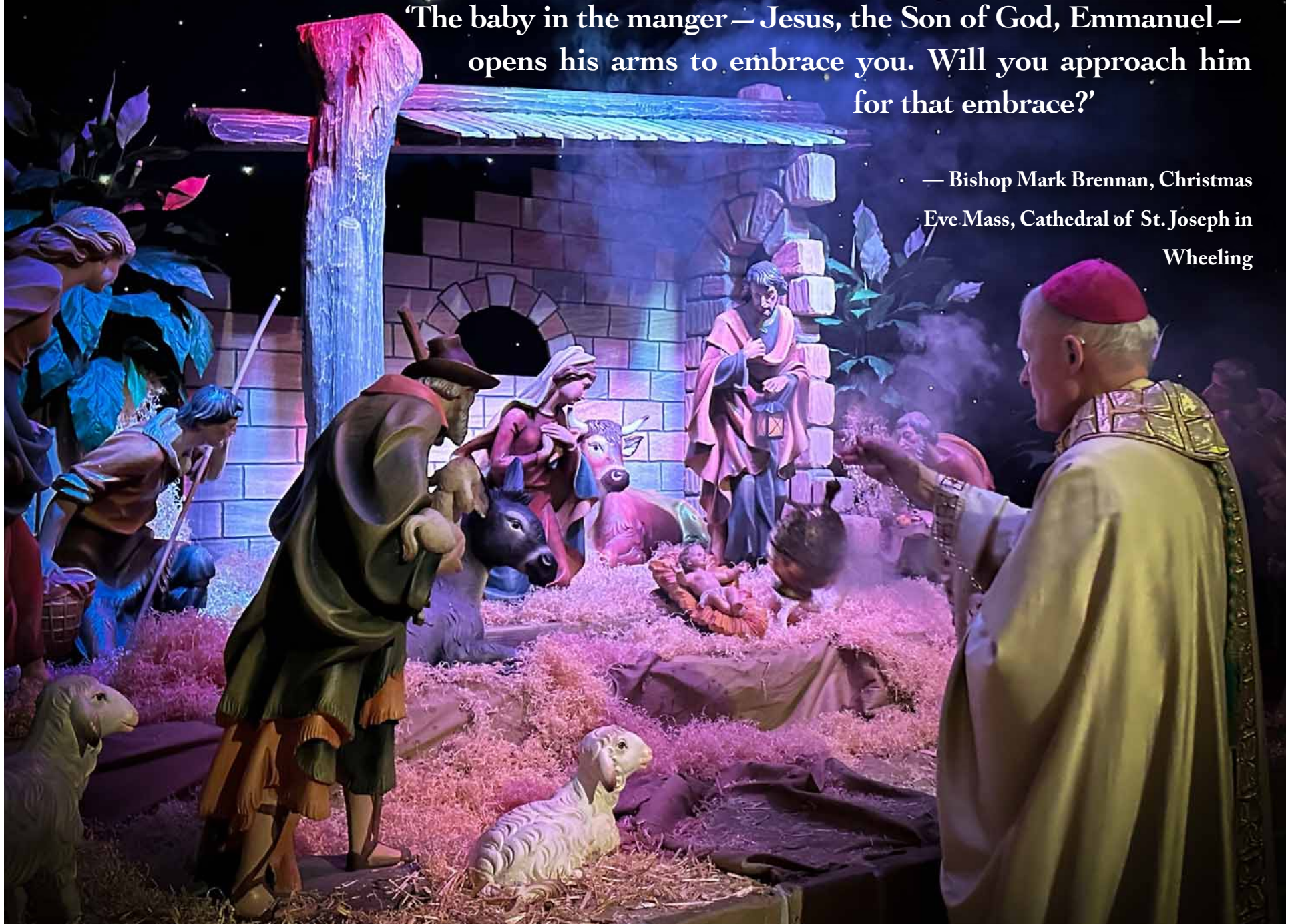


THE CATHOLIC Spirit

Christmas Invites Us to Draw Closer to God, Bishop Says

‘The baby in the manger — Jesus, the Son of God, Emmanuel — opens his arms to embrace you. Will you approach him for that embrace?’

— Bishop Mark Brennan, Christmas Eve Mass, Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling



Tyler J. Greenwood Photo

Bishop Mark Brennan incenses the nativity scene at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling at the beginning of Christmas Eve Mass.

By Colleen Rowan

As he began his homily for Christmas Eve Mass at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling, Bishop Mark Brennan encouraged the faithful to visit the nativity scene beside the altar before leaving for the evening. “It’s really quite beautiful,” he said.

It was on Christmas Eve in the year 1223, the

bishop continued, exactly 800 years ago this night that St. Francis of Assisi inaugurated in Greccio, a village in the hills of central Italy, a widespread custom of mounting a nativity scene for the faithful to behold. St. Francis had been to the Holy Land and had seen the cave in Bethlehem where Jesus was born, the bishop shared, and he was struck by the poverty and the simplicity of the place and

how the Son of God chose to be born in such humble circumstances. St. Francis thought that the Christian faithful would benefit from seeing with their own eyes the conditions in which their Savior was born, Bishop Brennan said. And so, St. Francis asked a friend in Greccio, a nobleman named John who was renowned for his faith and his charity, to

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Diocese Announces Women’s Discernment Retreat, Page 6



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this Christmas & in the New Year*

dwc.org/CSA

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Because time is of the essence, faithful in Berkeley County and the surrounding area only are asked to complete this survey as soon as possible by **CLICKING HERE** or scanning the QR code shown below and share it with anyone who might be interested. Your feedback is greatly appreciated.



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. 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, go to www.dwc.org, click "Diocese", then "Offices," then "Office of Safe Environment."

