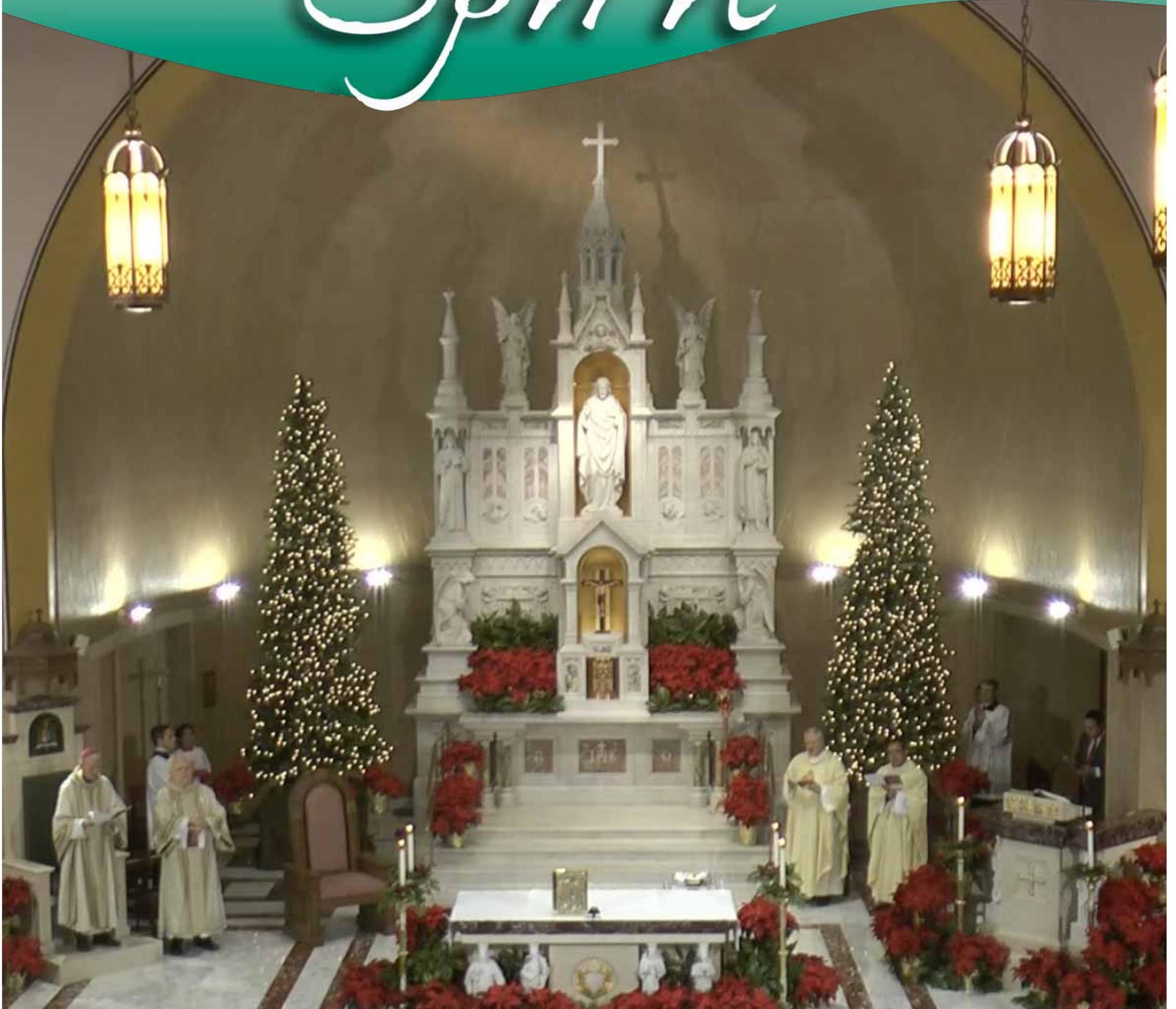


THE CATHOLIC
Spirit



Screen shot/The Catholic Spirit

Bishop Mark Brennan, left, celebrates Christmas Eve Mass at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston.

Bishop Brennan Celebrates Christmas Mass at Basilica in Charleston

By Colleen Rowan

After processing into the church at the beginning of his celebration of Christmas Eve Mass at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston, Bishop Mark Brennan stopped to bless the nativity beside the altar.

"God of every nation and people, from the very beginning of creation you have made manifest your love. When our need for a savior was great, you sent your son to be born of the Virgin

Mary. To our lives he brings joy and peace, justice, mercy, and love. Lord, bless all who look upon this manger," the bishop prayed. "May it remind us all of the humble birth of Jesus and raise up our thoughts to him who is God with us and savior of all and who lives and reigns forever and ever. Amen."

Bishop Brennan said that it was a great joy for him to join with the parishioners of the basilica especially because it was the 125th anniversary of the first Mass to be celebrated in this church.

That Mass was celebrated by Bishop Patrick J. Donahue on Christmas Eve 1897. To commemorate the anniversary, Bishop Brennan carried Bishop Donahue's crozier for his 2022 celebration of Christmas Eve Mass at the basilica.

