

THE CATHOLIC
Spirit

Immigrants: Our Neighbors, Friends and Fellow Believers

*A Pastoral Letter from
Bishop Brennan*

February 14, 2025

When I was a boy, we children sometimes asked one another: "What are you?" It wasn't a question about our sex or what position we played in baseball or soccer; it was a question about where our family had come from. "I'm Irish," someone would answer. "My family came from Italy," another would chime in. "I'm half English and half Polish," a third would say. We were aware that our families had come from other countries – sometimes our parents or our grandparents or other ancestors farther back in time.

We children were aware of a truth that some Americans today have forgotten: we are all immigrants or the descendants of immigrants. African Americans, whose ancestors were brought here in chains, have made strenuous efforts to discover their origins on the African continent. Even our indigenous tribes, here for millennia, came from immigrants who crossed over to the Americas from Asia. So important has immigration been in our country's history that a major exhibit at the Smithsonian Institution, our national museum, during our Bicentennial in 1976 was entitled "A Nation of Nations."

Why do people leave their homeland, where they know the language, the climate, the culture and their land's history and have multiple ties to family and friends? Sometimes because of threats to their safety. A woman in my last parish had a small store in El Salvador. The local gang told her they would protect her if she gave them half her profit. She said she didn't want their protection and refused their demand, so they killed her brother. She closed her store and came to the United States. Can you blame her?

Sometimes there is religious persecution. Thousands of Christians have left Iraq and Syria because they are persecuted for their faith. A priest in Iraq, a friend of a priest who served with me a few years ago, was murdered by Islamic State terrorists in his church. Many of the parishioners fled the country. Can you blame them?

Extreme poverty can prompt an exodus from all that is familiar. The Great Famine in Ireland in the middle of the 19th century caused many to leave their homeland, including my great grandparents, Thomas and Mary Farrell. They were afraid of starving to death,

See "Letter" on Page 2

Diocesan History to Celebrate

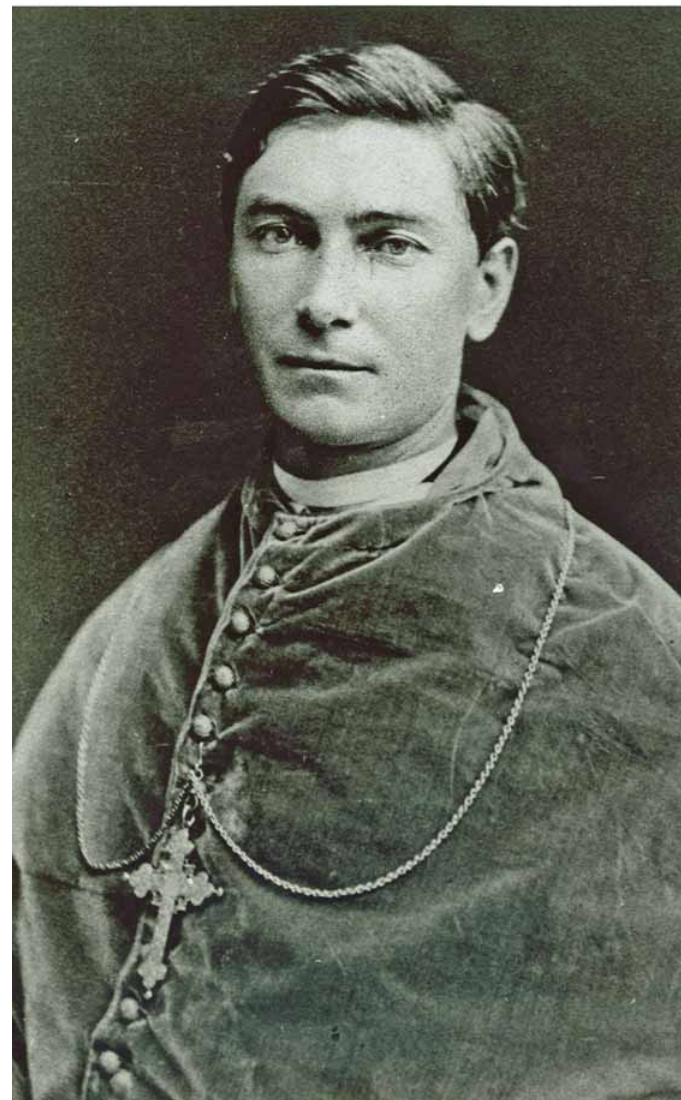
By Joyce Bibey

On February 12, 1875, the Holy See announced that Martinsburg native Fr. John Joseph Kain would be the bishop of the Diocese of Wheeling.

While it is the 150th anniversary of this announcement the declaration is also interesting because Fr. Kain was only 34 years old and a West Virginian. He was reluctant to leave the ministry of the parish and mission priest, but he did so for the betterment of the diocese.

John Joseph Kain was born in March of 1841, but would celebrate it as May 31, 1841, the day he was baptized. He went to St. Charles College in Maryland and St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore. He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Richmond (the entire Eastern Panhandle of our state was part of the Richmond diocese until 1974) at the

See "History" on Page 3



Courtesy photo

Bishop John Joseph Kain is pictured in this undated photo.

Bishop Brennan to Celebrate Red Mass in Charleston

By Colleen Rowan

CHARLESTON — Members of the bar association, members of the court, elected officials, and others who serve in the administration of justice and government are invited to the annual Red Mass at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston. Bishop Mark Brennan will celebrate the Mass on Thursday, Feb. 20, at 6 p.m. All those who serve in these professions are invited to the Mass no matter their religious affiliation.

"It is an honor for the basilica to host the annual Red Mass at the beginning of the 87th West Virginia Legislature," said Very Rev. Donald X. Higgs, Assoc. V.E., V.F., rector of the basilica. "Bishop Brennan will

gather us together to pray for those elected to public office and those serving in the law profession. We will pray that the Holy Spirit will pour out the gifts of wisdom and right judgment to those called to the important and honorable position of public service."

For those who attend each year, the Red Mass is an important celebration as it presents the opportunity to gather in prayer and to reflect on their work and their faith.

In his celebration of the Red Mass last year, Bishop Brennan encouraged those in attendance to seek justice, keeping the full human dignity of those they serve in mind.

See "Mass" on Page 3

Inside: Pope Adds Feast Day of St. Teresa of Kolkata to Universal Calendar, Page 3

Evening of Music from the African American Tradition to be Held at Mount St. Joseph, Page 4

Letter ...

Cont'd from Page 1

so they saved and borrowed money to pay for passage to the US. Can you blame them?

There is great concern today over illegal immigration. Contrary to what many assume, most immigrants – 77% – are in this country legally. Of all foreign-born residents, 49% have become US citizens, 24% have permanent residency (“green cards”), 4% have legal temporary residency and 23% are undocumented or illegal. Another way to look at it is that about 14.3% of all people living in this country now are foreign-born; but those here without government permission are about 3.5% of the total population. (See *Pew Research Center* bulletin for September, 2024.)

The Catholic Church recognizes the right and the duty of governments to regulate their borders to protect their citizens and promote their well-being. So, the federal government has the duty to bring order to its borders and has every right to expel murderers, rapists, drug cartel members and dealers, human traffickers, terrorists and others who harm or could harm our people.

At the same time, the government’s right is not absolute. God said to the first human beings, representing our entire race: *Fill the earth and subdue it* [Genesis 1:28]. God gave the earth to the whole human race; national borders are a secondary human creation. Second, people have a right to go elsewhere if they are living in intolerable conditions. So, governments, especially those in large, rich countries like the United States, should exercise their responsibility humanely and be generous in responding to those who, in distress, must leave their homelands.