To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children: The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. We also encourage utilizing www.reportbishopabuse.org to make a report about any bishop in the U.S. If you have reason to believe that a bishop has engaged in sexual misconduct or has interfered with an investigation into sexual misconduct, please contact civil authorities in the applicable jurisdiction and visit www.reportbishopabuse.org. **To Report to Civil Authorities: Contact your local law enforcement:** numbers will vary based on your location. If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911. To confidentially report any incidence of suspected child abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse, contact the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families' Child Protective Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 800.352.6513. You may report anonymously to this hotline if you prefer. **To Report to Diocesan Authorities:** The diocese encourages reporting to the appropriate civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. The diocese also encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities. To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, contact one of the following designees at 1.888.434.6237 or 304.233.0880: Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; or Very Rev. Dennis Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., ext. 270; or Sr. Martha Gomez, ext. 264. 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. Additional methods of reporting are available at www.dwc.org, under "Accountability." Complaint forms are available online at www.dwc.org, click "Diocese" on the menu bar, then "Offices," then "Safe Environment", then "Download Files and Forms." The form is titled "Complaint Form for Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor." The form may be returned via U.S. mail to: Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003. **To Report to the Diocese's Victim Assistance Coordinator:** please call Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, at 304.559.6742. 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.

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 Mailing: PO Box 230
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 (304) 232-0444
 Fax: (304) 233-8551
 Web site: www.thecatholicspiritwv.org
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Christmas...

Cont'd from Page 1

prepare a cave just outside the town for the nativity scene. The saint sent word to his friars, who streamed toward the town from all over Italy. Carrying torches and candles to illuminate the night, the local people, the friars, and St. Francis went to the cave where they saw an ox, a donkey, and a manger filled with hay. Local people, the bishop said, posed as Mary and Joseph, and the sources are not exactly clear but there may have been a baby in the manger.

"Mass was celebrated over the manger," Bishop Brennan said, "allowing the risen Christ to make himself truly present in the Eucharist just above the replica of where he lay as a baby. And, according to a contemporary record, Francis spoke about the Christ child's birth and urged the people to learn from him."

Reportedly, the people returned home filled with joy.

"What did St. Francis hope the people would learn from their nativity scene?" the bishop asked. "Our savior was born poor and vulnerable in the humblest of circumstances. Francis, himself, had voluntarily chosen to be poor though he came from a rich family."

St. Francis knew that most people were not called to that kind of poverty, the bishop said, but they could become poor in spirit as Jesus teaches us in his Sermon on the Mount. They could value their faith more than their possessions as St. Francis's friend John and grow in practical love for their neighbor rather than acting toward others with disdain or indifference, he said.

"We can learn that lesson too if we believe what the Lord teaches us and seek his help to live by it," Bishop Brennan said. "Jesus became a healthy, strong, young man but he lost his health, his strength, and his life in a few hours between the Garden of Gethsemane and the Cross. Yet, his trust in his Father never wavered. We, who are vulnerable to nature and to the treatment others meet out to us can learn from Jesus to recognize our need for God and to trust in him more than in our own physical and moral resources."

The faithful can also learn from the humility of God's Son, the bishop said; he did not put on a show of his divinity, though he was divine.

"He chose to cloak himself in the same flesh we wear and to be dependent as a baby on others," the bishop said. "He was humble when he later accepted John's baptism as a sign of repentance from sin though he never sinned. He dined with sinners even though it caused the self-righteous to look down on him. He performed miracles, but was not a one man show. For he gathered disciples around him, sent them out to preach his gospel, and endowed them with the power to perform mighty works. His humility is foreshadowed in the manner of his birth. We learn from that little child not to strut about as if we were so important and to work with others in accomplishing good things."



Courtesy Photo

Bishop Brennan celebrates Christmas Eve Mass at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling.

Bishop Brennan noted that God's word says to all that the Son of God chose to come close to us. St. Matthew, he said, tells us that Jesus is Emmanuel, "God is with us." Isaiah, in the first reading for the Christmas Eve Mass, used marriage to speak of God's closeness to his people, the bishop said, a people struggling to reestablish themselves after their exile. "No more shall people call you 'Forsaken,' or your land 'Desolate,' but you shall be called 'My Delight,' and your land 'Espoused.' For the LORD delights in you and makes your land his spouse. As a young man marries a virgin, your Builder shall marry you; and as a bridegroom rejoices in his bride so shall your God rejoice in you" (Is 62:1-5).

Bishop Brennan then spoke of a Christmas card he received from a recently married couple who expressed their joy in being husband and wife. "And Isaiah says that's the joy God finds in us," the bishop said, "and united to us as his people."

Jesus, in the New Testament, referred to himself as the bridegroom, the bishop said, noting that we, as church, are his bride.

"That closeness of God to his people made supereminently for real in the Incarnation of his son was what St. Francis wanted to get across to the Christians of his day, which our nativity scenes are meant to remind

us of today," Bishop Brennan said. "Our God is not far from us. Though hidden from our eyes, he is with us, walking with us and guiding us even in the worst of times."

Bishop Brennan recounted a story of a commandant of a Nazi concentration camp who ordered some of the prisoners to be hung. All the prisoners were assembled to watch. An embittered soul in the crowd cried out to any who were believers, "Where is your God now?" Another voice from the crowd answered, "He's up there, hanging with them."

The bishop then spoke of when Saul, the future St. Paul, was going to Damascus to arrest Jewish Christians, and Jesus spoke out of a blinding light to him and said, "Saul, Saul why are you persecuting me?"

"Jesus takes our sufferings personally, especially those we endure for him," Bishop Brennan said. "He does not cause our suffering but he allows it. Why? His suffering redeemed the world and ours purifies us and can be offered to God for our own sins and to help others. The Lord will either strengthen us to bear our sufferings or else give us an honorable way out of them. He does not stand at a distance. He remains close to us always."

"My brothers and sisters, Christmas invites us to draw closer to the

God who has drawn so close to us. This is why we need to pray every day, be faithful to Sunday worship and the other great feasts, cherish and receive the sacraments of divine grace, and recognize the needy Christ in our needy neighbor."

