

THE CATHOLIC

# Spirit

## Clifton Mastran Ordained Deacon

By Colleen Rowan

**WHEELING** — Clifton Mastran was ordained to the diaconate by Bishop Mark Brennan on Dec. 20. The joyous moment gathered faithful, religious, and clergy of the diocese with his family and friends on that Saturday morning at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling.

Deacon Mastran was ordained a transitional deacon on path to ordination to the priesthood.

In his homily, Bishop Brennan said the Lord uses the images of salt and light to describe what his disciples should be like, and they apply in a heightened way to a deacon. Salt was valued in ancient times as a preservative, he said.

“In that sense, Clifton, you must strive to preserve the riches of the Catholic faith in your teaching and preaching,” the bishop said. “Do not alter God’s word or add extraneous teachings ... but give to the people the truth that God has revealed to us and which he has commissioned his church to proclaim to the world.”

However, he said, it is necessary to find appropriate ways to communicate that truth and urged him to get to know the people to whom he is sent so that he may teach them and preach to them effectively.

As for light, Bishop Brennan said to Deacon Mastran, fidelity to the Lord in daily prayer, in the Liturgy of the Hours, and at Mass will be noted by the people.

“And that will encourage them to engage in sound spiritual practices as the essential foundation of a good Christian life,” he said. “But you also remind them when you are serving at the altar that the worship of God and charity and service to others must always go together. You are a visible sign of the unity of those two loves.”

Over time, the bishop said, the people will come to appreciate that unity; and Deacon

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Colleen Rowan photo

Bishop Mark Brennan ordains Clifton Mastran to the diaconate at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling Dec. 20.

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## Obituary—Father D. Kent Durig

Rev. Fr. D. Kent Durig, a devoted priest of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston who faithfully served the Church and her people for nearly three decades, passed away on December 19, 2025.



Fr. Kent was born on March 23, 1956, in New Martinsville, West Virginia, one of three children born to the late Donald Eugene and JoAnn Simms Durig. From an early age, he felt a calling to serve God and His Church, a vocation that would guide his entire life.

He attended St. Mary's Seminary and University in Baltimore, Maryland, where he completed his undergraduate and theological studies. Fr. Kent was ordained to the priesthood on June 5, 1993, by Bishop Bernard W. Schmitt at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling, West Virginia.

Following his ordination, Fr. Kent's priestly ministry touched many parishes throughout the Diocese. He served as associate pastor at St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Weirton from 1993 to 1995. In 1995, he was priest in residence at St. Alphonsus, St. Ladislaus, and St. Mary parishes in Wheeling. From 1995 to 1998, he served as pastor of Annunciation of Our Lord Parish in Fort Ashby and St. Anthony Parish in Ridgeley.

In 1998, Fr. Kent returned to Weirton as pastor of Sacred Heart of Mary Parish, where he served until 2010. During his tenure, he led a significant renovation and beautification of the church, leaving a lasting legacy for the parish community. From 2010 to 2019, he served as pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Stonewood, where he once again guided a renovation and beautification project, reflecting his deep reverence for sacred spaces.

Later in his ministry, Fr. Kent served as priest in residence at the Clara Welty Apartments LC in Wheeling for over a year. He retired from active ministry in 2021, hav-

ing faithfully answered God's call with dedication, humility, and pastoral care.

Fr. Kent was preceded in death by his parents, and his nephew C. Michael Hickman.

He will be remembered with love by his brother, Todd Durig of New Martinsville, West Virginia; his sister, Nanette Raber and her husband, Thomas, also of New Martinsville; niece, Carrie (Thomas "T.J.") Haught; step-niece, Stephanie Corathers; his good friend of twenty years, Joe Keaton, and his aunt who helped care for him through the years, Michelle Mason along with several great nieces and nephews, brother priests, and countless faithful whose lives he touched.

On Monday, December 29, the reception of Fr. Kent's body will take place at Sacred Heart of Mary Roman Catholic Church in Weirton at 4:00 p.m., followed by visitation from 4:00 to 6:00 p.m. A Vigil Service will immediately follow, with the Very Reverend Donald X. Higgs, V.E., V.F., serving as presider and homilist.

On Tuesday, December 30, visitation will be held at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling from 9:00 to 11:45 a.m. The Funeral Mass will follow at 12:05 p.m., celebrated by the Most Reverend Mark E. Brennan, Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston, as presider and homilist, with diocesan priests concelebrating. A luncheon will be held in the Chancery following the Mass.

Fr. Kent will be laid to rest at Greenlawn Memorial Park in New Martinsville, West Virginia, beside his parents.

May Fr. Kent Durig rest in the peace of Christ whom he so faithfully served.



Fr. Kent's arrangements are under the care of the Diocese of Wheeling Charleston and Greco-Hertnick Funeral Home 3219 Main Street Weirton, WV.

Share tributes and memories at [www.grecohertnick.com](http://www.grecohertnick.com)

### Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

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

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

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### The Catholic Spirit's Print Schedule for 2026

There are 10 print editions in 2026. Below are the names of the issues and the publishing dates. Please note, the publishing dates may or may not be on feast days. Digital issues are published every Friday, delivered by e-mail to subscribers, and posted on [thecatholicspiritwv.org](http://thecatholicspiritwv.org).

#### 2026 Print Dates:

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



Colleen Rowan photo  
Deacon Mastran is vested with the stole and dalmatic by Msgr. William Fay (center) and Father Dennis R. Schuelkens, Jr.



Colleen Rowan photo  
Deacon Mastran receives the Book of Gospels from Bishop Brennan.



Colleen Rowan photo  
Deacon Mastran receives the Kiss of Peace from his brother deacons.

## Mastran ...

Cont'd from Page 1

Mastran will evangelize by serving in both those ways—in charity and in worship.

“With the diaconate Clifton, you commit yourself to serving the people of this diocese which encompasses all of the State of West Virginia,” the bishop said. “We are small town America,” and the people are connected in many ways.

“As you embark on your service as a deacon and prepare for a future ordination to the priesthood, may the Lord bless, guide, and protect you,” Bishop Brennan said to Deacon Mastran. “As a priest, you will discover that most of your daily ministry is really diaconal in nature. So, engage in it well. It will be the foundation of a fruitful priesthood. Trust God, keep praying, and learn each day a little more of the Lord’s charity whose minister you are becoming.”

