his 1947 book of Christmas homilies, "The Sweetest Story Ever Told." He wrote that the Nativity has always taught that Christ, born a helpless "Babe in Bethlehem" and adored by shepherds and Wise Men, "was true God and true man." Though He assumed human nature, He never ceased to be God; the two natures were united in one divine Person. Archbishop Swint reminded the faithful that our hearts should be filled with joy and gratitude at Christmas, echoing



Courtesy photo

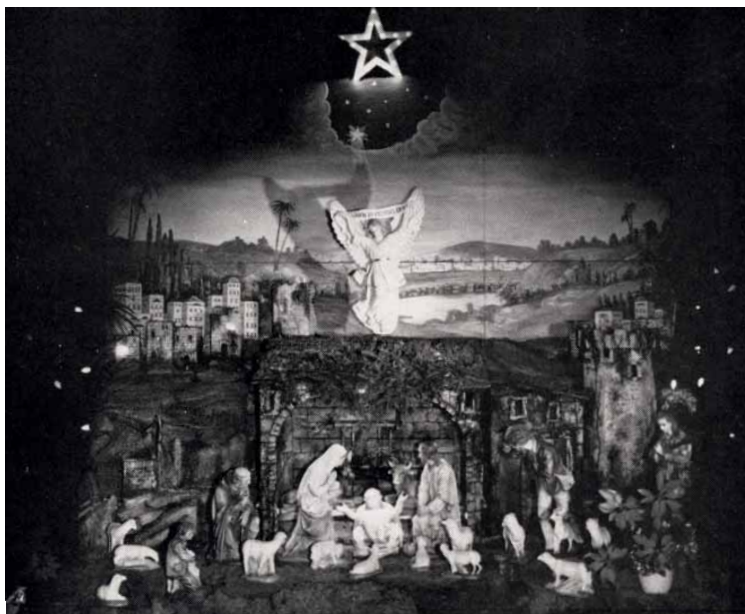
St. Patrick's mission church of Coalton traditionally displayed a Nativity with figures quite small, but the scale of the locally crafted stable and cut evergreen trees draped in tinsel surrounding the Nativity made it grand. The parish was established in the 1850s for Irish immigrants in the area and in 1918 the present church building was constructed to serve the influx of Italian Catholics moving into the area for coal mining jobs. The photo was taken in 1949 of the church.

the Gospel of John: "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us... full of grace and truth." Those who receive Him are given the power to become children of God.

Our love for the Nativity scene traces back to its origins, when St. Francis of Assisi, who, over 800 years ago in 1223, created the first living Nativity in the small town of Greccio, Italy. Saint Francis' intent was simple and profound: to evangelize through sight, to awaken wonder and awe at the humble Newborn King, and to connect Bethlehem directly to

the celebration of the Eucharist.

Saint Bonaventure recounts that on Christmas Eve of 1223, St. Francis preached about "the Babe of Bethlehem" from beside the scene itself. Thomas of Celano, St. Francis' first biographer, explained that Francis wanted all to see with their own eyes the poverty and vulnerability Christ embraced—lying in a manger between the ox and the ass. The Church records a miracle from that night: Giovanni Veleti reported seeing a real infant appear in the empty manger, whom St. Francis



Nativities at St. Alphonsus Church in Wheeling are shown in these undated photos.



