

THE CATHOLIC
Spirit

Diocese Announces Opening of New Diaconate Formation Program

By Colleen Rowan

WHEELING—The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston has announced the opening of a new Diaconate Formation Program for all Catholic men who will be 35 by June of 2027. Bishop Mark Brennan has made the 2023-2028 Diaconate Formation Program free to the men who apply, and the cost will be covered by the diocese.

Deacons are ordained to a ministry of service, assisting the bishop and his priests in many areas, especially in the ministry of the liturgy, of the word, and of charity.

“The possibilities are endless,” said Deacon John Yaquinta, coordinator of the Permanent Diaconate Formation Program for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

Deacon Yaquinta said there is no limit to the number of men who will be accepted to the program and that it will be administered at locations in West Virginia

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Diocese Awards over \$789,000 in Matching Grant Program

WHEELING—Over 30 parishes and schools throughout the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston recently received Diocesan grants for approved capital projects. Grants ranging from \$2,000 to \$50,000 were awarded through a capital matching grant program that offered up to 50 percent of funding for such projects.

Bishop Mark Brennan approved the program as part of the fiscal year 2022-2023 budget submitted by the Diocesan Finance

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Knights of Columbus Open Baby Pantry at St. Albans Parish



Courtesy Photo

Knights of Columbus St. Albans Council #4694 members Joe King, Gene Delfine, and Paul Niedbalski (pictured from left) attend the official opening of the Little Blessings Baby Pantry at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in St. Albans Nov. 30. The council established the pantry with support from the parish to help mothers and babies in need.

By Colleen Rowan

ST. ALBANS—Being pro-life begins with protecting unborn babies from abortion. It’s also about being present to mothers and their babies who need help.

The Knights of Columbus, who have always been at the forefront of the pro-life cause, know that answering that call to help women and their babies, is more important

than ever in this post-Roe world. Driven by this commitment to them, the Knights of Columbus in St. Albans has opened the Little Blessings Baby Pantry with support from St. Francis of Assisi Parish in St. Albans. The pantry, located at the church, provides everything from clothing to diapers, to formula and anything else moms and their little blessings need.

“Our pantry can become a beacon of hope for both the babies and mothers,” said Paul Niedbalski, a member of the Knights of Columbus Council #4694. “We feel by creating this pantry we not only support the right to life but put the goal of continuing this support through the pantry—both prior to birth by letting pregnant

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through St. Meinrad School of Theology in Indiana. He also noted that the program now has an additional year of formation which was implemented by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

The diaconate is a vocation that men are called to, Deacon Yaquinta said.

"The first year of aspirancy," for those who have been accepted to the program by the diocese, "is where they really learn about discernment and if they are being called or not being called," Deacon Yaquinta said. Aspirants will meet most of the first year on designated Saturdays, once a month, at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Stonewood, where Deacon Yaquinta serves as pastoral associate. The first two years of the program will be a period of aspirancy. Following that will be a three-year period of formation, at a college graduate level curriculum. The faculty will be provided through St. Meinrad's and local clergy and lay personnel.

The second year of aspirancy and all three years of formation classes will take place at Saint John XXIII Pastoral Center in Charleston one weekend a month.

The academic year begins in September and ends in June.

The men accepted to the new program will see the ordination of the 20 current candidates to the diaconate on June 7, 2024, at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston.

Deacons receive their assignments in the diocese on their ordination day. Deacons serve their assigned parish by assisting at liturgical functions, preaching, officiating at baptisms and marriages outside of Mass, assisting and officiating at funeral rites, adult education, youth ministry, and prison ministry, among other projects.

Unlike transitional deacons going on to the priesthood, permanent deacons may be married. They must be faithful Catholics; married in the church (if married) or willing to remain celibate if not married; of good character; enjoy good mental, emotional, and physical health; be financially stable; be recommended by their pastors; and supported in their vocation by their wives and their parish or other church community. They should already be active in the church, committed to the church's doctrine on social justice and have good "people skills." Most deacons work at secular jobs and must be willing to be open to an assignment out-

side of their parish.

An applicant should possess a bachelor's degree from an accredited college or university as diaconate studies will be conducted at a graduate level. Exceptions to this academic requirement can be made if the candidate can demonstrate the ability to do graduate-level work. An applicant who became Catholic later in life is welcome to apply, provided he has been a Catholic for at least five years.

The application process for the 2023-2028 Diaconate Formation Program is open. All applications must be received by April 15, 2023.

Applications may be obtained by contacting Tina High in the Office of the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston at (888) 434-6237 or for the Wheeling area at (304) 233-0880, ext. 271. Applications and more information are also available on the diocese's website at <https://dwc.org/directory-listing/permanent-diaconate-formation-office-of/2275/>.

Completed applications must be sent to the Office of the Episcopal Vicar for Clergy for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston: Very Rev. Dennis R. Schuelkens, Jr., V.E. Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston P.O. Box 230, Wheeling, WV 26003.

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."

Grant...

Cont'd from Page 1

Council. The program awarded more than \$789,000 in grants.

All parishes and schools in the diocese were invited to apply for the matching grant program. To meet their obligation to match the 50 percent grant from the Diocese, and with assistance from the Office of Stewardship & Development, many locations utilized the Catholic Sharing Appeal as a preferred method of raising funds. The Office of Buildings & Properties and the Department of Catholic Schools worked with parishes and schools as projects were submitted and reviewed, and grants were awarded.

In order to qualify for a matching grant, a parish or school was required to be current in financial and reporting obligations to the diocese and to the Priests' Health & Retirement Association.

The diocese hopes to make this an ongoing program, with requests for fiscal year 2023-2024 due in early spring, 2023.



Office: 1322 Eoff St.
Mailing: PO Box 230
Wheeling, WV 26003
(304) 232-0444
Fax: (304) 233-8551
Web site: www.thecatholicspiritwv.org
Diocesan Web site: www.dwc.org
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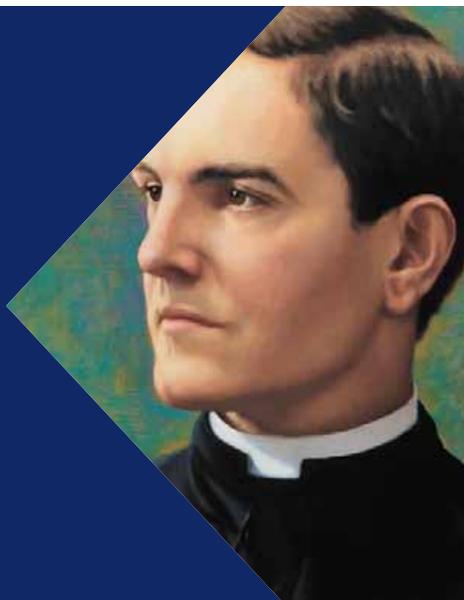
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Share Your Faith in Christ, Bishop Brennan Says on First Sunday of Advent



Colleen Rowan Photo

Bishop Mark Brennan lights the first candle on the Advent wreath at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling on Nov. 26.

By Colleen Rowan

Bishop Mark Brennan lit the first candle on the Advent wreath, after blessing it, for the first Sunday of Advent during Mass at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling Nov. 26.