The Rite of Ordination began before the homily with the Election of the Candidate as Deacon Mastran stood before the bishop.

“Relying on the help of the Lord God and our Savior Jesus Christ, we choose this man, our brother, for the Order of the Diaconate,” the bishop said at the end. This was met with a round of applause from the bishop, clergy, and the congregation.

In the Promise of the Elect (which began after the homily), Deacon Mastran stood before the bishop and promised to serve the people of God as a deacon. Those gathered at the cathedral then prayed the Litany of Supplication as he prostrated himself before the altar.

Deacon Mastran then knelt before the bishop, who laid his hands on his head and prayed the Prayer of Ordination. Deacon



Colleen Rowan photo  
The bishop, clergy, and all gathered pray the Litany of Supplication as Deacon Mastran prostrates himself before the altar.

Mastran was vested with the stole and dalmatic (vestments of a deacon) by Msgr. William Fay, a representative of Pope St. John XXIII National Seminary in Weston, Mass., and Father Dennis R. Schuelkens, Jr., pastor of St. Joseph the Worker and Sacred Heart of Mary parishes in Weirton.

Deacon Mastran then knelt before the bishop who placed the Book of Gospels in his hands, saying: “Receive the Gospel of Christ, whose herald you have become. Believe what you read, teach what you believe, and practice what

you teach.”

Deacon Mastran then received the Kiss of Peace from his brother deacons.

Before entering Pope St. John XXIII National Seminar, Deacon Mastran had an 18-year professional career as a federal civilian employee within the U.S. Department of Defense. He also has a Bachelor of Science in computer science with minors in business administration and classical studies from the University of Florida.

At press time, Deacon Mastran’s assignment had not been announced.



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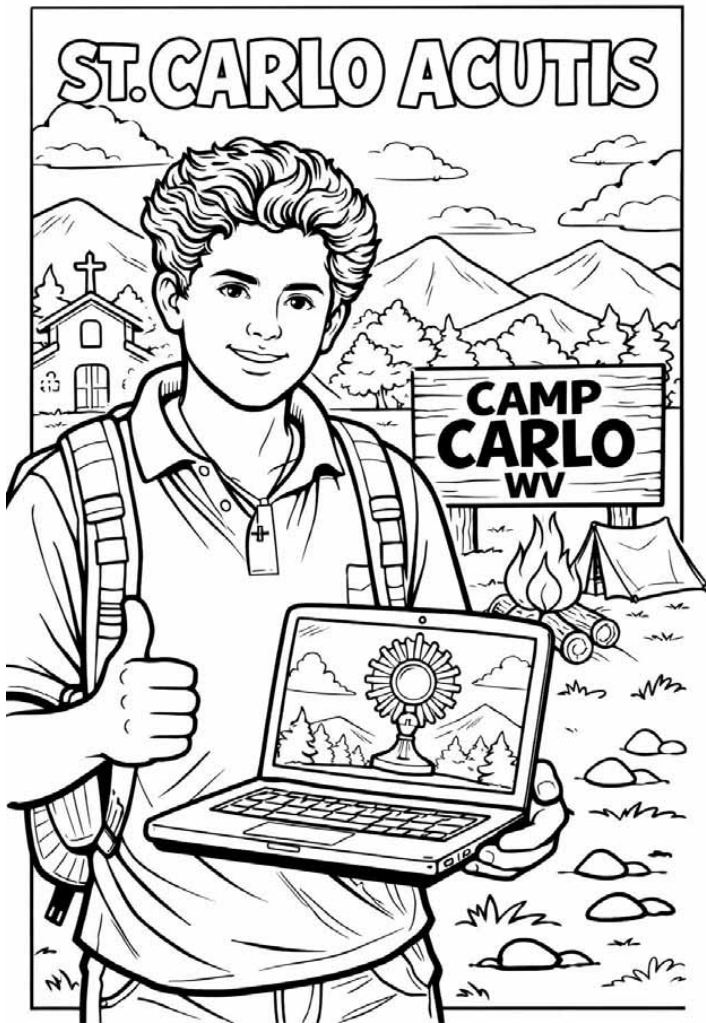
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# HHS Announces Actions to Restrict 'Sex-Rejecting Procedures' on Minors

By **Tyler Arnold, Catholic News Agency**

The Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) proposed regulations Dec. 18 that would seek to end "sex-rejecting procedures" on anyone younger than 18 years old, which includes restrictions on hospitals and retailers.

Under one proposal, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) would withhold all funding through Medicare and Medicaid to any hospital that offers surgeries or drugs to minors as a means to make them resemble the opposite sex. The proposed rules would prohibit federal Medicaid funding for "sex-rejecting procedures" on anyone under 18 and prohibit federal Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) funding for the procedures on anyone under 19.

This includes surgical operations, such as the removal of healthy genitals to replace them with artificial genitals that resemble the opposite sex and chest procedures that remove the healthy breasts on girls or implant prosthetic breasts on boys.

It also includes hormone treatments that attempt to masculinize girls with testosterone and feminize boys with estrogen and puberty blockers, which delay a child's natural developments during puberty.

HHS also announced that the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is issuing warning letters to 12 manufacturers and retailers that they accuse of illegally marketing "breast binders" to girls under the age of 18 as a treatment for gender dysphoria. Breast binders compress breasts as a means to flatten them

under their clothing.

The news release said breast binders are Class 1 medical devices meant to help recover from cancer-related mastectomies, and the warning letters will "formally notify the companies of their significant regulatory violations and how they should take prompt corrective action."

Additionally, HHS is working to clarify the definition of a "disability" in civil rights regulations to exclude "gender dysphoria" that does not result from physical impairments. This ensures that discrimination laws are not interpreted in a way that would require "sex-rejecting procedures," the statement said.

HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr. said in a news conference that "sex-rejecting procedures" on minors are "endangering the very lives that [doctors] are sworn to safeguard."

"So-called gender-affirming care has inflicted lasting physical and psychological damage on vulnerable young people," he said. "This is not medicine — it is malpractice."

The proposals would conform HHS regulations to President Donald Trump's Jan. 28 executive order to prohibit the "chemical and surgical mutilation" of children. The order instructed HHS to propose regulations to prevent these procedures on minors.