The Christmas Eve Mass at the cathedral was livestreamed on Facebook and at dwc.org; and televised at midnight in Wheeling, Martinsburg, Beckley, Bluefield, Charleston, Clarksburg, Huntington, and Morgantown.

Bishop Brennan ended his homily for the Christmas Eve Mass by speaking of the Mass he celebrated earlier this month in the federal prison in Beckley. The men there, he said, are deprived of liberty of movement and activity.

"Some of them made their confessions sincerely and then they listened attentively to God's word and received holy Communion devoutly," the bishop shared. "They enjoyed an interior freedom and chose to use a recreation hour to worship God. They teach us that we need to use our freedom to draw near to God in prayer and worship and service."

"The baby in the manger—Jesus, the Son of God, Emmanuel—opens his arms to embrace you," the bishop said. "Will you approach him for that embrace?"

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40 Hours of Devotion

January 12-14, 2024

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Friday, January 12:

6:00 PM—Exposition and Vespers with Preached Homily
9:30 PM—Chanted Compline followed by Simple Reposition

Saturday, January 13:

7:00 AM Exposition
8:00 AM—Office of Readings and Lauds
8:30 AM—Votive Mass of The Most Holy Eucharist
12:00 PM—Recitation of the Angelus and the Most Holy Rosary
5:00 PM—Vespers followed by Simple Reposition
5:30 PM—Saturday Vigil Mass
9:30 PM—Chanted Compline

Sunday, January 14

9:30 AM—Office of Readings and Lauds followed by Simple Reposition
10:30 AM—Solemn Mass
6:00 PM—Solemn Vespers and Benediction with Preached Sermon

Sign up in the back of Church for your hour(s) to be with Christ in the Blessed Sacrament.
You may also sign up via email Mike Brumley at brumleyma@gmail.com.

Diocese Announces Women's Discernment Retreat

By Joyce Bibey

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston is pleased to announce the 2024 Women's Discernment Retreat set for June 21-23, 2024, at St. Joseph Retreat Center, Wheeling, for single women ages 18 and over, who are wondering where God's calling them to be.

Religious life? Marriage? Single life? This retreat is an opportunity to ask, listen, reflect, and experience Sisterhood and help you discern your vocation.

In the Church we naturally immediately think of the call to the priesthood, when we hear: "Pray for vocations;" "Discernment Weekend;" and "Shepherds of the flock." In this moment we want to shift our focus to women in the Church to the first of hopefully many discernment retreats for Catholic women in WV, said Sister Martha Gomez, RGS, and delegate for Consecrated Life in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

Having the opportunity to spend time away from all distractions to listen closely to your heart and what God wants for you is invaluable, said Father Brian Crenwelge, director of Vocations for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

"God calls each of us to a particular vocation," he said. "To some, he whispers on their hearts that he wants them to give of their whole lives to him in a radical way—to consecrate themselves to him so as to follow him more closely and live now like we will live in heaven.

"The religious vocation is ultimately a vocation of love. It is a self-giving that receives a hundredfold back from God in return. Every young woman before she considers marriage should first consider whether or not Christ wants her to follow after him more deeply through this life of total consecration. What a gift it is!"

Religious sisters from various religious orders will assist at the retreat by sharing their testimonies and providing a joyful witness of what it means to be a consecrated Religious Sister.

"Think of discernment as discovery," Sister Martha said. "We all need to discover what Christ wants for us by discerning one vocation at a time, one step at a time. This June retreat will help the ladies in our diocese to prayerfully experience a glimpse of life as a religious sister—one of commitment, prayer, and community."

Religious sisters serving in the diocese are representative of more than 20 communities/congregations. "Our Women's Discernment Retreat will be a well-deserved time to get to know yourself, your heart, and how

Christ is working in your life," Sister Martha said. "In a world that lacks silence because of the noise of opinions, confusion, fear, and mistrust it can be easy for us to ignore our callings. It is so important to take advantage of moments like this one when you can give your heart, mind, and purpose attention, while being in the presence of other faithful women."

It is important to register as soon as possible, as space is limited to less than 10 women in order to provide a special attention and experience for the

attendees, she said. As part of the registration process candidates will need to include a letter of reference from their pastor, Catholic school principal, campus minister, or director of religious education.

The retreat is free. To register go to: <https://dwc.org/2024-womens-discernment-retreat/>

For more information email Sister Martha Gomez, RGS, at mgomez@dwc.org or call the Office of Consecrated Life at (304) 233-0880, ext. 264.

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Women's Discernment Retreat
June 21-23, 2024 St. Joseph Retreat Center, Wheeling, WV



www.dwc.org




The Office of Consecrated Life presents a discernment retreat for single Catholic women ages 18 and over. In a world that lacks moments of silence and reflection it can be easy for us to ignore our callings. Join us and take this time to get to know yourself, your heart, and how Christ is working in your life.

- ✦ Retreat is free.
- ✦ Be with other discerning women.
- ✦ Register now - space is limited!




To Register/More Info:

 Sister Martha Gomez, RGS,
mgomez@dwc.org

 Office of Consecrated Life
(304)233-0880 ext. 264

'We are so Grateful for Our Knights'



Courtesy Photo
"We are so grateful for our Knights," Sacred Heart Parish in Bluefield posted on Facebook. The Knights of Columbus Council # 1404 of Bluefield delivered fruit baskets to parishioners who are homebound for Christmas. Two council members are shown holding the baskets. "Thanks to all the KOC who helped deliver all the baskets full of fruit. Jesus is the reason for the Christmas Season!" the parish posted.



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Walking with Moms in Need is a nationwide, parish-based initiative to increase support for pregnant and parenting mothers in need. It works to ensure that any woman who finds herself unexpectedly pregnant, or parenting in difficult circumstances, can turn to her local Catholic Church and be connected with the resources she needs. Volunteers walk with moms throughout the motherhood journey, offering them authentic Christian friendship and ongoing support.