Concelebrating the Mass were Very Rev. Donald X. Higgs, V.F., rector of the basilica, and Father Dominic Athishu, assoc. rector. Deacon Dennis Nesser, J.C.L., served as deacon of the word. Also serving were diocesan seminarians

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Diocesan Official Appointments

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

Father Dominikus Baok, S.V.D., is appointed pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Montgomery, St. Anthony Shrine Mission in Boomer, and Good Shepherd Chapel in East Bank, effective immediately.

Father Aloysius Boh is appointed pastor of St. Bernadette Parish in Hedgesville, effective immediately.

Father Binu Emmanuel, C.S.T., is appointed pastor of St. Patrick Parish in Mannington and St. Peter Parish in Farmington, effective immediately.

Father J. Michael O. Lecias is appointed pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Berkeley Springs, effective immediately.

Father Shinto Mathew is appointed pastor of St. John Parish in St. Marys, Christ Our Hope Mission in Harrisville (currently operating at St. Joseph Chapel, Pennsboro), and St. Joseph Chapel in Pennsboro, effective immediately.

Father Biju Parampil is appointed pastor of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in Logan, St. Edmund Chapel in Man, and Sacred Heart Parish in Williamson, effective immediately.

Father L.J. Asantha Jude Perera, T.O.R., is appointed pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Follansbee, effective immediately.

Father Daniel Price is appointed pastor of Annunciation of Our Lord Parish in Fort Ashby and St. Anthony Parish in Ridgeley, effective immediately.

Father S. Kumar Reddimasu is appointed pastor of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Stonewood, effective immediately.

Father Thomas A. Sebastian, C.S.T., is appointed pastor of Assumption Parish in Keyser and Our Lady of Grace Parish in Romney, effective immediately.

Father Martin Smay is appointed pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Thomas and Our Lady of Mercy Mission in Parsons, effective immediately.

Father Edward A. Tetteh, S.V.D., is appointed pastor of Holy Rosary Parish in Buckhannon and Sacred Heart Chapel in Pickens, effective immediately.

Father Shaji Jacob Thomas is appointed pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Huntington and St. Peter Claver Parish in Huntington, effective immediately.

In consultation with Bishop James Thoppil of the Diocese of Kohima, India, **Father Sojan Xavier** is appointed administrator of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in St. Albans with residence in St. Albans, effective immediately.

To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children: The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. We also encourage utilizing www.reportbishopabuse.org to make a report about any bishop in the U.S. If you have reason to believe that a bishop has engaged in sexual misconduct or has interfered with an investigation into sexual misconduct, please contact civil authorities in the applicable jurisdiction and visit www.reportbishopabuse.org.

To Report to Civil Authorities: Contact your local law enforcement: numbers will vary based on your location. If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911. To confidentially report any incidence of suspected child abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse, contact the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families' Child Protective Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 800.352.6513. You may report anonymously to this hotline if you prefer.

To Report to Diocesan Authorities: The diocese encourages reporting to the appropriate civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. The diocese also encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities. To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, contact one of the following designees at 1.888.434.6237 or 304.233.0880: Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; or Very Rev. Dennis Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., ext. 270. You may also call the Diocese's Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504. You may also call the Diocese's sexual abuse hotline at 833.230.5656. Complaint forms are available online at www.dwc.org, click "Diocese" on the menu bar, then "Offices," then "Safe Environment", then "Download Files and Forms." The form is titled "Complaint Form for Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor." The form may be returned via U.S. mail to: Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003.

To Report to the Diocese's Victim Assistance Coordinator: please call Dr. Patricia Bailey at 304.242.6988. In addition to the methods listed above for reporting sexual abuse, the Diocese also has partnered with Navex Global to offer the EthicsPoint platform to report other, additional concerns, such as suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, religious, or lay employee of the Diocese or any Catholic parish or school in West Virginia. The EthicsPoint platform can be accessed via www.dwc.org, under "Accountability", then "Report Misconduct" or by calling 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint is a third-party reporting system that reports to civil authorities where applicable and Diocesan authorities, and the identity of the person reporting is protected. Links and information: WV Department of Health and Human Resources: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. West Virginia State Police, Crimes Against Children Unit: 304-293-6400.

Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

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

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December 30, 2022, Vol. 53, No. 51

Publisher: Bishop Mark E. Brennan.....
Executive Editor: Colleen Rowan, Ext. 347 crowan@dwc.org
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Member
Catholic Press Association
West Virginia Press Association
National Press Photographers Association, Inc.




Published 24 times per year. All issues sent to each registered Catholic household free of charge. Donations to help offset the cost of producing The Catholic Spirit are welcomed. Out-of-diocese subscriptions are \$25 annually. The Catholic Spirit intends its news reports to be fair and accurate in every regard. The opinions of correspondents do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Catholic Spirit. Submission of news releases, stories and color photos welcomed and encouraged. Not responsible for unsolicited material.

Christmas..

Cont'd from Page 1

Michael J. Tupta and Timothy Kawash.

To begin his homily, Bishop Brennan shared the story of a 4-year-old boy on Christmas Eve in 1930s Kilkenny, Ireland. The boy's mother was going into labor in her home. The boy did not understand what was going on or why women were going in and out of his mother's bedroom or why no one gave him any presents. After a while, a woman came to him and said he had a new baby brother. He was not impressed.

