

THE CATHOLIC
Spirit

Mourning, Prayer and a Resolve to Rebuild Follow Devastating Tornadoes



CNS Photo/Cheney Orr, Reuters

Debris surrounds a destroyed home in Mayfield, Ky., Dec. 11 after a devastating tornado ripped through the town. More than 30 tornadoes were reported across six states late Dec. 10, and early Dec. 11, killing almost 90 people and leaving a trail of devastation and 109 people unaccounted for.

By Catholic News Service

MAYFIELD, Ky. (CNS) — Mourning, prayer and a resolve to rebuild shattered lives, homes and businesses in Mayfield followed one of the most powerful twisters in U.S. history that leveled the city of 10,000 in western Kentucky overnight Dec. 10.

The Bluegrass State was the worst hit as numerous devastating tornadoes traveled across it and its neighboring states of Illinois, Tennessee, Arkansas and Missouri, leveling entire communities.

As of Dec. 14, at least 74 people were confirmed dead in Kentucky, including a 2-month-old infant;

109 people remained unaccounted for.

At least 14 other people were killed in the other states: six in Illinois, four in Tennessee, and two each in Arkansas and Missouri.

As members of two of Mayfield's faith congregations came together to pray Dec. 12 amid rub-

ble — piles of brick, metal and glass — prayers for their city and all of those affected by the ferocious mid-December twisters came from far and wide, including from Pope Francis and the U.S. Catholic bishops, and from close to home — Bishop William F. Medley of

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Catholic Schools Learning about WV Hope Scholarship with the Rest of the State

By Joyce Bibey

WEST VIRGINIA—Earlier this year the WV Legislature passed House Bill 2013, now known as the Hope Scholarship to provide funds for families enrolling in private school, alternative instruction programs, or home schools beginning in the Fall of 2022. This education savings account is set up by the state and managed through the West Virginia Treasure Riley Moore's office.

As with any scholarship, there are qualifiers and stipulations.

Superintendent of Schools for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Mary Ann Deschaine, Ed.S., has been trying to learn everything she can about how the state-run program will work.

"This is an exciting opportunity for all children and families in the state of West Virginia, who are seeking to enter into a private or home school situation," Deschaine said. "We are learning about the Hope Scholarship program right alongside everyone else."

What do the schools know about the program? The same information that is available online through the treasurer's office: <https://hopescholarshipwv.com>.

Specifically, students are eligible for the program if they are:

- A resident of West Virginia
- Entering kindergarten for the first time in the Fall of 2022
- Current K-11 student enrolled full time (or at least 45 days during the time of application) in a public elementary or secondary school in West Virginia in 2021-2022
- Current private and home school students are not eligible for the program at this time

Moore has shared with Deschaine and noted on the FAQs on the scholarship's website that current non-public school students will eventually be eligible for the program, "If the participation rate of the combined number of students in the Hope Scholarship Program and students eligible who have applied to participate in the Hope Scholarship program in 2024 is less than five percent of net public school enrollment adjusted for state aid purposes for the previous school year, then, effective July 1, 2026, all students will be eligible to participate in the Hope Scholarship Program" the website details.

"The stipulation for current private school and home school families fluctuates as it is presented currently, and therefore, we cannot be exact on predicting when and how much will be made available to our current families," Deschaine said. "As the program unfolds, my office will be following along closely, as will our principals, pastors, and advisory boards."

According to the West Virginia Hope Scholarship website, under the current school aid formula, each eligible student would receive \$4,600 annually that can be used toward private school, alternative instruction programs, or home school.

Deschaine emphasized this scholarship is not run, managed, or determined by the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston or the Department of Catholic Schools in the Diocese.

The state stipulates that money in the Hope Scholarship education savings account will be administered through a third party. The treasurer's office reports that each family awarded would have access to an account for each eligible student in their household. All purchases would be pre-approved by the state. The funds awarded can only be spent on education expenses such as tuition and fees, extracurriculars, tutoring, materials, supplies, textbooks, transportation, etc.

The website notes that there is not a date or deadline set yet for when families can apply for the Hope Scholarship. It does define that applications will be available no later than March 1, 2022, and that Moore's office is to advertise the availability.

While the Catholic schools of West Virginia continue to learn about the Hope Scholarship, current public school and young families are welcome to learn if Catholic schools are the right fit for their children.

All 24 Catholic schools in the state are preparing for Catholic Schools Week set for Jan. 29 through Feb. 5, many are planning to host open houses and schedule student shadow days for children and families to see what makes West Virginia Catholic schools exceptional, Deschaine said.

"Our PK-12 focus is to encourage individual and critical thinking; deepen faith; build self-esteem; and develop a sound moral foundation rooted in the gospel," Deschaine said. "We are unapologetically Catholic with a mission focused on providing our students with a strong foundation for the future – spiritually, academically, emotionally, and socially – all in a Christ-centered environment. We challenge our students to be the best version of themselves – to be as God sees and wants them to be."

West Virginia Catholic schools welcome families to learn more about Catholic education. The common application and re-enrollment period for West Virginia Catholic schools begins in February.

For information on the Catholic Schools of West Virginia go to: <https://wvcatholicschools.org>.

To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children

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 Very Rev. Dennis Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., ext. 270. You may also call the Diocese's Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504. You may also call the Diocese's sexual abuse hotline at 833.230.5656. 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: please call Dr. Patricia Bailey at 304.242.6988.

In addition to the methods listed above for reporting sexual abuse, the Diocese also has partnered with Navex Global to offer the EthicsPoint platform to report other, additional 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 West Virginia. The EthicsPoint platform can be accessed via www.dwc.org, under "Accountability", then "Report Misconduct" or by calling 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint is a third-party reporting system that reports to civil authorities where applicable and Diocesan authorities, and the identity of the person reporting is protected. Links and information: WV Department of Health and Human Resources: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. West Virginia State Police, Crimes Against Children Unit: 304-293-6400.

Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) requires that all Dioceses/Eparchies have in place a Safe Environment Program for the protection of children and young people. In accordance with these requirements, 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; and sexual abuse awareness training for adults. Sexual abuse awareness training may be completed online or via live workshop. For more information on the Office of Safe Environment, please go to www.dwc.org, click "Diocese", then "Offices," then "Office of Safe Environment."



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Special Collection to be Held to Support Recovery Efforts in Kentucky

WEST VIRGINIA—Bishop Mark Brennan has approved a special collection to be held the weekend of January 1 and 2, 2022, in all parishes and missions throughout the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to support recovery efforts related to the recent natural disasters that have occurred in Kentucky, leaving severe damage and significant loss of life.

Donations can also be made at your parish or

on the diocesan website at dwc.org/disaster-relief.

Proceeds from this collection will support the humanitarian and recovery efforts of Catholic Charities agencies on the ground, working in the communities affected by the tornadoes.

Please remember in prayer all those who have lost their lives in the wake of these disasters, as well as all those who have been injured

and lost their homes, cars, employment, and access to food and water, especially as we prepare for the Christmas Season.

As we hold the victims and first responders in our prayers during these critical days, let us also spend time in prayer and discernment as we prepare for this upcoming collection. Let us come together now to support our brothers and sisters in Christ who are suffering this horrible loss.

Tornadoes...

Cont'd from Page 1

Owensboro, whose diocese covers western Kentucky.

A papal telegram conveyed by Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, said Pope Francis "was saddened to learn of the devastating impact of the tornadoes" in the Midwest and the South.

"He offers heartfelt prayers that almighty God will grant eternal peace to those who have died, comfort to those who mourn their loss, and strength to all those affected by this immense tragedy," it said.

"With gratitude for the tireless efforts of the rescue workers and all engaged in caring for the injured, the grieving families and those left homeless, Pope Francis invokes upon all engaged in the massive work of relief and rebuilding the Lord's gifts of strength and generous perseverance in the service of their brothers and sisters," said the telegram, which Cardinal Parolin sent to Archbishop Christophe Pierre, the apostolic nuncio in the U.S.

Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, chairman of the USCCB's Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, said the destruction and devastation was "heartbreaking" and called for prayer and assistance for all those who were in the path of the storms.

"During this Advent season where we await in joyful anticipation for the birth of our Lord, we pray for those who have been injured, for those who have lost their lives, and for their grieving families and communities," said Archbishops Gomez and Coakley. "May those who have been impacted by these storms find peace, comfort and hope in our faith and in God's endless love.

"We also pray for the emergency responders and those who have begun the work of providing for the needs of the impacted in these communities in the recovery efforts," they said in a statement issued late Dec. 11. "We entrust all



People walk through debris in Mayfield, Ky., Dec. 13 after tornadoes ripped through several U.S. states.

CNS Photo/Cheney Orr, Reuters

our brothers and sisters in harm's way to our Blessed Mother, and we ask for her continued protection and for her intercession in comforting those who are suffering."

The two prelates urged Catholics and all people of goodwill to donate to recovery efforts and financial help for tornado victims by supporting the work of Catholic Charities USA: <https://www.catholiccharities.us/campaign/cusa-disaster-relief/c353051>.

Bishop Medley in a Dec. 11 statement called on the Catholic community of the diocese "to unite in prayer ... for all of the suffering that was caused by this disaster."

He asked all parishes to take up a special collection over the Dec. 11-12 weekend to aid tornado victims.

The bishop also took note of the leveling of Mayfield's candle factory, where 110 employees were

working around the clock, which is customary during the Christmas season, according to news reports.

Initially, city officials feared the death toll among factory workers would reach 70. Late Dec. 12, a company representative told reporters that eight workers were confirmed dead, and a day later the workers who had been missing were accounted for.

"Many of those injured in the Mayfield candle factory were parishioners, and others represented migrants and the marginalized in our communities," Bishop Medley said in his statement.

He added that through its Catholic Charities office, the diocese planned "to offer immediate help and services" for those displaced by the tornado and/or in need of immediate emergency financial help.

"I am proud of the many ways that your generosity always allows the Catholic Church to respond to

the suffering and to families in crisis," Bishop Medley said. "So I thank you in advance for your generous response to this terrible devastation. God will bless our generosity."

In a Dec. 12 tweet, Bishop Medley said he visited the Catholic community of St. Joseph Church in Mayfield: "Father Eric Riley, the pastor, preached on the Advent and Our Lady of Guadalupe themes of hope and joy. Neighboring parish St. Jerome of Fancy Farm welcomed them."

At a news briefing Dec. 12 in Mayfield, Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear noted one tornado traveled 227 miles. "It didn't take a roof, which is what we've seen in the past. It exploded the whole house. People, animals ... just gone."

"The very first thing that we have to do is grieve together," he said, "and we're going to do that before we rebuild together."

Dr. Mark Miravalle Speaks at Weirton Event for Year of St. Joseph



Courtesy Photo

Dr. Mark Miravalle speaks at St. Joseph the Worker Parish Dec. 10.

WEIRTON—Renowned Mariologist and first-class theologian Dr. Mark Miravalle gave a talk on the Spiritual Fatherhood of St. Joseph at St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Weirton.

The Dec. 10 gathering was held for the Year of St. Joseph.