Click here to learn more

To start this ministry in your parish, contact:

Kathleen Barton, Director of Social Ministry for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston (304) 233-0880, Ext. 289; kbarton@dwc.org

Anonymous Donor's Gift Funds New Truck for Simon of Cyrene Trucking Ministry



Courtesy Photo

St. James the Greater Parish in Charles Town is so blessed that people continue to give in their own ways to the building up of the kingdom, parish officials said. Thanks to a generous and anonymous donor, Simon of Cyrene Trucking (a ministry of the parish that brings food to communities in need around the state) was able to purchase a new truck from Guy's GMC and can now serve more people than before. Gary Chicchirichi continues the beautiful tradition of his father with his great generosity to St. James. The Chicchirichi family, who donated St. Michael's Hall, the rectory, and have given this truck at cost continue to be a blessed benefactor of the parish. The Simon of Cyrene Trucking crew is pictured with the new truck.



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- Paul Grist



St. Michael's, Vienna, Supports Stone Soup Kitchen through Advent Giving Tree Each Year

Courtesy Photo
Each year, the Advent Giving Tree at St. Michael Parish in Vienna benefits the Stone Soup Kitchen at St. Francis Xavier Parish in Parkersburg. This year's tree is shown above surrounded by provisions for the soup kitchen donated by St. Michael's parishioners.

Special collection for the Holy Land

at Masses in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Jan. 13-14

“The money collected will be sent to **The Catholic Near East Welfare Association (CNEWA)**, a papal agency for humanitarian and pastoral support. They will provide the essentials of water, food, and emergency kits on the ground in the Holy Land. CNEWA has offices in the region and know where and what kind of help is needed the most.” —*Bishop Mark Brennan*



Your donation can save a life.

CNEWA's Emergency Relief Fund to provide the essentials of water, food and emergency kits on the ground in the Holy Land.



Learn more about CNEWA at <https://cnewa.org>

Serving Church, Country ‘an Honor,’ Says Priest Promoted to General in Air Force Chaplain Corps

By OSV News

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (OSV News) — At Blessed Sacrament Parish in Tallahassee, Father Peter Zalewski is a busy and beloved pastor, tending to the activities of his church community and the local Catholic school, the largest primary school in the Pensacola-Tallahassee Diocese.

But the pastor also serves in the Air Force Chaplain Corps, and with his Dec. 14 promotion to a one-star, or brigadier, general, he now holds the highest rank in the military of any Catholic priest.

On his one day off a week, he'll be tending to meetings at the Pentagon or elsewhere in Washington, because he now serves as the primary adviser to the chief of the National Guard Bureau on religious, ethical and morale issues.

As a general, Father Zalewski will provide guidance and programs directing National Guard chaplain personnel and supporting Army and Air Guardsmen.

The Dec. 14 promotion ceremony at the Florida National Guard Headquarters in St. Augustine was the culmination of Father Zalewski's nearly 40-year life in the military, which began in 1984 as a cadet at the U.S. Air Force Academy in Colorado Springs, Colorado.

In the early 1990s, he deployed in major military operations, including serving as an intelligence officer in Operation Desert Storm in the first Gulf War. He was following in the footsteps of his father, who served two tours in Vietnam, but he also pursued a military career with encouragement of his mother, who helped him appreciate the meaning of serving the Armed Forces.

The Florida native eventually heard the call to pursue the priesthood instead of Air Force pilot training, so in 1992 he became a seminarian for the Diocese of Pensacola-Tallahassee. He also became an Air Force chaplain candidate.

At his promotion ceremony, Father Zalewski thanked his parishioners at Blessed Sacrament, as well as St. Dominic in Panama City, Florida, where he was previously pastor, for always supporting his dual responsibilities.

"Thank you for your support," he said. "We



OSV News Photo/courtesy Catholic Extension
Father Pete Zalewski, pastor of Blessed Sacrament Parish in Tallahassee, Fla., is seen during a Dec. 14 ceremony at the Florida National Guard Headquarters in St. Augustine where he was promoted to brigadier general in the Air Force Chaplain Corps. Now the highest-ranked Catholic clergyman in the U.S. Armed Services, he will minister to members of both the Air and Army National Guard.

have to protect those who protect us. So, thank you for allowing me to do that. That means a lot to me."

Father Zalewski's remarks were reported by Catholic Extension in an article on its website, www.catholicextension.org.

The priest's connection to the Chicago-based organization is twofold. He serves on its mission committee, which helps Catholic Extension increase its impact and awareness around the country. He also has involved his parish in rais-

ing financial support for various Extension initiatives over the years.

But the priest also was a beneficiary of Extension's funding of seminary education when he was in formation to be ordained for the Pensacola-Tallahassee Diocese.

Each year, Catholic Extension supports 400 seminarians on their path to the priesthood by providing scholarships that help struggling dioceses pay for seminarian tuition as well as room and board.

After his ordination in 1997, Father Zalewski began serving as a parish priest in his diocese and as a military reserve chaplain at bases in the Florida Panhandle. He would eventually be deployed again in 2008 as a "wing chaplain" to Al-Dhafra Air Base in the United Arab Emirates, serving military personnel supporting U.S. operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

"He knows that the many sacrifices of our service members have created a toll — physical, mental and spiritual," Catholic Extension said. "Father Zalewski recalls his visits to military bases over these past years where he would encounter young soldiers wearing prosthetics, reminding him of what they gave on the battlefield.

"More troublesome, still, are the wounds that are not visible. Father Zalewski laments that despite many efforts within the services, suicides among military personnel are not decreasing and more needs to be done to stem this tide."

Father Zalewski said, "It's been an honor to serve my country in the military, and an honor to serve the Catholic Church in America through Catholic Extension's mission committee. I see that many of our service members come from rural communities — so Extension is a direct contributor to their spiritual well-being and strength."

Roughly a quarter of all active-duty military personnel are Catholic, Extension noted, but "as a general, he will serve people regardless of their religious affiliation. ... His job will be to ensure that these young, self-sacrificing men and women, who have given so much to our country, have the spiritual care they need."