"He told me he resented his baby brother at first," Bishop Brennan said. "Eventually, he got over it."

It was a Christmas Eve for him to forget, the bishop said of the boy. The first Christmas, the world will never forget, the bishop continued, noting that St. Paul reminded the Jews and the God-fearing gentiles who went to synagogue services on the Sabbath that God had acted on his people's behalf many times—"freeing them from slavery in Egypt and giving them David, their greatest king. And from this man's descendants Paul, went on, God has brought to Israel a savior, Jesus.

"The Lord Jesus would go around to proclaim a gospel of forgiveness and new life before offering his life for our sins on the cross and then rising from the dead to give us eternal life," the bishop said. "In the most definitive manner possible, by sending his son as our savior, God acted on behalf of his human children and began with that birth in Bethlehem."

The bishop pointed to St. Luke, who emphasized that the coming of our savior took place in history. That is why he mentions Cesar Augustus ruling in Rome and Quirinius, the governor in Syria.

"But he also points out that the powerful and rich people of that time we're not involved in or even knew about Jesus's birth," the bishop said. "The first to learn of it were shepherds, simple people engaged in tending sheep. And while many highly placed people in the past 2,000 years have believed in Christ, his message has always had a particular resonance with the poor and the lowly. Perhaps that is because they, more than others, yearn to hear some good news. We who are affluent and socially elevated do well to recognize that we need to be humble in order to welcome Christ into our lives. We have to make ourselves poor and lowly to welcome our savior."

The Lord continues to act on behalf of those on whom his favor rests, who put their faith in him, Bishop Brennan continued. He then offered a few examples: a young West Virginia woman accepted, in these times, God's call to enter reli-



Screen shot/The Catholic Spirit
Bishop Mark Brennan incenses the altar during his celebration of Christmas Eve Mass at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston. Looking on, from left, are Deacon Dennis Nesser, J.C.L.; Very Rev. Donald X. Higgs, V.F., rector of the basilica; and Father Dominic Athishu, assoc. rector.



Screen shot/The Catholic Spirit
Bishop Brennan bestows the final blessing at the end of Christmas Eve Mass. With him is Deacon Nesser.

gious life.

"She told me she has found great happiness in her community life and in her service to the poor," Bishop Brennan said.

He then spoke of a young man who got married while still working on his doctorate. Bishop Brennan, who officiated the wedding, said the man and his wife trusted that if they did not put children on hold for a number of years but were open to new life their lives would not fall apart. Raising two little ones with a third on the way has slowed the husband's academic progress somewhat, the bishop said, "but he and his wife are finding out that raising children is an engrossing adventure of its own."



Screen shot/The Catholic Spirit
Bishop Brennan blesses the nativity before Christmas Eve Mass. With him are diocesan seminarian Timothy Kawash, left, and an altar server.

On a larger stage, Bishop Brennan pointed to the outpouring of prayer and humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

"I'm not talking about what governments do," the bishop emphasized, "I'm talking about what we do as a people—our prayer and our humanitarian aid."

The Archbishop of the Ukrainian Catholic Church told the U.S. bishops about this at their conference in November, Bishop Brennan shared.

"He thanked our people, all of you, greatly for all that help that's given. All of that prayer, that humanitarian aid reveals God's blessings on a predominantly Christian country willing to stand up to a bully," Bishop Brennan said. "And Catholic parishes in this diocese

and elsewhere around our country that support pregnancy centers will likewise experience God's peace as his favor rests on them for doing what is right and good. So, God continues to show his favor to those who believe in him."

Bishop Brennan said the Incarnation, the coming of God's son into human flesh, taking a real human nature on himself, continues in the church.

"For we are the visible body of Christ—joined to Christ, are an invisible head. Even with troubles and scandals and persecutions we cannot be destroyed," Bishop Brennan said. "For Christ's life lives in us. He promised that the gates of hell would not prevail against us.

See "Christmas" on Page 4

Christmas..

Cont'd from Page 3

Sometimes the howling of the demons and the terrible afflictions, because acting through wicked people can discourage us, but we must resist giving into that negative sentiment. We must be convinced that like Jesus, who is legally descended through Joseph from the great King David, we have a royal dignity that cannot be taken away from us. We are the bearers, today, of the greatest message ever given to human beings. We say to all who will listen as Isaiah said: No more shall you be called 'Forsaken,' nor your land called 'Desolate,' But you shall be called 'My Delight is in her,' and your land 'Espoused.' For the LORD delights in you, and your land shall be espoused. For 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." (Isaiah 62: 4-5)

The bishop continued pointing to Luke 2:10, "The angel said to them, 'Do not be afraid; for behold, I proclaim to you good news of great joy that will be for all the people.'"

No one need give in to despair, Bishop Brennan said.

"God has commissioned us to say to everyone that God loves all his children and has acted on their behalf by sending his son as their savior," the bishop said. "Sin and death will not prevail. That is good news. That's news too good to keep to ourselves. We must share it with others."