Drawing on Sacred Scripture, the Church's Sacred Tradition, and on Her Magisterium, Miravalle explained in both profound and engaging ways the title and role of St. Joseph as Universal Patron of the Church. According to the church fathers, St. Joseph received a special grace from God so that he could fulfill his role as Christ's earthly father. The mystical tradition also says that St. Joseph's greatest suffering was that he could not be with Christ and the Blessed Mother during his son's passion and death. St. Joseph would appear with the Blessed Mother and the child Jesus in his arms at Fatima, blessing the world with the Sign of the Cross. Miravalle then called on all families to say the Litany of St. Joseph every Wednesday.

Miravalle also suggested the wearing of "St. Joseph's Cord" for those seeking to safeguard their purity.

Finally, he encouraged all those who were present to make the Consecration to St. Joseph so that the fullness of his intercession could be brought to bear in their lives.

"St. Joseph the Worker, pray for us!" parish officials said.

Those who attended joined Miravalle in praying the rosary before his talk began.

Year of St. Joseph Continues in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

By Colleen Rowan

Bernadette McMasters Kime, director of the Office of Worship and Sacraments, reminded the faithful that the Year of St. Joseph continues in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

In an e-mail to all parishes of the diocese Dec. 10, Kime said that Pope Francis has officially ended the world-wide Year of St. Joseph, but that it continues in West Virginia.

"Bishop Mark Brennan has promulgated our Year of St. Joseph to begin on March 19, 2021, and conclude on March 19, 2022," Kime said in the e-mail.

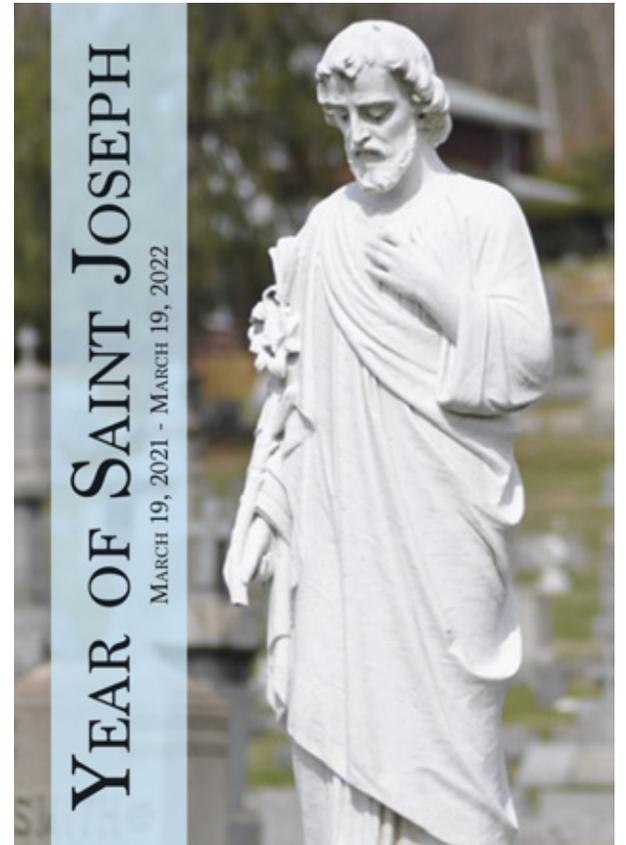
"So please, continue to promote devotion to St. Joseph in your parishes and stay tuned for more details," she added.

Kime went on to say that if the situation with COVID-19 does not experience an upsurge, the diocese is anticipating a Diocesan Pilgrimage to the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston to close the Year of St. Joseph on March 19, 2022.

"Under the Patronage of St. Joseph, may he protect and guide our diocese," Kime said in ending her message.

Bishop Brennan opened the Year of St. Joseph in the diocese on the Solemnity of St. Joseph, March 19, with the celebration of Mass at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling. The Mass gathered faithful and priests of the diocese to open the special year honoring St. Joseph, not only as the patron of the universal church but also as the patron of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

Since the celebration began, the diocese and parishes have been holding Masses, pilgrimages, talks, prayerful gatherings, and many other events focusing on St. Joseph. The diocese also released a series of St. Joseph



Courtesy Photo

Shown above is one of the prayer cards for the Year of St. Joseph sent to the faithful from the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

prayer cards which were sent to the faithful and provides an array of resources on its website.

For more information about the diocese's celebration of the Year of St. Joseph, visit <https://dwc.org/year-of-st-joseph/>.

Diocesan Official Appointments

Bishop Mark E. Brennan has made public the following appointments:

Father Daniel M. Price is appointed administrator of Annunciation of Our Lord Parish in Fort Ashby and St. Anthony Parish in Ridgeley with residence at the parish rectory in Fort Ashby, effective December 1, 2021.

Father Douglas A. Ondeck is appointed chaplain of the State of West Virginia Catholic Daughters of the Americas for a period of two years, effective immediately. He is also appointed chaplain of Court Victory #379 of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas for a period of two years, effective immediately. These appointments are in addition to his current assignment as pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Weston, St. Bridget Chapel in Roanoke, St. Bernard Chapel in Loveberry, and St. Patrick School in Weston.

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TEC Brings Teens into Close, Personal Relationship with Jesus Christ

Still Time to Register for January TEC

TEC stands for Teens Encounter Christ. TEC is an international, spiritual-renewal movement in the Catholic Church that strives to bring young people and adults into close, personal relationship with Jesus Christ. TEC is a community, led by the Holy Spirit, that gathers people into Christian groups of faith, while attempting to incorporate its ministry into the overall ministry of their members' dioceses and parishes.

The primary method employed to gather people into Christian community and form them in the Christian life is that of the weekend retreat. At the weekend retreat, which usually runs from Friday evening to Monday afternoon, the participants are led into Christ's Paschal Mystery, through a combination of presentations, activities, talks, prayer, community building, and liturgy.