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 with Fr. Chapin
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 8:00 WBOY NBC 12 Weston-Clarksburg-Fairmont
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- 8:15 PM** Reception

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20TH

- 9:00 AM** Mass
- 9:45 AM** **Restoring Your Identity:** Who You Are,
Whose You Are, and Why You're Here
- 11:00 AM** **The Most Important Thing:**
A Personal Relationship with Jesus
- 12:15 PM** Men's Lunch
- 12:45 PM** Men's Ministry Training

Cathedral of St. Joseph
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Turning to Our Lady of Guadalupe with Love, Hope Saved Her Life, Singer Says

By Theresa Cisneros

LOS ANGELES (OSV News) — Five years ago, Rosy Oros lay comatose in a hospital bed in Mexico — some 1,500 miles away from home — after experiencing complications from a medical procedure that had taken a drastic toll on her body and mind.

She was suffering internal and external bleeding, her organs were damaged, and doctors gave her only a 2% chance of surviving.

As she lay there on the brink of death, she finally opened her eyes and — in a haze — saw a familiar set of brown eyes gazing back at her, lovingly, that were very much still alive.

Those eyes belonged to an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe hanging just a few feet away, at once filling her heart with love and hope that the Virgin Mary she'd held dear since childhood would intercede with Jesus to help her make it out of the clinic alive.

Oros' healing journey came full circle this December as she and a cadre of other musicians sang hymns of praise and thanksgiving to Our Lady of Guadalupe during the annual "Las Mañanitas" celebration at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in honor of her feast day.

"I am so humbled and blessed to be able to stand there and in my own simple way give thanks to the Virgin," Oros told Angelus, the online news outlet of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. "It may seem insignificant but I know that she is receiving it with a lot of love and that it makes her happy, because she knows my heart."

At the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels, the festivities ran from the evening of Dec. 11 into the early hours of Guadalupe's feast day, Dec. 12.

As in years past, the celebration featured Aztec and Ballet Folklorico dancers, veneration of the only relic of St. Juan Diego's "tilma" in the U.S., the rosary, a musical tribute that included "Las Mañanitas," and ended with midnight Mass, where Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles said the Guadalupe story is a reminder that "Jesus Christ loves us so much that he came to share our hopes and dreams and to offer his life for us."

"Just as she did with Juan Diego, the most holy Mary entrusts each of us with a task. She has a message that she needs us to spread and she is sending us to tell the whole world about Jesus and his love and salvation," he said.

Oros aimed to do just that as she and six other guest singers — including Latin Grammy-nominated Graciela Beltran — delivered individual serenades to the Virgin backed by Mariachi Garibaldi de Jaime Cuellar.

Oros — dressed in a floor-length gown and red shawl — carefully made her way onto the altar, set down a bouquet of red roses near two giant images of Our Lady of Guadalupe and St. Juan Diego be-

decked with hundreds of flowers, and sang two songs to the Virgin while looking deep into the compassionate eyes that she's come to know so well.

It was a moment that she had trained for all her life.

Oros was born in Aguascalientes, Mexico, into a family of nine that is both musically inclined and devoutly Catholic; one of her brothers spent six years in the seminary, while another is currently a Jesuit novice. She immigrated to Santa Maria in California as a preteen, and from a young age studied music theory and vocalization, singing to God and to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

At 12, she discovered a love for Mexican "ranchera" music when her father bought her a copy of Linda Ronstadt's 1987 album "Canciones De Mi Padre" — in which the American singer recorded traditional mariachi songs that were of special significance to her family.

"I would lock myself in my room and listen to the cassette over and over and over again until I learned all the songs," she said. "I fell in love with Linda Ronstadt, with her voice, with her interpretation."

Since then, Oros has remained close to the singing world. She's enjoyed a long career working in TV, radio, the recording industry and now in publishing as editor-in-chief of Iconos, her own magazine highlighting music and entertainment news.

While she's remained mostly behind the scenes, she has recorded jingles, produced her own albums and sings when the occasion arises. While living in New York, she had the chance to sing on the "Late Show with David Letterman," for fashion designer Oscar de la Renta and open for Mexican "ranchera" icon Vicente Fernández at Madison Square Garden.

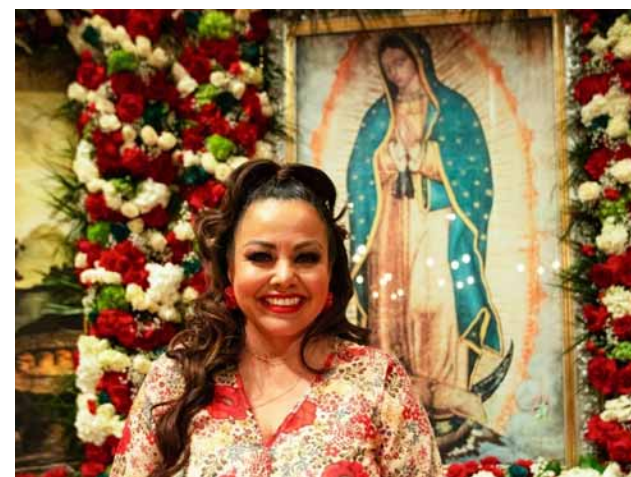
"Even though I liked to sing, for some reason, I felt like God didn't want me to become a famous singer and I understood that and I accepted it with much love and humility," Oros said. "And so now when there is an opportunity for me to sing or participate in a festival or a special event, I do it."

It was with that sense of humility that Oros accepted the chance to sing during this year's "Mañanitas" celebration at the cathedral, out of gratitude for the role she said Our Lady played in saving her life just five years ago.

In 2018, Oros went into septic shock, and then fell into a coma, after undergoing a medical procedure in Aguascalientes. After awakening, she suffered a cerebral thrombosis and other complications that worsened her prognosis.