In a news release, HHS repeatedly referred to the medical interventions as "sex-rejecting procedures" and warned they "cause irreversible damage, including infertility, impaired sexual function, diminished bone density, altered brain development,

and other irreversible physiological effects."

HHS cited its own report from May, which found "deep uncertainty about the purported benefits of these interventions" for treating a minor with gender dysphoria. The report found that "these interventions carry risk of significant harms," which can include infertility, sexual dysfunction, underdeveloped bone mass, cardiovascular disease, metabolic disorders, psychiatric disorders, and adverse cognitive impacts, among other complications.

Stanley Goldfarb, chairman of Do No Harm, a medical advocacy group, said in a statement that the proposed regulation on hospitals is "another critical step to protect children from harmful gender ideology" and said he supports rules that ensure "American taxpayer dollars do not fund sex-

change operations on minors."

"Many so-called gender clinics have already begun to close as the truth about the risks and long-term harms about these drugs and surgeries on minors have been exposed," he said. "Now, hospitals that receive taxpayer funds from these federal programs must follow suit."

Mary Rice Hasson, director of the Person and Identity Project at the Ethics and Public Policy Center (EPPC), said she sees the proposed restriction on hospitals as "excellent."

"This proposed rule sends a powerful message to states and health care providers: It's time to stop these unethical and dangerous procedures," Hasson said. "Puberty is not a disease to be medicated away. All children have the right to grow and develop normally."

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# Pope's First World Peace Day Message Draws from His First Public Greeting

**VATICAN CITY (CNS)** — Pope Leo XIV's first World Peace Day message will expand on the prayer he expressed the night of his election when addressing the crowds gathered in St. Peter's Square.

The Vatican announced the theme of Pope Leo's message for 2026 will be: "Peace be with you all: Towards an 'unarmed and disarming' peace."

The Catholic Church celebrates a world day of prayer for peace each Jan. 1. The pope's message for the day usually is released in early December and is shared with heads of state around the world by Vatican ambassadors. The pope also personally gives a copy of the message to visiting government leaders throughout the year.

## **'Authentic peace based on love, justice'**

The Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, which helps develop and promote the message, announced the theme Aug. 26, saying it was an invitation to all people "to reject the logic of violence and war, and to embrace an authentic peace based on love and justice."

When he appeared on the balcony of St. Peter's Basilica immediately after his election May 8, Pope Leo shared Christ's greeting of peace with the crowd and said, "It is the peace of the risen Christ. A peace that is unarmed and disarming, humble and persevering. A peace that comes from God, the God who loves us all, unconditionally."

The dicastery's announcement of the theme said that the peace people are praying for "must be unarmed, that is, not based on fear, threats or weapons. And it must be disarming, capable of resolving conflicts, opening hearts and generating mutual trust, empathy and hope."

## **Must 'embody' peace as way of life**

"It is not enough to call for peace; we must embody it in a way of life that rejects every form of violence, whether it be visible or systemic," the announcement said.

Christ's greeting of peace "is an invitation addressed to everyone — believers, nonbelievers, political leaders and citizens — to build the Kingdom of God and to work together to build a humane and peaceful future," the dicastery said.

Also Aug. 26, the Libreria Editrice Vaticana, the Vatican publishing house, announced it was releasing a book collecting Pope Leo's first speeches. The volume is titled, "Peace Be With You: Words to the Church and the World."

## **Hope for 'unarmed and disarming' peace**

"At his first appearance before the whole world, Leo XIV expressed to everyone his hope for an 'unarmed and disarming' peace — the kind that (Trappist Father) Christian de Chergé, the prior of Tibhirine, once wrote about. May 8, the day of Robert Prevost's election to the papal throne, also marked the liturgical commemoration of the martyrs of Algeria," the publication announcement said.

The 19 martyrs, who included the seven Trappist monks of Tibhirine, were killed between 1993 and 1996 while Algeria was locked in a 10-year-long armed conflict between government forces and extremist Islamic rebel groups.

Pope Leo's first speeches, the Vatican publishing house said, indicated some of the priorities of his papacy: "the primacy of God, communion in the church and the search for peace."

## *A message from the West Virginia Knights of Columbus State Council*

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# Experts Offer Strategies for Connection during Christmas Amid U.S. 'Epidemic' of Loneliness

**By Kimberley Heatherington , OSV News**

**(OSV News)** — The holidays are here, and the Savior comes — but for many, it will still be a blue Christmas, and possibly new year, too.

## Why? They'll be lonely.

In 2023, former U.S. Surgeon General Vivek Murthy declared loneliness in America an epidemic — and issued an 82-page report warning of its dangers to “individual and population health, community safety, resilience and prosperity.”

The report — “Our Epidemic of Loneliness and Isolation” — advised readers loneliness is “far more than just a bad feeling”; indeed, it warned “the mortality impact of being socially disconnected is similar to that caused by smoking up to 15 cigarettes a day.”

Failure to address loneliness, Murthy added, will come at a price: “We will continue to splinter and divide until we can no longer stand as a community or a country.”

Which raises at least two questions: What can the Catholic Church do about it? And how can lonely people connect at Christmas?

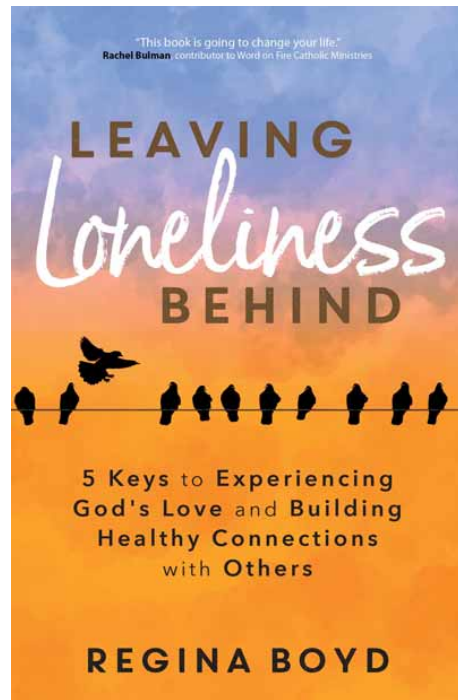
“Loneliness is not just an issue of the church. Loneliness is a cultural thing,” Marcel LeJeune — president and founder of Catholic Missionary Disciples in College Station, Texas — told OSV News. “And there’s no one reason that people are lonely; it can come from a multitude of issues or reasons. We see it in people that don’t have good relationships — that could be, they don’t have good friendships; their marriages are struggling; they can’t find community.”