With the Paschal Mystery as the movement's fundamental point of theological focus, participants on the retreats are shown God's great love for them, through a close consideration of Jesus Christ's suffering, death, and resurrection. They are shown how to incorporate Christ's Paschal Mystery into their own faith lives, through a calling to die to sin and self, in order to rise to New Life in the Spirit. They are also empowered to bring back to their communities the great gift of God's love and Spirit that they encountered on their retreat.

Once initiated into the movement through attending a weekend retreat, the participant becomes an informal member of a



Catholic community within the Church that endeavors to live the Christian life and bring others into relationship with Jesus Christ through His Church.

The Spirit encountered, energy built, and community established at the retreats never die. They flow over into the wider community throughout dioceses and within parishes. The TEC community also itself maintains its identity through gatherings and events that continue beyond the retreats.

The next TEC retreat that will take place in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston will be held from Friday, January 14th to Monday, January 17th, at the St. John XXIII Pastoral Center in Charleston, West Virginia.

It will be free for all teens who are in their junior year of high school through first year of college.

You can register to attend or volunteer at this retreat on the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's website (dwc.org) and clicking Events at the top right of the home page.

SYNOD Listening Sessions

Check updates at <http://dwc.org/synod-sessions/>



Holy Family, Richwood: First Session—Dec. 11 following Mass; Second Session—Dec. 12, following Mass

Holy Rosary, Buckhannon: Third Session—Jan. 11, 1 p.m.; Fourth Session—Jan. 13, 1 p.m.

Holy Trinity, Nitro:

First Session—Jan. 8 after Mass; Second Session—Jan. 9 after Mass; Third Session—Jan. 13, 6 p.m.; Fourth Session—Jan. 15 after Mass; Fifth Session—Jan. 16 after Mass

Sacred Heart, Bluefield: First Session—Dec. 14, 1 p.m.; Second Session—Dec. 16, 6 p.m.

Sacred Heart of Mary, Weirton: First Session—Jan. 13, 1-2:30 p.m.; Second Session—Jan. 13, 6:30-8 p.m.; Third Session—Feb. 9, 1-2:30 p.m.; Fourth Session—Feb. 9, 6-8:30 p.m.

St. Catherine of Siena, Ronceverte: First Session: Dec. 5—12 p.m.; Second Session—Dec. 9, 7 p.m.

St. Charles Borromeo, White Sulphur Springs: First Session—Dec. 20, 6 p.m.

St. Francis de Sales, Beckley: Second Session—Jan. 9, after 11 a.m. Mass; Third Session—Jan. 18 after the 8:30 a.m. Mass

St. Francis de Sales, Morgantown: First Session—Jan. 9 after Mass; Second Session—Feb. 19 after 5:15 p.m. Mass; Third Session—March 8 10 a.m.

St. Francis of Assis, St. Albans: First Session—Jan. 9, 1 p.m.; Second Session—Jan. 10, 6:30 p.m.

St. John, St. Marys: First Session—Jan. 25; Second Session—Inclement weather date, Feb. 1

St. Michael, Wheeling: Second Session:—Jan. 9, 6 p.m.; Third Session—Jan. 25, 6-8 p.m.

St. Peter, Farmington: First Session—March 20 following Sunday Mass

St. Peter Claver, Huntington: First Session—Jan. 9 after 11 a.m. Mass

St. Vincent de Paul, Berkeley Springs: Second Session—Jan. 6, 5 p.m.; Third Session—Jan. 22, 10 a.m.; Fourth Session—Feb. 6, 10:30 a.m.; Fifth Session:—Feb. 23, 2 p.m.

St. Vincent de Paul, Wheeling: First Session—Feb. 6; Second Session—Feb. 16; Third Session Inclement weather date, Feb. 20

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Father Jagela Blesses Bridgeport Daycare Operated by Parishioners

BRIDGEPORT—Father Walt Jagela, pastor of All Saints Parish in Bridgeport, blessed the new addition to the Cubby's Daycare in Bridgeport Dec. 14. The facility is run by three parishioners: Jennifer Trippett, Janelle Demarco, and Jeanette Laverdierre (all sisters).

"Many of the kids from our parish go there for child care each day," said Brian Suehs-Vassel, pastoral associate at All Saints. "Father Walt and our staff felt it was important to bless the building and the work of people who care for the children of our community."

Suehs-Vassel added that it is "especially cool that it is run by parishioners whose family have a long history of being a part of All Saints. The building is really cutting edge to provide great opportunities for the children of our community."

Father Walt Jagela blesses Cubby's Daycare in Bridgeport Dec. 14. Looking on is Jeanette Laverdierre, a co-owner of Cubby's Daycare.

Courtesy Photo



Stephen Pishner's Music Debuts in Canada and on Sirius Radio



Courtesy Photo

Stephen Pishner, director of Music and Liturgy at All Saints Parish in Bridgeport, is pictured.

Stephen Pishner, director of Music and Liturgy at All Saints Parish in Bridgeport, was recently a guest, in mid-October, on Salt and Light Media, which broadcasts from Canada. The radio show is called Salt and Light Hour with Deacon Pedro. Three of his songs were featured on the Catholic radio show that also airs also on the Catholic Channel on Sirius XM Radio 129 and a few other online sites. His music was heard by thousands of lis-

teners that day.