Drifting in and out of consciousness, she spent the early days of her recovery in a clinic named, aptly, for Our Lady of Guadalupe, where she said she experienced the love of Jesus for her through Mary.

A pivotal point in her healing, she said, came when she and her husband received messages from



OSV News Photo/Victor Alemán, Angelus
A radiant Rosy Oros stands before an image of Our Lady of Guadalupe at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Angels in Los Angeles during the annual "Las Mañanitas" celebration Dec. 11-12 in honor of Our Lady's feast. The singer credits her healing from a deadly infection to the intercession of Our Lady of Guadalupe in 2018.

Mary through a prayer group, assuring her that Christ would save her through his mother's intercession.

"She said, 'I am with you, do not be afraid,' Oros said. "You will heal from this but we will do this together, facing the sanctuary.' In other words, she wanted me to get closer to her Son while holding her by the hand."

And that's exactly what happened.

Today, Oros' body and faith have grown continually stronger. The Los Angeles resident and her husband are more devoted than ever to the rosary, to Christ and to the church. They regularly seek out ways to thank Mary for her hand in the healing — including making special pilgrimages with family and friends to the Basilica of Guadalupe when Oros' work leads them to Mexico.

"She interceded for me to live," she said. "We always look for the opportunity to thank her and to be in communion with her."

Performing during this year's "Las Mañanitas" celebration at the cathedral was Oros' way of showing gratitude to Our Lady, evangelizing through song and pledging silently to the Virgin to become even more devoted to the rosary going forward.

Directing her attention toward the framed image of Our Lady of Guadalupe on the altar, she sang "Mi Querida Guadalupe" and "Hay Unos Ojos" — the latter being a song from Ronstadt's "Canciones de Mi Padre" album in which the songwriter gushes over the beauty and sparkle of his beloved's eyes.

"The song is so appropriate," she said, "Even though sometimes we are like lost sheep, she is always looking at us with eyes of love."

Surviving the near-fatal incident has shown Oros that Our Lady of Guadalupe is very much alive and is there to help all of her children, she said.

"We may not be perfect, we may be sinners, we may fall, but in the end this is proof of the love and mercy of Christ through his mother. She is the key to the door that opens to Christ and to our salvation."

(Theresa Cisneros writes for Angelus, the online news outlet of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles.)

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**DIOCESE OF
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Acudir a la Virgen de Guadalupe con amor y esperanza le salvó la vida, dice una cantante

By **Theresa Cisneros**

LOS ÁNGELES (OSV News) — Hace cinco años, Rosy Oros yacía en coma en la cama de un hospital de México -- a unos 1.500 kilómetros de su casa -- tras sufrir las complicaciones de un procedimiento médico que había afectado drásticamente a su cuerpo y su mente. Sufría hemorragias internas y externas, sus órganos estaban dañados y los médicos sólo le daban un 2% de posibilidades de sobrevivir.

Cuando estaba al borde de la muerte, abrió los ojos y, en medio de una nebulosa, vio unos ojos marrones que le devolvían la mirada, amorosamente.

Esos ojos pertenecían a una imagen de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe que colgaba a unos metros de ella, y que llenó su corazón de amor y esperanza de que la Virgen María, a la que tanto apreciaba desde niña, intercediera ante Jesús para ayudarla a salir con vida de la clínica.

El viaje de curación de Oros cerró el círculo este mes cuando ella y otros músicos entonaron himnos de alabanza y acción de gracias a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe durante la celebración anual de "Las Mañanitas" en la Catedral de Nuestra Señora de los Ángeles en honor de su festividad.

"Me siento muy humilde y bendecida por poder estar allí y, a mi manera, dar gracias a la Virgen", dijo Oros. "Puede parecer insignificante, pero sé que ella lo recibe con mucho amor y que la hace feliz, porque conoce mi corazón".

En la catedral, los festejos se extendieron desde la noche del 11 de diciembre hasta las primeras horas de la fiesta de Guadalupe, el 12 de diciembre.

Como en años anteriores, la celebración contó con bailarines aztecas y del Ballet Folklórico, la veneración de la única reliquia de la "tilma" de San Juan Diego en Estados Unidos, el rosario, un tributo musical que incluyó "Las Mañanitas", y terminó con la misa de medianoche, donde el arzobispo José H. Gomez dijo que la historia de Guadalupe es un recordatorio de que "Jesucristo nos ama tanto que vino a compartir nuestras esperanzas y sueños y a ofrecer su vida por nosotros".

"Al igual que hizo con Juan Diego, María Santísima nos encomienda a cada uno de nosotros una tarea. Ella tiene un mensaje que necesita que difundamos y nos envía a hablar al mundo entero de Jesús y de su amor y salvación".

Oros se propuso hacer precisamente eso mientras ella y otras seis cantantes invitadas --entre ellas la nominada al Grammy Latino Graciela Beltrán -- dirigían serenatas individuales a la Virgen respaldadas por el Mariachi Garibaldi de Jaime Cuéllar. Vistiendo un vestido largo y un chal rojo, se dirigió con cuidado al

altar, depositó un ramo de rosas rojas cerca de dos imágenes gigantes de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe y San Juan Diego adornadas con cientos de flores, y cantó dos canciones a la Virgen mientras miraba profundamente a los ojos compasivos que tan bien conoce.

Fue un momento para el que se había entrenado toda su vida. Oros nació en Aguascalientes, México, en el seno de una familia de nueve miembros con inclinaciones musicales y devotos católicos; uno de sus hermanos pasó seis años en el seminario, mientras que otro es actualmente novicio jesuita. Emigró a Santa María en California cuando era preadolescente, y desde muy pequeña estudió solfeo y vocalización, cantando a Dios y a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe.

A los 12 años, descubrió su amor por la música ranchera mexicana cuando su padre le compró una copia del álbum de Linda Ronstadt de 1987, "Canciones de mi padre", en el que la cantante estadounidense grababa canciones tradicionales de mariachi que tenían un significado especial para su familia.