It’s part of LeJeune’s job to build that community — to, as the name of his ministry implies, help churches forge disciples. But the state of societal trust poses a challenge.

“What’s happened in our world — especially in the United States — we’ve seen the breakdown of community institutions. So there’s just little trust put into the church right now,” he explained. “People don’t

see the parish as a place where they can find meaningful relationships. And that’s an unfortunate reality. Can you still find meaningful relationships in a parish? Absolutely — but you’ve got to work at it.”

The reason for that, LeJeune said, is “our institutions aren’t set up, for the most part, to address the issue of loneliness. What we’re set up to do is to gather people for the



OSV News photo/Ave Maria Press

**This is the cover of “Leaving Loneliness Behind: 5 Keys to Experiencing God’s Love and Building Healthy Connections with Others” (Ave Maria Press) by Regina Boyd. Boyd is founder of Heartspace Therapy Center in Lake Mary, Fla., and a licensed mental health counselor.**

sacraments, for events and for programs. There’s nothing that’s wrong with that — in fact, flowing out of that, you might find friendship; connection; relationships. But the issue is,” he added, “that unless we intentionally try to help make that happen, it probably won’t happen in those places.”

LeJeune is not, however, discouraged.

“I do believe that the loneliness people feel in this culture ... is also the greatest opportunity for the church in the 21st century,” he shared. “Because if we address the loneliness people feel — and we offer an antidote through commu-

nity and relationships that are meaningful — then guess what happens? You’ve earned that trust that’s necessary to build a relationship wherein evangelization and discipleship can take place.”

## And the template for that?

“We’ve got to go beyond just the norm of the average parish, which is stuck in the status quo,” LeJeune emphasized. “If we go back to what the grassroots methodology of Jesus was, he didn’t run programs. He had very few events, and he didn’t teach a class — even though he taught. So, what did he do?” asked LeJeune. “He gathered people together, and did meaningful things. They would eat together. They would travel together. They would pray together, and they would have conversations about things that mattered.”

In 2024, the Harvard Graduate School of Education’s “Making Caring Common” project released a four-year investigation of the underlying causes of loneliness.

“Loneliness in America: Just the Tip of the Iceberg” found people between 30 and 44 years old were the loneliest, with 29% saying they were “frequently” or “always” lonely. For 18- to 29-year-olds, the rate was 24%; 45- to 64-year-olds, 20%; 65-plus, 10%.

Men and women experienced similar rates of loneliness, and neither race or ethnicity appeared to have a role (although those with more than one racial identity had levels of loneliness at 42%). Income was a factor — Americans earning less than \$30,000 were the loneliest — but not education. Busy and tired people (62%) also obviously have less time with family (66%).

Kevin Vost — a Catholic psychologist and author of “The Catholic Guide to Loneliness: How Science and Faith Can Help Us Understand It, Grow from It, and Conquer It” (Sophia Institute Press) — died unexpectedly in 2023. But when his book was published in 2017, Vost was already alerting readers “the prevalence of loneliness seems to be escalating at an alarming rate in our time.”



OSV News photo/Ave Maria Press  
**Regina Boyd, founder of Heartspace Therapy Center in Lake Mary, Fla., is pictured in an undated photo. She is a licensed mental health counselor, and author of “Leaving Loneliness Behind: 5 Keys to Experiencing God’s Love and Building Healthy Connections with Others,” from Ave Maria Press.**

On the Dec. 19, 2017, broadcast of “Divine Intimacy Radio” — a show heard on EWTN Catholic Radio Network — Vost explained, “People who are lonely for a long time become more like people with depression. And there’s quite an overlap, and they can become very negative. They tend to remember just negative personal experiences or losses in the past. They might be hesitant to reach out to others, or they might fear rejection.”

He added that psychologists try to turn that thinking around.

“The psychological techniques — the most effective found in studies — are the ones that focus on that perception, the way we think about the situation, because they found most adults already do have social skills,” noted Vost. “It’s just this distorted thinking that’s preventing them to reach out. So one of the most important components in dealing with a person who is distressed by a loneliness is to try to train them to think more realistically and rationally about their situation.”

Regina Boyd — founder of Heartspace Therapy Center in Lake Mary, Florida, a licensed mental health counselor, and author of “Leaving Loneliness Behind: 5 Keys to Experiencing God’s Love  
**See “Connection” on Page 10**

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## Connection ...

**Cont'd from Page 9**  
and Building Healthy Connections with Others" (Ave Maria Press) — told OSV News while everyone seems digitally connected at all times, it's a different kind of bonding than in-person communication.

"Even though we have this ability to connect online and develop relationships — which is a beautiful gift of convenience — I think it also shortens experiences in a lot of ways," Boyd suggested.

"One person that I spoke to recently made an observation about birthdays — they get less phone calls on their birthdays because it's so much easier to just send a text. Whereas maybe 30 years ago, they were on the phone throughout the day receiving phone calls from people. In a way, we're connected — but also disconnected."

The 2024 Harvard Graduate School of Education study also reported 73% of those surveyed selected technology as contributing to loneliness.

And as to the melancholy so many experience at this time of the year,

Boyd thinks she knows why.

"The holidays sort of amplify whatever we might be experiencing or going through. So if we're feeling joyful, it feels brighter during the holidays, but also if we're feeling lonely, it feels heavier," she observed. "And we have the experience of social comparisons. We see all of these beautiful images on social media, talking about togetherness and happiness."

Changed routines, Boyd added, also allow for reflection.

"Emotional needs are coming to the surface — when maybe in our typical

routines, we can put those emotions aside, and push past them. And when there's loss — missed family members; people who are no longer present — the holidays provide that opportunity for grief, and reminders of those relationships that have changed."