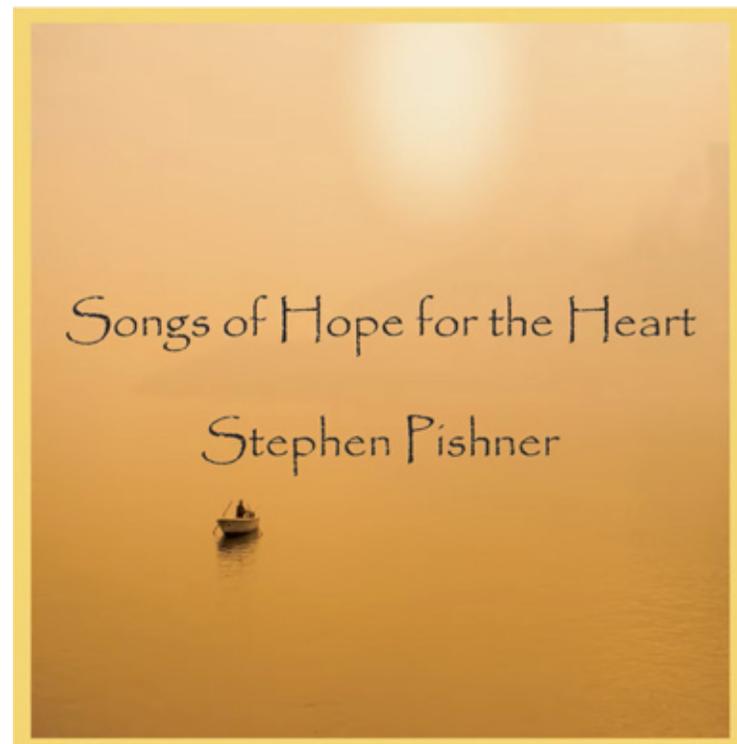
The radio show is a kind of light-hearted talk show that features a discussion of a variety of topics relevant to Catholic life and more. They feature various kinds of Catholic musicians throughout their broadcasting season as well. Pishner had sent them a sample of his music a while back, and they eventually responded and then did a recorded interview via Zoom. A few days after the interview on the show, a woman from Ohio sent

Pishner a message requesting one of his CDs. She had just lost her 93-year-old father. She had heard Pishner's recording of "Quiet My Soul" on the broadcast and found it comforting. He sent her the CD and she was very grateful.

More recently Pishner was also interviewed by a radio show from England called Chat and Spin Radio. He got a chance to talk about the music that he's composing, recording and performing these days, as well as his work at All Saints. There were 142,000 listeners during the interview. Pishner has been invited back on the show in December.

Pishner's latest album "Songs of Hope for the Heart" is now available online on: iTunes, Amazon Music, Spotify, Youtube and on 40 other various digital music platforms worldwide.

He also has some recently recorded Christmas music now available on many digital music platforms this December. One song, most notably, is called "Labor of Love" by Andrew Peterson. It is a very powerful song that re-



Courtesy Photo

Stephen Pishner's latest album "Songs of Hope for the Heart" is now available online on: iTunes, Amazon Music, Spotify, Youtube and on 40 other various digital music platforms worldwide. The album cover is pictured above.

calls the nativity story, in a very real way. The song is a kind of duet that features Belinda, his wife. It was recorded in Wheeling at Jamie Peck Productions. Stephen has also now created a "Pishner Christ-

mas Playlist" now on YouTube, that people can hear for free.

To hear the radio show that was done from Canada go to the link to the page <https://slmedia.org/blog/a-new-catholic-tv-show-for-kids>

St. Paul School Students Visit Blue Stream Farms

Kids Plant 800 Heads of Lettuce to be Given to Those in Need

WEIRTON—On Dec. 2, Blue Stream Farms hosted second- through fourth-grade students from St. Paul School in Weirton. The students learned about microgreens, hydroponics and aquaponics.

During the field trip the students planted 800 heads of lettuce that will be donated to organizations over the holiday season that assist those in need.

“It was a great day for Blue Stream Farms!” shared Joseph R. Edmiston, chief operating officer of Blue Stream Farms. “Having students in the building and getting them excited about what we do is exactly the outcome we hope for. At Blue Stream Farms students have the ability to literally watch science come to life.”

In addition to planting lettuce for those in need, the students also toured the facility, named some of the organization’s 75 tilapia and asked numerous questions to gain a better understanding of how the grow process works at Blue Stream Farms.

“We are very proud to have one of our local grade schools taking advantage of what we offer at Blue Stream Farms,” said Daniel B. Spickard, chief executive officer at Blue Stream Farms. “It is great to see students advance their content knowledge through our project-based learning platform.”

Blue Stream Farms is open to any school in the tri-state area that would like to schedule a field trip to learn about their grow systems.

For additional information on Blue Stream Farms, visit the organization’s website at: www.bluestreamfarms.com.



Third-graders from St. Paul School in Weirton visit Blue Stream Farms.

Courtesy Photo

Confirmation Class Makes Christmas Cookies for Soup Kitchen

The confirmation class and volunteers at St. Michael Parish in Vienna baked cookies for the Stone Soup Kitchen to give to the homeless and hungry in downtown Parkersburg. Some of the young people and volunteers are pictured here with the boxes of cookies.

Courtesy Photo



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Hurricane Knights of Columbus Remind Community of True Meaning of Christmas



Courtesy Photo

Will Dempsey, grand knight of the Knights of Columbus Council #9483 of Hurricane, left, and council member Bob Matheny and his grandson Ryan Justice stand beside the council's "Keep Christ in Christmas" sign they placed in the community. The council also placed a sign in front of Ascension Parish in Hurricane. The message of "Keep Christ in Christmas" is promoted by knights councils throughout West Virginia and the nation.