In his homily, the bishop urged those gathered and those watching the livestream on the diocese's social media and the rebroadcast on TV "to pray daily, fast weekly, and offer your sufferings and good works up to the Lord for our absent Catholics and religiously unaffiliated persons whom you know. Ask the Lord for opportunities to speak to them in a simple, personal way of your faith in Christ, why it matters to you to belong to his church. A person's salvation may depend on what you do."

"Don't be afraid," the bishop said. "Remember Jesus's last words before his Ascension, 'Know that I am with you always until the end of the world.'"

St. Nicholas Mass in Morgantown Dec. 6

MORGANTOWN — St. John University Parish in Morgantown will have a St. Nicholas Mass Dec. 6 at 5:15 p.m. with music from the parish Schola Cantorum followed by a procession and reception in the parish hall.

Pantry...

Cont'd from Page 1

mothers be aware of help and after by actually providing this help."

The pantry is located at St. Francis of Assisi Church and is open to all families in the community who need help not just parishioners and not just Catholics. "No one in need will be turned away," Paul said.

The name of the pantry came from Paul's wife Diane Niedbalski. "Diane's belief was that every baby is God's blessing to the mother," Paul said. "Thus, 'Little Blessings' came to be."

When she first heard of the idea of the pantry, Diane knew right away she wanted to be involved.

"I knew that there was a great need in our town, and what better way to help mothers and babies. Children are our greatest gift and a true blessing from God."

The idea of the pantry was discussed after council members returned from the supreme convention in August during which the ASAP (Aid and Support After Pregnancy) program of the supreme council to help mothers and babies by supporting pregnancy resource centers and maternity homes, was discussed. After research, Paul said council members recognized a need in the western part of Kanawha County. Plans moved forward with great input and support from Father Patrick McDonough, pastor of St. Francis of Assisi. The parish held a special collection and additional monies were received from the council and the women's club. Paul said that donations of clothes, diapers, formula, toys, and other baby necessities were given to the pantry from many sources.

"The wives of the knights saw this as a fantastic project and rolled up their collective sleeves to transform what was part of the meeting space for the council into a pantry," Paul said.

The council and parish held an open house in mid-November and the official opening of the pantry was Nov. 30.

For St. Francis of Assisi parishioner Liz Liberatore being involved in the pantry is a continuation of her late mother's work at Birthright.

"There is so much need out there and if I can bring love and support to these moms who are having a difficult time," she said, "there is no



Courtesy Photo

Diane Niedbalski (left) and Terri Delfine attend the official opening of the Little Blessings Baby Pantry at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in St. Albans Nov. 30. They have been involved with establishing the pantry.

Courtesy Photo
Baby items available at the Little Blessings Baby Pantry at St. Francis of Assisi Parish in St. Albans are shown.



greater joy."

It is the knights' calling to help those in their community, said Fred Heindl, a member of Council #4694.

"This particular mission is to assist those in need who are going to struggle raising a child of God," he said. "It is our duty and obligation to those in our community to make their lives less stressful. Maybe those that we help will see the light of Christianity."

What the council and parish have accomplished in St. Albans can be done anywhere, Paul said. "Every community will be better for it," he said, "and it will help show why the knights were formed by Father McGivney, 'to be a place where families will always feel they receive help when needed.'"

Paul is willing to discuss the effort and creation of the pantry with any council,

group, or parish that may be interested in doing the same in their community.

Donations are essential to the operation of the pantry. Donations of baby items up to 3-years-old can be placed in the pack and play in the church or dropped off at the St. Francis of Assisi rectory. Monetary donations may be made by check payable either to the Knights of Columbus or St. Francis of Assisi Church with a notation on the check to Little Blessings.

Initially, the pantry will be open from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. on the second and fourth Wednesday of each month. If demand necessitates, Paul said, days will be adjusted to meet the requests of those in need.

For more information about the pantry or how to donate, contact Paul at (304) 545-5100 from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Present in the Eucharist



Throughout this Diocesan Year of the National Eucharistic Revival, each print edition of *The Catholic Spirit* (published on the First Friday of each month) will feature a guest article on the Eucharist.

Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston



Courtesy Photo

Sister Albertine Cevallos, OP, speaks to the students of Mount de Sales Academy about her vocation story. Sister Albertine teaches in the science department at the Catonsville, Md., school.

By Sister Albertine Cevallos, OP, a Dominican Sister of Saint Cecilia

“**I** put before you the one great thing to love on earth: the Blessed Sacrament... There you will find romance, glory, honour, fidelity, and the true way of all your loves on earth...” - J. R. R. Tolkein

It was a Saturday afternoon, I was 23, and a friend had invited me to go with her to church for something called Adoration.

It had been several months since a grand conversion of faith in which I encountered the merciful love of Jesus at an evangelical church. My former way of living, a dull and monochrome life that chased distractions and success with no real satisfaction, had given way to a bright technicolor adventure — the amazing, unconditional love of God that alone can satisfy my restless heart. I wanted nothing else but to know this great Lover. I was bouncing from Bible study to Bible study, relishing each copy of the Bible offered from Christians eager to encourage a new believer. After weeks of pouring these pages, hungry for Jesus, I had come to a full stop at the 6th chapter of John. This contains the scene where Jesus invites his many listeners to eat the bread of life: his own body. The echoes of the Masses I had attended as a bored, distracted child suddenly reverberated in my heart. The same Jesus that I had just fallen in love with, and was pursuing in the pages of Scripture—was he really, literally, what had been offered on the altar



Photo Courtesy of the Dominican Sisters of Saint Cecilia
Sister Albertine Cevallos, OP, a Dominican Sister of Saint Cecilia

every Sunday? If this was true, this would change everything, again. I prayed one of the best prayers I know—Lord, I believe, help my unbelief—and waited for God to show me that he was really present in the Eucharist.

That afternoon, my friend led me to a pew toward the front. A priest placed the host in a beautiful, golden holder, which I now know is called the monstrance. In a moment, I experienced the answer to my prayer. I sensed the heart of Jesus, beating for me. I could hear his words of love deep in my heart. I could hear him invite me to belong to him, to lay down my life for him as he had for me. What do you say when the King of the Universe

proposes to you? I knew that he had a plan for me to belong entirely to him, and I said yes. It was only afterward that I discovered this monthly hour of Adoration is sponsored by the Serra Club with one intention: to pray for vocations.

As I began to discern a religious vocation and entered the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia, my greatest moments of clarity and assurance of God's love have been before our Eucharistic Lord. As Tolkein puts it, the Blessed Sacrament is the one great thing to love on Earth. To sit at his feet in adoration is the one thing necessary. If he has gone through so great a trouble as to endure the Passion, to resurrect, and to ascend to Heaven, leaving behind his True Body and Blood as a pledge of future glory, who are we not to avail ourselves of such a priceless treasure? When our feeble senses fail to grasp the mystery, when we struggle to stay awake in adoration, we will remain no less united to him than in the greatest consolation. Faith suffices,

and he is eager to grant this gift to anyone who asks. Glory and romance await those who seek him, or rather are sought by him, in the Blessed Sacrament. “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice, then I will enter his house and dine with him, and him with me.”

Open wide the door, in the words of Pope St. John Paul II, open wide the door of your heart to Jesus! He is waiting for you in the Blessed Sacrament so he

can love you. Do not be afraid!

