

THE CATHOLIC

Spirit

Bishop Brennan Releases a Pastoral Letter on Marriage

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, National Marriage Week, celebrated from February 7 to 14, is a welcome opportunity to recognize the profound importance of marriage and family life in our world and in our Church. As a celibate priest, I have come to know many married couples and have celebrated hundreds of weddings, learning to appreciate the beauty and goodness of marriage and family life. I agree with the words of a blessing in the Rite of Marriage: "Marriage is the one blessing not forfeited by original sin nor washed away in the flood" (Noah's).

This year's theme for National Marriage Week is: "Man and Woman He Created them: Together for Purpose." In a nation that is very confused about the meaning and purpose of marriage, our Church speaks with clarity and conviction about marriage's basic role in uniting the two most distinct expressions of our human nature – male and female – and in highlighting their indispensable role in bringing forth new life.

We Catholics should rejoice that our Church holds up for all people to see the noble calling God gives to married couples. Our Church maintains that marriage is the union of a man and woman who pledge their life-long, faithful mutual love and support and are open to having and raising children. This is a high standard but, as a Protestant man preparing for marriage to a Catholic said to me years ago, "The world needs a standard to judge itself by." Our Church gives the world that standard.

There are in reality only two sexes: *God made them male and female* [Genesis 1:27]. Science agrees. "Biological sex in humans is primarily
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Courtesy photo
The Most Blessed Sacrament is exposed at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston in 2024. A Holy Hour for Peace will be held at the basilica on Feb. 14 from 4 to 5 p.m.

Holy Hour for Peace in West Virginia

By Colleen Rowan

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston is answering the invitation from Archbishop Paul S. Coakley, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, to bishops and priests across the United States to offer a Holy Hour for Peace as a step toward healing. "Your faith matters. Your prayers matter. Your acts of love and works of justice matter," the archbishop said. "The current climate of fear and polarization, which thrives when human dignity is disregarded, does not meet the standard set by Christ in the Gospel."

The holy hour was planned for three regions of the state for the faithful to pray before the Most Blessed Sacrament, and two of them have already been held.

The last of the three will be for central and southern regions of the state at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston on Feb. 14 from 4 to 5 p.m.

"In our Gospel this past Sunday, Jesus described his followers as salt of the earth and light of the world," Very Rev. Donald X. Higgs, Assoc. V.E., V.F., rector of the basilica, said. "In these difficult and dark moments in our world, between nations, and in our own nation, may our Holy Hour for Peace be a visible
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determined by specific chromosomes." two X chromosomes in one's DNA indicate a female, one X and one Y chromosome indicate a male (*Biology Insights, August 22, 2025*). There are some complicating conditions, such as an additional X chromosome or only one with no Y chromosome. Still, in the vast majority of cases a person's DNA will determine one's sex as male or female. Human reproduction is based on having both sexes and is the biological reason for sexual relations between the sexes.

In speaking with an engaged couple I always asked them: are you willing to have children? God says: *Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it* [Genesis 1: 28]. Notice that it is the openness to having children that is at issue, not the actual ability to have them. As long as a couple has the essential body parts, they can marry. And there is always hope. A friend and his wife wanted children but had none for seven years. They learned natural family planning not to avoid children but to discover when their fertile time was, and then they had three children.

I pray regularly for infertile couples and occasionally I get to move the couple's names from the infertile list to the pregnant list. Remember that Abraham and Sara, whose story is told in the Book of Genesis, were both well advanced in years and yet God fulfilled His promise that they would have a child: Isaac was born, the son of the promise. The same was true for Zachariah and Elizabeth, an elderly childless couple who became the parents of John the Baptist. For those who can never have children naturally, it is a generous act to adopt children or find other ways to serve young people.

Some people today believe that members of the same sex can be married to one another, a view the US Supreme Court adopted in 2015. "You should be able to marry the one you love," say same-sex advocates. Our Lord teaches us to love our neighbor, so would that allow for marriage to a person of your own sex? Not if you consider that the love Jesus teaches us to show to others is the willingness to do them good, not simply an affection or sexual feelings the other person provokes in us. He extends the commandment of love to include even our enemies, toward whom we would hardly feel affection or sexual attraction. Men can have genuine affection for other men and women for women. They can (and ought to) form strong friendships but that doesn't constitute a basis for marriage.

Marriage is intimately and, I would argue, necessarily, tied to having and raising children. Even in the Stone Age, which lasted for 3.4 million years, ending between 4000 and 2000 BCE, anthropologists say "pair bonding" between a man and a woman existed [Stephanie Coontz, *A History of Marriage*, 2005]. That is not true for most animals, birds and some other primates excepted; but it is typical for humans to form male-female pairs. They have sexual relations and produce children.

Now, human children require a much longer time for their brains to develop and to learn language, social skills such as cooperation and moral values, and acquire cultural knowledge. Neuropsychologist Sam Goldstein says: "While most mammals become self-sufficient within months or a few years, humans require over a decade to achieve independence" (*Psychology Today*, May 21, 2025). I wager that most parents would not consider their

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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 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, 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:** 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, 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.

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, click "Diocese", then "Offices," then "Office of Safe Environment."



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Daily Living
with Fr. Chapin

Sunday Mornings

| | |
|------------------|--|
| 6:30 WTOV FOX 9 | Wheeling-Steubenville |
| 6:30 WOWK CBS 13 | Huntington-Charleston |
| 8:00 WBOY NBC 12 | Weston-Clarksburg-Fairmont |
| 6:30 WOAY ABC 4 | Beckley-Bluefield-Oak Hill (Lewisburg) |
| 8:30 WVNS FOX 59 | Beckley-Bluefield-Oak Hill (Lewisburg) |
| 9:30 WVVA NBC 6 | Beckley-Bluefield-Oak Hill (Lewisburg) |
| 11:00 WDVM 25 | Hagerstown-Washington D.C. |

Plus watch online at - www.mydailyliving.com and YouTube

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.

2026 Print Dates:

Lent, February 20
The Annunciation of the Lord, March 13 (Solemnity, March 25)
Easter, April 10 (Easter Sunday, April 5)
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

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ten-year-old son or daughter capable of living on their own. Dr. Goldstein adds that “emerging adulthood” now stretches well past biological maturity into the late 20’s. It simply takes human beings a very long time to be able to take care of themselves and direct their lives.

Children and adolescents need adults during this prolonged maturation process. Who are the best people to oversee and contribute to their development? The parents who brought them into the world. Others help, of course: grandparents, older children, day care workers, teachers, coaches and more; but the parents are the most important adults because of their natural ties to their children. Idealistic young Jewish couples in Israel living on *kibbutzim* (communal farms) in the 1950’s decided that each adult would take personal responsibility for raising all the children in the *kibbutz*, without preferring their own, only to have the experiment fail when children wanted more time with their own parents and parents increasingly felt the same. Nature won. Respecting nature, the Catholic Church teaches that parents are the primary educators of children in all things, including the faith.

The stable union of the parents in order to raise their children is, I believe, the historic origin of marriage. This makes marriage a distinctly heterosexual institution, for only the union of a man and a woman can produce a child. Members of the same sex can (and, in some cases, do) raise children but they cannot be their origin. This is why societies throughout history and all major religions, including our Catholic Church, have regarded marriage as uniquely the union of members of the two sexes.

So, if the stable union of parents is the necessary foundation of their children’s development, does their marriage lose its purpose after their children grow up? May they separate or divorce then? According to nature, I would argue, yes. But Jesus Christ teaches us differently: *For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother*

and be joined to his wife and the two shall become one flesh. So, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate [Mark 10:7-9].

The commandment of life-long marriage is a distinctive element of the “new way” of living and serving God that Jesus taught his disciples. Jewish law and pagan law allowed for divorce – in many cases, giving the right to initiate a divorce only to the men. But Jesus teaches us: *Love your neighbor as yourself* [Mark 12:31]. Marriage creates a unity that takes precedence over the duality of two persons. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. The couple faces the challenge every day to love one another, preferring the good of one’s spouse to the good of oneself.