Bishop Brennan said he was recently asked on a radio talk show which sermon he would prefer to give if he could only give one—Christmas or Easter? That choice was not hard for him to make. For him, it is Easter. Christmas, the bishop said, leads to Easter.

"The son of God's natural life ended, as ours will, with his death. But the goal of Christmas was that he and we might obtain the fullness of eternal life which has already begun in the risen body of Jesus Christ. That new life, without constraints, the constraints and trials of this earthly life, awaits us. That is why Easter is the greatest

Christian feast. Today's feast of Christmas points to it as a sign along the highway points to the city ahead. Contemplating what God has done in his Christ, we can share the joy of the angels and the shepherds who glorified God for his saving deed."

Turning back to the

story he shared at the beginning of his homily, Bishop Brennan said that perhaps a 4-year-old boy could not grasp what happened on that Christmas. But later, he did realize that he and his little brother, born Christmas Eve, were bound by spiritual ties of faith as well as by the natu-

ral ties of blood.

"The older brother became a priest who served God's people in our country honorably for many years," Bishop Brennan said. "I was his associate pastor for four years when I was much younger. That priest, that older brother, learned the true meaning

of Christmas and he taught his people to praise God, who had acted on their behalf. So, glory to God in the highest and on earth peace to those on whom his favors rest."

The Mass was televised throughout the state and livestreamed on the diocese's Facebook page.



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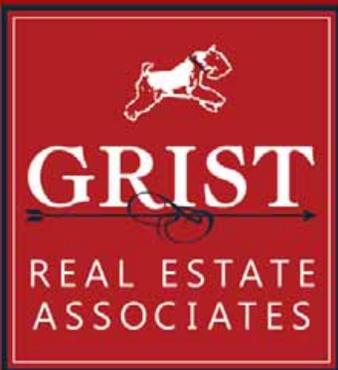
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A Joyful Celebration in Oak Hill



Students at Ss. Peter and Paul School in Oak Hill attend school Mass before Christmas break.

Courtesy Photos



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Pishner's Song of Hope, Mercy, and Peace with 'A Message from Heaven in a Tiny Child'

By Joyce Bibey
Courtesy of FaithInWV

All Saints Parish's Stephen Pishner presents a reflective song, "This Child" to create the vision and feeling of Emmanuel – God is with us – not only at Christmas but every day of our lives. He wrote the song in 2019.

From a very young age Pishner has believed music and song strengthen our faith. With this song he wanted to not only paint a picture, but to move hearts to keep focused on Christ in all we do.

"I wanted to write a song for Christmas that gave more of a sense of how God became flesh and dwells among us," said Pishner, a composer, songwriter, recording artist, and director of music ministry for the Bridgeport parish. "The song speaks of the Christ-Child who is so near to us, that he holds our hearts, in whatever shape they are in, broken or not, and even our tears in his hands. The song later speaks of 'This Child' who walks with the sinner and rejected, the outcast and the poor and that he even bears a resemblance of all the lowly ones. This is how God comes to us and when I wrote this song, I wanted to offer this kind of musical text, that might move the listener to delve deeper into the reality of the presence of God, not just at Christmas, but always."

Pishner's parents and grandparents raised him and his two sisters to be active with their faith and church-life. His favor-



Stephen Pishner

ite bible verse, "Where your treasure is, there your heart will be" (Matthew 6:21) reflects that nurtured faith. "It reminds me to focus on what is really important and not be distracted with things that don't really matter or last," he said.

What was and is important to him is providing music to the Liturgy and prayer services to bring others closer to Christ, he said.

Pishner began playing for Mass when he was a sixth grader at St. Mary's Grade School and continued on as a high school student at Notre Dame High School, sometimes playing as many as five Masses on the weekend. "My fondest memory was the experience of getting people to sing and the energy you could feel, when there was great participation," he said. "The sound of their singing and the sound of the organ or piano, when it would all come together, was always a powerful moment and still is."

Pishner's favorite saint, St. Francis of Assisi, is a strong influence in the song "This Child." Like St. Francis, Pishner's lyrics focus on Christ's call for us to be His hands and feet.

"He brings a message about being instruments of peace, care for the poor, and standing firm in faith," Pishner said, which mirrors the message of Emmanuel glorified through "This Child."

Listen to the song "This Child" at: <https://youtu.be/OUyOp2manhA>

THIS CHILD

Words and Music by Stephen Pishner

In the face of this child lie a story and a song of a love without exception and a love that suffers long.

In the heart of this child lies a boundless gift to share of a dream and a vision of a peace beyond compare.

In the hands of this child lie broken hearts and pain, the tears of those in sorrow who long to smile again.

In the touch of this child is the soft and tender care of God who brings healing and whose Spirit fills the air.

Behold, God comes among us!

Behold, a new way of living!

A message from heaven in a tiny child: "God is doing something new!"

ALL: O come let us adore him. O come let us adore him. O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

The feet of this child will walk forevermore with the sinner and rejected, the outcast and the poor. For this child bears resemblance of all the lowly ones. This child is God-Among-Us, Emmanuel, God's Son.

Behold, God comes among us!

Behold, a new way of living!

A message from heaven in a tiny child: "God is doing something new!"

ALL: O come let us adore him. O come let us adore him. O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Behold, God comes among us! (Noel! Christ is born!)