### Her recommendation?

"It comes down to intentionality," advised Boyd. "Rather than us waiting for a magical moment to happen, we need to take some more control back, and make moments

happen for ourselves. And so maybe we have some intentional activities planned each week, once a week — taking a walk with a friend; going to that local Bible study; going to the holiday gathering you might have typically skipped. Or creating smaller, more seemingly meaningless connections — that brief conversation with your co-worker; with the employee across the counter; with your neighbor — just taking extra time to have those brief moments of connection."

And set realistic expecta-

tions for yourself, said Boyd.


"We put so much pressure on ourselves — and it's OK to not have the picture perfect holiday to feel connected."

(Kimberley Heatherington is an OSV News correspondent. She writes from Virginia.)

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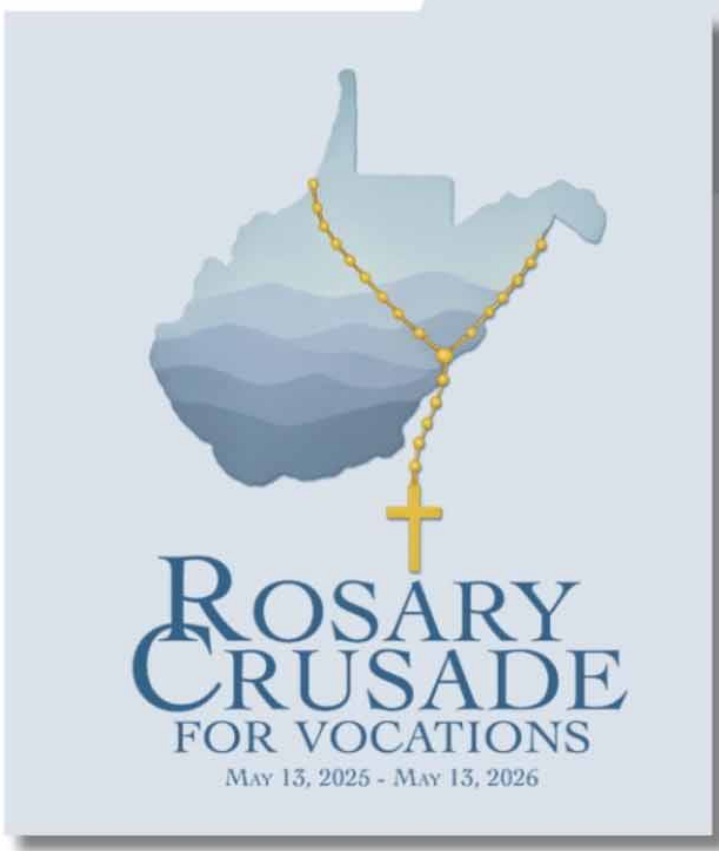
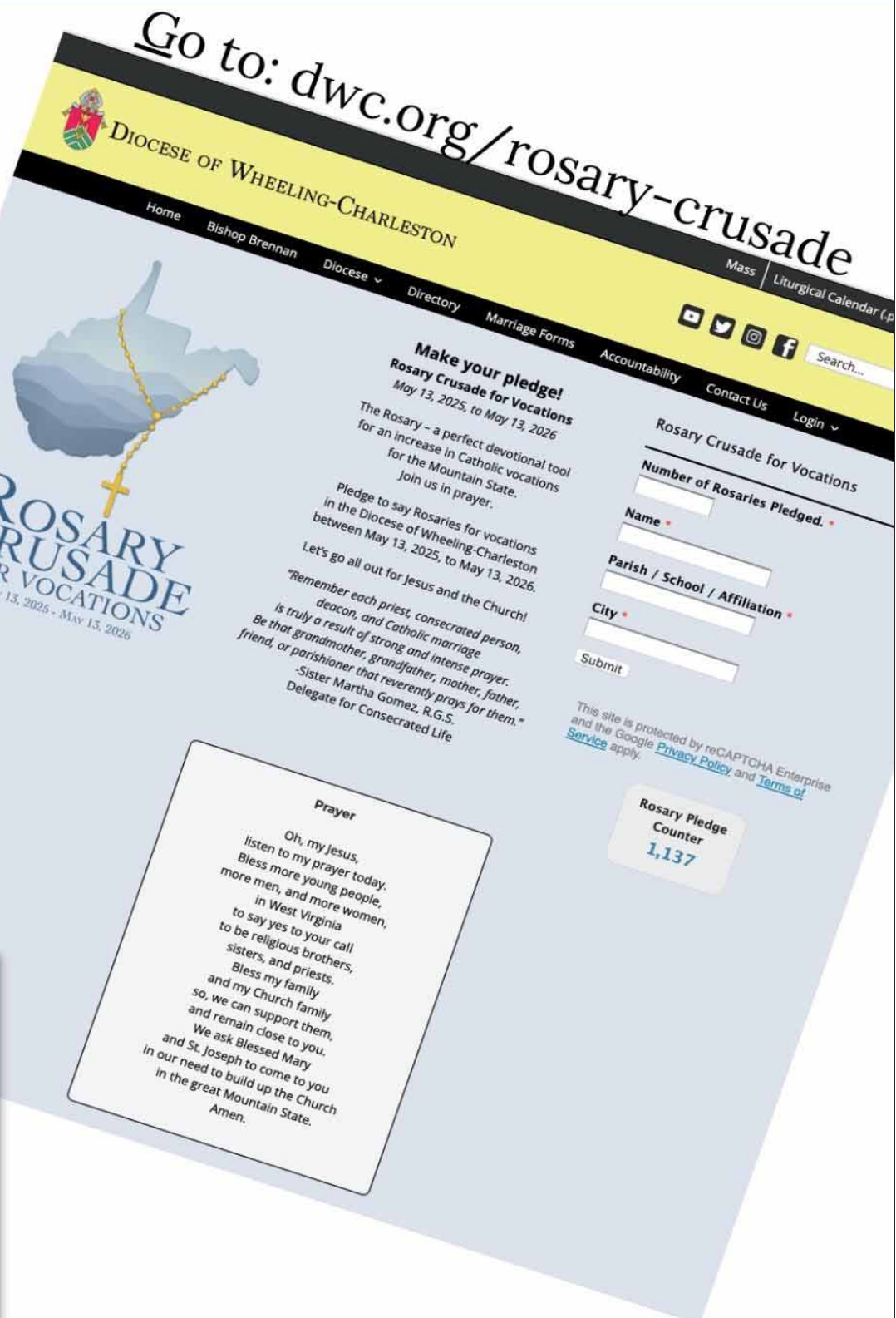
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# El pesebre y el árbol de Navidad son signos de esperanza, afirma el Papa León

Por Carol Glatz, Catholic News Service

**CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS)** — El nacimiento (también conocido como belén o pesebre navideño) y el árbol de Navidad son signos de fe y esperanza, afirmó el Papa León XIV.