Such self-giving over a lifetime is only possible with God’s help – but He offers it in abundance, especially through the Sacrament of Matrimony, which two baptized Christians enjoy. Thus, grace builds on nature and perfects it. Jesus calls married couples beyond the natural limits of their state of life to a way of living their marriage that reflects the loving, faithful and fruitful union of Christ, the Bridegroom and his Bride, the Church. Happily married couples understand this instinctively and live it joyfully.

Because the joining of husband and wife makes them one flesh in a union that God has joined, they have a solemn responsibility to work out any difficulties that might threaten their union. St. Paul’s teaching, discussed by Pope Francis in his encyclical letter, *Amoris Laetitia* (the Joy of Love), applies in a special way to marriage: *Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous, it is not pompous, it is not inflated, it is not rude, it does not seek its own interests, it is not quick-tempered, it does not brood over injury, it does not rejoice over wrongdoing but rejoices with the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things* [1 Corinthians 13:4-7]. This kind of love never fails, says the Apostle. This is not an impossible dream, for there are many marriages which attain or come close to attaining this ideal. It certainly is worth the effort, for it produces something of great benefit to the couple.

What if a marriage fails? The question is: why? If one or both of the spouses did not live up to their promises and that caused the rupture in their relationship, then they should own their responsibility for what went wrong. But let them hear Jesus’ message: *Repent and believe in the Gospel* [Mark 1:15]. Being sincerely sorry for causing a marriage to fail will bring God’s forgiveness, while Christ’s Gospel assures the repentant sinner that he or she is still a beloved child of God. Even if the marriage cannot be repaired, the separated or divorced spouses can accept God’s grace and live in peace.

In my opinion, a large number of marriages fail for what we might call structural reasons: the edifice wasn’t strong enough to bear the weight of marital responsibilities and challenges. Our Church, exercising the power of the keys entrusted to it by the Lord [Matthew 18:18] and striv-

ing to be both merciful and just, has an annulment procedure to determine if a failed marriage was joined by God or not. Having worked on many annulment cases, I know that people can err in choosing a spouse (for example, a man inclined to be violent might hide that tendency until after the wedding; a woman might ignore her husband and only listen to her mother, which contradicts the “partnership of the whole of life” that a true marriage demands).

A decree of annulment does not mean there was nothing good in a marriage nor does it make children illegitimate (they were born in a marriage recognized in law by the state and, often, by the Church) but it does render an impartial judgment on the overall viability of a marriage. If judged invalid, the couple is free of that bond and may, if they choose, marry someone else with, one hopes,

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Proceeds from this Gala directly support our mission in 17 counties in northern West Virginia, including our Catholic Charities Neighborhood Center on 18th Street in Wheeling, and other programs and services for children, seniors and families.

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a better outcome.

Finally, regarding children, it is ironic that a society that firmly and rightly condemns child abuse is turning away from having children. It is a broad trend in today's world with many countries, including our own, below the fertility rate needed, 2.1 children per woman, simply to maintain the population at its current level. We see with some frequency couples walking their dog instead of pushing a child in a baby carriage. I have had couples tell me, "We only want one child so we can give our child all our love." I would ask them, "Have you thought about it from the child's point of view? You will be gone some day and your child will have no brothers and sisters." I urged them to understand that love is expansive; it reaches out to embrace others. This is different, of course, from the situation of a couple that, try as they might or faced with a serious impediment to having further children, are able only to have one.

If God wants married couples to be open to bringing forth new life, we must recognize that a couple may need to postpone having more children. The Catholic faith does not oppose this. It only asks two things, first, that the reasons for doing so be serious: the couple has a large number of children, a parent has significant health problems, the family does not have sufficient resources to care for more children – and second, that the means for limiting family size be appropriate: natural means rather than artificial ones.

The Church opposes artificial birth control because, in the couple's fertile phase, it separates their sexual union's unitive and procreative dimensions, which God joined together. Natural family planning methods respect the periodic appearance of both unitive and procreative aspects of the one act by counseling abstinence during the fertile phase. Contrary to what many think, modern natural planning methods are not based on averaging previous menstrual cycles but on real-time observations of the woman's body. Does it always work? No – and neither do condoms, the pill or diaphragms. It takes some instruction, discipline and trust in God to abstain from sexual relations for a short time but married couples should remember that some fellow Catholics – bishops, priests, religious sisters and brothers – are called by God to practice total abstinence. *With God all things are possible* [Matthew 19:26].

I end with a story. On a visit to Spain in 2013, I spent a weekend in Barcelona and, along with scores of other tourists, I visited a thirteenth-century Gothic church called Santa Maria del Mar on Saturday afternoon. Not surprisingly, a wedding was taking place. I notice that people stopped walking around with their cameras, sat down and watched. Standing on an altar platform several steps above us, the young couple pronounced their vows and exchanged their rings. All of a sudden, an immense applause erupted from us tourists. We sensed that we had just witnessed something extraordinary: a man and a woman had pledged faithful love to one another for the rest of their lives and we were there to see it. The couple turned toward us and bowed graciously. I know I prayed for them and I would imagine many of the other tourists did as well. This is how a marriage among our people should begin: in God's presence and with trust in His grace to sustain them to the end. God bless you, married couples! May the Lord, whose Son married our human race in the Incarnation, be the foundation and joy of your lives.

Sincerely in Christ,

+Mark E. Brennan

+Mark E. Brennan
Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston



Tommy McKee photo

Deacon David Galvin bestows the final blessing at the Holy Hour for Peace at St. James the Greater Church in Charles Town Feb. 11.

Holy Hour ...

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and powerful light to the world."

The holy hour was held earlier this week for the Eastern Panhandle at St. James the Greater Church in Charles Town on the Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes and World Day of the Sick, Feb. 11, followed by Mass, and for the northern region on Feb. 6 at St. Alphonsus Church in Wheeling.

Annual Women's Retreat

SOLD OUT

Finding God in The Everyday

ANNUAL WOMEN'S RETREAT MARCH 20-22



The Annual Women's Retreat at St. John XXIII Pastoral Center, 100 Hodges Road, Charleston, is set for March 20-22, with the theme Finding God in The Everyday.

Pause, reflect, and rediscover how God is already at work in your daily life.

The keynote presenter is WV native John Angotti, a nationally honored singer-songwriter, speaker, and music missionary who uses his gift of song to awaken

hearts and bring healing to communities. Angotti travels the world sharing the Gospel through concerts, retreats, and worship experiences that bridge tradition and contemporary sound.

The cost of the weekend: overnight guests single rooms \$250; overnight double occupancy \$210 per person; and commuters \$125. Register at dwc.org/2026-womens-retreat. For more info contact Gerri Wright at gwright@dwc.org or call 304-552-3662.



Wheeling Parish Holds ‘A Conversation on Catholic Social Teaching & Immigration’

By Colleen Rowan

WHEELING — On Feb. 5, St. Michael Parish in Wheeling posed the question, “Who is my neighbor?” And community members packed a room at the parish hall to capacity to answer. Catholics and members of other religious denominations, clergy, religious, advocates from the region, and about 20 students from Wheeling University gathered that evening for “A Conversation on Catholic Social Teaching & Immigration.”

The program was described by the parish as a synodal style listening session concerning the most recent teachings of the Catholic Church from Pope Leo XIV, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Bishop Mark Brennan “growing in hospitality, solidarity, and compassion with the many refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and immigrants around the world.”

Before the program began, Facilitator Lou Volpe introduced Bishop Brennan, “who has really spearheaded a tremendous movement in our diocese and even beyond that...”

He said the bishop’s leadership through his letters and his example has inspired him and others.

Lou then invited all to join him in praying the “Psalm of the Immigrant,” which he wrote with his grandfathers in mind—Luigi who came to the United States at the age of 16 on a packet boat with his three younger brothers in 1899 and Giuseppe, a World War I veteran of the Italian Army who came with his wife and 4-year-old daughter in 1921.

“I thought of them and what was going on in their minds,” he said. “To imagine the immigrant or the refugee, the person in the displacement camp, is for us to raise



Colleen Rowan photo

Faithful gather at St. Michael Parish in Wheeling for “Who is my neighbor? A Conversation on Catholic Social Teaching & Immigration” Feb. 5.

our level of awareness and prayer.”