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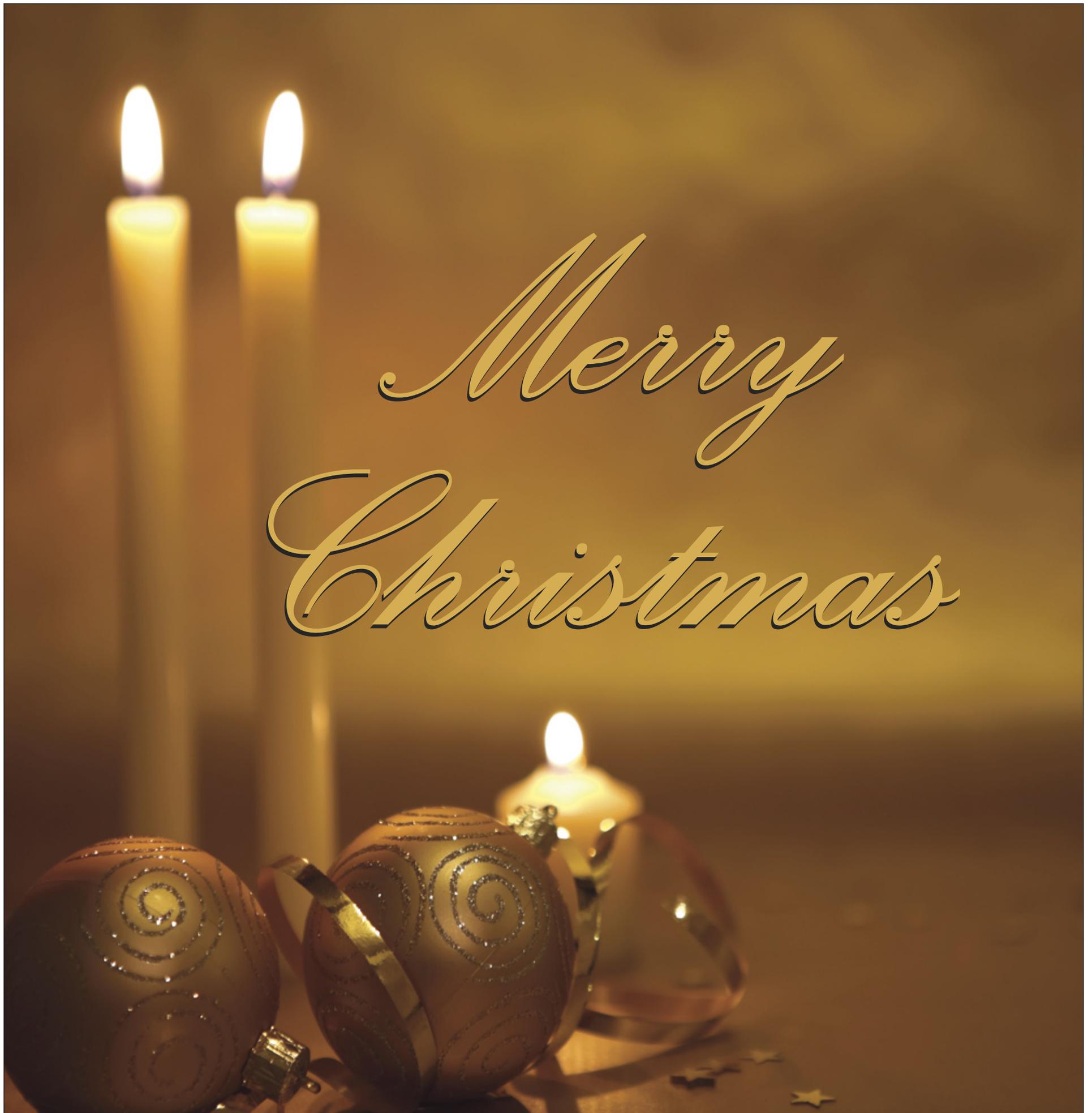
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Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebrated in Martinsburg



Clergy and parishioners of St. Joseph Parish in Martinsburg celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe Dec. 12.

Courtesy Photo

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Prepare for Christmas by Serving Others, Pope Says

By Junno Arocho Esteves, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — With Christmas just over a week away, Christians should prepare for Jesus' birth by serving those in need rather than focusing on what awaits them under the Christmas tree, Pope Francis said.

"We are so busy with all the preparations, with gifts and things that pass," the pope said Dec. 12 during his Sunday Angelus address. "But let's ask ourselves what we should do for Jesus and for others! What should we do?"

Many children along with their families came to St. Peter's Square with their baby Jesus figurines for a traditional blessing by the pope.

Assuring them that he would bless their statues after praying the Angelus, Pope Francis greeted the little ones and asked them to take

"my Christmas greetings to your grandparents and all your dear ones."

In his main address, the pope reflected on the Sunday Gospel reading from St. Luke which recalled the crowds of people who, after being moved by St. John the Baptist's preaching, asked him, "What should we do?"

Their question "does not stem from a sense of duty" but from their hearts being "touched by the Lord," and their being enthusiastic for his coming.

Just like the preparations people make to welcome a guest to their home by cleaning and preparing "the best dinner possible," Christians must do "the same with the Lord," he said.

St. Luke's Gospel, the pope added, also encourages one to ask, "What should I do with my life? What am I called to? What

will I become?"

"By suggesting this question, the Gospel reminds us of something important: Life has a task for us. Life is not meaningless; it is not left up to chance. No! It is a gift the Lord grants us, saying to us: Discover who you are, and work hard to make the dream that is your life come true!"

The pope encouraged Christians to prepare for Christmas by continuously asking God what should they do for themselves and others in order to contribute to the good of the church and society.

St. John the Baptist's answers, he said, responded to each individual in a way that fit his or her situation in life, a reminder from the Gospel that "life is incarnated" in concrete situations.

"Faith is not an abstract theory, a generalized theory; no!" he said.