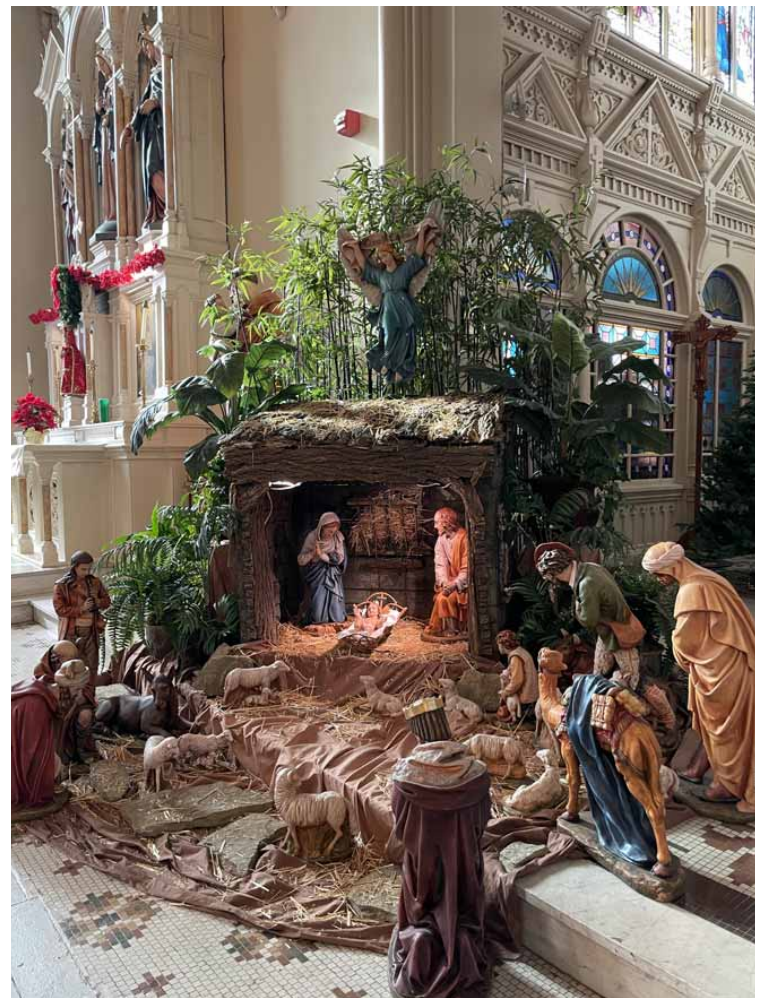
Courtesy photo

Four altar boys sing Christmas carols in front of the Nativity scene at St. Ladislaus Church in Wheeling in 1949. St. Lad's, as it was fondly called, was the first Polish Catholic Church in the diocese, founded in 1903.

tenderly held. Other miracles followed, including healings connected to the straw of the manger. From its very beginning, the Nativity was marked by grace, humility, and living faith.

That same spirit continues to move the Church

today. Earlier this week, Pope Leo XIV spoke to the faithful portraying the Holy Family in Vatican City's living Nativity, calling them a joyful sign of discipleship and "pilgrims of hope," bearers of consolation and **See "Nativities" on Page 9**



Courtesy photos

Nativities ...

Cont'd from Page 8

inspiration in daily life. Pope Francis, in his 2019 Apostolic Letter on the Nativity scene, reflected on St. Francis' first crèche, where the Eucharist was celebrated over the manger. In doing so, the priest emphasized the inseparable bond between Bethlehem and the altar. The Nativity, Pope Francis wrote, still reveals God's tender love and nearness, teaching every generation to believe that God is with us and that we are with Him.

In West Virginia, this centuries-old tradition is deeply cherished during Advent and Christmas. In many parishes, a family or child is blessed each year with the honor of placing the Christ Child in the manger at Christmas Mass, a quiet yet powerful act of faith passed from one generation to the next.

While detailed records of Nativity scenes in the Diocese since its founding in 1850 are limited, the influence of immigrant cultures is clear. Polish Szopki (Nativities) featured elaborately painted backdrops and figures reflecting Polish heritage. Saint Ladislaus, the first Polish Catholic Church in the diocese was founded in 1903. The Poles who settled in WV were from sections of Poland with customs also influenced by Austria and Russia, therefore the Nativity and decorations reflected their rich, expansive heritage. Italian Presepi (Nativities) were often ornate, adorned with fine fabrics and gold accents. German parishes typically displayed a humbler Krippe (Nativity), crafted of wood and set within



Courtesy photo

The Nativity at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston features a woman approaching the scene holding her young child, and she is dressed more like a European native, which is reminiscent of what you could find in a Polish or German Catholic Nativity scene.

a stable or grotto. At St. Alphonsus in Wheeling, founded in 1856, parishioners obtained a magnificent "Crib" scene with molded figures and a painted Bethlehem backdrop, complete with palm trees and a starry, illuminated sky. Lovingly preserved, the figures and stable remain in use today.

German families historically were among the first to place Nativity scenes in their homes beneath

Christmas trees, sometimes with snowcapped stables. Irish and Appalachian Nativities reflected simplicity and resourcefulness, fashioned from hand-carved wood or humble materials, reverent and warmly heartfelt. Irish parish, St. Patrick's of Coalton, displayed a Nativity with figures quite small, but the scale of the locally crafted stable and cut evergreen trees draped in tinsel surrounding the

Nativity made it grand.