Also in his mind was the image of Christ the King at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling.

“When one looks upon this image,” he said, “you can’t help but see that Christ is welcoming us, calling us to our destination, to our fulfillment together—together at the end. And now we work to bring that togetherness to reality in whatever way God is calling us.”

Very Rev. Carlos Melocoton, V.F., pastor of St. Michael’s, welcomed all to the event which he and Lou worked on together to present.

“Right now, with all that’s going on,” Father Melocoton said, “it is good to come together, to be aware of things, to learn from one another,” and let prayer lead all to

where God wants them to be.

Father Melocoton shared his own story of growing up in The Philippines in turbulent times and in the country’s peaceful revolution before coming to the United States. The themes of Catholic Social Teaching—Life and Dignity of the Human Person; Call to Family, Community, and Participation; Rights and Responsibilities, Option for the Poor and Vulnerable, Dignity of Work and the Rights of Workers; Solidarity; and Care for God’s Creation—he said address a lot that is going on with immigration in the United States.

“I am blessed,” Father Melocoton said. “I went through the proper channels. I waited for many years for that. And then, after about 10 years, I became a citizen

of this country that welcomes me to serve the people of West Virginia. And that is a beautiful story.”

Participants, who were seated at tables of up to eight, were asked to write down some of the things they think of when they hear the words “immigrant, refugee, migrant, or asylum seeker.” Lou encouraged them to listen to one another as they discussed their answers. An individual from each table then shared some of the words or phrases that came to mind: “New and better life; joy and freedom; sacrifice; empathy; courageous; welcoming; unique stories; bravery; vulnerability; fear of coming to a new country; we are all immigrants; lack of welcoming; hostility; and sadness of the

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Conversation...

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current situation."

One of the featured speakers was Genevieve Volpe, who grew up as a member of St. Michael's and spoke of her work with migrant youth at Jewish Family and Community Services in Pittsburgh. It was during the Covid pandemic, and Genevieve was conducting virtual interviews with the kids, listening to their stories of hardship and hunger.

She addressed the question, Why would parents let their kids cross the border by themselves? So often, she said, kids in El Salvador, Honduras, and Guatemala will be on their way to school and gang members will stop them, saying, "You have to join us or we're going to kill your parents. We're going to kill

you." So, their parents send their children north.

Genevieve also told stories about a mom in the mountains of Guatemala who has no education, trying to support her children. So, she saves and sends her oldest son here, to the United States, to get a job, make money and send it back home.

"That's what they're working for," Genevieve told those gathered.

She also spoke of an 11-year-old boy who escaped the Taliban in Afghanistan and an orphaned 15-year-old boy who is gay escaping a West African country where it is illegal to be homosexual.

Another featured speaker was Father Lusius Mite, SVD, parochial vicar of St. Michael's, who spoke of his ministry and outreach to migrant families in Chicago through his

order's Society of the Divine Word. Many reasons brought the people there to seek refuge, he said, "war, poverty, political conflict, and the struggle simply to survive."

He also reflected on the welcome he received when he came to serve St. Michael's.

"I'm the only one from Indonesia" at the parish, he said. "I'm deeply grateful to serve here because I have the experience how wonderful and welcoming the people of this community are. ...I feel accepted, supported, and of course at home. Sometimes, I imagine how beautiful our world would be if everyone—especially migrants, immigrants, and strangers—could feel the same welcome that I feel here."

Before bestowing a blessing at the end of the program, Bishop Brennan said, "The earth has been given to all people by God who created it. Governments do have the right to regulate ... boundaries for the good of their people, for the common welfare, but it should be done in a reasonable way and with a touch of humanity... The Catholic Church, while it affirms the right of the governments to regulate their borders it also says people have a right to move when they're living in intolerable conditions," noting the stories from the evening. He then added a few stories of his own.

In his time in the Archdiocese of Washington, the bishop helped a man who,



Colleen Rowan photo

Faithful engage in discussion during "Who is my neighbor? A Conversation on Catholic Social Teaching & Immigration" at St. Michael Parish in Wheeling Feb. 5.

with his brother as teenagers escaped El Salvador during the country's civil war, to become a priest. They are both doing very well, the bishop said, and "one is an auxiliary bishop serving the people of the Washington Archdiocese."

The bishop also shared the story of a woman from his last parish in the Archdiocese of Baltimore who, before coming to the United States, refused to share profits from the store she owned with a gang in her country. "So, they killed her brother," he said.

"I baptized a man who could not get baptized in

Iran because he could have been killed for doing that and his family put in jail," he said.

"These are real stories," the bishop said. "Why do people leave? Because it's intolerable where they are."

"The earth belongs to all of the people," he said. "We have to find a reasonable way to accommodate those who are here and who have put down roots and who love this country."

The parish is planning to hold another session in March at Wheeling University. The date and time have not been announced.



Colleen Rowan photo

Bishop Mark Brennan greets people at his table during "Who is my neighbor? A Conversation on Catholic Social Teaching & Immigration" at St. Michael Parish in Wheeling Feb. 5.

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Archbishop Fulton Sheen's Beatification Moves Ahead after 6-Year Pause

(OSV News) — Venerable Fulton J. Sheen will soon be beatified, now that the Vatican has given the green light, the Diocese of Peoria, Illinois, announced Feb. 9. No date or location for the beatification was given.

The announcement comes six years after the Holy See had postponed the beatification, initially scheduled for December 2019, only weeks before the event was to take place.

"The Holy See has informed me that the Cause for the Venerable Servant of God Archbishop Fulton J. Sheen can proceed to Beatification," Bishop Louis Tylka of Peoria said in a Feb. 9 statement. "The next step in the process is the celebration of the Beatification, in which Fulton Sheen would be declared Blessed."

He added, "We are working with the Dicastery of the Causes of Saints at the Vatican to determine the details for the upcoming Beatification."

The bishop said the date and event details will be released soon through celebratesheen.com, the website for Archbishop Sheen's cause.

"Archbishop Fulton Sheen was one of the greatest voices of evangelization in the Church and the world in the 20th century," Bishop Tylka said. "I have long admired his lifelong commitment to serve the Church as a priest, rooted in his deep devotion to the Blessed Mother and the Eucharist. As he journeyed through the different stages of his life, his ability to share the Gospel and truly relate to people drew



OSV News files Venerable Fulton J. Sheen, the famed media evangelist, is pictured in an undated photo. In his book, "The Cross and the Beatitudes," Archbishop Sheen wrote, "Meekness is self-possession. That is why the reward of meekness is possession."

countless souls into an encounter with Jesus — one that transformed not only his life, but more importantly, the lives of those he touched."

Archbishop Sheen's cause for canonization, opened in 2002, has been stalled by two controversies — a public battle to relocate his remains from St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York to its current location, the side chapel of the Cathedral of St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception in Peoria; and, more significantly, concerns that as bishop of the Diocese of Rochester, New York, from 1966-1969, the prelate might have overlooked sexual abuse by at least one former diocesan priest there.

The latter concern was magnified after the state of New York adopted look-back laws that allowed

hundreds of abuse claims to be considered, with the Diocese of Rochester ultimately filing for bankruptcy. The bankruptcy was finalized in September 2025, after the establishment of a \$256.35 million settlement fund for abuse survivors.

In July 2019, then-Bishop Daniel R. Jenky of Peoria announced Pope Francis had approved a miracle attributed to the intercession of Archbishop Sheen, which led the way to the announcement he would be beatified. The announcement was made on Nov. 18, 2019, that Pope Francis had called for the beatification to be held Dec. 21, 2019, in Peoria.

A little more than two weeks later, a Dec. 3, 2019, news release from the Diocese of Peoria said it had been informed the previous day that the Holy See had decided to postpone the Dec. 21, 2019, ceremony "at the request of a few members" of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops over the possibility that abuse-related concerns might surface.

The Dec. 3 statement from the Diocese of Peoria said, "In our current climate it is important for the faithful to know that there has never been, nor is there

now, any allegation against (Archbishop) Sheen involving the abuse of a minor."