When immigrants arrive here, we Catholics try to meet their needs for food, clothing, lodging and other necessities. God says to us: *You shall not molest or oppress an alien, for you were once aliens yourselves in the land of Egypt* [Exodus 22:20]. In our situation, that means: “Treat the immigrant fairly and with compassion; your ancestors were immigrants, too.” The child Jesus was a refugee in Egypt, fleeing King Herod [Matthew 2:13]. The adult Lord says to us: *I was a stranger and you welcomed me, hungry and you fed me, naked and you clothed me* [Matthew 25:35-36]. Our initial concern as Catholics is not the immigrant’s legal status but his human need. We will listen to our Lord and welcome the stranger.

Vice-President Vance recently criticized us bishops for helping to resettle refugees. Consider this: the federal government investigates those applying for refugee status and, for those it approves, it contracts with groups such as Catholic Charities to get them settled in our country. The govern-

ment pays for these services – often in arrears – but the funds received do not cover all of the cost; the Church loses several millions of dollars each year to help resettle refugees. We do it as an act of mercy, following the Lord’s teaching [*Catholic News Agency*, February 3, 2025].

As I have pointed out before, the fundamental problem is that immigration to this country is a very lengthy and cumbersome process. Someone wanting to marry a US citizen often must wait three years to get a visa to enter the United States. While foreign professionals with advanced degrees or exceptional talents can enter more quickly, ordinary people who just want to work to provide food for themselves and their families must often wait fifteen years (See *Stilt*, April 10, 2024). You could starve to death or be put in jail for your political or religious beliefs by then. People in desperate situations take the risk of coming here without legal papers.

The way forward, which we Catholic bishops have been advocating for decades, is to reform the immigration process so that it is simpler and more expeditious. It is instructive that in the period of greatest immigration, the late 19th and early 20th centuries, the government’s process for allowing in immigrants was much quicker and easier to follow. At that time, Ellis Island in New York Harbor received millions of immigrants, of whom 98% were admitted. The sick were hospitalized and admitted when they got well. Only anarchists, prostitutes and the insane were excluded. (Brochure of the National Park Service at Ellis Island.) Like the householder who can bring out of his storeroom both the old and the new (Matthew 13:52), our civil government should consider past practice and adapt accordingly.

The current presidential administration has adopted some policies with regard to immigration that are acceptable in Catholic teaching: a reasonable approach to putting order at the nation’s borders, deporting true criminals. But any policies that would separate parents from their children or deny American citizenship to children born here or engage in massive deportation efforts, which will not only hurt ordinary immigrants but the US economy as well, should be abandoned. A basic medical principle is: Do no harm. The government should apply that principle in its immigration policies.

What are you? You are an immigrant or the descendant of immigrants. Show respect and fraternal welcome to those coming to our shores today. You will honor your God and your ancestors.

Sincerely in Christ,

Mark E. Brennan

+Mark E. Brennan
Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston

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://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 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.”

The Catholic Spirit’s Print Schedule for 2025

There are 10 print editions in 2025. 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.

2025 Print Issues and Dates:

Month of the Holy Family, February 7; Lent, March 7; Easter, April 18; Month of Mary, Mother of God, May 23; Month of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, June 13; Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 15; Triumph of the Cross, September 12; Month of the Rosary, October 3; Advent, November 21; Christmas, December 19



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Pope To U.S.: Migration Policies Built on Force, Not Truth, ‘Will End Badly’

Click here to read story

Pope Adds Feast Day of St. Teresa of Kolkata to Universal Calendar

By Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis has added the feast day of St. Teresa of Kolkata, a “beacon of hope” and an example of loving service to the poorest of the poor, to the General Roman Calendar so that her “Optional Memorial shall be celebrated by all on 5 September every year.”

Cardinal Arthur Roche and Archbishop Vittorio Francesco Viola, respectively prefect and secretary of the Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments, announced the pope’s deci-

sion in a decree published by the Vatican Feb. 11.

Previously the feast day of St. Teresa of Calcutta, as the Vatican refers to the city in India where she began her work with the abandoned poor, was inscribed only in the proper calendar of the Missionaries of Charity and the proper calendar of India. Now her memorial is included in the calendar of the universal church.

“Canonized in 2016 by Pope Francis, the name of Teresa of Calcutta continues to shine out as a source of hope for many men and women who seek consolation amidst tribula-

tions of body and spirit,” said the decree, dated Dec. 24.

Pope Francis, responding to the requests of bishops, religious and laypeople “and considering the influence exercised by the spirituality of Saint Teresa in different parts of the world,” decided to add her to the universal calendar, the decree said.

In a separate note, Cardinal Roche described Mother Teresa as “a beacon of hope, small in stature yet great in love, a witness to the dignity and privilege of humble service in the defense of all human life and of all

those who have been abandoned, discarded and despised even in the hiddenness of the womb.”

Bishops’ conferences around the world will need to translate from Latin the prayers issued by the dicastery for Mass on her feast day as well as those used in the Liturgy of the Hours and have the translations confirmed by the dicastery.

Cardinal Roche said the collect or opening prayer for Mass on her feast day “opens for us the heart of her spirituality: the call to satisfy the thirst of Jesus Christ on the Cross by answering with love the needs

of the most needy. For this reason, we beseech God the Father that, imitating her example, we may minister to Christ present in our suffering brothers and sisters.”

The Gospel reading for her feast is from the 25th chapter of St. Matthew, the cardinal said, which lists “the works of mercy” — feeding the hungry, visiting prisoners, welcoming strangers — and it “contains the following words brought wonderfully to life in Mother Teresa: ‘Whatever you have done to the very least of my brothers and sisters you have done also to me.’”

History ...

Cont’d from Page 1

age of 25, in the year 1866. His first assignment was his childhood parish – St. Joseph in Martinsburg. He was also assigned to serve in missions in the regions within and around Leesburg, VA, and Harpers Ferry, WV. Not only did his duties include serving the faithful and evangelizing the people, but it was also to help rebuild the communities after the Civil War.

His installation as the second bishop for the Diocese of Wheeling was in May 1875. He succeeded Bishop Richard Whelan, who died in 1874. Bishop Kain expanded his servant leadership ministry to meet the needs of newly arrived immigrants

from all over Europe who came to work in the coal mines and mills of West Virginia; and he was consulted on issues of labor unions and education.

Bishop Kain took over in a time of great debt in the diocese and horrific hard financial times for the people of WV.

Within the 18 years he served as our bishop he opened 15 parishes and six schools. His service to the diocese ended in 1893, when he was then appointed to be the Archbishop of St. Louis. He was so successful as a leader of the Church many dioceses wanted him to be the successor of other bishops across the country, but he was able to refuse those positions until the Church leaders needed him

in St. Louis.

However, Bishop Kain didn’t leave Wheeling until he was certain his beloved diocese was in good hands. He was able to help select his successor Bishop Patrick J. Donahue.

Bishop Kain remained in St. Louis until his death on Oct. 13, 1903. He was 62.

Fun fact: Bishop Kain was baptized by Father Richard Whelan. It was one of the last baptisms Bishop Whelan celebrated before being installed as Bishop of Richmond in 1841. In 1849, Bishop Whelan as Bishop of Richmond convinced the Provincial Council of Baltimore to divide the Diocese of Richmond into two dioceses – Richmond and Wheeling – with the Allegheny Mountains to be the natu-

ral barrier; and on July 19, 1850, the Holy See established the Diocese of Wheeling. The Wheeling, Virginia diocese became a two-state diocese in 1863, when WV became the 35th state.

Mass ...