Across cultures and centuries, the Nativity endures. In West Virginia and throughout the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, it remains a living witness to the humble birth of our Lord Jesus Christ—first shown to the world by St. Francis of Assisi, and still teaching, evangelizing, and drawing hearts to Bethlehem, where God chose to dwell among us.



Courtesy photo

St. Francis Xavier Church in Moundsville displays a life-sized outdoor Nativity cut out and painted on plywood in the 1940s or 50s by the Sisters of St. Joseph who worked at the parish and school. The set had been stored in the church's bell tower for nearly 40 years but has once again recently found a place of honor on the church property along Seventh Street.

Looking Back at Rosary Rallies in Honor of Our 175th Anniversary

By Joyce Bibey (courtesy of FaithInWV)

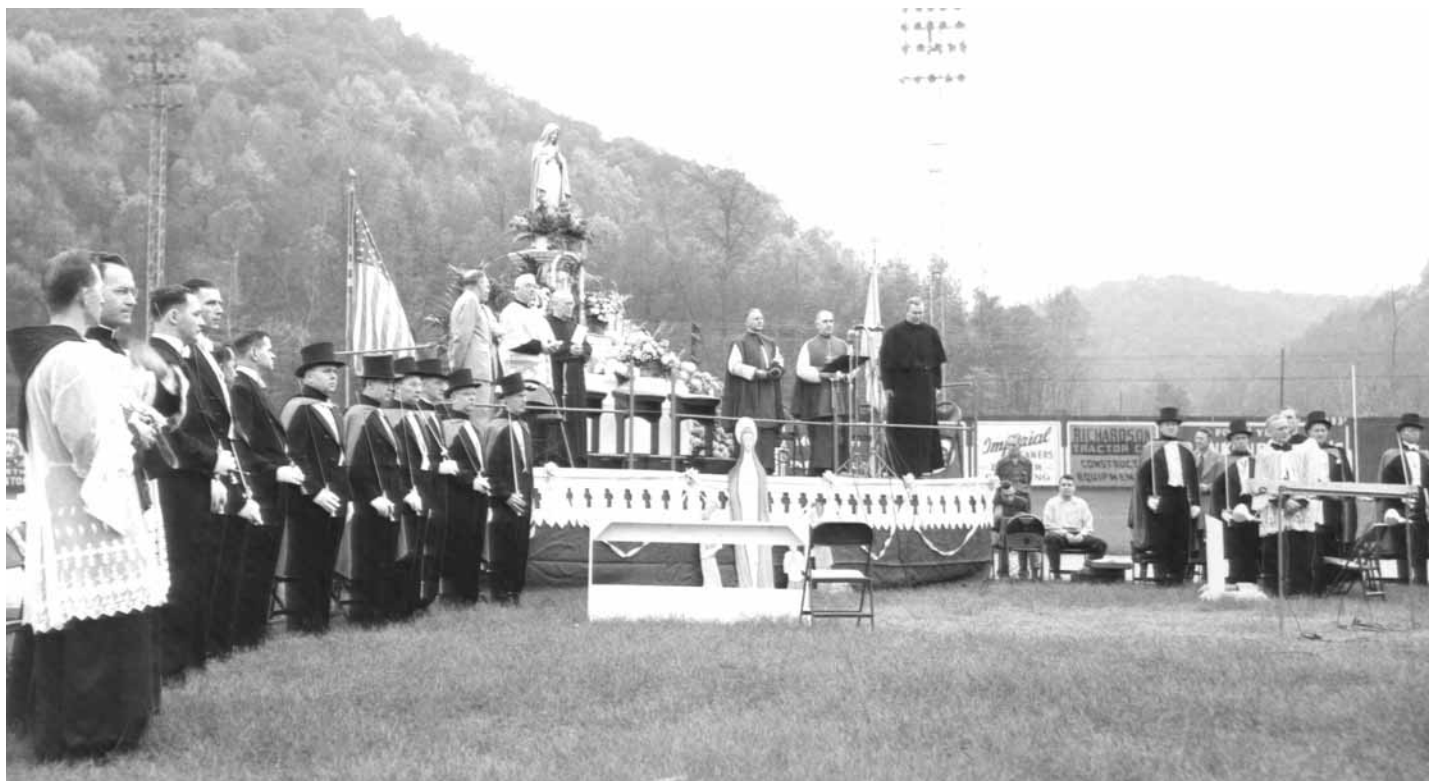
Bishop Thomas J. McDonnell had a deep devotion to the rosary and like the leader of the national Family Rosary Crusade of the 1940s, Father Patrick Peyton, CSC, Bishop McDonnell believed wholeheartedly in Father Peyton's motto, "the family that prays together stays together."