(Sister Albertine Cevallos, OP, is a native of Charleston and was a member of the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart. She is currently teaching chemistry and physics at Mount de Sales Academy in Catonsville, Md.)

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Relics of the Little Shepherds & Our Lady of Fatima Pilgrim Statue Coming to St. Anthony's in Follansbee

By Joyce Bibey

The faithful around the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston are invited to pray before the relics of the little shepherds of Fatima, Portugal — Saints Jacinta and Francisco Marto, and the pilgrim statue of Our Lady of Fatima, Dec. 8-11, at St. Anthony Parish, 1017 Jefferson Street, Follansbee.

This is only the second time since the pandemic that the relics in the petite reliquary and statue of Our Lady have traveled in the U.S. The custodian of the statue, Judy Studer, and pilgrimage coordinator, Joan Alix, will be on hand to address the faithful who come to venerate the relics and statue.

The relic visit was secured by Attilio Boni, a music minister at the parish, who contacted Alix after learning about this Mother of Mercy mission. Boni, Studer, and Alix believe prayerful reflection before these holy images not only bring hope and healing, but are also needed in this time of violence in our country, absence in our pews, and tolerance of evil in society.

Prayer intentions will be taken to Portugal

All who visit are encouraged to write a special intention on a prayer card that will be taken to the Chapel Shrine in Fatima, Portugal, the week of Dec. 12-18, and be permanently placed in a prayer offertory. The religious in Fatima pray daily for the intercessions and those who made them, Alix said. Rosaries made in Fatima, Portugal will be available.

The Little Shepherds

Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto are two of the three Portuguese children to whom the Angel of Peace appeared three times in 1916, and Mary, Our Lady of Fatima, appeared six times in 1917.

Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto along with their cousin Lucia dos Santos were eight, six, and nine-years-old respectively at the time. It was during World War I, when anti-Christian forces and politicians were determined to abolish even the thought of God, which agonized Catholics and Christians in Portugal and eastern Europe. For the Marto family prayer became increasingly important. Praying the rosary for peace became a beautiful ritual especially for the children.

All of these heavenly appearances occurred when the children were out on their families' land shepherding their sheep. The children loved this chore, which took them outside to play and explore.

According to memoirs written by Lucia, the first visit from the Angel of Peace was in the Spring of 1916. The angel said, "Do not be afraid. I am the angel of peace. Pray with me."

The children knelt with the angel and repeated the prayer he said: "My God, I believe, I adore, I hope, and I love You. I ask pardon for those who do not believe, do not



Courtesy Photo

Pictured is the Our Lady of Fatima statue with the petite reliquary of the relics of Saints Jacinta and Francisco Marto, and small statue of the Angel of Peace that travel with the statue.



Courtesy Photo

Saints Francisco and Jacinta Marto

adore, do not hope, and do not love You."

They all repeated the prayer three times. The angel said to pray that way and "the hearts of Jesus and Mary are ready to listen to you."

The angel appeared again to them in the Summer and Fall, Lucia wrote that it was to teach them the importance of continuous prayer, begging for mercy for sinners, sacrificing for God, and adoration of the Blessed Sacrament.

The children remained reverent in prayer and faithful to Jesus in the Blessed Sacrament after that. They were unaware that in just eight months they would be the ones who were chosen to be the instruments of heaven and the messengers for Our Blessed

Mother, when the infamous apparitions in Fatima began (May 13, 1917).

Saints Francisco died at the age of 11, and Jacinta died at the age of 10, just as Our Lady of Fatima said they would. Lucia dos Santos became a Carmelite nun in Portugal. She died February 13, 2005, at age 97. Pope Francis canonized Francisco and Jacinta May 13, 2017, at a Mass in Fatima.

Splinter of the Holy Oak

A piece of the holy holm oak tree that Our Lady of Fatima appeared to be floating above is included with the relics of the little saints.

Significance of the Statue

This particular statue is referred to as the United Nations statue, because it is the one that more than 800 people from around the world prayed in front of while it was at the UN on May 12, 2017, the day before the 100th anniversary of the Fatima apparitions, Alix said. That was the second time this statue was at the UN. The first time was in 1952, when it was in the Chapel of the United Nations where people prayed for the end of the Korean War. It is a statue of peace.

The statue was designed based on the interviews of the shepherd children and in particular Sister Lucia. However, artists knew it would not be as beautiful as the shepherd children witnessed.

Angel of Peace

Alix and Studer will also bring a statue of the Angel of Peace the little shepherds saw. It was created as Lucia described him in her diary.

Schedule for Dec. 8-11

December 8, 4-9 p.m., Welcoming

Welcome – 4 p.m.

Solemn Mass at 6 p.m.

Quiet prayer, rosary, chaplet, veneration of relics and presentations immediately following Mass

December 9, 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Day of Healing

Eucharistic adoration 9 a.m.-3 p.m.

Healing Mass at noon

Quiet prayer, rosary, chaplet, veneration of relics throughout the day.

Presentations: 9 a.m., noon, 3 p.m., and 5 p.m.

December 10, 9 a.m.-6 p.m., Marian Day

Presentations: 9 a.m., noon, 3 p.m., and 5 p.m.

Mass in honor of Our Lady at 10:30 a.m.

Confession at 2 p.m.

Mass at 4 p.m.

Quiet prayer, rosary, chaplet, veneration of relics throughout the day

December 11, 7:30 a.m.-noon, Farewell to Our Lady

Veneration at 7:30 a.m.

Mass at 8 a.m.

Youth Presentation at 9 a.m.

Closing Mass at 10:30 a.m.

Farewell procession at noon

National Religious Retirement Collection Supports Religious Orders in the United States

WASHINGTON — The annual collection that supports nearly 25,000 elderly religious sisters, brothers and religious order priests in the United States will take place in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston on the weekend of Dec. 10-11. The collection, coordinated by the National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO), distributes financial assistance for retirement needs to eligible religious institutes.

Historically, Catholic sisters, brothers, and religious order priests served in church ministries such as parishes, schools, and health care facilities for little to no pay. As a result, many now lack

adequate retirement savings. With rising health-care expenses, hundreds of U.S. religious communities are struggling to care for elder members and now face a large gap between the needs of their older members and the funds available to support members' care. The bishops of the United States initiated the Retirement Fund for Religious Collection in 1988 to help address this deficit in retirement funding among U.S. religious orders. Last year, the NRRO annual collection raised more than \$28 million.

"The care of our aging religious presents an enormous finan-

cial responsibility. I feel we are deeply blessed by the generosity of the Catholic faithful who steadfastly contribute to this fund, helping us meet the needs of our aging religious," said Sister Stephanie Still, a member of the Sisters of the Presentation of San Francisco, and executive director of the NRRO. "This national collection is one way that we can honor the lifelong work of the women and men in religious communities by caring for them in their retirement," she added.

According to statistical data gathered by the NRRO in 2022, only 7% of the religious communities that provided data to the

NRRO reported being adequately funded for retirement. Since 1988, U.S. Catholics have generously donated close to \$948 million, with almost \$920 million distributed to support hundreds of religious communities as they care for aging members and plan for their retirement. Since 2009, the annual cost to support senior women and men religious has exceeded \$1 billion.