"Faith touches us personally and transforms each of our lives. Let us think about the concreteness of our faith. Is my faith abstract, something abstract or concrete? Does it lead me to serve others, to help out?"

Pope Francis said there are several ways people can serve others during Advent, including by doing "something concrete, even if it is small" to help others, "especially by visiting the lonely, the elderly, the sick or someone in need."

Then the pope added to the list: "Maybe I need to ask forgiveness, grant forgiveness, clarify a situation, pay a debt. Perhaps I have neglected prayer and after so much time has elapsed, it's time to ask the Lord for forgiveness."

"Brothers and sisters," he said, "let's find something concrete and do it!"

Pope establishes 'Fratelli Tutti' Foundation

By Junno Arocho Esteves, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis established a new Vatican foundation that will promote initiatives based on the principles set out in his encyclical "Fratelli Tutti, on Fraternity and Social Friendship."

In a decree published by the Vatican Dec. 15, the pope said he would "gladly accede" to the request of the Fabbrica di San Pietro, the Vatican office charged with the maintenance and upkeep of St. Peter's Basilica, "to establish a foundation of religion and worship intended to collaborate in spreading the principles set forth" in his encyclical.

The "Fratelli Tutti" Foundation, he said, will "encourage initiatives linked to spirituality, art,

education and dialogue with the world, around St. Peter's Basilica and in the embrace of its colonnade."

The decree, also known as a chirograph, was signed by the pope Dec. 8.

According to its statutes, the foundation, which will be headed by Cardinal Mauro Gambetti, archpriest of St. Peter's Basilica, will "support and plan" the promotion of art and faith.

It will also "invest in cultural and spiritual formation through events, experiences, paths and spiritual exercises" and "promote dialogue with cultures and other religions on the themes of the pope's recent encyclical to build a 'social alliance.'"

Among the goals of the "Fratelli Tutti" Foundation will be to promote a "culture of peace" as

well as "new encounters" that are "nourished by social dialogue, the sense of social forgiveness."

It will also sponsor initiatives that foster "the development of fraternal humanism" aimed at promoting "the principles of freedom, equality and fraternity, conditions for building a 'universal love' that recognizes and protects the dignity of persons" and the environment.

Lastly, inspired by the social teaching of the Catholic Church, the new foundation will promote "social alliance, responsible entrepreneurship, social investment, human and sustainable forms of work," as well as "integral ecology, sustainable development, ecological transition, health and scientific and technological research."



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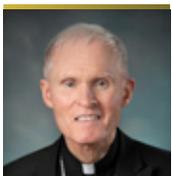
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Rejoicing with William

William is an Adult Learner in Huntington. He is a recovering addict and has been in recovery since August. We rejoice with William, celebrating his progress and victories!

This is an appropriate time to focus on William's story, as we are called to rejoice in a special way during this week of Advent.

William and others in recovery have been experiencing particular struggles over the last year and a half, which makes their triumphs all the more exceptional. Social distancing has led to isolation, which can be dangerous for those struggling with sub-

stance use disorder (SUD).

Catholic Charities West Virginia staff members have taken the precautions necessary to keep everyone safe, offering the gift of community when people need it most.

SUD impacts every area of a person's life, including relationships, nutrition, housing, and employment. William needs "wrap-around" support and services to help him overcome daunting challenges.

Our staff has worked with William to create an individualized plan to help him achieve his unique goals. We've connected him with social services to

support him while he earns his High School Equivalency diploma.

William says, "I'm getting a lot of help from Catholic Charities. They've helped me in so many different ways. Like, furthering my education, meals when I'm hungry and I don't have much to eat, rides to and from the [Catholic Charities] Center, helping me stay sober and in my recovery, and last but not least, friendship."

We're honored to walk with William on his journey of recovery. And we truly rejoice with him, thankful for every victory!



Courtesy Photo

William is an adult learner and a recovering addict. "I'm thankful to have this opportunity to better myself," he says.

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Ultimately, our goal is to help adult learners like William become healthier, stay in recovery, and get on the road to self-sufficiency.

To learn more about Catholic Charities West Virginia, visit www.CatholicCharitiesWV.org.

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Papa: Prepárense para la Navidad sirviendo a los demás

Por Junno Arocho Esteves, Catholic News Service

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS)—Faltando poco más de una semana para la Navidad, los cristianos deben prepararse para el nacimiento de Jesús sirviendo a los necesitados en vez de centrarse en lo que les espera bajo el árbol de Navidad, dijo el papa Francisco.

"Estamos muy ocupados con todos los preparativos, con los regalos y las cosas que pasan", dijo el papa el 12 de diciembre durante su discurso del Ángelus del domingo. "¡Pero preguntémonos qué debemos hacer por Jesús y por los demás! ¿Qué debemos hacer?"

Muchos niños, junto con sus familias, llegaron a la Plaza de San Pedro con sus figuritas del niño Jesús para recibir una bendición tradicional del papa.

Asegurándoles que bendeciría sus estatuas después de rezar el Ángelus, el papa Francisco saludó a los pequeños y les pidió que llevaran "mis saludos navideños a sus abuelos y a todos sus seres queridos".

En su discurso principal, el papa reflexionó sobre la lectura dominical del Evangelio de San Lucas que recordó las multitudes de personas que, tras ser conmovidas por la predicación de San Juan Bautista, le preguntaron: "¿Qué debemos hacer?"

Su pregunta "no surge de un sentido del deber", sino por corazones que están "tocados por el Señor" y están entusiasmados por su venida.

Al igual que los preparativos que la gente hace para recibir a un invitado en su casa limpiando y preparando "la mejor cena posible", los cristianos deben hacer "lo mismo con el Señor", dijo.