"Mientras los contemplamos en nuestros hogares, parroquias y plazas, pidamos al Señor que renueve en nosotros el don de la paz y la fraternidad", dijo, y pidió oraciones por todos aquellos que sufren a causa de las guerras y la violencia.

"Debemos eliminar el odio de nuestros corazones".

El Papa pronunció estas palabras el 15 de diciembre durante una reunión con los representantes del Gobierno, los artesanos y los donantes responsables de proporcionar los adornos navideños de la Sala de Audiencias Pablo VI y la Plaza de San Pedro.

El Papa León agradeció a la artista costarricense que creó el belén para la sala de audiencias, titulado "Nacimiento Gaudium". Creado por Paula Sáenz Soto, muestra a la Virgen María embarazada y 28.000 cintas de colores, cada una de las cuales representa una vida salvada del aborto gracias a las oraciones y el apoyo prestado a muchas madres en dificultades por organizaciones católicas, según un comunicado de prensa de la oficina de gobierno de la Ciudad del Vaticano.

En Nochebuena, la estatua será sustituida por otra imagen de María arrodillada en adoración al niño Jesús recién nacido, y se colocarán 400 cintas en el pesebre de Jesús con

oraciones y deseos escritos por jóvenes pacientes del Hospital Nacional de Niños de San José.

"Agradezco a la artista costarricense que, junto con el mensaje de paz de la Navidad, quiso lanzar también un llamamiento para proteger la vida desde la concepción", dijo el Papa León.

"El belén y el árbol de Navidad son signos de fe y esperanza", dijo a todos los presentes. "Dejemos que la ternura del Niño Jesús ilumine nuestra vida. Dejemos que el amor de Dios, como las ramas de un árbol siempre verde, permanezca feraciente dentro de nosotros".

El Papa agradeció a los habitantes de un pequeño pueblo de la provincia autónoma de Bolzano, en el norte del país, que donaron el abeto noruego de 25 metros de altura y 8,8 toneladas de peso, que se encenderá en una ceremonia especial el 15 de diciembre, cuando se inaugurará el gran belén de la plaza.

"Para los peregrinos de todo el mundo que se reunirán en la plaza de San Pedro, el pesebre les recordará que Dios se acerca a la humanidad, se hace uno de nosotros, entrando en nuestra historia en la pequeñez de un niño", dijo el Papa.

"Ante cada pesebre, incluso los que hacemos en nuestras casas, revivimos ese acontecimiento y redescubrimos la necesidad de buscar momentos de silencio y oración en nuestras vidas, para encontrarnos a nosotros mismos y entrar en comunión con Dios", afirmó.

El pesebre de la plaza de San Pedro para 2025 procede de una diócesis al sur de Nápoles, no lejos



Foto CNS/Vatican Media

El Papa León XIV se detiene a orar frente al pesebre o belén en el Aula Pablo VI en el Vaticano el 15 de diciembre. Agradeciendo a los artistas y donantes responsables de la decoración navideña del Vaticano, el Santo Padre pidió oraciones por los miembros de la comunidad judía en Australia tras el atentado terrorista de la noche anterior.

de la costa de Amalfi. Entre los regalos que ofrecen los pastores se encuentran productos agrícolas famosos de la región, como los tomates San Marzano y Corbarino, las nueces, las cebollas y las alcachofas.

Tanto el nacimiento como el árbol permanecerán en la plaza de San Pedro hasta el 11 de enero, fiesta del Bautismo del Señor.

La oficina gubernamental de la Ciudad del Vaticano ha informado de que las agujas y las ramas verdes del árbol se enviarán a una empresa austriaca para extraer sus aceites esenciales, y la madera se donará a

una organización benéfica.

Cuando el Papa León se reunió el 13 de diciembre con cientos de personas que participaban en un belén viviente celebrado en la basílica de Santa María la Mayor de Roma, dijo que el pesebre "es un signo importante: nos recuerda que formamos parte de una maravillosa aventura de salvación en la que nunca estamos solos".

"Difundan este mensaje y mantengan viva esta tradición. Son un regalo de luz para nuestro mundo, que tanto necesita poder seguir esperando", dijo.

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

La diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston te exhorta a denunciar cualquier delito ante las autoridades civiles. Para realizar una denuncia en contra de cualquier obispo en todos los Estados Unidos, favor de reportarlo en la página web [www.repostbishopabuse.org](http://www.repostbishopabuse.org). Y si, además, existen motivos para creer que un obispo ha cometido alguna conducta sexual inapropiada favor de comunicarse con las autoridades civiles de la jurisdicción correspondiente y también puede realizar un reporte en la página web antes mencionada. **Para informar a las autoridades civiles:** comuníquese con la policía local; los números varían según su ubicación. Si considera que alguien está en peligro inmediato, favor de llamar al 911. Para informar de forma confidencial sobre cualquier sospecha de abuso o negligencia infantil, incluido el abuso sexual, favor de comunicarse con la Oficina de Servicios de Protección Infantil de Niños y Familias de West Virginia, llamando a la línea directa de abuso infantil al 1-800.352.6513. **Para informar a las autoridades diocesanas:** La diócesis exhorta a informar primeramente a las autoridades civiles correspondientes, cuando la denuncia incluye un delito, y también alienta a informar a las autoridades eclesiales correspondientes. Para reportar casos sospechosos de abuso sexual de menores por parte del personal de la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston, comuníquese directamente con la diócesis a los teléfonos 1.888.434.6237 o 304.233.0880 para hablar con cualquiera de las siguientes personas asignadas: Sr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Sr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; y si desea hablar en español con Sor Martha Gómez, ext. 264. También puede llamar a la Oficina de Ambiente Se-