However, a Dec. 5 statement from the Diocese of Rochester, New York, said it had "expressed concern about advancing the cause for the beatification of Archbishop Sheen at this time without a further review of his role in priests' assignments." The statement said the Rochester Diocese, prior to the Vatican announcement Nov. 18 that Pope Francis approved the beatification, had provided documentation expressing its concern to the Diocese of Peoria and the Congregation for Saints' Causes via the apostolic nunciature in Washington.

The one-time New York lookback window, part of the state's Child Victims Act, was open from August 2019 until August 2021.

In December 2024, Msgr. Jason Gray, executive director of the Archbishop Fulton John Sheen Foundation, told OSV News that "Sheen is clean. ... Not one accusation has been raised that impugned Sheen."

Msgr. Gray said the foundation has examined "all of the pleadings" relevant to claims against the Rochester Diocese, and "there hasn't been anything that was brought up

there" implicating Archbishop Sheen.

Msgr. Gray also told OSV News that "the desire to see Sheen beatified is increasing, and there is a growing devotion to him," as evidenced by a surge in visits to his tomb, requests for both relics and for his more than 50 books, and reports of favors and graces received through Archbishop Sheen's intercession.

Archbishop Sheen is remembered as one of the most influential and innovative evangelists in American history. Once dubbed "God's microphone," Archbishop Sheen announced God's truth in a non-confrontational, yet no less life-giving, manner to untold millions through radio, print and television.

Born in El Paso, Illinois, on May 8, 1895, Archbishop Sheen resolved to serve the Church as a priest from an early age. He was assigned to academic ministry following his ordination to the priesthood on Sept. 20, 1919, for the Diocese of Peoria.

After studies in Europe, a promising future as a professor awaited Archbishop Sheen. First, though, his bishop called him back to a parish in Peoria to test his

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Beatification ...

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obedience. And he zealously took on the task. In less than a year, though, Archbishop Sheen landed a professorship at The Catholic University of America in Washington. For a quarter century, he was known there for his engaging and stimulating lectures. During that time, he published more than half of his over 60 books, informed by a lively and heroic faith.

During the 1930s and 1940s, then-Msgr. Sheen became a household name as host of "The Catholic Hour," broadcast nationally from NBC radio in New York. The priest emerged as a national voice, a prophetic truth-teller who spoke out on a host of issues, particularly the threats of communism.

Having to give up his professorship after appointment as director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith in 1950, Msgr. Sheen moved to New York City. The next year, he was appointed an auxiliary bishop of New York, ordained in Rome on June 11, 1951. Bishop Sheen began his work on behalf of the global missions with great energy, and his innovative efforts enabled him to evangelize at the same time. He donated all media earnings to the missions.

Beginning in 1952, Bishop Sheen proposed eternal truths each Tuesday evening to tens of millions via his "Life Is Worth Living" TV program, armed only with his charisma and intellect – and his famous cape and chalkboard. After his first year on the air, Bishop Sheen won an Emmy award for best television personality. Upon acceptance, he famously thanked his writers: Matthew, Mark, Luke and John.

Bishop Sheen was a charitable and attentive pastor who treated prince and leper alike. His intelligence, wit and sense of humor made him an effective evangelist. And with clear teaching and common sense, Bishop Sheen helped people make sense of life's problems. He was never afraid to proclaim Christ and brought many converts to Catholicism.

Throughout his 60-year priesthood, Bishop Sheen sought to conform himself more closely to Christ by observing a daily Eucharistic Holy Hour, what he called "the hour that makes my day." He also was intensely devoted to the Mother of God.

Bishop Sheen battled various temptations and difficulties throughout his life — including a decade of behind-the-scenes hostility from Cardinal Francis Spellman of New York, which

caused Bishop Sheen great pain. But in the face of his troubles, Bishop Sheen persevered in virtue. He understood his sufferings in light of God's providence: "Christianity begins not with sunshine, but with defeat. During those days when my life was backed up against the cross, I began to know and to love it more."

Despite his best efforts as bishop in Rochester, New York (1966-69) — what many considered to be an exile — Bishop Sheen's brief tenure was met with great resistance, resulting in a good deal of self-described failure. After retirement, Bishop Sheen was appointed titular archbishop of Newport, Wales, by Pope St. Paul VI. Archbishop Sheen delivered retreats aimed at renewal of the priesthood throughout the country and maintained a voice in the public square through regular media appearances.

The temptations and sufferings Archbishop Sheen faced purified him and intensified his union with Christ. He maintained "God has been easy with me." Toward the end of his life, writing in his autobiography, Archbishop Sheen apologized for his failures, wondering "Was I inspiring anyone to imitate Christ in the daily car-

rying of His Cross?"

After nearly two years in and out of the hospital following open-heart surgery, Archbishop Sheen died Dec. 9, 1979, in New York City, in the presence of the Blessed Sacrament. He was declared venerable in 2012.

Bishop Tylka said that Archbishop Sheen, particularly in his work for the missions, "helped us recognize that the Church is meant for all people" and that "as members of the Church, we are called to serve everyone, especially those most in need and those longing to hear and experience the Gospel, wherever they may be in the world."

"Archbishop Sheen will be a special blessing for the Church in the United States, where he was a powerful evangelist on radio, television, and in personal appearances," he said.

Bishop Tylka expressed thanks for "the collaboration, assistance, generosity, and prayers from the Holy See, my brother Bishops, clergy and lay people from around the world in moving this cause forward."

(Contributing to this story were Gina Christian, Michael R. Heinlein and Catholic News Service.)

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Sister Thea Bowman Had a ‘Loving Heart,’ ‘Prophetic Spirit’ and ‘Boundless Stamina,’ Mississippi Bishop Says

By Jennifer Brinker / St. Louis Review

JACKSON, Miss. (OSV News) — Servant of God Thea Bowman was a beacon for the Church to embrace more authentically the essence of what it means to be Catholic, Bishop Joseph R. Kopacz told Massgoers at the Cathedral of St. Peter the Apostle in Jackson, Mississippi.

“To love the Lord your God with your whole heart, mind, soul and strength, and your neighbor as yourself portrays her lifelong commitment,” he said in his homily at a Feb. 9 Mass of thanksgiving marking the conclusion of the diocesan phase of Sister Thea’s canonization cause. “Her loving heart, her prophetic spirit, her brilliant mind and boundless stamina, even in illness, inspired many.”

The Mass was attended by friends and acquaintances of Sister Thea, representatives from her religious order, the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, members of the historical commission who were part of the diocesan investigation and students from Sister Thea Bowman School in Jackson.

An official closing session of the diocesan phase of the canonization process followed the Mass, where the cause’s leaders ceremoniously sealed several boxes containing the diocesan phase’s documents and findings. In all, 10 boxes containing two sets of documents including more than 15,000 pages each, will be sent to the apostolic nunciature in Washington and then transferred to the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, which will further investigate the cause.

Jackson’s Bishop Kopacz, the main celebrant at the Mass, was among several bishops who witnessed the closing session. Concelebrants included Archbishop Mark S. Rivotuso and retired Archbishop Thomas J. Rodi of Mobile, Alabama, and Bishop Steven J. Raica and retired Bishop Robert J. Baker of Birmingham, Alabama.

Bishop Kopacz in 2018 opened the cause for Sister Thea, a native of Mississippi who was born in Yazoo City and raised in Canton. She was the

only African American member of the Wisconsin-based Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration. Before she died of cancer in 1990 at age 52, she was a widely known speaker, evangelizer and singer.

Nearly eight years after the cause was opened, Bishop Kopacz described the moment of closing the diocesan phase of the investigation as a blessing, especially for those who have been inspired by Sister Thea’s life.

“There’s considerable joy in the African American community,” he said. “It radiates throughout the whole diocese. Our Hispanic population is very proud of Sister Thea Bowman, too. They look to her as someone who had done a lot in her life and inspires them, in spite of obstacles, to continue forward. She had a great passion and love for God, and she saw the Church as the body of Christ as being for all. She taught people to be proud of their culture, and yet see the universality of the Church.”