The two were friends, and in the fall of 1951, Bishop McDonnell invited Father Peyton to tour WV on a diocesan/state-wide Rosary Rally campaign.

The photos on this page record those prayerful events attended by hundreds if not thousands of Catholics in each city.

Bishop McDonnell was described as a true missionary, an evangelist and friend to priests, laity, and non-Catholics. A "herald of the gospel... who upon the mountains and in the valleys of this world preached the glad tidings of the Prince of Peace" (as quoted in his eulogy given by friend Bishop Richard Ackerman, of Covington, Ky.).

Bishop McDonnell was appointed to serve the people in the Diocese of Wheeling as coadjutor bishop in 1951 for Archbishop John J. Swint. He was added to the office of the bishop to assist with



Courtesy photo
On the makeshift stage at a Rosary Rally in Charleston in 1951, Father Patrick Peyton CSC (dressed in the black cassock and shoulder cape), led the faithful in a rosary to strengthen families and the church. Bishop Thomas J. McDonnell is to the left of Father Peyton, and Father Frederick J. Schwertz, chancellor of the diocese at that time, is left of Bishop McDonnell.

Archbishop Swint's duties and travel around the vast diocese.

(A little Canon Law lesson (403-407), a coadjutor bishop is like an auxiliary bishop except that he

has the right of succession. When the bishop (aka the ordinary) resigns from office or dies, the coadjutor succeeds him. All offices of bishop — ordinary, auxil-

iary, and coadjutor — are considered successors of the apostles entrusted with the same office and authority our Lord entrusted to them.)



Courtesy photo

Faithful attend the rosary rally in Parkersburg in 1953.



Courtesy photo

Faithful attend the rosary rally in Bridgeport in this undated photo.

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Jubilee Year of Hope for the Incarcerated— Together We Serve

By Sister Dolores A. Keyser, ESEH, Social Ministry Project Coordinator, Prison Ministry Support, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

It started as a simple “thank you” email for inviting the DWC Prison Ministry team to join the WVDOC Chaplain’s Retreat at St. John XXIII Retreat Center in Charleston on August 24, 2025.

The purpose was to discuss the EDOVO Educational Prison platform and the Gatekeepers Re-Entry program, which are provided free of charge to incarcerated individuals via tablets distributed throughout many West Virginia prisons.

It began with the Opening Devotional: “Anchored in Grace” – Hebrews 6:19 - “We have this hope as an anchor for the soul, firm and secure.” What a beautiful prayer followed: “God of mercy and strength, anchor us today in Your grace. Let every word spoken and every silence held be a reminder of Your presence. Renew our hearts, restore our spirits, and remind us that we are never alone in this sacred work. Amen.”

This prompted a mention that the Catholic Church has a Jubilee Year every 25 years, a special time when spiritual renewal is important. The current Jubilee Year began on December 24, 2024, with Pope Francis opening the Holy Doors at St. Peter’s in Rome, along with a Holy Door at the Rebibbia prison in Rome, a historic first. He opened the Holy Door of the Church of Our Father, a chapel within the Rebibbia prison complex, on December 26, 2024.

The “Jubilee Year of Hope for Prisoners” is part of the 2025 Catholic Jubilee, a special year focused

on hope and mercy, with a designated day, December 14, 2025, for prisoners. It’s a time to renew hope for prisoners and their families, providing spiritual reflection. The Jubilee of Prisoners was held on December 14, 2025, uniting prisoners, their families, prison staff, and volunteers in prayer and solidarity.

In the email, we asked whether the Department of Corrections and the Prison Chaplains could consider coming together with the Prison Ministry staff of the Wheeling-Charleston Diocese for an Interfaith expression of Hope through Faith. The open Holy Door in prison serves as a symbol for prisoners to open their hearts to Christ’s love, which brings hope.

Could we come together to renew the hearts and restore the spirits of those behind the walls and the staff who give so much of themselves in their service to others?

Since that email was written in September, we have come together and are collaborating on two Advent Season events.

We couldn’t plan anything for December 14th, the designated day for The Jubilee Year of Prisoners, due to staffing requirements at the Correctional Centers.

The first Advent Event has already occurred. We have joined the Department of Corrections management and staff in providing the incarcerated men and staff at Parkersburg Correctional Center an Advent event on Wednesday, December 10, 2025, that included spiritual reflection on Advent, singing Christmas carols and holiday songs, and the distribution of gift bags to the men.