For more information on the work of the National Religious Retirement Office and how you can support the retired sisters, brothers, and religious order priests, please visit retiredreligious.org.

Even a Two-Minute Examination of Conscience is Helpful, Pope Says

By Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — A daily examination of conscience is an important tool for recognizing where God is at work in one's life and where "the evil spirit" tries to lead one astray, Pope Francis said.

"Learn to read in the book of our hearts what has happened during the day. Do it. Just two minutes, but it will do you good, I promise," the pope told visitors at his weekly general audience Nov. 30.

After his talk, Pope Francis and the crowd were treated to a performance by the Black Blues Brothers, a group of five acrobats from Kenya. Wearing dark suits and ties, they did hand-springs, created human pyramids and did tumbling and dance tricks while jumping rope to songs from the 1980 film "The Blues Brothers."

Continuing his series of audience talks about discernment, the pope spoke again about "spiritual consolation" and about using a daily examination of conscience to distinguish between what just feels good and "genuine consolation," which, he said, "is a sort of confirmation that we are doing what God wants of us, that we are walking on his paths, that is, on the paths of life, joy and peace."

Relying on the teaching

of St. Ignatius of Loyola, founder of the Jesuits, the pope explained that consolation comes from knowing that a thought or impulse is good at its beginning, middle and end, because it inclines one to do something good, is motivated by love for God and others and leads to a sense of peace.

On the other hand, the pope explained, "the evil spirit" can sneak in and distract one from doing good or sow anger toward others or pride.

"When we talk about the 'evil spirit,' we are talking about the devil, you know," the pope said. "The devil exists."

Pope Francis used the example of the thought or urge to pray, accompanied by "affection for the Lord and my neighbor, it invites gestures of generosity, of charity: it is a good beginning."

But, he said, if "every time I have to wash the dishes or clean the house, I have a strong urge to pray — this happens in convents" — then the impulse is not all good.

"Go wash the dishes, then go pray," he said, because "prayer is not an escape from one's tasks."

And, the pope said, "if I begin to pray and, like the Pharisee in the parable, I tend to be self-satisfied and to disdain others, perhaps with a resentful and sour

spirit, then these are signs that the evil spirit has used that thought as a key to enter into my heart and to transmit his feelings to me."

In such cases, he said, "the consolation of prayer" is false, and one simply is "a peacock before God," strutting his or her presumed holiness.

Then, Pope Francis said, one should ask, "Where does that thought take me? For example, it can happen that I work hard for a good and worthy task, but this pushes me to stop praying; I find I am increasingly aggressive and angry, I feel that everything depends on me, to the point of losing confidence in God. Here, evidently, there is the action of the evil spirit."

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The devil's style is "devious, masked," the pope said, and he usually starts with something important to the person and then twists it.

"The more we know ourselves, the more we sense where the evil spirit enters, his 'passwords,' the entrance to our heart," Pope Francis said.

"Before ending your day,

stop a bit and ask what has happened (that day) — not in the newspapers," he said, but in one's heart.

"Noticing what happens is important," he said. "It is a sign that God's grace is working in us, helping us to grow in freedom and awareness. We are not alone; the Holy Spirit is with us. Let's see how things are going."

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Jubilarians of 2022

A Special Section, Pages 7-25

December 2, 2022

Dear Jubilarians,

In response to the Lord's call, you have taken up your cross and followed him [Mark 8:34], offering up for his and his people's sake many legitimate activities and pleasures of this life. You have persevered in serving your brothers and sisters and so, as the Lord said, you are saving your lives [Luke 21:19].

I congratulate you on reaching another milestone on your journey to Christ's kingdom. Each of you has stories to tell about a variety of ministries, encounters with God's people and both joys and sorrows met along the way. All these experiences have woven a multicolored garment which, even in your human weakness, has enabled you, clothed in Christ [Romans 13:14], to lift him up before his people and to draw others to him.

Some of you are still actively engaged in fulltime pastoral ministry, others, despite being officially retired, lend a hand to good works in your community and still others, for reasons of health or advanced age, support the work of the Church and its ministers by your prayers and sacrifices. Whatever your particular situation at present, you are still responding to the Lord's call. Be confident that the Lord will continue to strengthen you and bless you with his peace.

As I travel around the Diocese, I meet many lay people who tell me stories about how a priest or deacon or religious sister or brother helped them, sometimes to the point of radically changing their lives. Both living and dead clergy and religious are remembered fondly. If you have ever doubted that your ministry had an impact on people, doubt no more because the people have told me it did.

These are times in which it is hard for young people (and some older ones) to hear God calling them to the ministries you embraced earlier in your life; yet the Lord is still calling. Pray that young and older men and women, free to make the choice, will open their minds and hearts to the Lord and say Yes to vocations that will always be less numerous than that to the lay life but which, as the laity keep telling us, are essential in the life of the Church.

Thank you for saying Yes. May God bless, protect and guide you now and always.

Sincerely in Christ,

+Mark E. Brennan

+Mark E. Brennan
Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston

Dear Fathers and Sisters:

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston celebrates your spirit of commitment and dedicated service to the Lord and His Church as we honor all of you in this year of Jubilee. Your faithful presence and ministry have made a lasting impact on the good people of West Virginia. The Church has grown because of your love. Our Diocese remains grateful for your collaboration in building up the Kingdom of God. May the Lord continue to bless you with good health, happiness and peace.

Respectfully yours in Christ,
Very Rev. Dennis R. Schuelkens, Jr.
Episcopal Vicar for Clergy

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

It's Jubilee time once more and this means stepping back and remembering the highlights of your years of ministerial service, giving thanks for all the blessings, and acknowledging God's handiwork in and through you! Every year of vows and promises had its own challenges and outcomes that reflect your shared commitment to the Church of Jesus Christ – especially the years here in West Virginia; not to mention the tremendous experience that we have had in the past years that affected our lives in every part of our being, challenging us to be creative and courageous. It's my hope that each one of you can find time and space to celebrate this milestone well, even as you journey on!

Sister Martha Gomez, RGS
Delegate for Consecrated Life

In Gratitude

of our Priests and Religious in West Virginia

For your years of faithful ministry to the people of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, we thank you. Our prayers and heartfelt wishes are with you as you celebrate your Jubilee Anniversaries.

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Congratulations

ON 65 YEARS OF PRIESTHOOD

Msgr. Ed Sadie

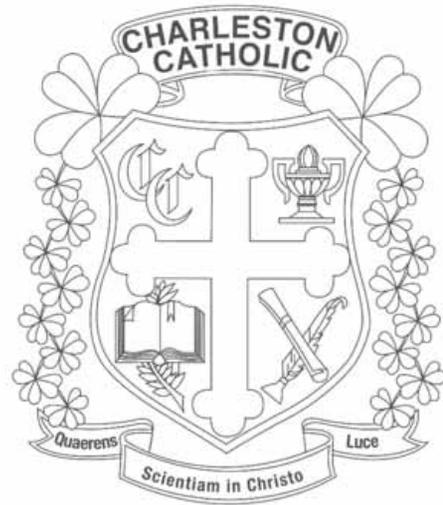
Thank you for your ministry and dedication to the Catholic community in Charleston.