Among the documents and findings related to Sister Thea are interviews with more than 40 witnesses as well as her writings, articles and other items pertaining to her life, said Emanuele Spedicato, the postulator for the cause who has been charged with sending the documents to Rome.

There are main components of a canonization investigation, which include a proven reputation for holiness, a rigorous examination of the candidate’s writings and life, the testimony of witnesses regarding heroic virtue and the investigation of at least one miracle attributed to their intercession.

Once the Vatican accepts the acts of the diocesan investigation, the sealed boxes will be opened and then begins the work of summarizing the information, said Spedicato, who will be tasked with writing the “positio,” which lays out the case for sainthood. From there, it is sent to the Dicastery for the Causes of Saints and then ultimately to the pope.

“The most exciting part is being here today



OSV News file photo/Michael Hoyt, Catholic Standard
Servant of God Thea Bowman, a Franciscan Sister of Perpetual Adoration from Canton, Miss., is shown during a talk she gave at St. Augustine Church in Washington in 1986. A sainthood cause for Sister Thea, who died in 1990, was opened in 2018 by the Diocese of Jackson, Miss., giving her the title “Servant of God.” The diocesan phase of her cause was closed after a Mass Feb. 9 and all the documents will be transferred to the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Causes of Saints for further investigation.

and showing the people the formalities (of the investigation) that are not only formalities but it’s for a purpose,” Spedicato said.

Sister Thea is among seven Black Catholics with active sainthood causes — dubbed the “Saintly Seven.”

Of the seven, four have been declared “Venerable”: Mother Mary Lange, who founded the Oblate Sisters of Providence, the first Catholic order of African American women religious, in Baltimore; Father Augustus Tolton from Chicago, the first Catholic priest in the United States known to be Black; Pierre Toussaint from New York City, known for his works of charity; and Mother Henriette Delille, foundress of the Sisters of the Holy Family in New Orleans.

Two others, like Sister Thea, have the title “Servant of God”: Julia Greeley, who was born into slavery and after her emancipation later moved to Denver, where she was known for her works of charity; and Father Martin de Porres Maria Ward, a Conventual Franciscan and Boston native who served the poor and the sick on mission in Brazil well into the late 1990s.

Among those who attended the Mass at the Jackson cathedral was Myrtle Otto, one of Sister Thea’s pupils at Holy Child Jesus School in Canton.

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Bowman ...

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After joining the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, Sister Thea returned to the school where she once was a student to teach music and English literature. She often stressed the importance of receiving a good education but also knew how to have fun, too, Otto said.

"We respected her in the utmost," she said, adding that Sister Thea's legacy should live on in how we treat others.

"Always learn to be kind," Otto

said. "Always learn to give people what's due to them. She was a strong woman, and she taught us how to be strong. Regardless of what goes on, you pray and you go on and you'll be successful. She's now gone to glory with God."

Several members of the Franciscan Sisters of Perpetual Adoration leadership were in attendance, including Sister Georgia Christensen, who knew Sister Thea from the time they were junior professed sisters.

Years ago during one of her assignments at a predominantly Black school in California, Sister

Thea had come to help out for a brief period and was encouraging with the students, Sister Georgia recalled.

"She always had a spirit of joy about her," she told the St. Louis Review, news outlet of the St. Louis Archdiocese, which Sister Thea visited on numerous occasions in the 1980s.

"She was able to break into song at any time, just praising God and making others happy. It touches the soul, and what it says is her life was a life worth living," Sister Georgia recalled.

As part of their community's

perpetual adoration, the Franciscan sisters include a prayer at the end of every hour with the line: "All praise and all thanksgiving, be every moment thine."

"I couldn't help but think of that here today," Sister Georgia said. "This is a moment of glory to God and Thea was the cause of it."

(Jennifer Brinker is a reporter at the St. Louis Review and Catholic St. Louis, the news outlets of the Archdiocese of St. Louis. This story was originally published by the St. Louis Review and distributed through a partnership with OSV News.)

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Two Major Medical Groups Back Limits on Gender Transition Procedures for Minors

By **Kate Scanlon**

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — Two major medical groups have backed limitations on certain types of medical or surgical gender reassignment procedures for minors who identify as transgender.

Statements from the American Society of Plastic Surgeons and the American Medical Association marked the first time major medical groups backed such limitations, while most have opposed efforts to restrict gender transition surgeries or provide hormonal treatments for minors experiencing gender dysphoria, often citing doctor-patient privacy.

In its policy statement, the American Society of Plastic Surgeons cited “a growing uncertainty about the benefits of medical and surgical interventions,” saying it therefore “recommends that surgeons delay gender-related breast/chest, genital, and facial surgery until a patient is at least 19 years old.”

“Plastic surgeons should maintain a working understanding of the current limits of evidence regarding social transition, puberty suppression, and cross-sex hormones; how prior medical/hormonal interventions may themselves influence physical and cognitive development, psychosocial functioning, and surgical care and risk; and the degree to which patient goals, expectations, and decision-making capacity have been evaluated in light of developmental stage and uncertainty of long-term outcomes,” the guidance said.

The American Medical Association, which is the nation’s largest organization representing doctors and has previously backed such procedures, said Feb. 4 that they should generally be deferred until patients reach adulthood.

“In the absence of clear evidence, the AMA agrees with ASPS that surgical interventions in minors should be generally deferred to adulthood,” it stated.

The Catholic Medical Association praised the ASPS recommendation in a Feb. 5 statement.

“The Catholic Medical Association has consistently maintained opposition to gender transition interventions, especially in minors,” Dr. David J. Hilger, the group’s president, said in the statement. “The use of such sex-rejecting procedures fails to recognize the scientific fact that biological sex is established, determinate, and unchangeable. No medication or surgery can alter that fact.”

Dr. Tim Millea, the chair of CMA’s Health Care Policy Committee, added, “We look forward to many other medical organizations providing similar warnings about these interventions.”

Chieko Noguchi, spokesperson for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, told OSV News Feb. 6 that “the Catholic Church is called to compassionately accompany people in their respective circumstances, which includes those struggling with his or her God-given sexual identity as male or female.”

“The bishops of the U.S. have been clear that medical

procedures or interventions related to ‘gender transition’ are not morally acceptable, and this is reflected in the revisions they recently approved for the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services (ERDs) that give authoritative guidance to those who provide Catholic health care,” she said. “However, whether a provider is Catholic or not, we pray that we may all find the compassion and wisdom to better help our brothers and sisters accept who God created them to be.”

The U.S. bishops in November approved an updated version of “Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services,” their guiding document on Catholic health care, with substantial revisions that include explicit prohibitions against such surgeries.

The updated ERDs incorporated guidance on health care policy and practices released in March 2023 by the USCCB’s Committee on Doctrine. It stated the church’s opposition to interventions that “involve the use of surgical or chemical techniques that aim to exchange the sex characteristics of a patient’s body for those of the opposite sex or for simulations thereof.”

“Any technological intervention that does not accord with the fundamental order of the human person as a unity of body and soul, including the sexual difference inscribed in the body, ultimately does not help but, rather, harms the human person,” the document states.

The ASPS recommendations appear to closely mirror regulatory actions announced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services in December in response to President Donald Trump’s executive order that sought to prohibit these procedures for individuals under 19 years old.

The ASPS did not immediately respond to a request for comment from OSV News about why age 19 was chosen.

HHS Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. said in a Feb. 3 statement, “We commend the American Society of Plastic Surgeons for standing up to the overmedicalization lobby and defending sound science.”

“By taking this stand, they are helping protect future generations of American children from irreversible harm,” he said.

The World Professional Association for Transgender Health, which claims to be “the leading global professional organization for clinicians, researchers, and experts in the field of trans-


gender healthcare,” said in a statement that it supports “cautious guardrails and criteria” for “adolescents to access surgical care,” but argued against a “‘one-size-fits-all’ approach.”

The group, however, has been criticized as not being solely a professional body, due to the inclusion of activists, and that its views do not represent a professional consensus.

A 2022 study by the UCLA Williams Institute found there are approximately 1.6 million people in the U.S. who identify as transgender, including about 300,000 youth (those ages 13 to 17) who identify as transgender.