Behold, a new way of living! (Noel! Christ is born!)

A message from heaven in a tiny child:

"God is doing something new!"

ALL: O come let us adore him. O come let us adore him. O come let us adore him, Christ the Lord.

Noel! Christ is born! Noel! Christ is born!

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Brooke County Parish Giving Gifts of Hope

By Joyce Bibey
Courtesy of FaithInWV

Follansbee's Saint Anthony Parish Jesse Tree Project is a way to show children Christ is among us not just at Christmas but always.

The Brooke County parish delivered a treasure trove of colorfully wrapped presents to 78 children the week of Christmas in the spirit of the Christ child. The presents were for children 3 months old to 18-years-old. Recipients are students and siblings from Brooke Primary North or Brooke Intermediate North schools whose families are struggling to make ends meet.

Many of the children receiving the gifts come from homes who do not know the story of Jesus, nor do they attend a church, said Nancy Deters, coordinator of the program that began 40 years ago thanks to the late Josie D'Ulisse and her son David Owen.

It has always been the hope of the parish that the children who open the gifts get to know God's love through this project, Deters said.

"God gave us our greatest gift (Jesus)," she said. "Maybe these kids will find and know God in that way. Hopefully knowing someone cares."

"This is evangelizing. I wished every family that receives a gift would join us. I would love to see them in our church. It's not about the presents really. It's the message they send and the people who go out of their way to fill a wish. It's about the true Christmas story - Christ being born, coming together for Mass, and listening to beautiful (sacred) music that fills the church."

Each gift that is given from the parish family to the children is a sign of love and hope she said.

"We get lots of requests for toys, and some people just say buy anything, but this year two young girls wanted elec-

tric blankets," she said. Deter grew up in Follansbee, spent her 35 years teaching in the same county, and knows firsthand the needs and heart-breaking situations many families are trying to get through. The humble request for a child to ask for a warm blanket as their Christmas present puts an exclamation point on the reason we do this, she added – "we care."

"Saint Anthony's is known in our community as a friendly parish – active and very charitable," Deters said. "Whether it is our Friday Friends (week-end food bags given to Brooke Intermediate Schools students), collections of items for the local nursing home, or even our fish fry; you will find this parish exactly how we all should be – friendly, welcoming, and caring."

You know you have touched a heart with your Christian spirit, when you load the Jesse Tree presents in the car of the recipient family



Joyce Bibey Photo

Karen Panza and Nancy Deters organize more than 250 presents for 78 children, recipients of St. Anthony Parish's Jesse Tree Project.

and the eyes of the parent or grandparent looking back at you are filled with grateful tears, Deter said.

"That's when you know you are making a special difference," she said, noting it is extra special when those faces are familiar.

"Sometimes the parents of the children receiving the gifts are former students of mine," she said. "They need the help and I love that I'm still here – we at St. Anthony's are here – to help them the best we can. It is truly a gift for us to be able to do it."

Pope Francis Says Retired Pope Benedict is 'Very Sick'

By Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Saying that retired Pope Benedict XVI was “very sick,” Pope Francis asked people to offer special prayers for him.

“I would like to ask all of you for a special prayer for emeritus Pope Benedict,” Pope Francis said at the end of his weekly general audience Dec. 28.

The 95-year-old retired pope “is sustaining the church in silence,” Pope Francis said. “Remember him. He is very sick.”

“Ask the Lord to console him and sustain him in his witness of love for the church until the very end,” Pope Francis said.

Matteo Bruni, director of the Vatican press office, told reporters that Pope Francis went to Pope Benedict’s residence after the audience to visit him.

“I can confirm that in the last few hours there has been a worsening (of Pope Benedict’s health) due to advancing age,” Bruni said. “The situation at the moment remains under control, constantly followed by doctors.”

On Feb. 11, 2013, Pope Benedict announced that he would retire effective Feb. 28 that year. He spent the first several months of his retirement at the papal summer villa in Castel Gandolfo before moving into the Mater Ecclesiae Monastery in the Vatican Gardens where he has lived since.

The retired pope has looked increasingly frail, but as recently as Dec. 1 the foundation that promotes his theological work released photos of him meeting with the two winners of the Ratzinger Prize. He also met in August at the monastery with Pope Francis and the new cardinals the pope had just created.

Supreme Court Keeps Title 42 Restriction on Border Entry in Place for Now

By Carol Zimmermann, Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — In an end-of-the-year decision, the Supreme Court said Dec. 27 that a federal public health rule that allows immigration officials at the border to quickly turn away migrants seeking asylum could stay in place while legal challenges to the policy played out.

In a 5-4 decision, the justices stopped a trial judge’s ruling that would have lifted the measure, known as Title 42 of the Public Health Services Act, on Dec. 21.

Chief Justice John Roberts had already put that order on pause Dec. 19 responding to an emergency request filed by 19 states asking the justices to keep Title 42 in place.

The Trump administration used the public health measure during the pandemic to allow U.S. border officials to expel migrants quickly without giving them an opportunity to seek asylum in the United States.

“Our hearts (are) broken by this decision and the many people that will be further harmed because of it,” tweeted the Interfaith Immigration Coalition Dec. 27.