St. Michael the Archangel

Knights of Columbus Council No. 12630

Happy Anniversary, Monsignor Sadie!



The Charleston Catholic community is deeply grateful for your long term leadership and support. We congratulate and celebrate you on your 65th Jubilee!

Thank you Jubilarians of 2022!

Thank you for your life of service, for your ministry, and for sharing your vocation serving God's people in West Virginia. Our parish community appreciates all that you have done and continue to do. Our prayers are with you always!

*St. Francis Xavier
Parish, Parkersburg*



The Serrans of Charleston are profoundly grateful to our priests and religious men and women who serve our Diocese. May our Lord bless you abundantly.

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Msgr. P. Edward Sadie, P.A., S.T.L.

65th Anniversary

Msgr. P. Edward Sadie, P.A., S.T.L., is celebrating his 65th anniversary of ordination to the priesthood this year. He was born in Parkersburg Dec. 15, 1930, and was ordained to the priesthood June 1, 1957, by Bishop Thomas J. McDonnell.



Msgr. Sadie served as rector of the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston from 1980 until his retirement from active ministry in 2016. He served as associate pastor of St. Mary Parish in Blacksburg, Va., from 1957-1963; as vice rector of St. Joseph Preparatory Seminary in Vienna from 1963-1969; and as pastor of St. Agnes Parish in Charleston from 1969-1980.

Msgr. Sadie was administrator of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in St. Albans and director of St. John XXIII Pastoral Center in Charleston in 1984. He was dean of the Charleston Deanery in 1978.

Msgr. Sadie was named monsignor in 2005 by Pope Benedict XVI and previously served as vicar forane of the Charleston Vicariate and as a diocesan consultant. He also previously served on the board of trustees for the Diocesan Priest Health and Retirement Association and on the board of directors of St. Francis Hospital in Charleston and the board of directors of Wheeling Jesuit University. He served on the Commission for the Religious Unity, the Commission for Evangelization, the Vocations Committee, the Anglican/Roman Catholic Commission of West Virginia, and the Methodist/Catholic Commission of West Virginia. He also served on the Religious Coalition for Community Renewal and the Clay Center for Science and Arts. He was also president of Charleston Catholic High School and an advisor on the City Cemetery Committee.

“Find for yourself a teacher and a friend.” –Talmud

In you, dear Monsignor, we have found both.

Mazel tov!

Rabbi Victor & Marilyn Urecki



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Happy 65th Anniversary of Priesthood, Msgr. Sadie!

Our Former Rector for 36 Years

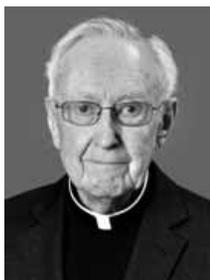
From the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart and Sacred Heart Grade School in Charleston, WV



Father Robert G. Park

65th Anniversary

Father Robert G. Park was born in Parkersburg July 25, 1929, and was ordained to the priesthood June 1, 1957, at St. Francis Xavier Parish in Parkersburg by Bishop Thomas J. McDonnell. He is celebrating his 65th jubilee this year.



seling. He was appointed delegate for clergy in 1987.

“A key moment in my life,” Father Park said, “was July 1945. I was 16 years old. My grandfather’s sister ‘Lottie’ Hendershot O’Brien died. She had become Catholic before her marriage, but because of living in a remote rural area and her husband’s early death, she had not been able to go to Mass for many years. Her children asked Father Rossman, pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish, Parkersburg, to celebrate her funeral in the church. My mother felt obligated to attend the funeral of her aunt. Since she had never been inside a Catholic church, she asked me to go with her. I was impressed with the beautiful murals, stained-glass windows, statues and altar. After the funeral I told my mother I wanted to join that church. She was horrified. I persisted in my intention, was baptized (on) the vigil of Pentecost, 1948, and ordained June 1, 1957. When Aunt Lottie died, I didn’t know she was Catholic, but her funeral was the beginning of my journey to priesthood.”

Father Park currently serves as the delegate for clergy and is director of the diocesan Office of Behavior Counseling and Ministry. He served as associate pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Parkersburg from 1957-1963 and as principal of Parkersburg Catholic High School from 1963-1966. He served as dean of studies for St. Joseph Preparatory Seminary in Vienna in 1966, as vice rector in 1969, and as rector from 1972-1978.

Father Park was pastor of Our Lady of the Blessed Sacrament Parish in Ravenswood from 1978-1982, was in residence at St. Francis Xavier in Parkersburg in 1982 and was director of the Center for Behavioral Counseling and Ministry for the diocese from 1982-1987 until the name was changed to the diocesan Office of Behavior Coun-

seling. He was appointed delegate for clergy in 1987.

Father William E. Coen, ST

60th Anniversary

Father William E. Coen, ST, is celebrating 60 years of priesthood. He is a 1971 graduate of Sophia University in Tokyo, Japan. He received his Master of Arts in 1974 from Oklahoma University in Norman, Okla., and then his doctorate in 1989 from Wright State University in Dayton, Ohio.



He completed his theological studies at Father Judge Missionary Seminary in Winchester, Va., and was ordained to the priesthood on May 31, 1962, by Bishop John J. Russell in Winchester for the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity.

Following ordination he was assigned to Trinitarian House in Washington. In 1963, he was appointed assistant pastor at St. Mildred Parish in Swansboro, N.C. In 1964, he was appointed assistant pastor of St. Agnes Parish in Cleveland. Three years later, he went to Collegio della Ss. Trinità in Rome for second novitiate.

Father Coen came to the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to serve as a veterans affairs chaplain. He served as chaplain at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Martinsburg from 1994 to 1995. Before that he served as chaplain at the Veterans Administration Hospital in Dayton. He previously served as a chaplain at Wright Peterson Air Force Base in Dayton; Alimendorf Air Force Base in Alaska; March Air Force Base in Riverside, Calif.; Kirkland Air Force Base in New Mexico; USAF in San Francisco; Dyess Air Force Base in Texas; USAF in Taiwan; USAF in Oklahoma City; and military service chaplain USAF.

Father Coen is retired from active ministry and lives in Harpers Ferry.

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Fr. Phillip J. Brown, P.S.S. and the St. Mary's Seminary community congratulate all the Jubilarians from the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

St. Charles College, and St. Mary's Seminary & University are proud of our alumni who are celebrating their 65th anniversary of ordination.

Fr. Robert Park
Msgr. Edward Sadie

Ad Multos Annos
Fr. Phillip J. Brown, P.S.S.

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*Happy 65th Anniversary of
Priesthood*

FATHER PARK

FROM YOUR COWORKERS
IN WHEELING



Father Mario Claro
55th Anniversary

Father Mario Claro is celebrating his 55th anniversary of ordination to priesthood. A native of Bronx, N.Y., he is the son of Mario Gaetano and Margaret Mary Duffy Claro.



Father Claro attended Immaculate Conception College of Philosophy in Troy, N.Y., and St. Bonaventure University in Olean, N.Y. He also earned a master's in theology with a specialization in liturgy from the University of Notre Dame at South Bend. He completed his preparatory studies for the priesthood at Mt. Alvernia Seminary in Wappingers Falls, N.Y., and was ordained June 10, 1967. He previously served at St. Agnes in Toronto, Ontario, Canada.