A recent JAMA Pediatrics study found 926 U.S. adolescents with commercial insurance and a gender-related diagnosis received puberty blockers from 2018 through 2022, and none of them were under age 12. The study did not include minors covered by Medicaid.

(Kate Scanlon is a national reporter for OSV News covering Washington.)



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Bishop Rhoades Calls on Notre Dame to Reverse New Director's Appointment over Abortion Advocacy

By **Gina Christian**

(OSV News) — An Indiana bishop is urging the University of Notre Dame to halt the appointment of a faculty member, who advocates openly for abortion, as head of one of the school's research centers.

The matter highlights the role of Catholic universities in the life of the Church, as delineated in St. John Paul II's 1990 apostolic constitution, "Ex Corde Ecclesiae," for which the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops approved a particular application in 1999.

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, issued a Feb. 11 statement expressing "dismay" and "strong opposition" to the university's appointment of associate professor Susan Ostermann as director of the Liu Institute for Asia and Asian Studies, effective July 1. Notre Dame is located adjacent to South Bend, Indiana, the state's fourth largest city.

The institute is part of the university's Keough School of Global Affairs, of which Ostermann — who specializes in the study of regulatory compliance, comparative politics and environmental regulation, with a focus on South Asia — is a faculty member.

The appointment, announced on Jan. 8, has drawn fire from Notre Dame faculty and staff due to Ostermann's robust public endorsement of legal abortion, and her work as a consultant for the Population Council, an international research and policy firm that works to advance "sexual and reproductive health, rights and choices" as a key aim. At least two Notre Dame faculty members, professor Diane Desierto and emeritus professor Robert Gimello, resigned their roles at the Liu Institute in protest, according to The Observer, Notre Dame's student-run news-

paper.

In his statement, Bishop Rhoades said Ostermann's "extensive public advocacy of abortion rights and her disparaging and inflammatory remarks about those who uphold the dignity of human life from the moment of conception to natural death go against a core principle of justice that is central to Notre Dame's Catholic identity and mission."

Bishop Rhoades — noting he had read "many of the op-ed pieces co-authored by Professor Ostermann — said the appointment was "causing scandal to the faithful of our diocese and beyond."

In one such piece, published by the Chicago Tribune in December 2022, Ostermann and former faculty colleague Tamara Kay (who left Notre Dame for the University of Pittsburgh, following outcry over her endorsement of legalized abortion) surveyed "lies about abortion" that have "dictated public policy."

Among those lies, wrote Ostermann and Kay, was that "abortion kills babies."

"Almost 90% of abortions occur during the first 10 weeks of pregnancy when there are no babies or fetuses. There are only blastocysts or embryos so tiny they are too small to be seen on an abdominal ultrasound," wrote Ostermann and Kay.

The same article also described crisis pregnancy centers as "anti-abortion rights propaganda sites" that "operate and provide false information to women who are lured to them believing they will receive legitimate medical care."

Ostermann and Kay further asserted that "women who are denied an abortion experience a panoply of negative outcomes physically, mentally and occupationally."

Bishop Rhoades quoted additional writings by Ostermann in his statement, noting she had claimed the pro-life position has "its roots in white supremacy and racism," with misogyny "embedded" in the movement.

"She also argued that the Catholic social doctrine of 'integral human development' supports abortion because it enhances freedom and flourishing for women," said Bishop Rhoades.

"These are all outrageous claims that should disqualify her from an administrative and leadership role at a Catholic university," he said. "I hope that Professor Ostermann will explicitly retract these claims, and I pray that she will have a change of mind and heart that will lead her to affirm the innate dignity of unborn babies as well as that of their mothers."

In a statement provided to OSV News, Ostermann said that her "primary focus is to serve as a steward for the Liu Institute mission in the context of the University's larger mission, and a facilitator for our world-class faculty.

"I am fully committed to maintaining an environment of academic freedom where a plurality of voices can flourish," she said. "I have long worked with scholars who hold diverse views on a multitude of issues, and I welcome the opportunity to continue doing so. While I hold my own convictions on complex social and legal issues, I want to be clear: my role is to support the diverse research of our scholars and students, not to advance a personal political agenda."

"This commitment to academic inquiry and mutual respect is deeply rooted in my appreciation for Notre Dame's identity as a global Catholic research university," Ostermann continued. "I am inspired by the University's focus

on Integral Human Development, which calls us to promote the dignity and flourishing of every person. I respect Notre Dame's institutional position on the sanctity of life at every stage. By fostering a collaborative space that values rigorous inquiry, we contribute in important ways to global development and human well-being. As Liu Director, I look forward to working closely with my colleagues to ensure the Liu Institute remains a place where truth is pursued with both excellence and integrity."

In his statement, Bishop Rhoades cited a Nov. 15, 2014, address by Pope Francis in which the late pontiff denounced "false compassion which holds that it is a benefit to women to promote abortion."

"The Church here in our diocese and around the world serves mothers before and after birth, providing spiritual, emotional, and material care to moms in need," said Bishop Rhoades. "The Church stands for the inalienable right to life of mothers and their unborn children."

Bishop Rhoades said that "Notre Dame has publicly committed as a Catholic institution to the life and dignity of the human person," affirming the Church's teaching that "human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception," as the Catechism of the Catholic Church states.

"I am proud of Notre Dame's pro-life commitment, manifest in the large number of students and faculty who promote a culture of life through many campus organizations, programs, and activities," Bishop Rhoades said. "They witness to the sanctity of life at every stage, with special attention to the lives of the vulnerable, including

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Rhoades ...

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the unborn, the poor, immigrants, the elderly, and the infirm."

He stressed that "the Catholic Church upholds a consistent ethic of life," pointing to Pope Leo XIV's recent citation of St. Teresa of Calcutta's address at the National Prayer Breakfast in February 1994, in which she said "the greatest destroyer of peace today is abortion."

Bishop Rhoades also quoted Pope Leo, who in a Jan. 31 address observed that "no policy can genuinely serve the people if it denies the unborn the gift of life, or if it neglects to support those in need whether in their material circumstances or in their spiritual distress."

Bishop Rhoades said that "this pro-life principle is not merely affirmed by Catholics; it is embraced by many people of good will of diverse backgrounds and commitments around the world."

With the Keough Institute endorsing integral human development as the primary Catholic social teaching principle for its work, said Bishop Rhoades, "Professor Ostermann has written — ludicrously — that this Catholic principle actually supports abortion on demand."

Yet the Holy See has repeatedly affirmed to the United Nations that the inherent right to life is central to integral human development, said the bishop.

"Professor Ostermann's opposite view thus clearly should disqualify her from holding a position of leadership within the Keough

School," he said.

He added that Ostermann's consultancy for the Population Council was another disqualifier for the Liu Institute appointment, since the council is "dedicated to the promotion of abortion around the world, 'linked to China's population control policies that have resulted in hundreds of millions of abortions of baby girls,' and 'instrumental in securing approval of the abortion pill by the FDA, which is responsible for the majority of abortions in the United States.'"

"Some may claim that this appointment should be protected by academic freedom," said Bishop Rhoades noted.

However, he said, "Academic freedom concerns the liberty of faculty to conduct research according to their own professional judgment and interests."

"This appointment, by contrast, concerns the official administrative appointment to lead an academic unit," he said. "Such appointments have profound impact on the integrity of Notre Dame's public witness as a Catholic university."

Ostermann's appointment as the head of the Liu Institute "understandably creates confusion in the public mind as to Notre Dame's fidelity to its Catholic mission," said Bishop Rhoades, adding that "many faculty, students, alumni, and benefactors of Notre Dame have reached out to me to express their shock, sadness, confusion, and disappointment" over the move.

Bishop Rhoades urged prayer, particularly to the Virgin Mary under her title

Our Lady of Lourdes, asking her to intercede so that "Notre Dame will always stand firm in her commitment to the Gospel of her Son, the Gospel of Life."

He cited "Ex Corde Ecclesiae," which names the local bishop as having

particular responsibility to promote and assist in preserving the Catholic identity of Catholic universities within a given diocese.