Cont’d from Page 1

The Red Mass was first celebrated in West Virginia at the basilica co-cathedral in 1995. This will be the fourth consecutive year for the celebration of the Red Mass at the basilica co-cathedral. The Mass is promoted each year by the St. Thomas More Society of Charleston.

A reception will be held following the celebration.

Diocesan Official Appointment

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

Father Andrew Switzer has been elected to a three-year term on the Diocesan Presbyteral Council, effective December 31, 2024. This is in addition to his current assignments as pastor of St. Agnes Parish in Shepherdstown.

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Rite of Election Dates Announced

By Colleen Rowan

WEST VIRGINIA — The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston has announced the dates for this year's Rite of Election: Sunday, March 9, Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston, 3 p.m.; Saturday, March 15, St. Agnes Church in Shepherdstown, 11 a.m.; and Sunday, March 16, Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling, 3 p.m.

Bishop Mark Brennan will preside over all three celebrations.

"Because of the size of our state, we have scheduled three Rites of Election," Bernadette McMasters Kime, PhD., D. Min., director of

Worship and Sacraments for the diocese, said in a Feb. 12 letter to pastors, administrators, parish staff, and Christian initiation coordinators. They were asked to choose a location most convenient for them, their initiation team, catechumens, and candidates.

"Keep in mind that you can always send someone to a different Rite of Election to accommodate their schedules," Kime wrote.

A registration form accompanied the letter with a Feb. 24 deadline to return to the Office of Worship and Sacraments.

At each Rite of Election, catechumens and candidates move

closer to full communion with the Catholic Church. In the Celebration of Election, catechumens are called by name and stand with their godparents. After affirmation from godparents and the assembly, the bishop says the church, in the name of Christ, accepts their judgment and calls the catechumens to the Easter sacraments. They will affirm their intent to enter fully into the life of the church through the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist and the bishop will invite them to come forward and offer their names for enrollment by signing the Book of the Elect.

The Call to Continuing Conversion follows with the names of the candidates from each parish announced. They will stand with their sponsors who, with the assembly, will affirm them. The bishop will say that the church recognizes their desire to be sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit and to have a place at Christ's Eucharistic table.

Their journey will culminate at the Easter Vigil as they receive the sacraments — baptism, first Communion, and confirmation for the elect and first Communion and confirmation for candidates — at their parish churches.

Evening of Music from the African American Tradition to be Held at Mount St. Joseph in Wheeling

By Colleen Rowan

WHEELING — "With Hands Lifted Up," An Evening of Music from the African American Tradition led by the Choir of All Saints Parish in Bridgeport, will be held Feb. 16 at 3 p.m. at Mount St. Joseph Chapel in Wheeling.

The choir is under the direction of Stephen Pishner, director of Music & Liturgy at All Saints, who said the choir will have 12 voices, drums, a couple of keyboards "and a lot of uplifting joy to make this vibrant musical evening come about."

The concert includes music from the African American Gospel Music genre, Pishner said. Some of the songs, he continued, come from the African American Catholic Hymnals called "Lead Me Guide Me" 1 & 2, published by GIA Publications, Inc. Other selections are songs from a variety of contemporary African American composers such as: Brenda Joyce Moore, Richard Smallwood, and Walter Hawkins to name a few, Pishner added. Songs include "With Hands Lifted Up" and "Come Bless The Lord," by African American Catholic Composer Leon Roberts.

"There is even a song from Mozambique in Africa, called 'Nzamu-ranza,' sung in the language Xitswa," Pishner said. "Its translation is: 'I will praise Christ, there is no one like Christ.' The song is done with voices, percussion, and hand-claps."

Pishner, who is a published composer with GIA Publications, and the Choir of All Saints are proud to present this concert during Black History Month, which is celebrated in February.

"Black History Month is a very

important celebration in the life of our country and church," Pishner said. "It's a history that unfortunately speaks of suffering, oppression, pain, exclusion, and prejudice. It's also a history filled with great contributions to our society and country including those who have enriched our faith. Think of Dr. Martin Luther King's work for

justice and peace and even more, think of the stories of the lives of the Catholic Saints such as Venerable Augustus Tolton, the first recognized African American priest, Sister Thea Bowman, a vibrant witness to African American spirituality and then there is the remarkable faith St. Josephine Bakhita, an African slave who ultimately finds free-

dom and serves the poor, and St. Martin de Porres who served the sick and marginalized. Their stories strengthen our faith."

The concert is free will offering. There will be a dinner with a cost of \$10 per person. Those interested must RSVP for the meal by calling (304) 907-0171 or by e-mail to atroiani@csjoseph.org.

"With Hands Lifted Up" An Evening of Music from the African American Tradition Led by the Choir of All Saints, Bridgeport WV

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All Saints Choir is under the direction of Stephen Pishner. Stephen is a 1990 Graduate of WV Wesleyan, with a Bachelors in Music Education with an emphasis in Pipe Organ. He is the



Director of Music and Liturgy in Bridgeport, WV and is a published composer with G. I. A. Publications.

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Vance Defends Cuts to Foreign Aid ‘Spreading Atheism’ at Religious Freedom Summit

By **Kate Scanlon, OSV News**

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — Vice President JD Vance defended cuts to U.S. foreign aid in remarks to the International Religious Freedom Summit Feb. 5, arguing the funds were “spreading atheism” abroad.

Although he did not name the agency, Vance’s comments came as the Trump administration moved to shutter the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the government’s humanitarian aid agency. Elon Musk targeted it for closure as part of the efforts of his Department of Government Efficiency, an unofficial task force with the stated intent of curbing federal spending. But Secretary of State Marco Rubio suggested some of its functions would be rolled into the State Department.

“Now, our administration believes we must stand for religious freedom, not just as a legal principle, as impor-

tant as that is, but as a lived reality, both within our own borders and especially outside our borders,” Vance said.

U.S. engagement on religious liberty issues abroad has “been corrupted and distorted to the point of concern,” Vance argued.

“Think about it: How did America get to the point where we’re sending hundreds of thousands of taxpayer dollars abroad to NGOs that are dedicated to spreading atheism all over the globe? That is not what leadership on protecting the rights of the faithful looks like, and it ends with this administration,” Vance said.

Vance did not specify which NGOs he was making the claim about. According to a review by Forbes, USAID’s top NGO recipient for fiscal years 2013-2022 was Catholic Relief Services at \$4.6 billion. The nonprofit, which is the U.S. Catholic Church’s overseas relief and development agency, is ded-

icated to assisting people who are poor and vulnerable overseas, reducing social and economic pressures that push people to leave their homes and migrate, in accordance with Catholic teaching.

Cuts to foreign assistance directly impacted the work of some of the religious freedom organizations at the summit. Reception to Vance’s speech was mixed as a result. Some applauded Vance’s remarks. But one individual left the room immediately after Vance’s comments.

Elsewhere in his comments, Vance said religious freedom “is the freedom to practice one’s own faith and act according to one’s own conscience, and it’s, of course, the bedrock of civil society in the United States of America and across the world.”

Vance touted actions taken by the first Trump administration — including steps to protect the conscience

rights of hospital workers and faith-based health care ministries who decline to participate in certain procedures such as abortion — as bedrock items for the second administration.

The annual summit in Washington brings together a broad coalition of faith groups and policymakers seeking to foster religious freedom around the globe. Actor Rainn Wilson, best known for his role as Dwight Schrute on the NBC sitcom *The Office*, addressed the conference virtually right after Vance’s comments. He called it a “strange and profound honor” to follow the vice president and quipped he could play Vance in a “TV movie.”

Wilson discussed the persecution of his fellow adherents of the Bahá’í faith, a universalist religion, in Iran.