They said that as people of faith, they were calling on President Joe Biden to “do everything in his power to welcome people seeking safety with the compassion they deserve.”

The justices agreed to hear arguments about enforcement of Title 42 at the border in February. In their brief unsigned order, they said the rule will remain in place for now and they will only consider whether the states challenging it have the legal right to do so.

In a dissent, Justice Neil Gorsuch, joined by Justice Ketanji Brown Jackson, emphasized that the Biden administration and Congress have failed to adequately address the immigration crisis and also said the nation’s high court is not meant to issue pol-

icies.

He said he did not discount concerns raised by the state attorneys general and also acknowledged that lifting Title 42 “will likely have disruptive consequences,” but he said the reason it was enforced, as a public health measure, is no longer valid.

“The current border crisis is not a COVID crisis,” he wrote, adding that the courts “should not be in the business of perpetuating administrative edicts designed for one emergency only because elected officials have failed to address a different emergency. We are a court of law, not policymakers of last resort.”

Justices Sonia Sotomayor and Elena Kagan indicated they would have allowed the federal judge’s ruling ending Title 42 to stand, but they did not join the dissent.

Title 42 gives the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention the power to bar the entry of individuals into the United States to protect the public from contagious diseases.

The Biden administration initially extended the policy used by the Trump administration but in April it announced that it would end it, saying it was no longer necessary to protect public health.

A federal judge in Louisiana said the administration had not followed proper procedures in trying to end Title 42 and ordered that it stay in place. The administration has appealed that decision to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 5th Circuit, where it remains pending.

In a separate case, a federal judge in Washington ruled that the policy itself was illegal and ordered the government to end it, which was challenged by 19 states with Republican attorneys general.

After the U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit rejected the states’ request to

join the case, the states came to the Supreme Court urging the court to keep the policy in place and saying that lifting it would “cause a crisis of unprecedented proportions at the border.”

Migrant families challenging the policy say the states’ support for Title 42 is not based on pandemic concerns. They also said the policy has had a devastating impact on those forced to return to “cartels and others ready to abduct and exploit them.”

Migrant advocates, including Catholic church organizations, women religious and Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso, Texas, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ migration committee, have strongly supported ending Title 42.

Texas border cities, like El Paso, had been preparing for the surge of new migrants as the pandemic-era rule was scheduled to end.

In mid-December, Dylan Corbett, director of the Hope Border Institute, a Catholic organization helping migrants, said constant changing policies make it hard for organizations such as his to plan.

“You have a lot of pent-up pain,” he told The Associated Press, noting that with government border policies in disarray, “the majority of the work falls to faith communities to pick up the pieces and deal with the consequences.”

In October, Bishop Seitz issued a statement expressing his disappointment that Title 42 had been expanded to Venezuelans seeking to cross the border.

“Now we must all work harder, especially the faith community, to build a culture of hospitality that respects the dignity of those who migrate, and to continue to press lawmakers and the Biden administration to establish a safe, humane, functioning and rights-respecting system to ensure protection to those in need,” he said.

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Priest Weathers Christmas Blizzard on Fireboat Celebrating Mass for Two

By **Dennis Sadowski, Catholic News Service**

Father Paul Seil experienced a Christmas unlike any other in his 67 years of life in Buffalo, New York.

In the midst of the multiday blizzard that paralyzed parts of western New York, Father Seil, chaplain for the Buffalo Fire Department, had to evacuate the rectory at his parish in the city's Old First Ward neighborhood on Christmas Eve, then spent the night aboard the department's fire boat and celebrated a short Mass Christmas morning for crewman Jack Kelleher.

Finally the afternoon of Christmas Day Father Seil made it to the rectory at St. Joseph Cathedral — courtesy of Kelleher — where he has been “holed up” since.

“This is the worst storm I’ve ever seen,” Father Seil, a native of Buffalo, told Catholic News Service Dec. 27.

The blizzard and subzero temperatures prompted Buffalo Bishop Michael W. Fisher to urge Catholics living in the worst affected communities to avoid venturing to their parish for Christmas Mass and to take advantage of livestreamed liturgies instead.

“Do not attempt to attend Masses in person,” Bishop Fisher warned Dec. 24.

As of Dec. 29, at least 37 people in Erie County, New York, had died during the storm, according to local officials. Over the course four days, the storm dumped 4 feet of snow in Buffalo and surrounding communities. At least 25 others across 11 U.S. states died because of the storm, which affected tens of millions of Americans and Canadians beginning Dec. 21 and lasted for five days.

Father Seil's Christmas adven-

ture began after the electricity went out the evening of Dec. 23 in much of the neighborhood around Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish, which has served the community for 125 years.

He said he went to sleep that night bundled in warm clothing and woke up the next morning to a “pretty cold room.”

Relocating to the kitchen, Father Seil periodically used the stove for a little heat, making sure the carbon monoxide detector he had worked. That situation lasted just a few hours.

“I heard a sound of rushing water. The pipes broke evidently and water came pouring down through the kitchen ceiling and extinguished the stove,” he said.

“With water coming in and no heat, it was getting a little desperate. I was scared. I was a little afraid of what the future might bring,” he said.