"I call upon the leadership of Notre Dame to rectify this situation," said

Bishop Rhoades. "The appointment of Professor Ostermann is not scheduled to go into effect until July 1, 2026. There is still time to make things right."

(Gina Christian is a multimedia reporter for OSV News.)

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 Saturday, April 18: St. James, Charles Town, 5:00 p.m.
 Sunday, April 19: Assumption, Keyser, 4:00 p.m.
 Wednesday, April 22: St. Francis de Sales, Morgantown, 6:00 p.m.
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 Saturday, April 25: Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Stonewood; 5:00 p.m.
 Sunday, April 26: St. Brendan, Elkins; 11:00 a.m.
 Friday, May 1: St. Francis de Sales, Beckley; 6:30 p.m.
 Saturday, May 2: SS Peter & Paul, Oak Hill, 5:30 p.m.
 Sunday, May 3: St. Catherine of Siena, Ronceverte, 11:00 a.m.
 Saturday, May 9: Immaculate Conception, Clarksburg, 4:30 p.m.
 Sunday, May 10: St. Joseph the Worker, Weirton, 7:00 p.m.
 Monday, May 11: St. Michael, Wheeling, 5:30 p.m.
 Wednesday, May 13: Immaculate Conception, Fairmont, 6:00 p.m.
 Saturday, May 16: St. Vincent de Paul, Wheeling, 5:00 p.m.
 Sunday, May 17: St. Jude, Glen Dale, 9:00 a.m.
 Friday, May 22: Epiphany of the Lord, Moorefield, 6:00 p.m.
 Saturday, May 23: St. Leo, Inwood, 5:00 p.m.
 Sunday, May 24: St. Bernadette, Hedgesville, 11:00 a.m.
 Sunday, May 24: St. Joseph, Martinsburg, 4:00 p.m.
 Saturday, June 6: Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart,
 Charleston, 5:30 p.m.
 Sunday, June 14: St. Matthew/Sacred Heart Mission, Point Pleasant,
 11:15 a.m.
 Saturday, June 20: St. Sebastian, Kingwood, 6:00 p.m.

A message from the West Virginia Knights of Columbus State Council

Deep within the heart of every man is a call to live with purpose and meaning; a call to lead, to protect, to serve and to defend.

Men today need a band of brothers – other Catholic men to share in that call, who walk together on the journey towards something better.

**You are invited
to put your
faith in action**

kofc.org/joinus



The **Knights of Columbus** is a trusted name, tried by time, present where men are, providing inspiring resources and support for strengthening your faith and living a life of virtue.

Knights lead with faith. Knights protect our families. Knights serve those in need.

When the world says men should step aside, Knights of Columbus step up.

We are Catholic men. We live by principles informed by faith. We are sons, fathers, husbands, and grandfathers. Join us on life's greatest adventure to discover the man God calls you to be.

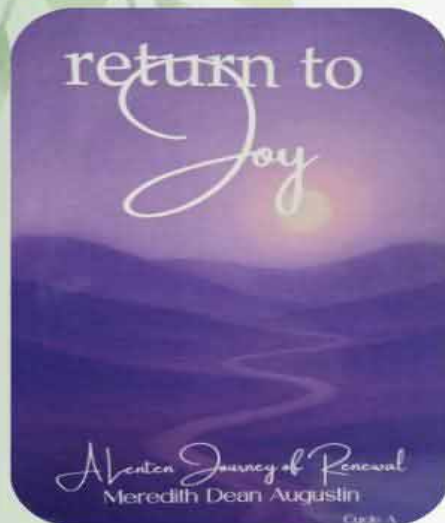
Become a Knight.

Click here

Return to Joy

A LENTEN JOURNEY OF RENEWAL

As the season approaches, many of us ask: What does my heart need this Lent? Return to Joy offers an answer, inviting individuals and groups to slow down, reflect deeply, and rediscover the quiet joy that grows from an honest relationship with God. Gather with others in a space that creates time for prayer, meaningful conversations, and renewal of the spirit!



Join us as we gather virtually for 8 weeks to explore the book RETURN TO JOY A Lenten Journey of Renewal!

Individuals will do self-reflection each day and then gather once a week for faith sharing! Bring your lunch, your copy of Return to Joy and your reflections!

MONDAY

February 16

TUESDAYS

February 24

March 3, 10, 17, 24, 31

April 7

ZOOM over LUNCH
11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.

Cost: \$25

**Participants must
purchase the book**



Reserve your spot today:
Contact Anna Marie Troiani
Phone: 304-907-0171
Email: atroiani@csjoseph.org



A Day of Joy and Learning: WV Birth to Three RAU-One's Storywalk Success

In Northern West Virginia, a delightful program unfolded, bringing smiles and laughter to families through the magic of storytelling and play. WV Birth to Three RAU-One recently held two enchanting Storywalk events as part of their Brown Bear Storywalk program, engaging children and parents in Wheeling and Morgantown.

In Wheeling, the event was a resounding success, with 12 dedicated practitioners and RAU One staff welcoming 19 adults and 22 children. Morgantown echoed this success, with 14 practitioners and RAU-One staff hosting 6 adults and 8 children. The practitioners, who generously volunteered their time and expertise, organized a series of captivating and developmentally appropriate activities centered around the beloved book "Brown Bear, Brown Bear" by Eric Carle.

Emily and Christopher Cawthon, parents of twin boys who attended, shared, "The boys had a blast, thank you for doing it! Have a great summer!" Another parent noted, "The children had a great time! It helped that there was a familiar face there."



Children eagerly followed bear paw prints to various stations, each offering a unique and engaging activity. They read the story together, crawled through tunnels, tossed rings on cones, blew bubbles, fished for magnetic fish, played matching games with ducks, and dug through beans to find feathers to glue onto bird pictures. The excitement was palpable as children immersed themselves in these activities, their faces lighting up with each new discovery.

As families completed the Storywalk, they received bags of goodies to continue the fun at home. One little boy was so thrilled with his bag that he sat at the exit, eagerly sorting through each item and exclaiming, "Wow!" with every new find. His joy was a testament to the event's success and the happiness it brought to each child.

These Storywalk events highlighted the power of community, dedication, and the joy of learning through play. WV Birth to Three RAU-One's commitment to fostering development and family engagement shone brightly, leaving a lasting impression on everyone involved. As the children and families left with smiles, laughter, and bags full of goodies, the true success of the Storywalk was evident: a day of joy, connection, and lasting memories.

ccwva.org

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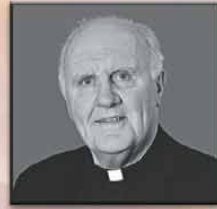
Collection Date: March 8, 2026



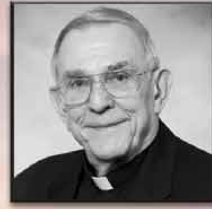
Msgr. Frederick P. Annie



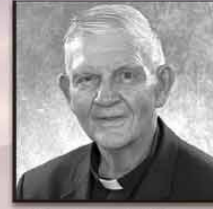
Msgr. Patrick L. Fryer



Msgr. Jeremiah F. McSweeney



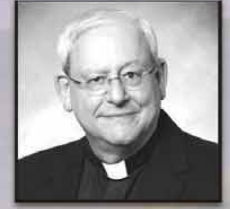
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Rev. William A. Anderson



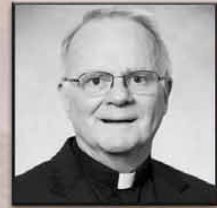
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Rev. Harry N. Cramer



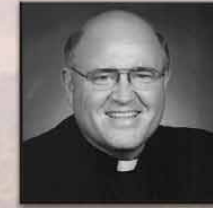
Rev. John V. Di Bacco, Jr.