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

CRS, Caritas Warn of Global Impact of USAID Shutdown

By **Gina Christian, OSV News**

(OSV News) — Catholic Relief Services and Caritas agencies throughout the world are warning that the Trump administration’s freezing of the U.S. Aid for International Development — which has provided major funding for the groups for over six decades — will harm millions globally.

As part of its suspension of foreign aid, the administration has moved to shutter the agency, which was established in 1961 by President John F. Kennedy following the signing of the Foreign Assistance Act.

The agency was designed to end extreme poverty and promote democratic, self-reliant societies, tasks then described by Kennedy as inescapable “moral ... economic ... (and) political obligations” for the U.S. as the world’s wealthiest and most free nation.

Caritas Internationalis — the universal Catholic Church’s global federation of more than 160 humanitarian organizations — said in a Feb. 10 statement it “strongly condemns” the decision as “reckless.”

While noting it “recognizes the right of any new administration to review its foreign aid strategy,” Caritas said “the ruthless and chaotic way this callous decision is being implemented threatens the lives and dignity of millions.”

Caritas secretary general Alistair Dutton said in the statement that “stopping USAID abruptly will kill millions of people and condemn hundreds of millions more to lives of dehumanising poverty.”

“This is an inhumane affront to people’s God-given human dignity, that will cause immense suffering,” Dutton said.

Cardinal Michael Czerny, prefect of the Vatican’s Dicastery for Promoting Integral Human Development, said in an interview with *The Associated Press* that halting USAID funding amid ongoing programming was “a serious thing.”

Like Caritas, the cardinal affirmed a government’s right to review its foreign aid commitments, but said, “It would be good to have some warning because it takes time to find other sources of funding or to find other ways of meeting the problems we have.”

Cardinal Czerny also pointed out in the interview that USAID’s budget, while large, is less than 1% of the U.S. gross domestic product.

According to USASpending.gov, during fiscal year 2024 the top awarding agency for prime awards and transactions was the Department of Health and Human Services, at \$1.85 trillion, with USAID in 13th place at \$30.25 billion.

A federal judge has issued a temporary restraining order on some components of the USAID shutdown — and in the meantime, CRS is urgently calling for donations to continue its work.

In a Feb. 4 email blast, Sean Callahan, president and CEO of CRS, the U.S. Catholic Church’s overseas relief and development agency, warned that “with programs paused, the effect is dire.”

He said that “families in Ukraine will lose safe housing,” since CRS will be forced to “stop home repairs, leaving them to endure freezing temperatures in severely damaged homes” amid Russia’s full-scale invasion. “Without heat or safe housing, children, older adults and people with disabilities are especially vulnerable to severe illness or even death,” wrote Callahan.

He also said that “in Sudan, 18,000 families will face increasing hunger due to losing farming support ahead of the critical planting season.”

In Vietnam, “nearly 8,000 people with disabilities and their caregivers will not receive therapy, equipment and support, endangering their health and directly impairing their ability to lead independent lives.”

The stoppage of aid will also prevent 10,000 families in Guatemala from receiving “the tools, seeds and cash to prepare crops for the beginning of the April planting season,” said Callahan.

He also noted that the aid suspension also stood to drive residents to migrate in the face of “worsening food security and malnutrition.”

In a Feb. 6 email message, CRS and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops urged U.S.-based supporters to contact Congress and lift the freeze so that aid could resume.

The text of a letter to Congress linked in that email highlighted the Joint Emergency Operation Program funded by USAID in Ethiopia, through which U.S.-grown food (such as sorghum, yellow split peas and vegetable oil) provides emergency food assistance to

some 2 million per month, “including pregnant and lactating women needing life-saving nutritional support and children under age 5 facing acute malnutrition.”

CRS and the USCCB reiterated Callahan’s emphasis on the direct connection between hunger and forced migration, noting that “families may migrate in search of food, leading to more displacement.”

The Feb. 6 email also said that in Haiti — which has endured years of political and economic crises, natural disasters and entrenched gang warfare — the Resilience Food Security Activity works to head off hunger-driven migration by providing “more than 65,000 individuals with food assistance through US-grown commodities and fresh and animal source foods.”

“Foreign assistance is not a handout. It is an essential investment to protect life, uphold human dignity, and pursue sustainable solutions to the world’s toughest challenges,” said the letter. “When societies thrive, they contribute to greater global stability, reduce the risk of conflict and create safer, more prosperous environments that benefit everyone, including Americans.”

Caritas Asia president Benedict Alo D’Rozario told Catholic media outlet LiCAS News that his organization relies on CRS for what the outlet described as “crucial capacity-building initiatives and staff support.”

D’Rozario said the shutdown was being felt in Bangladesh, with more than 100 USAID projects operated by a number of organizations at a standstill, and three Caritas Bangladesh projects funded by USAID on hold, affecting more than 300 staffers.

Assistance has been drastically slashed for a program assisting Rohingya refugees in the city of Cox’s Bazar, and the Catholic bishops of the Philippines said more than \$603,000 worth of programming has been affected by the USAID halt, LiCAS News reported.

At the same time, Bishop Jose Colin Bagaforo, president of Caritas Philippines, said that organization “will continue its work serving the poor and advance the programs of the Church, regardless of USAID funding cuts.”

(Gina Christian is a multimedia reporter for OSV News. Follow her on X @GinaJesseReina.)

U.S. Bishops Praise Trump's Executive Order on Women's Sports

By Laretta Brown, OSV News

(OSV News) — President Donald Trump signed an executive order Feb. 5 barring biological males from competing in women's sports.

"Under the Trump administration, we will defend the proud tradition of female athletes, and we will not allow men to beat up, injure and cheat our women and our girls," the president said at the signing ceremony, surrounded by female athletes. "From now on, women's sports will be only for women."

The order titled "Keeping Men Out of Women's Sports" stated that allowing biological men to compete in women's sports is "demeaning, unfair, and dangerous to women and girls, and denies women and girls the equal opportunity to participate and excel in competitive sports."

Under Title IX of the Education Amendments Act of 1972, the order says, educational institutions that receive federal funding "cannot deny women an equal opportunity to participate in sports" adding that, as some courts have said, "ignoring fundamental biological truths between the two sexes deprives women and girls of meaningful access to educational facilities."

The administration will

"prioritize Title IX enforcement actions against educational institutions" that "deny female students an equal opportunity to participate in sports and athletic events by requiring them, in the women's category, to compete with or against or to appear unclothed before males."

Additionally, the order called for Secretary of State Marco Rubio to use "appropriate measures" to see that "the International Olympic Committee amends the standards governing Olympic sporting events" so that "eligibility for participation in women's sporting events is determined according to sex and not gender identity or testosterone reduction."

White House press secretary Karoline Leavitt told reporters that President Trump "does expect the Olympic Committee and the NCAA to no longer allow men to compete in women's sports," saying, "the President with the

signing of his pen starts a very public pressure campaign on these organizations to do the right thing for women and for girls across the country."

Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, chair of the USCCB's Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Bishop David M. O'Connell, CM, of Trenton, New Jersey, chair of the USCCB's Committee on Catholic Education, praised the order.

"We welcome the President's Executive Order that protects opportunities for women and girls to compete in sports safely and fairly," said Bishop Barron and Bishop O'Connell. "Consistent with the Catholic Church's clear teaching on the equality of men and women, we reaffirm that, in education and in sports as elsewhere, policies must uphold human dignity. This includes equal treatment between women and men and

affirmation of the goodness of a person's body, which is genetically and biologically female or male." The bishops offered the following statement in response to the Executive Order signed by President Trump, "Keeping Men out of Women's Sports," which will help ensure the continued viability of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, guaranteeing equal educational opportunities for women and girls.