Soon, Father Seil put out a call for help on the fire radio he carries as fire department chaplain, a ministry he began in 2018. But the department couldn't respond. Fire trucks and emergency vehicles answering emergency calls were getting stuck in snowdrifts up to 6 feet high.

“There was nothing for me to do,” Father Seil said.

That's when Kelleher responded with an offer to help.

The marine engineer aboard the fire boat, named the Edward M. Cotter, said he could try to make it the mile from the boat's mooring along the Buffalo River to Our Lady of Perpetual Help.

Five blocks from the church, tall drifts blocked Kelleher's SUV. He radioed Father Seil asking if he could trudge to him instead.

Quickly packing a few overnight necessities and Communion wafers

and dressing in his fire turnout gear, Father Seil tried walking through the deep snow and gale-force winds. He quickly realized, however, that the storm's intensity was too much.

That's when a couple of neighborhood residents who were checking on people in their homes offered to help, followed by a man in snowmobile who had made his way from an outlying area to evacuate people to safety. Father Seil called him a godsend, a Christmas gift.

“I got on the back, strapped in my bags. In a few moments we were at Kelleher's Chevy Blazer,” Father Seil said.

The fireboat was operating on a generator, which provided heat and electricity. “It was nice. It was warm,” Father Seil said.

Also in Father Seil's bag was a couple of pounds of smoked kielbasa sausage and a few rolls. Christmas Eve dinner on the Cotter was a feast for the two men.

The next morning, Father Seil celebrated a brief Mass for Christmas, Kelleher then offered to take him to “your boss's house,” meaning St. Joseph Cathedral. It's where Father Seil has been since.

The priest, whose father was a firefighter in Buffalo until a serious accident while fighting a fire disabled him in 1964, was hoping to return to his parish as soon as possible. He was waiting for the all-clear from city officials that travel was safe again.

“I'm sorry I'm not in my parish,” he said.

The city of Buffalo remained under a travel ban at midday Dec. 27 as snow removal crew gradually cleared streets, many of which were blocked by vehicles that had become mired in deep snow.

Bishop Fisher said safety was his primary concern in asking people

not to attend long-awaited Christmas Masses.

“Unfortunately, it was too dangerous to ask people to even try to get here to the cathedral or any of our parishes,” he told CNS Dec. 27.

Most parishes in the immediate Buffalo vicinity canceled Masses, while many livestreamed liturgies for people stuck at home or in shelters. In some locales where streets were not clogged with snow, Masses went ahead as scheduled.

Bishop Fisher credited Catholic Charities of Buffalo for rushing to ensure food and supplies were distributed to people in need before the storm arrived.

“We felt confident people had food who needed it,” he said.

Several parishes also opened as shelters under Erie County's emergency management plan, allowing people whose homes lost heat and electricity to relocate to some place comfortable.

Two days after Christmas, many parishes remained closed, with pastors “hunkered down in their rectories,” Bishop Fisher said.

A special Mass was planned for Dec. 28 at St. Joseph Cathedral for Buffalo-area residents who died during the storm. Another liturgy was set for the weekend for first responders and other essential workers who continued to serve residents most affected by the wild winter weather.

“We're trying to take care of one another,” the bishop said.

“This time of the year, as we're celebrating Christmas, it's supposed to be a time of hope,” he added. “The people here in Buffalo, I've found, they're tough and hearty and resilient and very faith-filled. I know they're caring for one another and we're trying to do what we can as part of the community.”



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St. Michael Parish School Announces Aquinas Medal Recipient



Courtesy Photo

St. Michael Parish School in Wheeling congratulates its Aquinas Medal recipient, Levi Rine. Levi is standing next to Bishop Mark Brennan, on the right. His family is also with him. From left are his father, Jason; brothers, Isaac and Jacob; and his mother, Heather, who is the transitional kindergarten teacher at the school. Also pictured is Father Frederick J. D'Souza, parochial vicar of the parish. The success and value of our Catholic schools is manifested through our students. The Aquinas Medal is awarded to one student from each Catholic school in the diocese who embodies the qualities we seek to instill in our students. Saint Thomas Aquinas, patron saint of scholars, combined his powerful intellect with an all-embracing love of God. Saint Thomas labored, as do our schools, to impart knowledge infused with an awareness of God to those who learned from him. One student is selected from each of the diocese's Catholic schools to receive the Aquinas Medal. The medal is not intended as strictly an academic recognition but to make visible those young people in our schools who embody the spirit of the school's mission and the philosophy of Catholic school education.



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Papa: Escuchen el llanto del recién nacido Príncipe de la Paz

Por Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS) — Con el nacimiento de Jesús, Dios se hizo carne para compartir las alegrías y las tristezas, las esperanzas y los temores de todas las personas, especialmente de los pobres y de los que viven a diario en medio del peligro, dijo el papa Francisco en su mensaje navideño.

"Viene como un niño indefenso. Nace en la noche fría, pobre entre los pobres. Necesitado de todo, llama a la puerta de nuestro corazón para encontrar calor y refugio", dijo el papa el 25 de diciembre antes de dar su bendición "urbi et orbi" (a la ciudad y al mundo).