Father Claro was incardinated into the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Dec. 22, 1970. He previously served as associate pastor of St. Paul Parish in Weirton from 1968 to 1970 and St. Anne Parish, Bristol, Va., from 1970 to 1972. He became chaplain at Mount Saint Joseph Motherhouse in Wheeling in 1972 and served as chaplain for a time at Central Catholic High School in Wheeling. He returned to Weirton in 1977 to serve as associate pastor of St. Joseph the Worker Parish. From 1978 to 1983, he was on the faculty at St. Joseph Preparatory Seminary in Vienna, where he also served as dean of students.

Father Claro served as associate director of the diocesan Office of Sacraments, Worship and Spirituality from 1983 to 1988; coordinator of the diocesan Office of Liturgical Practices in 1988; and diocesan coordinator for the diocesan Department of Catholic Education and Formation from 1987 to 1992. He was also regional representative of the Federation of Diocesan Liturgical Commissions Region 4, consultant for the Diocesan Art and Architecture Commission, and teacher and liturgy coordinator for the Diaconate and Ministries Formation Program.

Father Claro served as rector of the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling from 1989 to 1994; pastor of St. Theresa Parish in Morgantown from 1994 to 1998; and pastor of St. Mary Parish in Petersburg and Epiphany of the Lord Parish in Moorefield from 1998 to 2006. Father Claro also became pastor of St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Franklin in 1998 and served there until his retirement from active ministry.

*Happy 55th Anniversary
of Priesthood*

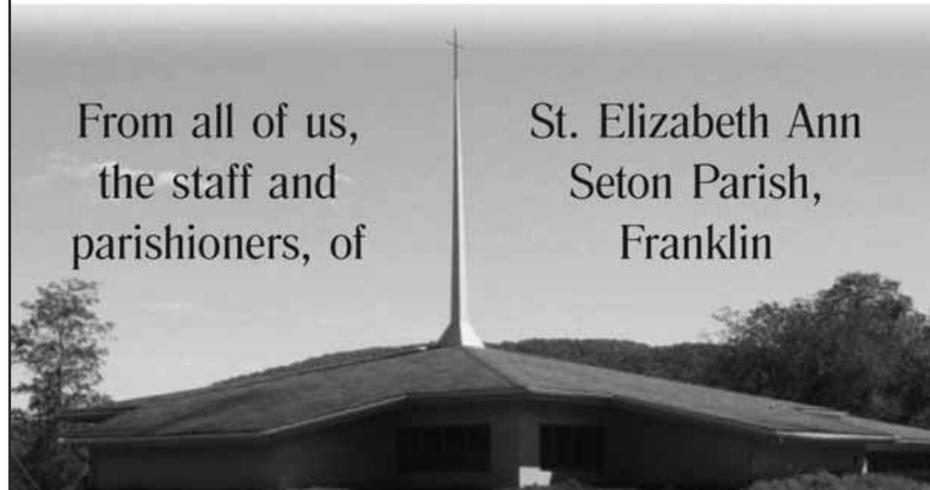
Father Mario Claro



Our dear
former pastor

From all of us,
the staff and
parishioners, of

St. Elizabeth Ann
Seton Parish,
Franklin



Father Park

As you celebrate
65 years of
Priesthood, we
thank you for
your ministry to
God's people in
West Virginia.
Our prayers are
with you as you
celebrate your
Jubilee.



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is the love of the
heart of Jesus.’*

—St. John Marie Vianney

65th Anniversary:
Msgr. P. Edward Sadie
Father Robert Park

60th Anniversary:
Father William E. Coen, ST

55th Anniversary:
Father Mario Claro
Father John V. Di Bacco, Jr.
Father George Manjadi
Father David Schmitt

50th Anniversary:
Msgr. Jeremiah McSweeney

25th Anniversary:
Father Charles I. Anemelu
Father William J. Kuchinsky
Father Shaji J. Thomas

**Ad Multos
Annos!**

**From your brother Priests and
the Clergy Office of the
Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston**



Father John V. Di Bacco, Jr.

55th Anniversary

Father John V. Di Bacco, Jr. is celebrating his 55th jubilee. A native of Thomas, he is the son of the late John and Mary Rossi Di Bacco. Father Di Bacco graduated from Wheeling Jesuit College and made his preparatory studies for the priesthood at St. Mary Seminary and University in Baltimore. He also earned a master's in applied spirituality from the University of San Francisco and did advanced studies at Drew University in Madison, N.J., and Washington Theological Union in Washington.



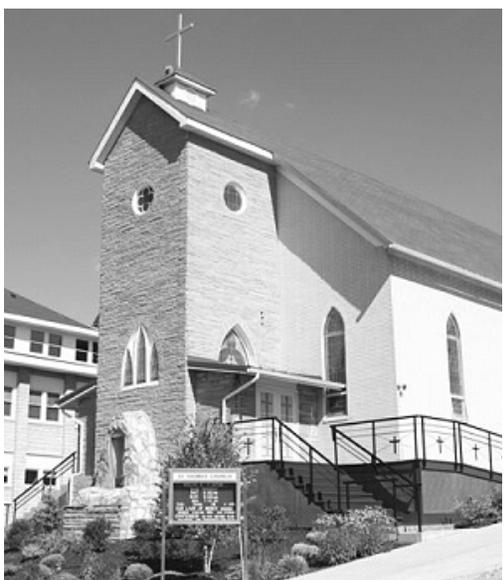
Father Di Bacco was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Joseph H. Hodges at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling May 13, 1967. Following his ordination, Father Di Bacco served as associate pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Clarksburg from 1967 to 1971 and Corpus Christi Parish in Wheeling from 1971 to 1974. He also served as director of the House of Studies in Wheeling from 1974 to 1979, chaplain at Bethany College from 1971 to 1979 and as pastor of St. Theresa Parish in Morgantown from 1979 to 1992.

Father Di Bacco spent 14 years of ministry in Martinsburg, where he served as dean of the Martinsburg Deanery and then as vicar forane of the Martinsburg Vicariate from 1997 to May 2005. He also served as pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Martinsburg from 1992 to 2006. He became pastor of St. Mary Parish in Star City on June 14, 2006, where he served until his retirement from active ministry on July 29, 2020.

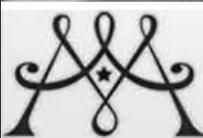
Wishing you a very happy 55th Anniversary of Priesthood,

Father Di Bacco

From St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in your hometown of Thomas, W.Va.