A similar Advent event was to take place on Wednesday, December 17, 2025, at the Lakin Correctional Center.

At the conclusion of these two Advent events, we look forward to continuing this collaborative relationship with the WV Department of Corrections management team and staff while providing support at other correctional facilities, as approved by the Department of Corrections, not only spiritual support to the incarcerated but also in the areas of Re-entry and other educational opportunities, as approved by the WVDOC.

Many thanks to all the management and staff at the WV Department of Corrections for their help in making these two events a possibility and a success.

Kathy Barton, director of Social Ministry and Prison Ministry for the Diocese of Wheeling Charleston, said: “At the conclusion of these two Advent programs, we will have touched 700 incarcerated souls. This was quite an effort to stuff 700 approved gift bags for the inmates and to get enough priests,



Colleen Rowan photo
Sister Dolores A. Keyser, ESEH, Social Ministry Project coordinator, Prison Ministry Support for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, is pictured at the chancery in Wheeling.

deacons and volunteers their clearances to enter the facilities for the program. We have already been given the green light to do two additional events at two additional facilities – yet to be determined. So, we are hoping for a Lenten program as well!

If you are interested in being a part of this beautiful ministry, please reach out to either Sister Dolores Keyser at Dkeyser@dwc.org or Kay Sanders at ksanders@dwc.org.”

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Jubilee ...

Cont'd from Page 7

The last time the death of a pope and the election of his successor occurred in a Jubilee Year was in 1700 with the death of Pope Innocent XII and the election of Pope Clement XI.

Aside from the uncertainty regarding who would be the next leader of the Catholic Church, Archbishop Fisichella acknowledged that it "was useless to deny" that the interregnum period caused "a certain objective difficulty."

Alessandro Gisotti, deputy editorial director of Vatican Media, told OSV News Nov. 11 that the Jubilee faced challenges even before the pope's death.

"Unfortunately, practically from the beginning of this Jubilee, Pope Francis was limited by illness, then hospitalization, and finally his death. He was only able to experience the importance and intensity of this Jubilee to a certain point," Gisotti said.

"When the pope was at Gemelli Hospital, the Jubilee continued, but without the pope, it was naturally more subdued," he added.

Nevertheless, Archbishop Fisichella said, "the machine did not stop."

For both Archbishop Fisichella and Gisotti, the death of Pope Francis and the conclave and election of Pope Leo XIV did not stop the Jubilee but instead redefined it.

"The death of Francis and the election of Leo had, in a way, restarted the Jubilee in terms of attendance," Gisotti noted.

"The cardinals supported me immediately and wanted the Jubilee to continue with its manifestations. Continuity was guaranteed by the very na-

ture of the Jubilee, which does not belong to a pontiff, but to the church and to the people of God," Archbishop Fisichella told OSV News.

Despite the demanding schedule, the archbishop added, "Pope Leo XIV accepted the calendar without fear and, from the beginning, chose to maintain the programmed Jubilee commitments."

"This allowed for stability and offered a true continuity that is evident to all, given the incredible numbers of pilgrims," he added.

This was most evident at the Jubilee of Youth in Rome, which drew an estimated 1 million young people from around the world.

The Jubilee of Youth

Like many young Catholics, Joey Pfeiffer, a 17-year-old from Miami, was at a crucial point in his life and trying to discover his own sense of faith.

"I've always grown up in the Catholic faith," he told OSV News Dec. 1. "But I'm a very factual guy, and I hadn't really found any proof that God existed.

For Pfeiffer, attending the Jubilee of Youth, meeting with Catholics his age, and witnessing their joy despite facing similar doubts, helped him build "a foundation in my faith."

"I saw all these people so filled with spirit and so alive about these different experiences that they're going through," he told OSV News. "And I feel like it helped me create a sense of security, knowing that God was there because I saw it in these different people."

The Jubilee of Youth wasn't just an occasion to connect with faith that was

exclusive to young people. It also offered a chance for those who led those groups to pass on the joy of those days they had received in the past.

"Looking back at the graces received in the Jubilee 2000, we experienced joy, gratitude and mercy. We knew that we wanted to be a part of transmitting it to the next generation," said Elias Rosado from New Jersey, who, along with his wife, Jessica, led a group of 170 young people from the Neocatechumenal Way to Rome for the event.