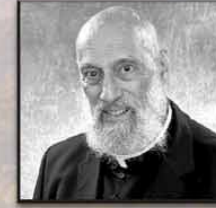
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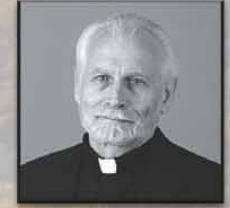
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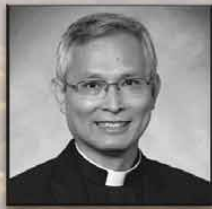
Rev. Patsy J. Iaquina



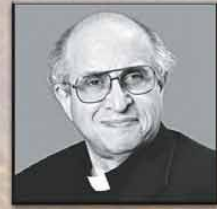
Rev. Giles LeVasseur



Rev. George M. Manjadi



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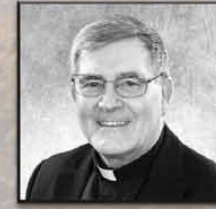
Rev. Robert A. Perriello



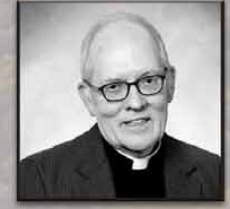
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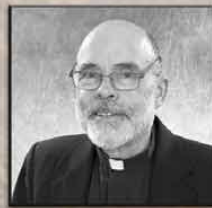
Rev. T. Mathew Rowgh



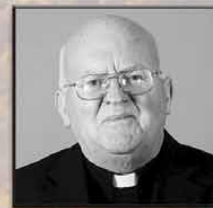
Rev. David J. Schmitt



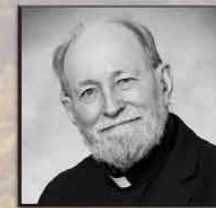
Rev. Douglas B. Sutton



Rev. Anthony G. Thurston



Rev. Laurence Wrenn



Rev. Paul D. Yuenger

"I thank you for your lives given in service to the Kingdom, for your daily labors, for so much generosity in the exercise of the ministry, for all that you live in silence, and that at times is accompanied by suffering or misunderstanding." ~ Pope Leo XIV

El proceso de beatificación del arzobispo Fulton J. Sheen avanza tras una pausa de seis años

PEORIA, Illinois (OSV News) —El venerable arzobispo Fulton J. Sheen será beatificado próximamente, según anunció la Diócesis de Peoria el 9 de febrero. No se ha dado a conocer la fecha ni el lugar de la beatificación. Considerado uno de los evangelizadores católicos más influyentes en la historia de Estados Unidos, el arzobispo Sheen utilizó los medios de comunicación modernos para proclamar el Evangelio a millones de personas.

Nacido en Illinois en 1895 y ordenado sacerdote para la Diócesis de Peoria en 1919, el arzobispo Sheen combinó el rigor de un filósofo con la compasión de un pastor. Tras sus primeros años de ministerio parroquial, enseñó durante 25 años en la Universidad Católica de América, donde escribió docenas de libros y se ganó la reputación de ser un orador cautivador que hablaba sin apuntes. El arzobispo Sheen alcanzó la fama nacional a través del programa de radio de la NBC "The Catholic Hour" y, posteriormente, del programa de televisión "Life Is Worth Living", que llegó a tener una audiencia de hasta 30 millones de personas y le valió un premio Emmy. Nombrado obispo auxiliar de Nueva York en 1951, dirigió las Obras Misionales Pontificias de EE.UU., donando todas sus ganancias de los medios de comunicación a las misiones.

Conocido por su ingenio, claridad y profunda devoción eucarística, el arzobispo Sheen también experimentó sufrimiento personal y controversias. Falleció en 1979 y fue declarado venerable en 2012.

La disminución de los hogares con parejas casadas en EEUU impulsa un llamado a la acción para los líderes de la Iglesia

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — Ante la doble celebración anual del Día Mundial del Matrimonio (8 de febrero) y la Semana Nacional del Matrimonio (7 al 14 de febrero), Estados Unidos se encuentra en una encrucijada sociológica, enfrentando una pregunta desconcertante sobre una institución milenaria: ¿Importa todavía el matrimonio? Los nuevos datos del Censo de EE. UU. sobre la estructura familiar y las condiciones de vida en Estados Unidos, publicados el pasado diciembre, muestran que menos de la mitad (47%) de los hogares estadounidenses en 2025 estaban formados por parejas casadas, un cambio significativo con respecto a 50 años antes, cuando casi dos tercios (66%) lo estaban.

"Lo que muestra el censo de este año es que Estados Unidos está envejeciendo y se está volviendo más solitario", dijo

Patrick T. Brown, investigador del Centro de Ética y Políticas Públicas en Washington. "Nuestra población sigue viviendo más tiempo, teniendo menos hijos y formando pareja más tarde, lo que significa que la proporción de estadounidenses casados con hijos menores de 18 años se encuentra en su nivel más bajo. Se trata de la continuación de una tendencia a largo plazo que, lamentablemente, no parece que vaya a revertirse en un futuro próximo".

Brown considera que estas estadísticas son un llamado a la acción para los líderes de la Iglesia. "Si no encontramos la manera de reconstruir la institución del matrimonio, haciéndola más atractiva y facilitando que los jóvenes formen pareja antes, veremos cómo la sociedad se vuelve cada vez más estéril, más frágil y menos optimista", afirmó.

Agradecemos a Don Luis y a Horacio por grabar la Novena de Cuaresma y las Reflexiones para la Cuaresma.

Radio Luz de Vida comenzará a transmitir las el lunes 9 de febrero, cuatro minutos antes de cada hora. También están disponibles a la carta en la sección de podcasts (<https://www.lolradio.org/Podcasts.html>) del sitio web de Radio Luz de Vida.

Agradecemos al Señor por bendecir a Radio Luz de Vida (<https://radio.secure-systems.net/ciruscore/WL0L2>) para que pueda difundir la Palabra de Dios en la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston y la Diócesis de Steubenville.

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. 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 Seguro 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, 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, 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.



Now is a good time for parishes and schools to plan ahead and order materials for **Lent '26 "Operation Rice Bowl."** This now fifty year old program is a major way for American Catholics to be part of the worldwide work of Catholic Relief Services, our bishops' sponsored international relief agency.

Rooted in the history of the Eucharistic Congress, **CRS Rice Bowl** invites Catholics and faith communities in the United States to encounter God and our global family throughout Lent by practicing the **pillars of prayer, fasting and almsgiving**. Lenten alms donated through CRS Rice Bowl support the work of CRS in more than 120 different countries each year. Twenty-five percent of donations to CRS Rice Bowl stay in the local diocese, supporting hunger and poverty alleviation efforts. Since its inception in 1975, CRS Rice Bowl has raised more than \$350 million. With drastic federal cuts in international humanitarian aid our support of CRS is even more critical.

Free materials for Lent '26 "Operation Rice Bowl" can now be ordered at:
<https://www.crsricebowl.org/order-crs-rice-bowl-materials>

These materials include:

1. The now iconic "mite boxes" to collect saving from fasting,
2. Prayer materials for each day of Lent,
3. Stories and photos about communities being served by our support of CRS and even recipes based on meals of those people.
4. Videos and printed materials suitable for use during announcements at Sunday mass and other gatherings.
5. Materials for various levels of student and university participation.

For more information about Catholic Relief Services: search CRS.org

Diocesan contact **Chad Carter**, Chancellor, at 304-233-0880

or

Fr. Larry W. Dorsch, CRS Global Fellow,

For guest homilist or program speaker: Phone 304-281-6503

Prison Ministry Needs Your Help

Prison Ministry is in need of a priest, deacon, or trained Catholic volunteer willing to serve the incarcerated men and women at **North Central Regional Jail in Greenwood, WV.**

Prison ministry has received several calls requesting support for the facility. Before his retirement, Deacon Rue Thompson faithfully traveled to NCRJ weekly to offer prayer, encouragement, and sacramental support to inmates. His ministry made a meaningful impact, and the need continues.

If you know of anyone who may be interested, or if there is someone already serving, please reach out to Kay Sanders at 304-621-4514 or msanders@dwc.org.

Thank you for your continued commitment to those in need.

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The WVU Heart and Vascular Institute Structural Heart Program is the only program in West Virginia that offers eight specialized, structural heart procedures and is one of the few programs in the United States (and the only one in West Virginia) offering cerebral embolic protection during transcatheter aortic valve replacement (Protected TAVR) and transcatheter mitral valve replacement.

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