El Evangelio de San Lucas, agregó el papa, también alienta a uno a preguntarse: "¿Qué debo hacer con mi vida? ¿A qué estoy llamado? ¿En qué me convertiré?"

"Al sugerir esta pregunta, el Evangelio nos recuerda algo importante: la vida tiene una tarea para nosotros. La vida no carece de sentido, no se deja al

azar. ¡No! Es un regalo que el Señor nos concede, diciéndonos: Descubre quién eres y trabaja duro para hacer realidad el sueño que es tu vida".

El papa animó a los cristianos a prepararse para la Navidad preguntando continuamente a Dios qué deberían hacer por ellos mismos y por los demás para contribuir al bien de la iglesia y la sociedad.

Las respuestas de San Juan Bautista, dijo, respondieron a cada individuo de una manera que se ajustara a su situación en la vida, un recordatorio del

Evangelio de que "la vida se encarna" en situaciones concretas.

"La fe no es una teoría abstracta, una teoría generalizada, ¡no!" él dijo. "La fe nos toca personalmente y transforma cada una de nuestras vidas. Pensemos en la concreción de nuestra fe. ¿Es mi fe abstracta, algo abstracta o concreta? ¿Me lleva a servir a los demás, a ayudar?"

El papa Francisco dijo que hay varias formas en que las personas pueden servir a los demás durante el Adviento, incluso haciendo "algo concreto, in-

cluso si es pequeño" para ayudar a otros, especialmente visitando a personas que se sienten solas, a los ancianos, los enfermos o alguien necesitado.

Entonces el papa agregó a la lista: "Quizás necesito pedir perdón, conceder perdón, aclarar una situación, pagar una deuda. Quizás he descuidado la oración y después de tanto tiempo, es hora de pedir perdón al Señor".

"Hermanos y hermanas", dijo, "¡busquemos algo concreto y hagámoslo!"

Fiesta de Nuestra Virgen de Guadalupe



Foto cortesía

La celebración de Nuestra Virgen de Guadalupe en la Parroquia de San José se lleva a cabo en Martinsburg.

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

Para informar a las autoridades civiles: comuníquese con la policía local; los números varían según su ubicación. Si cree que alguien está en peligro inmediato, llame al 911. Para informar confidencialmente cualquier incidencia de sospecha de abuso o negligencia infantil, incluido el abuso sexual, comuníquese con la Oficina de Servicios de Protección Infantil de Niños y Familias de West Virginia llamando a la línea directa de abuso infantil al 800.352. 6513. Puede informar anonimamente a esta línea directa si lo prefiere.

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

Para informar al Coordinador de Asistencia a Víctimas de la Diócesis: llame a la Dra. Patricia Bailey al 304.242.6988.

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

Catholic Groups Challenge Federal Mandate on Gender Transition Procedures

By Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — Several Catholic hospitals, a Catholic university and Mercy sisters who run health clinics filed a challenge to a federal mandate for performing gender transition procedures with the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 8th Circuit Dec. 15.

The groups are continuing a fight they had previously won when two lower federal courts struck down what has been described as the Affordable Care Act's "transgender mandate," saying it was a violation of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act.

The Biden administration has appealed both decisions at the 8th Circuit.

Becket, a Washington-based nonprofit religious liberty law firm that is representing some of the Catholic groups, described this case on its website as challenging a policy that threatens Catholic doctors, hospital and clinics "with multimillion-dollar penalties for sex discrimina-

tion unless they perform controversial gender-transition procedures."

Luke Goodrich, vice president and senior counsel at Becket, said in a Dec. 15 statement that both federal courts which took up "this controversial mandate have struck it down as bad for patients, bad for doctors and bad for religious liberty."

He also said the federal government "has no business forcing doctors to perform controversial procedures that could be deeply harmful to patients," and he hoped the appeals court would issue "a commonsense ruling" that is good for everyone.

In 2016, the federal government began implementing a mandate requiring doctors to perform gender transition procedures on any patient, including children, and required private insurance companies — except plans run by Medicare and Medicaid — and many employers to cover gender reassignment therapy

or face severe penalties and legal action.

In August 2016, Becket, joined by eight state governments, filed a lawsuit in Texas on behalf of Franciscan Alliance, a religious hospital network sponsored by the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, and the Christian Medical & Dental Associations, defending them from this government mandate.

Becket filed a parallel lawsuit in federal court in November 2016 on behalf of Catholic groups in North Dakota including the Sisters of Mercy, the University of Mary in Fargo, and SMP Health System, sponsored by the Sisters of Mary of the Presentation. The state of North Dakota also joined Becket's legal challenge.

In 2016, the federal court in North Dakota put the rule on hold, and in 2019 the federal court in Texas struck it down. The two courts said the policy was an unlawful overreach by a federal agency and a likely

violation of religious liberty.

In 2020, the Trump administration put in place conscience protections for doctors opposed to the mandate, but the effort was blocked by the courts.

On Jan. 21, 2021, the U.S. District Court for the District of North Dakota Eastern Division struck down the transgender mandate. On Aug. 9, 2021, the U.S. District Court for the Northern District of Texas granted the plaintiffs permanent relief from the mandate.

In November, the Supreme Court turned down an appeal from a Catholic hospital in California that was sued for refusing to perform a hysterectomy on a transgender patient.

The court's decision, issued without comment, sent the lawsuit back to state court.

When the Catholic hospital was sued in 2016, a trial court sided with it, but an appeals court reversed that decision. So the hospital appealed

to the Supreme Court in 2020, saying its case "poses a profound threat to faith-based health care institutions' ability to advance their healing ministries consistent with the teachings of their faith."

A brief filed by the Catholic Health Association said the appeals court decision "portends ill for all religious organizations that serve the public following the precepts of religious teaching."

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