Decenas de miles de personas se reunieron en la Plaza de San Pedro bajo un cielo cálido y soleado para la bendición y el mensaje del papa invitando a la gente a prestar menos atención a los regalos y más a la oración, particularmente por Ucrania y otros lugares donde la guerra y los conflictos desafían la proclamación de los ángeles pidiendo "paz en la tierra".

"Dejemos atrás el estruendo que entorpece nuestros corazones y nos hace pasar más tiempo preparando adornos y regalos que contemplando el gran acontecimiento: el hijo de Dios que nos ha nacido", dijo el papa Francisco a las personas en la plaza, escuchando por radio, o viendo en la televisión o en línea.

"Hermanos y hermanas", les dijo, "volvamos la mirada a Belén y escuchemos los primeros gritos débiles del Príncipe de la Paz. Porque verdaderamente Jesús es nuestra paz".

La Encarnación, Pasión, Muerte y Resurrección de Jesús "abrió el camino que lleva de un mundo cerrado en sí mismo y oprimido por las sombras oscuras de la enemistad y la guerra, a un mundo abierto y libre para vivir en fraternidad y paz", dijo el papa.

Para seguir el camino de paz de Jesús, dijo, "debemos despojarnos de las cargas que nos agobian y obstruyen nuestro camino", los mismos obstáculos que impidieron al rey Herodes acoger el nacimiento de Jesús: "apego al poder y al dinero, soberbia, hipocresía, falsedad".

En el "rostro pequeño e inocente" del niño Jesús acostado en el pesebre, exhortó, "veamos los rostros de todos esos niños que, en todas partes del mundo, anhelan la paz".

En su décimo mensaje de Navidad como papa, el

papa Francisco denunció la "grave hambruna de paz" en todo el mundo.

Mencionando puntos críticos específicos, comenzó con Ucrania, orando por aquellos que celebran la Navidad "en la oscuridad y el frío, lejos de sus hogares debido a la devastación causada por 10 meses de guerra".

El papa instó a la gente a seguir siendo generosa en hacer donaciones y acoger a las personas desplazadas por los combates. Su limosnero, el cardenal Konrad Krajewski, estaba pasando la Navidad en Ucrania, entregando generadores, ropa de abrigo y otras ayudas en nombre del papa.

Que Dios "ilumine las mentes de aquellos que tienen el poder de silenciar el trueno de las armas y poner fin de inmediato a esta guerra sin sentido", oró.

Y mientras Ucrania domina las noticias, el papa Francisco también oró por la paz en Siria, Yemen, Myanmar y en toda la región del Sahel en África.

Dirigiéndose a Tierra Santa, "donde en los últimos meses ha aumentado la violencia y los enfrentamientos, trayendo a su paso muertos y heridos", oró para que "allí, en la tierra que lo vio nacer, el diálogo y los esfuerzos para construir la confianza mutua entre israelíes y los palestinos pueden reanudar".

En Líbano, donde continúa la crisis económica y política, el papa rezó para que el país pueda "finalmente recuperarse con la ayuda de la comunidad internacional y con la fuerza que nace de la fraternidad y la solidaridad".

En América Central y del Sur, donde continúan las "tensiones políticas y sociales" en varias naciones, el papa rezó para que la luz de Cristo inspire a los líderes políticos y a todas las personas de buena voluntad.

Y ofreció oraciones especiales por "el pueblo de Haití que sufre desde hace mucho tiempo".

Sabiendo que muchas personas en la Plaza de San Pedro y mirando alrededor del mundo pronto se sentarían a disfrutar de una comida festiva y abundante, el papa Francisco pidió que tengan en cuenta "a todos aquellos, especialmente a los niños, que pasan hambre mientras diariamente se consumen enormes cantidades de comida, se desperdician, y recursos se gastan en armas".

La guerra de Rusia contra Ucrania, un importante proveedor de cereales para el mundo, está poniendo

a naciones enteras en riesgo de hambruna, dijo, condenando el uso de alimentos como arma de guerra.

Lamentablemente, dijo, al igual que hace 2000 años, "Jesús, la luz verdadera, viene a un mundo enfermo de indiferencia, una enfermedad terrible, un mundo que no lo acoge y lo rechaza, como se le hace a muchos extranjeros o lo ignora, como hacemos con demasiada frecuencia con los pobres".

El papa Francisco rezó para que esta Navidad "no olvidemos a los muchos desplazados y refugiados que tocan nuestra puerta en busca de consuelo, calor y comida. No olvidemos a los marginados, los que viven solos, los huérfanos y los ancianos que corren el riesgo de estar apartados y prisioneros, a quienes consideramos únicamente por los errores que han cometido y no como a nuestros semejantes".

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El candidato ideal domina el español y tiene un título de asociado o educación superior en el campo del idioma o la enseñanza. El candidato preferido actuará como ejemplo y motivador hacia el cumplimiento de la filosofía católica de la escuela. El solicitante acepta que el empleador tiene derecho a despedir al maestro por rechazo público o violación de las enseñanzas oficiales, y por cualquier violación de las políticas del manual del empleado.

Si está interesado en este puesto, envíe su currículum por correo electrónico a Meg Partington a mpartington@sjsvw.org.

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

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

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