Speaking to OSV News Nov. 30, Rosado said the Jubilee helped him and his wife rediscover that "we are not alone on our true pilgrimage, which is our life."

"We experienced that God provided an answer to our suffering today, and in our marriage. Facing infertility, we experienced joy and consolation in this suffering to see how the Lord can use our suffering and make it glorious; that our suffering has meaning," Rosado told OSV News.

Both Pfeiffer's and Rosado's experiences of the pilgrimage echoed what Archbishop Fisichella witnessed during the many Jubilee year events, where "pilgrims did not limit themselves to venerating the places of faith, but wanted to touch the living flesh of the Gospel."

The Vatican official noted that the Jubilee Year initiatives linked to the corporal works of mercy "have shown a church that does

not fear translating theology into concrete gestures."

"The signs of hope are precisely these: those that translate our faith into life daily. The signs become innumerable because they are the fruit of the centrality of faith," he told OSV News.

A door opened, a door closed

In December 2024, Pope Francis opened the Holy Door in St. Peter's, marking the beginning of the Jubilee. The task of closing that door now falls to his successor, Pope Leo XIV.

Gisotti told OSV News that Pope Leo is continuing "that spirit of hope desired by Pope Francis" and that his experience as a missionary "capable of speaking to everyone" brings "an extraordinary international dimension to his papacy."

For Archbishop Fisichella, the fact that Pope Francis would not be the one to end the Jubilee of Hope is one of "profound symbolic value."

"Let this unfinished gesture become an invitation

for every believer: The mission of the church never closes," he said.

The message he believes Pope Leo will give at the closing of the Jubilee Year will entrust the faithful with bringing "hope, peace and communion into their own homes."

"Crossing the Holy Door means assuming the responsibility to bring hope where it is missing," he said.

Archbishop Fisichella told OSV News that the Holy Year brought the "dimension of the pilgrimage back to the center" and that among the fruits of the Jubilee that "will accompany the church in the coming decade" is the "rediscovery of personal responsibility in the faith that is strengthened by hope."

"The 'Pilgrims of Hope' return to their dioceses with a stronger sense of belonging and, above all, with the awareness that daily witness is the first place of evangelization," he said.

(Junno Arocho Esteves writes for OSV News from Malmö, Sweden.)



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Christian Archaeology Can Serve Evangelization, Pope Says in Document

By Carol Glatz, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Christian archaeology seeks to see, hear and touch the Word made flesh, Pope Leo XIV said, inviting the world's bishops and others to encourage young people, lay people and priests to study archaeology.

Ancient relics, catacombs, artifacts and ruins from the early Christian communities help the faithful "rediscover the roots of their faith," and they speak "to those who are distant, to nonbelievers and to those who question the meaning of life, because they find an echo of eternity in the silence of the tombs and in the beauty of the early Christian basilicas," the pope wrote in a new document.

"Moreover, archaeology speaks to young people, who often seek authenticity and significance; to scholars, who view faith as a historically documented reality rather than an abstraction; to pilgrims, who find in the catacombs and shrines a sense of purpose and an invitation to pray for the Church," he wrote.

The Vatican released Pope Leo's apostolic letter "on the importance of archaeology," Dec. 11, "on the occasion of the centenary of the Pontifical Institute of Christian Archaeology," which was founded by Pope Pius XI in 1925. The pope also met with members of the institute in an audience at the Vatican the same day.

The institute is a graduate-level research and teaching institution that offers degrees in Christian archaeology and has trained hundreds of archaeologists who specialize in ancient Christianity.

In the six-page letter, Pope Leo reaffirmed "the essential role of archaeology in understanding Christianity and, consequently, its application within catechetical and theological formation."

"This is not about reducing ecclesial life to a cult of the past," he wrote. True Christian archaeology is about making "the past speak to the present" and recognizing "the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding history."

"In today's fast-paced world, there is a tendency to forget and to consume images and words without reflecting on their meaning," Pope Leo wrote. "The Church, on the other hand, is called to educate people in memory, and Christian archaeology is one of its most noble tools for doing so."

Archaeology is "a ministry of hope, for it

shows that faith has already survived difficult times and resisted persecution, crises and changes," he wrote. "Those who study the origins of Christianity discover that the Gospel has always had a generative force, that the Church is always reborn," and that the faith "has been renewed and regenerated, taking root in new peoples and flourishing in new forms."

"We live in an age in which misuse and overconsumption have taken precedence over preservation and respect," he wrote. "Archaeology, on the other hand, teaches us that even the smallest piece of evidence deserves attention, that every detail has value and that nothing can be discarded."