"The Catholic Church teaches, and the Catechism of the Catholic Church affirms: 'Man and woman have been created, which is to say, willed by God: on the one hand, in perfect equality as human persons; on the other, in their respective beings as man and woman. "Being man" or "being woman" is a reality which is good and willed by God.' Athletics not only provide valuable educational opportunities, fostering discipline, team-

work, and personal growth, but they also serve as a celebration of the human body as a gift from God.


"In further recognition of the inherent dignity of the human person, the Church stands firmly against all unjust discrimination, including against those who experience gender discordance, who are equally loved by God. Students who experience gender dysphoria bear the full measure of human dignity, and they therefore must be treated with kindness and respect. Similar to their peers, those students must be assured the right to participate in or try out for co-educational activities in accord with their biological sex."

(Laretta Brown is culture editor for OSV News.)

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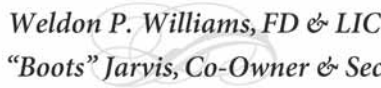
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Trump at National Prayer Breakfast Announces New Order to Investigate ‘Anti-Christian’ Bias

By **Kate Scanlon, OSV News**

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — President Donald Trump said in remarks to the National Prayer Breakfast Feb. 6 that he would create a task force, led by Attorney General Pam Bondi, to investigate “anti-Christian” bias in the federal government.

In dual remarks at the event, first at the U.S. Capitol and then across town at the Washington Hilton, Trump said he would establish a presidential commission on religious liberty that “will work tirelessly to uphold this most fundamental right.”

The president also said he would sign an executive order to make Bondi head of a task force “to immediately hold all forms of anti-Christian targeting and discrimination within the federal government, including at the DOJ — which was absolutely terrible — the IRS, the FBI and other agencies.”

Trump has long taken aim at some Biden administration policies he argued “weaponized” the Department of Justice, including Trump’s own prosecution on charges related to his alleged conduct surrounding the Jan. 6, 2021, riot at the U.S. Capitol, and other alleged misconduct.

Among his first actions in office, Trump issued

pardons for 23 pro-life activists he said were improperly prosecuted by the Biden administration under the Federal Access to Clinic Entrances Act. The FACE Act prohibits actions including obstructing the entrance to an abortion clinic. Trump cited those convictions as examples of such bias.

The president’s comments came as his administration has openly feuded with the Catholic Church’s bishops and ministries, as well as other Christian groups, over immigration policy and the church’s ministry to unauthorized immigrants, and U.S. foreign aid work.

World Relief, an evangelical charity organization, called itself “heartbroken” by stop-work orders on its federally-funded partnerships with the U.S. government, including one it received following the potential closure of the U.S. Agency for International Development or USAID.

Other faith-based groups impacted by a freeze on foreign assistance funding include Samaritan’s Purse and Catholic Relief Services, the overseas charitable arm of the Catholic Church in the U.S.

At the prayer breakfast, Trump shared that his own views on religion had changed in the wake of

the July assassination attempt against him.

“It changed something in me, I feel,” Trump said of the nearly fatal incident on the campaign trail in Butler, Pennsylvania.

“I feel even stronger,” he said. “I believed in God, but I feel, I feel much more strongly about it. Something happened.”

In other comments, Trump suggested he has plans to overhaul the air traffic control system following a deadly plane collision in the nation’s capital Jan. 29.

For many years, the National Prayer Breakfast was organized by the International Foundation, a Christian group that also used the name the Fellowship Foundation, sometimes the nickname “The Family.”

In 2023, the event was reorganized following concerns from some lawmakers that the event was becoming too divisive after several controversial moments at the annual gathering. One such moment took place in 2013 when Dr. Ben Carson delivered remarks criticizing then-President Barack Obama’s health care policies while he was sitting nearby.

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

Report: Russia Weaponizes Orthodoxy to Persecute, Kill Christians in Ukraine

By **Gina Christian, OSV News**

(OSV News) — A new report calls for the Russian Federation to be designated a state sponsor of terrorism, finding that Russia is weaponizing Orthodox Christianity as part of a genocidal attack on Ukraine — persecuting Catholics, other Christians and other faith communities in the besieged nation.

Mission Eurasia, a Tennessee-based ministry that trains Christian missionaries and leaders in 13 nations spanning Europe, Asia and Israel, released its findings Feb. 4 in “Faith Under Russian Terror: Analysis of the Religious Situation in Ukraine.”

The 52-page report, available at missioneurasia.org, was produced by Mykhailo Brytsyn, director of Mission Eurasia’s Religious Freedom Initiative, and Maksym Vasin, director of international advocacy and research at the Kyiv-based Institute for Religious Freedom.

The publication is a sequel to the organization’s 2023 release, “Faith Under Fire,” which documented the state of religious freedom in the Russian-occupied territories of Ukraine from February 2022 to mid-2023.

That report and Mission Eurasia’s latest release add to an expanding body of evidence documenting the Russian state’s use of detention, tor-

ture, imprisonment and execution — as well as bans against specific faiths and seizure of houses of worship — to suppress religious practice in occupied areas of Ukraine, and to force Christians of various denominations to convert to Russian Orthodoxy.

The Mission Eurasia data was drawn from some 50 in-person interviews, conducted from August 2023 to December 2024, with clergy and representatives of all Christian denominations in Ukraine, including Orthodox Christians, Greek and Roman Catholics, and Protestants from various faith traditions, among them Baptist, evangelical, Pentecostal and Mennonite.

The report’s authors said some sources were anonymized to protect their safety and that of fellow believers and family members living under Russian occupation.

The Mission Eurasia report noted that Russia’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine, launched Feb. 24, 2022, continued attacks initiated in 2014. Under longtime leader Vladimir Putin, Russia has sought to reabsorb Ukraine — which gained its independence from the former Soviet Union in 1991 — while continuing historical campaigns by Russia under tsarist, communist and post-communist regimes to erase Ukrainian identity and “russify” Uk-

rainians.

Russia’s systematic attacks on Ukraine — which have routinely targeted civilians and civilian structures, in violation of international humanitarian law — have been declared a genocide in two joint reports by the New Lines Institute and the Raoul Wallenberg Center for Human Rights.

The Mission Eurasia report — consistent with data from several human rights monitoring groups and from Ukraine’s government — said Russian forces have so far damaged or destroyed several hundred religious sites

in Ukraine, with the Institute for Religious Freedom citing a total of at least 650.

During June 2023 and September 2024 tours of Ukraine, OSV News visited several churches that had sustained damage from direct attacks by Russian forces.

Mission Eurasia noted that “at least 47 Ukrainian religious leaders have been killed as a result of Russia’s full-scale aggression.”

Others, said the report, have been subjected to imprisonment and

See “Report” on Page 8

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Red State Death Penalty Repeal Efforts Emerge Despite Trump's Order to Expand Use of the Practice

By **Kate Scanlon, OSV News**

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — Efforts to repeal the death penalty have been introduced in two Republican-led states, with some lawmakers citing their Catholic faith as a factor in their opposition to capital punishment. The efforts come even as President Donald Trump has moved to expand the use of the practice.

Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy, executive director of Catholic Mobilizing Network, a group that advocates for the abolition of capital punishment in line with Catholic teaching, told OSV News, "There's a stark contrast between this special Jubilee Year of hope and the retribution and vengeance we see from the early action of the Trump Administration on the death penalty."

Among the first actions of his second term, Trump signed an executive order directing the U.S. attorney

general to "pursue the death penalty for all crimes of a severity demanding its use," and to "seek the death penalty regardless of other factors for every federal capital crime" that involves the "murder of a law-enforcement officer" or a "capital crime committed by an alien illegally present in this country."