"Me encerraba en mi habitación y escuchaba el cassette una y otra vez hasta que me aprendí todas las canciones", contó a Angelus, el medio de noticias de la Arquidiócesis de los Ángeles. "Me enamoré de Linda Ronstadt, de su voz, de su interpretación".

Desde entonces, Oros se ha mantenido cerca del mundo de la canción. Ha desarrollado una larga carrera en la televisión, la radio, la industria discográfica y, ahora, en el mundo editorial como editora en jefe de ICONOS, su propia revista de actualidad musical y del espectáculo.

Aunque ha permanecido casi siempre entre bastidores, ha grabado jingles, ha producido sus propios álbumes y canta cuando se le presenta la ocasión. Cuando vivía en Nueva York, tuvo la oportunidad de cantar en el "Late Show with David Letterman", para el diseñador de moda Oscar de la Renta y de actuar como telonera del icono de la ranchera mexicana Vicente Fernández en el Madison Square Garden.

"Aunque me gustaba cantar, por alguna razón, sentí que Dios no quería que me convirtiera en una cantante famosa y lo entendí y lo acepté con mucho amor y humildad", dijo Oros. "Y por eso ahora, cuando hay una oportunidad para que cante o participe en un festival o un evento especial, lo hago".

Fue con ese sentido de humildad que Oros aceptó la oportunidad de cantar durante la celebración de las "Mañanitas" de este año en la catedral, en agradecimiento por el papel que, según dijo, la Virgen jugó en salvar su vida hace apenas cinco años.

En 2018, Oros entró en shock séptico, y luego cayó en coma, tras someterse a un procedimiento médico

en Aguascalientes. Tras despertar, sufrió una trombosis cerebral y otras complicaciones que empeoraron su pronóstico.

Los primeros días de su recuperación, en los que entraba y salía de la consciencia, los pasó en una clínica llamada, acertadamente, de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe, donde dijo haber experimentado el amor de Jesús por ella a través de María.

Un momento crucial de su curación fue cuando ella y su esposo recibieron mensajes de María a través de un grupo de oración, asegurándoles que Cristo la salvaría por intercesión de su madre.

Ella dijo: "Estoy contigo, no tengas miedo". "Te curarás de esto, pero lo haremos juntos, de cara al santuario. En otras palabras, quería que me acercara a su Hijo mientras la llevaba de la mano". Y eso es exactamente lo que ocurrió. Hoy, el cuerpo y la fe de Oros se han fortalecido continuamente. La residente de Los Ángeles y su esposo son más devotos que nunca del rosario, de Cristo y de la Iglesia.

Buscan con regularidad formas de agradecer a María su intervención en la curación, incluyendo peregrinaciones especiales con familiares y amigos a la Basílica de Guadalupe cuando el trabajo de Oros les lleva a México. "Ella intercedió para que yo viviera", afirmó. "Siempre buscamos la oportunidad de darle las gracias y estar en comunión con ella".

Actuar durante la celebración de "Las Mañanitas" de este año en la catedral fue la forma que tuvo Oros de mostrar su gratitud a Nuestra Señora, evangelizar a través del canto y prometer en silencio a la Virgen ser aún más devoto del rosario en el futuro.

Dirigiendo su atención hacia la imagen enmarcada de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe en el altar, cantó "Mi Querida Guadalupana" y "Hay Unos Ojos" -- esta última es una canción del álbum "Canciones de Mi Padre" de Ronstadt en la que el compositor se deshace en elogios hacia la belleza y el brillo de los ojos de su amada. "La canción es tan apropiada", dijo, "aunque a veces seamos como ovejas descarriadas, ella siempre nos mira con ojos de amor".

Sobrevivir al incidente casi mortal ha demostrado a Oros que Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe está muy viva y está ahí para ayudar a todos sus hijos, dijo.

"Puede que no seamos perfectos, puede que seamos pecadores, puede que caigamos, pero al final esto es una prueba del amor y la misericordia de Cristo a través de su madre. Ella es la llave de la puerta que se abre a Cristo y a nuestra salvación".

(Theresa Cisneros, una periodista independiente con 24 años de experiencia, escribe para Angelus, el medio de noticias de la Arquidiócesis de los Ángeles.)