Archaeologists, he wrote, "do not destroy, but decipher," identifying "the spirit of an era, the meaning of faith and the silence of prayer on a piece of pottery, a corroded coin or a faded engraving." This kind of attitude and approach of respect "can teach us a great deal about pastoral care and catechesis today."

"Christian communities safeguarded not only Jesus' words, but also the places, objects and signs of his presence," he wrote. "The empty tomb, Peter's house in Capernaum, the tombs of the martyrs and the Roman catacombs all testify that God has truly entered history, and that faith is not a mere philosophy, but a tangible path within the reality of the world."

"In an era when culture often loses sight of its roots, archaeology becomes a valuable instrument" for evangelization, he said in the new document.

Christian archaeology does not simply look at the past, he wrote, but it also speaks to all people in the present day: the faithful, those who are distant, nonbelievers, young people and even scholars.

"It is still the mission of Christian archaeology to help the Church remember its origins, preserve the memory of its beginnings and recount the history of salvation not only through words, but also through images, forms and spaces," he wrote.

Christian archaeology "seeks to touch, see and hear the Word made flesh," he wrote. "By concentrating on the physical traces of faith, archeology educates us in a theology of the senses: a theology that knows how to see, touch, smell and listen."

"Do we too believe in the power of study, for-

mation and memory? Are we willing to invest in culture despite today's crises, to promote knowledge despite indifference and to defend beauty even when it seems irrelevant?" Pope Leo asked.

He invited "bishops, as well as leaders and guides in the areas of culture and education, to encourage young people, lay people and priests to study archaeology."

"Christian archaeology is a service, a vocation and a form of love for the Church and for humanity," he wrote, encouraging the pontifical institute to "continue your excavations. Continue to study, teach and recount history" to others as well as to "make visible the Word of life, bearing witness that God became flesh, that salvation has left its mark, and that this Mystery has become a historical narrative."


The Pontifical Institute of Christian Archaeology was founded to complement the work of the Pontifical Commission for Sacred Archaeology, which oversees the protection, conservation and administration of Christian catacombs and other sacred archaeological sites in Italy; the Pontifical Roman Academy of Archaeology, which promotes scholarly lectures and study on archaeology spanning from ancient Roman to Medieval times; and the Pontifical Academy "Cultorum Martyrum," which promotes the veneration, historical study and liturgical memory of Christian martyrs.

Pope Leo urged the different bodies to cooperate, communicate and mutually support one another.

Christian archaeology is "a resource for everyone," he wrote, by promoting culture and inspiring "respect for diversity."

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Papa León: La Navidad nos recuerda que Dios se encuentra en lo cotidiano

Por Carol Glatz, Catholic News Service

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS) — La Navidad es un recordatorio de que las personas pueden encontrar a Dios en los lugares cotidianos y comunes, dijo el Papa León XIV.

Nacido como un bebé en Belén, Dios eligió "revelarse en un entorno humano", dijo el Santo Padre en un discurso pronunciado el 13 de diciembre ante los músicos y organizadores del concierto anual de Navidad del Vaticano.

"No usa escenarios imponentes, sino una casa sencilla; no aparece de lejos, sino que se acerca; no se queda en un lugar inaccesible del cielo, sino que llega al corazón mismo de nuestras pequeñas historias", dijo.

El Papa se dirigía a los organizadores, cantantes y músicos que participan en la edición de 2025 del concierto anual, que comenzó en 1993.

La Navidad, dijo, "nos recuerda que Dios elige un entorno humano para revelarse". Y, como tal, "nos revela que la vida cotidiana, tal como es, puede convertirse en un lugar de encuentro con Él".

Durante esta temporada navideña, dijo el Papa, que "la música sea en lugar del alma: un espacio donde el corazón encuentre su voz, acercándonos a Dios y haciendo que nuestra humanidad esté cada vez más inspirada por su amor".

El concierto del 13 de diciembre,

que normalmente se celebra en la Sala de Audiencias Pablo VI, tuvo lugar en un gran auditorio de la Via della Conciliazione, la amplia avenida que conduce a la Plaza de San Pedro.

El Papa León asistió a otro concierto en la sala de audiencias del Vaticano el 12 de diciembre.