Almost immediately following her confirmation to lead the U.S. Justice Department, U.S. Attorney General Pam Bondi issued her own directives to implement those orders.

Trump's order also directed the attorney general to "encourage" state attorneys general and district attorneys to pursue death sentences, and to "take all necessary and lawful action to ensure that each state that allows capital punishment has a sufficient supply of drugs needed to carry out lethal injection."

The death penalty order was among those Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio,

president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops and head of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, called "deeply troubling" in a statement about Trump's first batch of executive orders in his second term, which also included criticism of some of his immigration policies. The bishops have also praised some of Trump's other orders, such those on gender policy and school choice.

"Especially in this Jubilee Year, we are called to 'proclaim liberty to captives, recovery of sight to the blind and letting the oppressed go free,'" Vaillancourt Murphy said of the 2025 Jubilee Year underway in the Catholic Church. "Indeed, liberation, conversion and reconciliation set us on the path toward right-relationship with God and our neighbors — retribution does not."

"We know that both the state and federal death pen-

alty systems are broken beyond repair, and emblematic of a throwaway culture," she added. "We remain committed to the work we have done for 15 years. And so, as pilgrims of hope, we will pray and advocate and educate and advance restorative practices until this system of death is dismantled and our communities flourish amid a culture of life."

Amid Trump's efforts to expand the use of capital punishment, some efforts to repeal capital punishment at the state level have been introduced in states with Republican legislative majorities.

A bipartisan, bicameral group of lawmakers in Ohio recently introduced a bill to block funding for three different life issues: abortion, physician-assisted suicide and capital punishment.

Ohio law already prohibits state funds from paying for elective abortion procedures, and the state

has not legalized physician-assisted suicide, but the legislation is meant to prohibit "state-funded" death, said its proponents, including the Ohio Catholic Conference.

Brian Hickey, executive director of the Catholic Conference of Ohio, said in a statement the group "fully supports this unique and urgent answer to the moral dangers facing our state and its fiscal consequences."

"Our taxpayer dollars should be used for the common good, not in a way that takes life and is opposed by more than half of Ohioans," he said. "We urge the House and Senate to act decisively to pass this bill, making Ohio a leader in affirming a culture of life."

Hickey added the Catholic faith "teaches us that every life is a gift, created in the image and likeness of God. This belief compels us to act with courage and

See "Efforts" on Page 9

Report...

Cont'd from Page 7

torture, including Ukrainian Greek Catholic priests Father Ivan Levitsky and Father Bohdan Geleta, who in November 2022 were seized by Russian forces from their parish, Church of the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos in Berdyansk. After 18 months in Russian captivity, the priests — having lost significant amounts of weight, and with their heads shaved — were released as part of a June 2024 prisoner exchange.

In a post-release interview with the UGCC's Zhyve television station, Father Geleta said he and Father Levitsky had been subjected to both psychological and physical torture at the hands of Russian forces.

Fellow UGCC priest Father Oleksandr Bohomaz, forcibly "deported" in December 2022 from the Russian-occupied Ukrainian of Melitopol, was also quoted in the Mission Eurasia report. The priest noted that while ministering under Russian occupation, "Russian security forces ... pressured me to disclose the content of confessions. ... I made it clear to them that confession is a sacred mystery. But they didn't care."

That same month, Russian officials formally banned the UGCC, the Knights of Columbus and Caritas in occupied areas of Ukraine.

The Mission Eurasia report also highlighted Russian abuses of religious freedom for Ukraine's children.

UNICEF, the United Nations' relief agency for children, reported in May 2024 that close to 2,000 children had been killed in Ukraine since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion, with "the true number ... likely much higher."

The Mission Eurasia report said that following

Russia's July 2024 attack on the Okhmatdyt children's hospital in Kyiv, political commentator Andrey Perla justified the carnage, telling Russian Orthodox television channel Tsargrad that the missile strike "wasn't a mistake" since Ukrainians cannot be considered human: "Our (Russian) missiles do not kill humans. Not a single human. Over there (in Ukraine), there are no humans," Russian commentator stated.

At least 19,546 Ukrainian children have been abducted by Russia, with Russia itself claiming to have taken more than 700,000 Ukrainian children, who are forced to renounce their Ukrainian identity under reeducation and "russification" programs, after which many are drafted into Russian military service.

Russian forces have eliminated or severely limited access to children's catechetical materials, the report said, and have shut down children's religious ministries by raiding and destroying houses of worship while repressing ministry leaders.

Under Russian occupation, public schools foster "militaristic ideology infused with elements of Russian chauvinism," and children "are immersed in an atmosphere of hatred toward non-Orthodox religious minorities and everything Ukrainian," said the report.

The Mission Eurasia report also examined Ukraine's initiatives to prevent Russia's weaponization of Orthodoxy, noting that the Ukrainian Orthodox Church — distinct from the autocephalous Orthodox Church of Ukraine — has "mirrored" Kremlin and Russian Orthodox narratives in Ukraine.

At the same time, the Mission Eurasia report cited "several shortcomings" in Ukraine's August 2024 law banning the ROC in Ukraine and pro-

hibiting Ukrainian religious organizations affiliated with Russian religious centers. While noting Ukraine's government has "strong arguments to justify its legitimate aim of intervening in the religious sphere during martial law and amid an existential threat to Ukraine ... debates continue regarding adherence to the principle of proportionality" in the law as written.

Based on its findings, Mission Eurasia proposed a number of recommendations, specifically calling for the designation of the Russian Federation as a state sponsor of terrorism and increased international pressure to end its aggression. In addition, Mission Eurasia urged continued documentation of Russia's war crimes against faith-based leaders and communities, along with humanitarian, psychological and other aid to be coordinated via religious networks throughout Ukraine.

(Gina Christian is a multimedia reporter for OSV News. Follow her on X @GinaJesseReina.)

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compassion, especially when facing suffering. This legislation exemplifies that courage, offering a consistent and holistic affirmation of life that transcends partisanship by denying the state the ability to fund death."

Asked about the Ohio effort to link the three issues, Vaillancourt Murphy said, "People around the country — from faithful grassroots advocates, to state legislators and political leaders — are assessing what this particular moment calls for, and what opportunities or challenges are before us at this deeply polarized time."

"We have long said that Ohio may very well be the next state to abolish the death penalty. There's much momentum in this state and a growing opposition among its citizens to the practice of capital punishment," she said.

"This state-funded death bill, which is backed by the Catholic Bishops in Ohio, is a new approach which situates the death penalty squarely along the continuum of life issues," she continued. "We often see the death penalty left out of conversations around pro-life policy and advocacy, or regarded as a 'lesser' concern. Unlike those historic experiences of a limited approach to life issues, this bill defends a broader and more consistent ethic of life."

Meanwhile, in Indiana, House Bill 1030, which would repeal the death penalty in that state, was introduced by a Republican and has gained additional Republican co-sponsors.

Vaillancourt Murphy called that effort "fitting for this Jubilee Year, in the wake of last year's disheartening resumption of executions" in Indiana.

Indiana Rep. Bob Morris, R-Fort Wayne, a Catholic who introduced the legislation, previously told OSV News that his heart had "been changed" on the issue of capital punishment, now seeing its use as inconsistent with his pro-life beliefs.

Pope Francis revised the Catechism of the Catholic Church in 2018 to reflect that capital punishment is morally "inadmissible" in the modern world and that the church works with determination for its abolishment worldwide.

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

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Women's Retreat to be Held in Charleston March 28-30

CHARLESTON—The Women's Retreat "Are You a Martha or a Mary? Living a Balanced Life" will be held at St. John XXIII Pastoral Center in Charleston March 28-30. Presented by Sister Janet Schaeffler, OP, the retreat is co-sponsored with the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's Office of Evangelization and Catechesis.