guro de la diócesis al 304.230.1504 o a la línea directa de abuso sexual de la diócesis al 833.230.5656. Los formularios de quejas están disponibles en línea en la página web [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org), favor de hacer clic en "Diócesis" en la barra de menú, luego en "Oficinas", en "Ambiente seguro" y en "Descargar archivos y formularios". El formulario se titula "Formulario de queja para denuncias de abuso sexual de menores". El formulario se puede enviar por correo en Estados Unidos a: Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003. **Para informar al Coordinador de Asistencia a Víctimas de la Diócesis:** Favor de llamar a Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, al 304.559.6742. Además de las vías mencionadas anteriormente para denunciar el abuso sexual, la diócesis se ha asociado con la compañía Navex Global que ofrece la plataforma EthicsPoint para informar cualquier inquietud adicional, como sospecha de mala conducta financiera, profesional y personal de un sacerdote, diácono, religioso, o empleado laico de la diócesis o cualquier parroquia o escuela católica en West Virginia. Puede acceder a la plataforma EthicsPoint a través de la página web [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org), en "Rendición de cuentas", luego "Informar mala conducta" o llamando al 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint es una herramienta de denuncia confidencial y anónima, ellos se encargarán de transmitir su denuncia directamente a las autoridades civiles y a las autoridades diocesanas correspondientes, y lo más importante al denunciar a través de ellos, la identidad de la persona que denuncia está protegida. **Enlaces e información:** Departamento de Salud y Recursos Humanos de WV: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. Policía Estatal de Virginia Occidental, Unidad de crímenes contra a menores: 304-293-6400.

# Employment Opportunities

## School Nurse

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston is looking to fill the position of School Nurse for its School Based Health Program. This is a full-time position requiring 40 hours per week for 40 weeks. The position is located at St. Vincent de Paul School, St. Michael Parish School, Central Catholic High School and Our Lady of Peace School.

The school nurse is responsible for planning, implementing, coordinating, and evaluating school health services within the context of the School Based Health Program. The nurse serves in the roles of program manager, case manager, direct care provider, collaborator, advocate, educator and counselor to students, parents, faculty, and the community as appropriate.

The successful candidate will possess a current valid WV Nursing License with a BSN. Pediatric, adolescent or public health experience is desired. The individual must be able to function independently within scope of practice. Interested persons should submit a resume to Erin McFarland, School Based Health Coordinator at emcfarland@stvincentschool.org

## Provider Support Specialist

Full Time, Catholic Charities West Virginia (CCWVa.) The Provider Support Specialist of the Child Care Resource Center is responsible for assisting child care providers in the West Virginia CARES system, WV STARS Career Pathway system, providing support in person or on the phone as needed, participating in community outreach events, and relieving the Supervisor of clerical duties and minor administrative business details.

To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill and/or ability required; bachelor's degree in human services or related field or early care and education or child development. The definition of related fields includes social work, sociology, psychology, counseling, interpersonal communications, elementary or special education, and behavioral science; ability to work collaboratively in a team environment as well as independently; ability to follow directions and work well with others; ability to prioritize and handle multiple tasks simultaneously; knowledge of office equipment and understanding of sound basic office procedures; prior use and understanding of computers, word processing and spread sheet application. Have a good understanding of how to use technology such as internet, Microsoft Office programs, and other programs as needed; good typing and editing skills; ability to work with persons from varied socio-economic backgrounds; willingness to work with people of cultural, ethnic and racial diversity; ability to maintain confidentiality, good written and oral communication skills; must hold a valid driver's license and able to drive throughout the covered region and state. Click here to apply.

## Homeless Winter Shelter Assistant

Part Time, located in Morgantown. At Catholic Charities West Virginia (CCWVa), we have a culture deeply rooted in Catholic social teaching and respect all Catholic beliefs and practices.

### ESSENTIAL DUTIES

The Winter Shelter Assistant (WSA) will provide essential 24-hour awake coverage and supervision of the assigned shelter. This position is responsible for the welfare, safety and comfort, as well as daily support to the shelter residents. The incumbent is expected to always stay awake during shift.

Job responsibilities include: Create a welcoming environment for shelter clients, including greeting clients, orienting new clients to the shelter, and answering questions; empower shelter clients and provide support and crisis intervention through a trauma-informed care lens; provide resource information or triage questions for families residing in the shelter; ensure the safety and security of the shelter and the residents by enforcing house rules and conducting inspections during shift and reporting incidents by following protocols; support and assist guests with their shelter needs as they arise (ex. questions, concerns, hygiene supplies, cleaning supplies, bedding, food and more); maintain the safety and security of shelter property, and report concerns to Shelter Director.

### ADDITIONAL DUTIES

Answers phone calls and relays important telephone calls to Service Specialist and

Shelter Director; document shift notes at least once per shift and completes proper documentation, including but not limited to task list checks off lists, incident reports, reasonable suspicion forms, and mandated reporter documentation/reporting duties.

### QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily; the requirements listed below are representative of the knowledge, skill and/or ability required; high school diploma; at least one (1) year related work experience in direct service, preferably working in residential shelter services environment; ability to work a flexible schedule, working as a part of a 24 hour on-call system, and always staying awake during work hours; ability to lift a minimum of 50 pounds; ability to respond to physical emergencies, including immediate evacuation of campus buildings and potential client medical and behavior situations

The physical demands described here are representative of those that must be met by an employee to successfully perform the essential functions of this job.

The work environment characteristics described here are representative of those an employee encounters while performing the essential functions of this job.

The noise level in the work environment is usually moderate.

Click here to apply.

## HR Generalist, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

The Human Resources Generalist as a member of Diocesan Services, is committed to advancing the mission of Jesus Christ, consistent with the core purpose and Gospel values enunciated in the Diocesan Services' Mission Statement. The Human Resources Generalist will work as part of the HR team with a focus on supporting the Catholic Schools throughout the Diocese. The generalist will also serve to drive the onboarding process within the Diocese.

**ESSENTIAL DUTIES:** Performs all onboarding for Diocese, including schools and parishes; works directly with school administration and staff to ensure accuracy and proper use of entire HRIS system; supports person for Family Medical Leave and Short Term Disability; ensures all ACA reporting and maintains file accuracy in the payroll system; assists with open enrollment for all

benefit platforms; helps maintain organizational guidelines; maintain employee files and records electronically; monitors HR Help Desk; backup for Diocesan Pension Plans.