Ese evento, organizado por el Dicasterio para la Cultura y la Educación y la Fundación Pontificia "Gravissimum Educationis", fue dirigido por el renombrado músico italiano Riccardo Muti, quien también recibió el Premio Ratzinger 2025 de manos del Papa durante el evento. El Premio Ratzinger, una especie de "Premio Nobel de Teología",

honra cada año a dos académicos, elegidos por el Papa entre los candidatos recomendados por un comité de la Fundación Joseph Ratzinger-Benedicto XVI, que apoya la investigación teológica y promueve los estudios sobre la teología y la enseñanza del Papa emérito.

"Saludo al maestro Riccardo Muti, a quien hoy se le confiere el Premio Ratzinger, en señal de reconocimiento por una vida enteramente consagrada a la música, lugar de disciplina y revelación", dijo el Papa León al director al término del concierto en la sala de audiencias.

"Estoy muy agradecido por este

concierto, con motivo de la Navidad del Señor", afirmó.

"La música es una vía privilegiada para comprender la altísima dignidad del ser humano y para confirmarlo en su vocación más auténtica", dijo, recordando la enseñanza de San Agustín, que vinculaba la música con "el arte de guiar el corazón hacia Dios".

Traer armonía al mundo, dijo el Papa, significa "mantener unidas diferencias que podrían chocar, permitiéndoles generar una unidad superior. También el silencio contribuye a este fin: no es ausencia, es preparación, porque en él se forma la posibilidad de la palabra, en la pausa aflora la verdad".

Rosas para Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe

Durante la Misa en la Catedral de San Jose en Wheeling, WV, fieles depositan rosas, frente a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, con motivo de su festividad, 12 de Diciembre 2025.

Foto de Colleen Rowan



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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. 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 eclesásticas 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 Ambiente Se-

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Christmas Reminds Faithful God Can be Found in the Ordinary, Pope Says

By Carol Glatz, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Christmas is a reminder that people can encounter God in ordinary, everyday places, Pope Leo XIV said.

Born as a baby in Bethlehem, God chose to “reveal himself in a human setting,” the pope said in a speech Dec. 13 to musicians and organizers of the Vatican’s annual Christmas concert.

“He does not use impressive scenery, but a simple home; he does not show himself from afar, but draws near; he does not remain in an inaccessible place in heaven, but reaches us in the very heart of our little stories,” he said.

The pope was speaking to organizers, singers and musicians taking part in the 2025 edition of the annual concert, which began in 1993.

Christmas, he said, “reminds us that God chooses a human setting to reveal himself.” And, as such, “he reveals to us that everyday life — just as it is — can become the place where we encounter him.”

During this Christmas season, the pope said, “may music be the place of the soul: a space where the heart finds its voice, bringing us closer to God and making our humanity ever more inspired by his love.”

Normally held in the Paul VI Audience Hall, the concert Dec. 13 was held in a large auditorium on the Via della Conciliazione, the wide boule-

vard leading to St. Peter’s Square.

Pope Leo attended a different concert in the Vatican audience hall Dec. 12.

That event, organized by the Dicastery for Culture and Education and the Pontifical Foundation “Gravissimum Educationis,” was conducted by the renowned Italian musician, Riccardo Muti, who also received the 2025 Ratzinger Prize from the pope during the event. The Ratzinger Prize, a sort of “Nobel Prize in Theology,” honors two scholars each year, chosen by the pope from among candidates recommended by a committee of the Joseph Ratzinger-Benedict XVI Foundation, which supports theological research and promotes studies on the theology and teaching of the retired pope.

“I extend my greeting to Maestro Riccardo Muti, to whom today the Ratzinger Prize is being awarded (as a) a sign of appreciation for a life entirely consecrated to music,” the pope told the conductor at the conclusion of the concert in the audience hall.

“I am very grateful for this concert, on the occasion of the birth of the Lord,” he said.

“Music is a special path for understanding the highest dignity of the human being and for confirming one’s most authentic vocation,” he

said, recalling St. Augustine’s teaching, which linked music to “the art of guiding the heart toward God.”

Bringing harmony to the world, the pope said, is to “hold together differences that could clash, allowing

them to generate a higher unity. Silence too contributes to this purpose: it is not an absence of something, it is preparation, because in it the possibility of the word is formed; when there is a pause, truth emerges.”

Daily Living
with Fr. Chapin

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- 6:30 WOAY ABC 4 Beckley-Bluefield-Oak Hill (Lewisburg)
- 8:30 WVNS FOX 59 Beckley-Bluefield-Oak Hill (Lewisburg)
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