Sister Janet continues the ministry she was involved in for many years in parishes and as director for Adult Faith Formation for the Archdiocese of Detroit, as she: leads days of reflection/retreats, parish missions, and workshops/presentations; facilitates gatherings and retreats for communities of women religious; facilitates online courses for the University of Dayton and Boston College; and serves as a pastoral services team member for RENEW International. Sister Janet created and publishes "GEMS": a twice-monthly newsletter from an ongoing international best practices study on adult faith formation. She is the author of hundreds of articles and several publications.

"The Scripture story of Jesus coming to the home of Mary and Martha (and Lazarus) is well-known to us," retreat organizers said. "What is the message for us, women living in 2024? Through this Scripture passage, what is God saying to us about our lives? Is it what we often hear – or might there be several messages?"

Some questions retreat organizers pose for potential retreatants are: "Do I feel too busy, too rushed? How – really – do I balance everything today? What really are the answers to which Jesus challenges us – and comforts us?"

For more information contact: Gerri Wright by calling (304) 552-3662 or e-mailing gwright@dwc.org; Sandi Hudson by calling (304) 549-4009 or e-mailing shudson0155@gmail.com; or Anna Marie Troiani by calling (304) 907-0171 or e-mailing atroiani@csjoseph.org.

The cost is as follows: Overnight per person, single occupancy is \$250 per person and double occupancy is \$200; commuter is \$125.

Mail registration form and check to: Gerri Wright, Saint John XXIII Pastoral Center, 100 Hodges Rd, Charleston, WV 25314

www.dwc.org/2025-Womens-retreat

The deadline for registration is March 20.

Father Dave Pivonka's New Book Helps Readers Encounter God as Father

STEUBENVILLE, OHIO—Franciscan University of Steubenville President Father Dave Pivonka, TOR, has published a new book, *Joyful Sons and Daughters: Embracing the Father's Love*, with The Word Among Us Press.


"More than 150 times in the Bible, Jesus refers to God as Father. Understanding God as our Father is fundamental to our Christian faith, and yet many today struggle to embrace this truth," Father Pivonka said. "I hope this book helps people to experience healing and see themselves as sons and daughters of a Father who loves perfectly and satisfies the deepest longings of their hearts."

In his approachable writing style, Father Pivonka draws both from his personal experience and the experiences and wisdom of respected Catholics to explore what it means to be a son or daughter of God. He addresses the role of earthly fathers, priestly spiritual fatherhood, the model of the Holy Family, and how Jesus Christ reveals God the Father.

Each short chapter also concludes with questions to encourage readers to reflect on their own experiences with fatherhood and deepen their relationship with God as a good and loving Father.

The book is based on My father's Father, Father Pivonka's 2024 video series produced by 10th Hour Productions. In this six-part documentary series, Father Pivonka explored how people's relationships with earthly fathers can impact their experience of their heavenly Father.

Joyful Sons and Daughters: Embracing the Father's Love is available from The Word Among Us Press and other major booksellers.



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June 23	AT HOME IN THE WEB OF LIFE, PART III
July 28	AT HOME IN THE WEB OF LIFE, PART III
August 25	THE TELLING TAKES US HOME, PART I - Rodica Stoicoiu
September 22	THE TELLING TAKES US HOME, PART II
October 27	THE TELLING TAKES US HOME, PART III
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Courtesy photo

Wheeling University students work with seventh graders from Wheeling Middle School on STEAM projects.

WHEELING—The Hess Family Foundation has awarded Wheeling University more than \$10,000 to continue a mentoring program that enriches learning for seventh grade students from Wheeling Middle School (WMS).

The Help Enrich Someone Special (H.E.S.S.) program was restarted three years ago thanks to a grant from the HESS FAMILY FOUNDATION. Throughout the 10-week program which begins in February, the Wheeling Middle School students will come to the Wheeling University campus where the university students serve as mentors – guiding the seventh graders through fun, educational activities in science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics (STEAM) each week.

Wheeling University President, Dianna Vargo, Ed.D. said the University was able to restart the program and continue offering it thanks to funding provided by the Hess Family. Since its restart in 2022, Vargo, along with faculty and students from the Education Program have organized the program.

“We are grateful to the HESS FAMILY FOUNDATION for supporting the continuation of this valuable educational program that aligns with the mission of Wheeling University – to educate students for life, leadership, and service,” Vargo noted. This year, she said, the Foundation awarded Wheeling \$10,038 to fund H.E.S.S.

The H.E.S.S. Program provides Wheeling University education majors with the opportunity to engage

with middle school students in an informal setting. This gives the Wheeling University students a foundation that fosters communication and an understanding of student needs and recognition of student strengths, the president explained.

Additionally, “H.E.S.S. enhances critical thinking skills for the students from Wheeling Middle School by providing them with the opportunity to participate in STEAM education. The students work collaboratively with their peers and University mentors to solve problems creatively. By bringing the Wheeling Middle School students to the University they are given the opportunity to experience a college campus,” Vargo said.

Each Wednesday, a different education session is offered to teach STEAM, and Vargo enlists the help of University and community partners to provide activities for the middle school students. Those partners include, the University’s Challenger Learning Center, academic programs and Athletic teams, along with The SMART Center of Wheeling.

During the 10-week program, the students are bused to campus where they are met by their Wheeling University student mentors. The WMS students take time to reflect on the prior week’s activities in their journals. With the assistance of the Wheeling University mentors and staff, the WMS student also do fun, team building activities, and eat dinner in the Benedum Room before taking part the week’s STEAM activity.



DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON



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MARCH 7



SATURDAY
MARCH 8

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Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston
CONFIRMATION SCHEDULE – Spring 2025
Bishop Mark E. Brennan, Celebrant

Saturday, March 8: St. Agnes, Charleston; 5:00 p.m.

Friday, April 4: St. Augustine, Grafton; 6:00 p.m.

Monday, April 28: St. John University, Morgantown; 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, April 30: Sacred Heart, Chester; 6:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 4: Our Lady of Fatima, Huntington, and St. Stephen, Ona, at Our Lady of Fatima; 5:30 p.m.

Tuesday, May 6: St. Joseph, Huntington; 6:00 p.m.

Wednesday, May 7: St. Francis de Sales, Morgantown; 5:15 p.m.

Sunday, May 11: Cathedral of St. Joseph, Wheeling; 10:30 a.m.

Sunday, May 11: St. Mary, Star City; 4:00 p.m.

Monday, May 12: St. Michael, Wheeling; 5:30 p.m.

Wednesday, May 14: St. Michael, Vienna; 7:00 p.m.

Friday, May 16: St. Joseph, Martinsburg; 6:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 17: St. James, Charles Town; 10:00 a.m.

Saturday, May 17: St. Leo, Inwood; 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 18: St. Bernadette, Hedgesville; 11:00 a.m.

Sunday, May 18: St. Vincent de Paul, Berkeley Springs; 5:00 p.m.

Wednesday, May 21: St. Joseph the Worker, Weirton; 6:30 p.m.

Thursday, May 22: St. Thomas Aquinas, Thomas; 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 25: St. Paul, Weirton; 2:00 p.m.

Wednesday, May 28: St. Patrick, Weston; 5:30 p.m.

Saturday, May 31: Annunciation of Our Lord, Fort Ashby; 4:30 p.m.

Sunday, June 1: St. Luke the Evangelist, Cheat Lake; 2:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 7: St. Francis of Assisi, St. Albans; 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, June 8: St. Francis de Sales, Beckley; 11:00 a.m.



DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON



Lenten
Mission

“For the Love of God”

Presented by

Chris Padgett

March 9 - 12, 2025



9th - 11th: Refreshments at 6 PM

Event at 6:30 PM

**12th: Lenten Penance Service
at 6:30 PM**

**Ascension Catholic Church
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Hurricane, WV 25526**

El Papa añade la fiesta de Santa Teresa de Calcuta al calendario universal de la Iglesia

Por Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS) — El Papa Francisco ha añadido la fiesta de Santa Teresa de Calcuta, "faro de esperanza" y ejemplo de amoroso servicio a los más pobres entre los pobres, al Calendario Romano General para que su "memoria libre (u opcional) sea celebrada por todos el 5 de septiembre".

El cardenal Arthur Roche y el arzobispo Vittorio Francesco Viola, prefecto y secretario respectivamente del Dicasterio para el Culto Divino y la Disciplina de los Sacramentos, anunciaron la decisión del Papa en un decreto publicado por el Vaticano el 11 de febrero.

Anteriormente, la fiesta de Santa Teresa de Calcuta, como el Vaticano se refiere a la ciudad de India donde comenzó su trabajo con los pobres abandonados, estaba inscrita sólo en el calendario propio de las Misioneras de la Caridad y en el calendario propio de la India. Ahora su memoria está incluida en el calendario de la Iglesia universal.

"Canonizada en 2016 por el Sumo Pontífice Francisco, el nombre de santa Teresa de Calcuta no deja de brillar como fuente de esperanza para tantas personas que buscan consuelo en las tribulaciones del cuerpo y del espíritu", dice



Foto CNS/cortesía MotherTeresaMovie.com
Santa Teresa de Calcuta en esta foto sin fecha.

el decreto, fechado el 24 de diciembre.

El Papa Francisco, respondiendo a las peticiones de obispos, religiosos y laicos "y considerando la influencia ejercida por la espiritualidad de santa Teresa de Calcuta en numerosas regiones del mundo", decidió añadirla al calendario universal, dice el decreto.

En una nota aparte, el cardenal Roche describió a la Madre Teresa como un "faro de esperanza, pequeña en estatura, pero grande en el amor, testimonio de la dignidad y del privilegio

del servicio humilde en defensa de la vida humana, tanto de aquellos que han sido abandonados, descartados y despreciados, como en el interior del seno materno".

Las conferencias episcopales de todo el mundo tendrán que traducir del latín las oraciones publicadas por el dicasterio para la Misa de su fiesta, así como las utilizadas en la Liturgia de las Horas, y hacer que el dicasterio confirme las traducciones.

El cardenal Roche dijo que la oración colecta u oración inicial de la Misa de su fiesta "nos ofrece el corazón de su espiritualidad: la llamada a saciar la sed de Jesucristo en la cruz, respondiendo con amor a las necesidades de los más necesitados. Por ello, suplicamos a Dios Padre, que, imitando su ejemplo, sirvamos a Cristo, presente en nuestros hermanos afligidos".

La lectura del Evangelio para su fiesta es del capítulo 25 de San Mateo, dijo el cardenal, que enumera "las obras de misericordia" -- alimentar a los hambrientos, visitar a los presos, acoger a los extranjeros -- y "presenta unas palabras, vividas de modo elocuente por Madre Teresa: 'Cada vez que lo hicisteis con uno de estos, mis hermanos más pequeños, conmigo lo hicisteis'".

Para denunciar presuntos casos de abuso sexual de niños:

La Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston alienta a informar ante las autoridades civiles ante todo si se ha cometido un delito. También alentamos a utilizar www.reportbishopabuse.org para hacer un informe sobre cualquier obispo en los EE. UU. Si tiene motivos para creer que un obispo ha cometido una conducta sexual inapropiada, comuníquese con las autoridades civiles de la jurisdicción correspondiente y visite www.reportbishopabuse.org.

Para informar a las autoridades civiles: comuníquese con la policía local; los números varían según su ubicación. Si cree que alguien está en peligro inmediato, llame al 911. Para informar confidencialmente cualquier incidencia de sospecha de abuso o negligencia infantil, incluido el abuso sexual, comuníquese con la Oficina de Servicios de Protección Infantil de Niños y Familias de West Virginia llamando a la línea directa de abuso infantil al 800.352.6513. Puede informar anonimamente a esta línea directa si lo prefiere.

Para informar a las autoridades diocesanas: La diócesis alienta a informar a las autoridades civiles apropiadas, ante todo, si se ha cometido un delito. La diócesis también alienta a informar a las autoridades eclesásticas apropiadas. Para reportar casos sospechosos de abuso sexual de niños por parte del personal de la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston a la Diócesis, comuníquese con uno de los siguientes designados al 1.888.434.6237 o 304.233.0880: Sr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Sr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; o Sor Martha Gómez, ext. 264. También puede llamar a la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro de la Diócesis al

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.

Para informar al Coordinador de Asistencia a Víctimas de la Diócesis: llame a la Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, al 304.559.6742.

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.

Employment Opportunities

Principal, Parkersburg Catholic High School

Parkersburg Catholic High School, located in Parkersburg, West Virginia is seeking a 6-12th Grade Principal.

We are searching for a dynamic, mission-driven, forward thinking high school principal for Parkersburg Catholic High School.

The candidate must be a practicing Catholic in good standing with Church precepts and act as an example and motivator toward the fulfillment of the Catholic philosophy of the school.

The ideal candidate would have an earned Master's Degree in Educational Leadership or Administration or begin the process of completing degree requirements; or hold a valid Educational Leadership certification from the state of West Virginia or be eligible for such certification.

The candidate will have a minimum of three years of successful educational experience with a preference for administrative experience.

A resume with three references may be emailed with all attachments to Father Rice: jrjice@dwc.org

Principal, St. Joseph High School, Martinsburg

Saint Joseph High School in Martinsburg, W.Va., is seeking a principal. We are searching for a dynamic, mission-driven, forward-thinking principal who will work with our team to create a new Catholic high school for students in grades nine to 12 that will open for the 2025-26 academic year.

We are an equal-opportunity employer committed to excellence through diversity.

Candidates must be practicing Catholics in good standing with church precepts and act as examples and motivators toward the fulfillment of the Catholic philosophy of the school. The ideal candidate will have a master's degree in educational leadership or administration; begin the process of completing that degree requirement; or hold a valid educational leadership certificate from the state of West Virginia or be eligible for such certification.

Candidates also must have a minimum of three years of successful educational experience; administrative experience is preferred.

A résumé, cover letter and three letters of reference may be emailed to Deacon Patrick Michel, Ed.D., at deaconpat@stjosephwv.org.

Director of Music Ministries, Charleston

The Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart located in Charleston, West Virginia is looking for a pastoral musician. Responsibilities include overseeing the selection of music for liturgies, substituting for our organist, directing the choir, cantoring when necessary, preparing worship aids and expanding our current music program. Candidates should have a BA degree or higher in a music field, or other field, if musically trained, excellent organ/keyboards/choral conducting skills and vocal technique and be familiar with music notation software. A practicing Catholic is preferred but not required; candidates must be of the Christian faith with willingness to learn

about and genuinely support others in their Catholic faith. Conversant with a variety of liturgical styles including contemporary, classical, and traditional. Must demonstrate a commitment to use a blended approach to liturgical music that encourages the assembly to sing. Working hours are flexible and include weekends and some evenings. Complete job description available upon request. Please send résumés to: Bernadette McMasters Kime, Office of Worship and Sacraments, PO. Box 230, Wheeling, WV 26003 or email bkime@dwc.org

Résumé submissions will be accepted until the position is filled.

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