Congratulations!
Fr. John V. Di Bacco, Jr.
Many thanks and blessings from
St. Mary Parish, Star City



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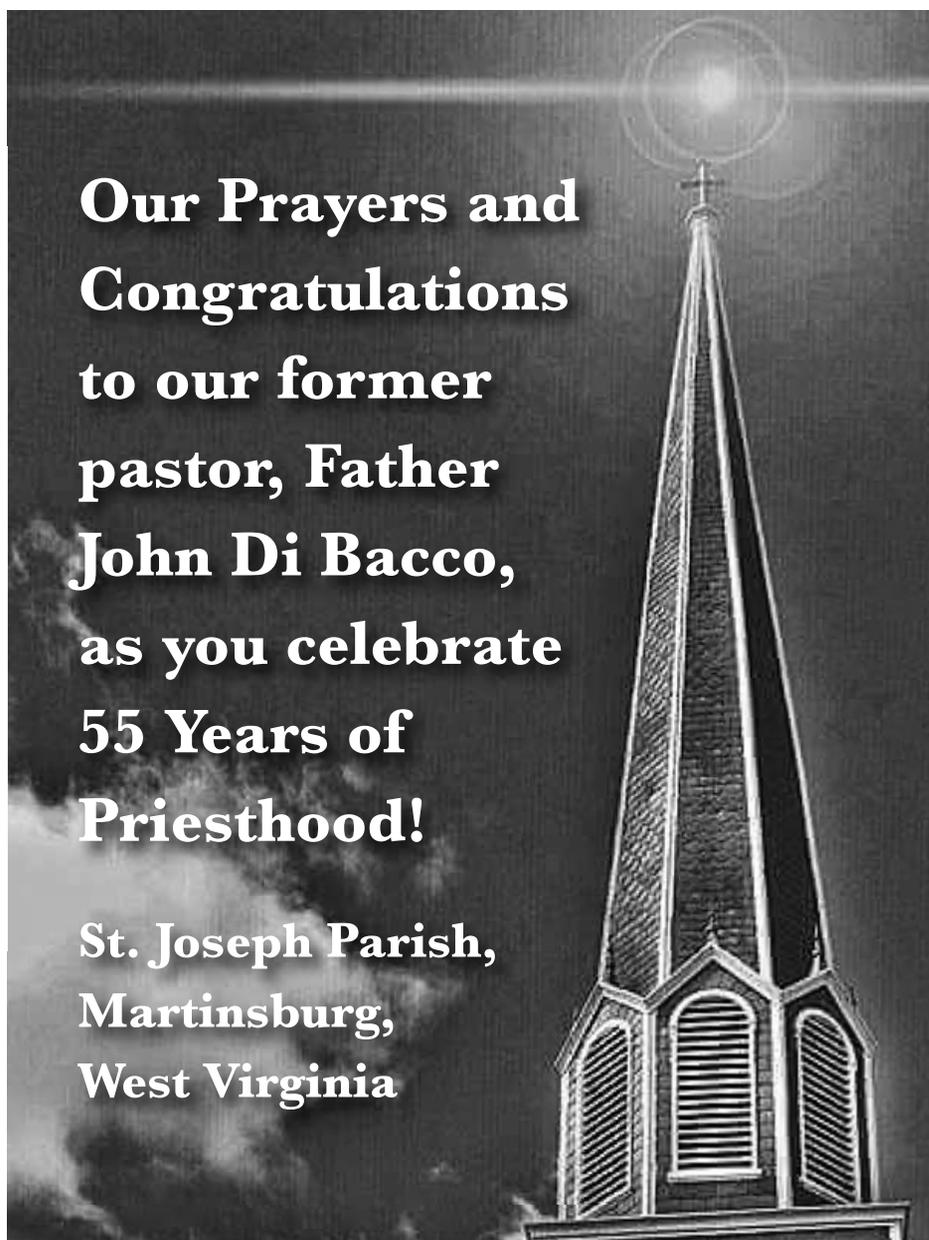


Walking with Moms in Need is a nationwide, pastoral effort led by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops to encourage increased outreach to pregnant and parenting mothers in need.

www.walkingwithmoms.com

Our Prayers and Congratulations to our former pastor, Father John Di Bacco, as you celebrate 55 Years of Priesthood!

St. Joseph Parish, Martinsburg, West Virginia



Father George Manjadi

55th Anniversary

Father George Manjadi is celebrating his 55th anniversary of ordination to priesthood. He is a native of Kerala, India, and the second of 12 children.



Father Manjadi studied at Carmel Polytechnic College in Alleppey, Kerala, India, and worked for the state electricity department for one year before entering St. Ambrose Minor Seminary in Nuzvid, India, to study for the priesthood. He completed his studies at St. John Major Seminary in Hyderabad, Andhra, Pradesh, and was ordained to the priesthood Dec. 27, 1967. Prior to coming to West Virginia, Father Manjadi served at Bishop Grassi High School and Boarding Home in Gunadala, Vijayavada; Sacred Heart in Begivada; and St. Michael Cathedral in Eluru.

Father Manjadi came to the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston in

1983, and was assigned as associate pastor at St. Joseph Parish in Huntington. In 1984, he was appointed administrator of St. Peter Claver Parish in Huntington, and then pastor in 1989 when he was incardinated into the diocese. He served as pastor of St. John Neumann Parish in Marlinton and its Mission of St. John the Evangelist in Bartow from 1997 to 2000 and then as pastor of St. Matthew Parish in Ravenswood from 2000 to 2005. He was appointed pastor of St. Boniface Parish in Camden in 2005 where he served for the next 10 years. During that time, he also became temporary administrator of Good Shepherd Mission in Glenville and chaplain at Gilmer Federal Correctional Institution and Glenville State College. He retired from active ministry in 2015.

Father David Schmitt

55th Anniversary

Father David Schmitt is celebrating his 55th jubilee. He made his preparatory studies for the priesthood at St. Gregory Seminary, Cincinnati, Ohio; St. Charles Borromeo, Wickliffe, Ohio; and St. Mary Seminary, Cleveland, Ohio.

He was ordained to the priesthood for the Diocese of Cleveland May 20, 1967. Parishes in Ohio where he has served include: St. Mary, Wooster; St. Joseph, Strongsville; Immaculate Conception, Willoughby; St. Mary Magdalene, Willowick; and Our Lady Help of Christians, Litchfield.



Father Schmitt was incardinated into the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston in 1993. He became administrator of St. Patrick Parish in Hinton and its missions of St. Mary of the Greenbrier in Alderson and St. Colman of Irish Mountain in 1988 and was appointed pastor there in 1993. He became dean of the Logan Deanery in 1996 as well as pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Logan and St. Edmund Parish in Man. From 2003 to 2008, he served as pastor of Holy Redeemer Parish in Spencer and its missions of St. Elizabeth of Hungary in Elizabeth and Jesus Christ, Prince of Peace in Grantsville. From 2008 to 2011, he served as pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Point Pleasant and St. Joseph Mission in Mason. He also served for a time as chaplain of Our Lady of Mercy Chapel and Davis Hall Chapel at Alderson F.C.I.

Father Schmitt retired from active ministry in 2011.

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Congratulations, Msgr. McSweeney!

*We are forever grateful for your insight into Irish culture and your guidance as our Chaplain.
From your brothers in the Ancient Order of Hibernians, Wheeling, WV*



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Congratulations and thanks to our Jubilarians

St. Michael Parish, Vienna

God bless you for your service

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Msgr. Jeremiah McSweeney 50th Anniversary

Msgr. Jeremiah McSweeney is celebrating his Golden Jubilee this year. A native of Ireland, he is a 1967 graduate of Mungret College in Limerick. He completed his theological studies at St. Peter's Seminary in Wexford, Ireland, in 1972. He was ordained to the priesthood that same year for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston on June 17 by Bishop Cornelius Lucey of Cork and Ross.