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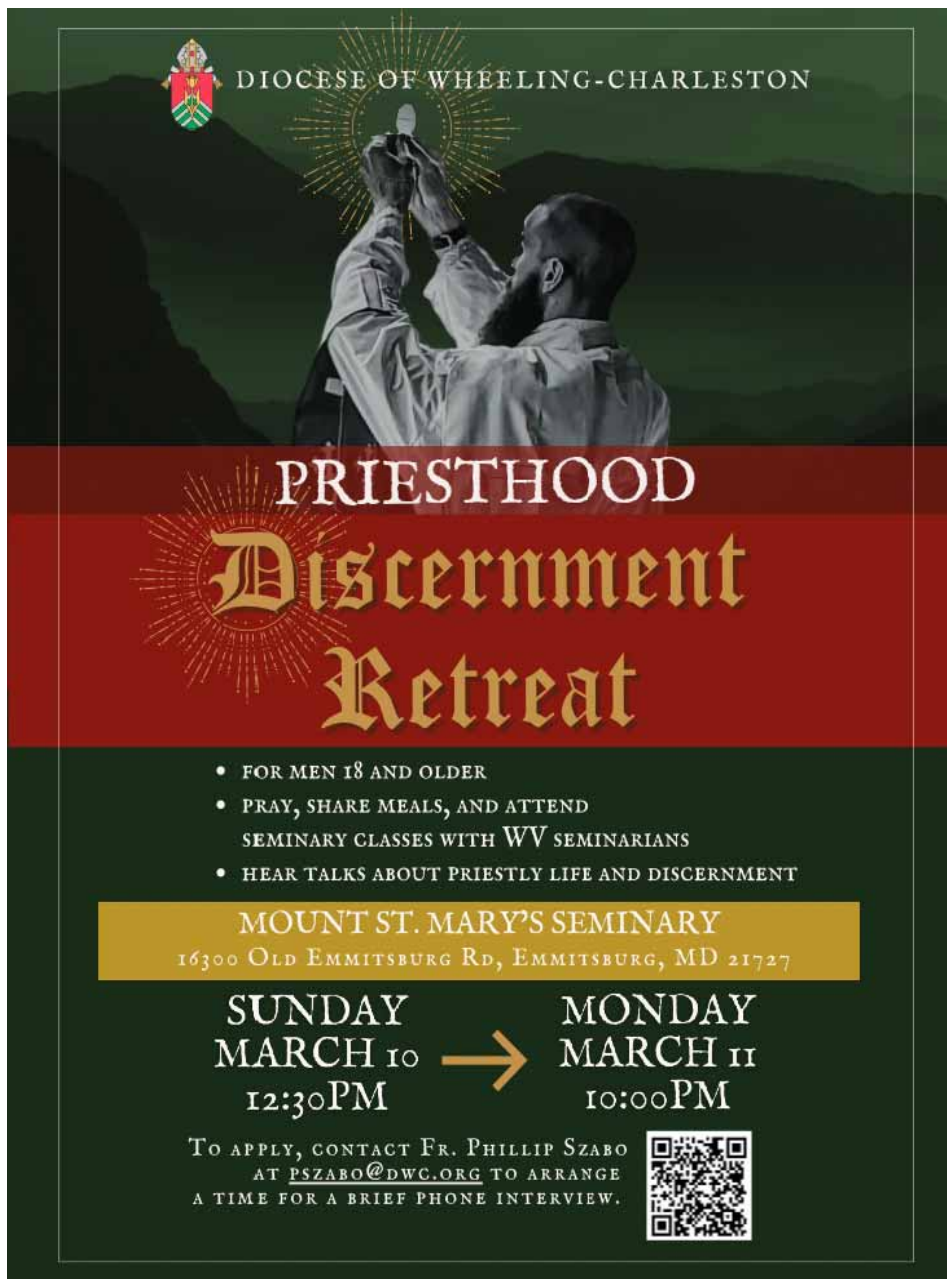
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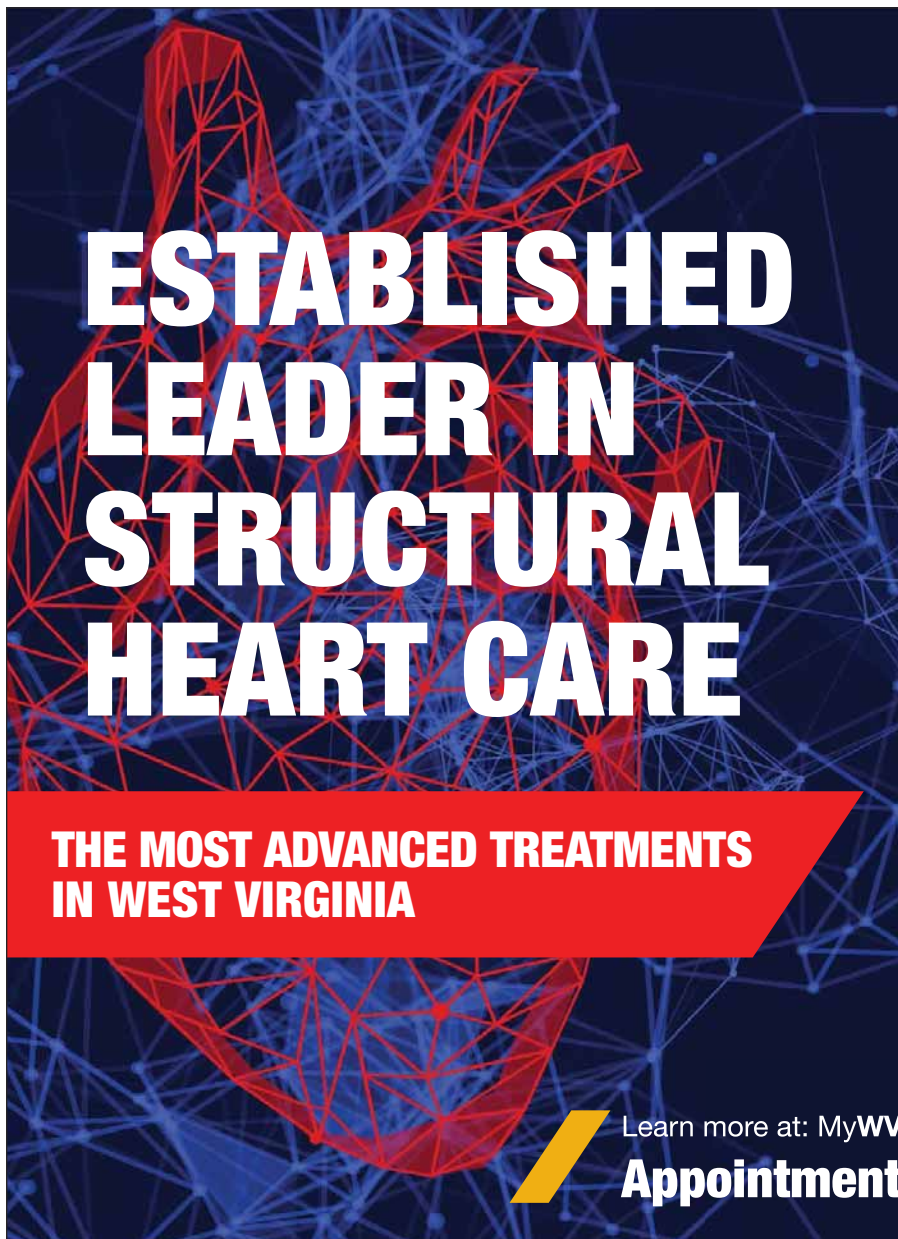


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