**QUALIFICATIONS:** High school graduate; Bachelor's Degree in Human Resources or Business; five (5) years' experience in human resources; firm knowledge and understanding of human resources best practices; knowledge and experience working with payroll and HRIS applications. Labor relations and policy experience a plus; ability to maintain confidentiality; ability to work collaboratively in a team environment.

Qualified candidates should forward a cover letter and current resume to: Debbie Turziano, Director of Human Resources at dturziano@dwc.org.

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# Employment Opportunities

## Saint Joseph School Elementary/Middle School Principal

Saint Joseph School in Martinsburg is seeking a principal who understands that this is a ministerial position at a religious institution and that there is within the Catholic Church a body of officially taught and commonly accepted beliefs, the communication of which is a fundamental purpose and mission of a Catholic school and that its students and staff have a right to expect such communication implicitly and explicitly from its president, principal and teachers, regardless of the subject areas, grades or courses being taught.

Reports to: Head of Schools

Job Description: According to Policy 2212.3 of Diocesan policy for Catholic Schools, the principal will serve as administrator, spiritual leader, financial manager and chief academic officer. The principal's responsibilities include, but are not limited to: curriculum, staff development, facilities, sports, finances and all day-to-day operations of the school. The principal reports to the pastor/designated pastor of the school.

### ESSENTIAL DUTIES:

Performance Responsibilities:

General Duties: Chief Academic Officer

As the chief academic officer, the principal will fulfill administrative duties including, but not limited to, those required as the leader of the

school:

**Spiritual Leader:** Ensures a strong Catholic identity in the school, working with teachers, students and their families to continually build the faith community.

**Instructional Leader:** Ensures academic excellence driven by a variety of teaching and learning strategies.

Guides teachers to use data to make instructional decisions.

Is the chief communicator of the school to families.

**Managerial Leader:** Manages the school staff, including teachers and other school personnel.

Ensures staff is continually focused on school improvement through the accreditation process.

### ADDITIONAL DUTIES:

**Facility Manager:** Oversees the management of the school facility

**Financial Manager:** Oversees the management of finances

Day-to-day school decisions will be the responsibility of the school principal. Regular meetings with the pastor/designated pastor must occur. Working as a team is essential to the success of the impact that the leadership will have on the school

community.

### QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS:

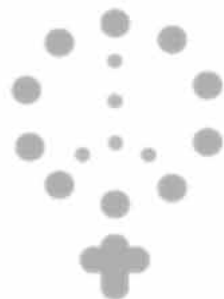
Practicing Catholic; Committed to Catholic education and the core values of Catholic schools; Committed to the leadership capacity within Catholic schools; Should be certified or eligible for certification in the state of West Virginia; Master's degree or related work experience preferred.

Please send a letter of introduction and resume to Maria Byrd at mbyrd@sjsvw.org.

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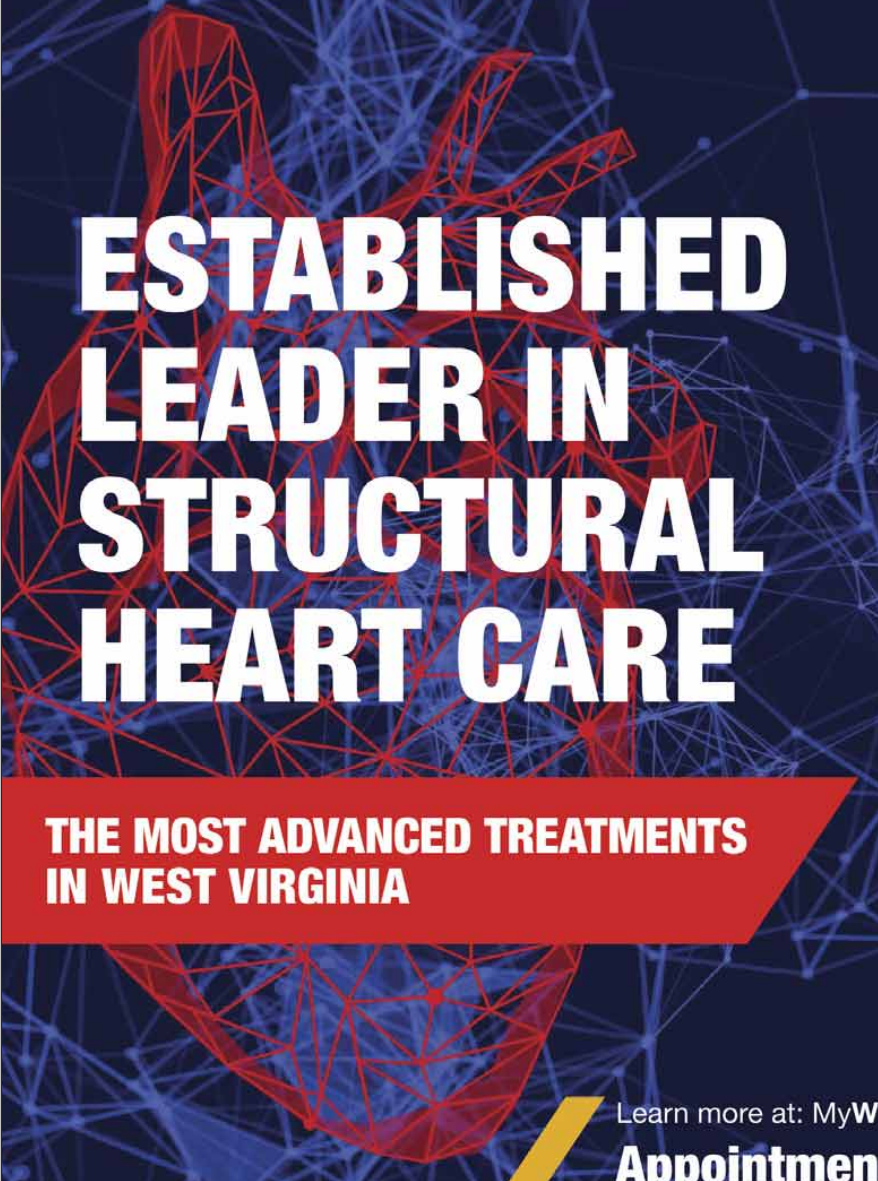
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