In his priesthood, Msgr. McSweeney served in many parts of West Virginia beginning in 1972 at St. Anthony Parish in Follansbee as associate pastor. From 1975 to 1977, he served as associate pastor of St. Francis de Sales Parish in Beckley and as pastor of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Mullens from 1977 to 1981. He was pastor of St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Ronceverte from 1981 to 1987, Ss. Peter and Paul Parish in Oak Hill from 1987 to 1992, and St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Cheat Lake from 1992 to 2002. He served as pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Weston from 2002 to 2009 and on Presbyteral Council from 2006 to 2009.

He became pastor of St. Michael Parish in Wheeling in 2009 and was named a monsignor in 2016. In 2018, he was appointed chaplain of the Bishop Whelan Division Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH), Division 1 in Wheeling.

This past summer, Msgr. McSweeney's brother priests, deacons, friends, and parishioners gathered at St. Michael Parish for Mass to celebrate his 50 years of priesthood. The Mass was celebrated by Bishop Mark Brennan on the feast of St. John Vianney, the patron saint of priests.

"This has been a fantastic celebration of hope and joy," Msgr. McSweeney said after the Mass. He also bestowed upon all an Irish blessing.

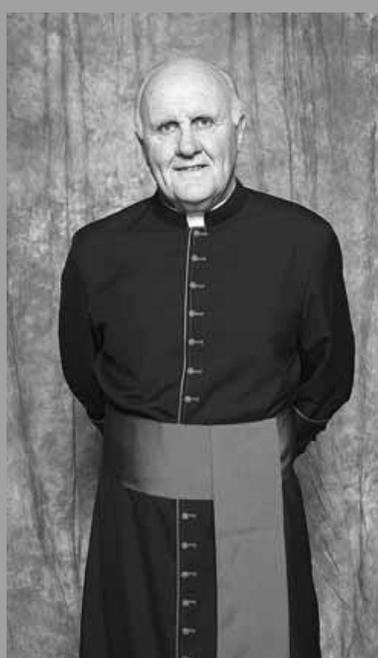
Congratulations Monsignor Jeremiah McSweeney on your Priesthood Golden Jubilee June 17th, 1972-2022



"You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek." (John 7:17)

**Saint Patrick Church and School,
Weston, West Virginia**

Congratulations to the 2022 Jubilarians and to our beloved former Pastor, Msgr. McSweeney, on his Golden Jubilee!



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Father Charles I. Anemelu

25th Anniversary

Father Charles I. Anemelu of Nnokwa, Nigeria, celebrates his 25th anniversary of priesthood this year. He currently serves as chaplain of the Greater Charleston Area Hospitals and is a priest in residence at St. Anthony Parish in Charleston with Our Lady of the Hills Parish in Elkview.

Father Anemelu received a degree in philosophy from St. Joseph Major Seminary in Ikot Ekpene, Nigeria. He completed his theological studies at Seat of Wisdom Seminary in Owerri, Nigeria. He completed advanced studies at Seton Hall University in South Orange, N.J., where he received a master's in psychological studies and

an Ed.D. in higher education leadership, management, and policy.

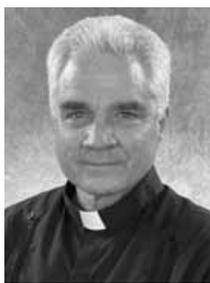
Father Anemelu was ordained to the priesthood on Aug. 16, 1987, in Onitsha, Nigeria, by Archbishop Albert Kanene Obiefuna for the Archdiocese of Onitsha. Before coming to West Virginia he served for a time in the Diocese of Bridgeport, Conn.

Father Anemelu previously served as chaplain of Wheeling Hospital from 2016 to 2018. He was appointed chaplain of the Greater Charleston Area Hospitals in 2018 and resides at St. Anthony Parish in Charleston. He provides supplemental ministry at St. Anthony's and Our Lady of the Hills.

Father William J. Kuchinsky

25th Anniversary

Father William J. Kuchinsky is celebrating his 25th anniversary of ordination to priesthood. He is currently supervisor of the Office of Prison Ministry for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston and is an elected member of the Diocesan Presbyteral Council. He is originally from Washington, D.C. He is a 1986 graduate of the University of Maryland in College Park, Md., where he received a Bachelor of Science in business management. He received his Master of Divinity from St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe, Pa., in 1996 and was ordained to the priesthood by Bishop Bernard W. Schmitt on Nov. 22, 1997, at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling. He was appointed associate pastor of St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Weirton where he served until 1999. He then became associate pastor of St. Michael Parish in Wheeling and served there until 2000. He was appointed pastor of St. John Neumann Parish in Marlinton and its Mission of St. Mark the Evangelist in Bartow in 2000 where he served for the next three years.



From 2003 to 2008, he served as pastor of Our Lady of Grace Parish in Romney, Annunciation of Our Lord Parish in Fort Ashby, and St. Anthony Parish in Ridgeley. In 2012, he became priest in residence at St. Leo Parish in Inwood and then for a time as priest in residence at Immaculate Conception Parish in Fairmont. From 2013 to 2015, he was sacramental supply minister residing at the Clara Welty Apartments in Wheeling. From 2015 to 2016, he served as associate pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Martinsburg. After a leave of absence, he served as priest in residence at St. James the Greater Parish in Charleston from 2019 to 2020. He became administrator of St. Bernadette Mission in Hedgesville in 2020. The mission was elevated to a parish in 2020 and he served as pastor until 2021. He was appointed supervisor of the Office of Prison Ministry in August of 2021.

This year, he was elected to a three-year term on the Diocesan Presbyteral Council. In April, he celebrated a funeral Mass and dignified burial for more than 100 aborted babies that pro-life activists said they rescued outside of a Washington, D.C., abortion clinic.

Father Shaji J. Thomas

25th Anniversary

Father Shaji J. Thomas is from Idukki, Kerala, India. He is celebrating 25 years of priesthood. He is a 1992 graduate of the Bhopal School of Social Sciences in Bhopal, India. He completed his theological studies at St. Ephrem's Theological College in Satna, India, in 1996 and was ordained to the priesthood on Jan. 4, 1997, by Bishop Gregory Karotprel, CMI, for the Vincentian Congregation in India. He received a master's in social work from the University of Delhi in 2002. He previously served in the Diocese of Miao, India, where he served as a vocations promoter and as pastor and associate pastor of a number of parishes. He also was



director of De Paul Boys Home in India. He came to the U.S. in 2008 serving at parishes in Colorado. He came to West Virginia in 2017 and was appointed associate pastor of St. Peter the Fisherman Parish in Fairmont. He was appointed administrator of St. Peter Claver Parish and Sacred Heart Parish in Huntington in 2021 and continues to serve there today.

Throughout his priesthood, Father Thomas has been involved in youth and family ministries as well as catechesis. He has initiated marriage preparation classes and retreats for engaged couples and has focused on care for orphans in India.

Happy 25th Anniversary, Father Anemelu

Thank you for all you do for our parishes and for the hospitals of our area!



Charleston, West Virginia

St. Anthony Catholic Church Est. 1908

Our Lady of the Hills

Elkview, West Virginia

Catholic Church

Happy Anniversary, Father Thomas!

Celebrating 25 Years of Priesthood



From your Parish Family at Sacred Heart in Huntington



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