

THE CATHOLIC
Spirit

Floods Devastate Southern West Virginia



Courtesy photo

Flooding from the Tug Fork River engulfs downtown Welch Feb. 15.

By Colleen Rowan

WELCH — As heavy rains fell and flood waters rose in southern West Virginia last weekend, Father Rey Landicho posted a Facebook message to his parishioners in McDowell County on Saturday, Feb. 15, “Please stay safe and well. May God protect us always and keep us in His care.”

Three people died in the flooding, which devastated communities along the Tug Fork River in McDowell and Mingo counties and the Bluestone River in Mercer County.

The three deaths were from the same family, West Virginia State Police said in a press release on Wednesday,

Feb. 19. They were identified as Donald and Debbie Griffin, both 69, of Welch, and a 2-year-old boy. They were all in a truck that was washed into the Tug Fork River on Sunday, Feb. 16. Two female juveniles were able to escape the truck after it went into the river and were rescued from the water by fire department and EMS personnel. The Griffins were the legal guardians of the children, the press release stated.

In a press conference the previous day, Gov. Patrick Morrisey announced he has requested an emergency disaster declaration from President Donald Trump to unlock federal resources. The governor declared a State of Emer-

gency in Boone, Cabell, Greenbrier, Kanawha, Lincoln, Logan, Mercer, McDowell, Mingo, Raleigh, Summers, Wayne, and Wyoming counties.

Morrisey thanked state and local officials, first responders, law enforcement, emergency management teams, and volunteers. He said the West Virginia National Guard is assessing, assisting, and coordinating emergency support operations for affected areas.

In a press conference on Thursday, Feb. 20, Morrisey said over 135 water rescues had occurred in the flooding. Calling it a “historic weather event” last weekend, he said parts of McDowell County received 4.72 inches of rain

in less than 48 hours and the Tug Fork River crested at 49 feet, believed to be its second highest.

The American Red Cross is providing shelter for those without power or who have unlivable properties—50 people in Williamson and another 30 in Welch.

In McDowell County, where Father Landicho is pastor of St. Peter Parish in Welch, Sacred Heart Mission in Powhatan, and the Chapels of Our Lady of Victory in Gary and Holy Cross in Pineville, the aftermath is catastrophic.

“Yesterday, you couldn’t get in or out of Welch let alone the county,”

See “Flooding” on Page 3

Diocese Announces Disaster Assistance Fund with \$50,000 Challenge Grant from the Bishop and W.Va. Catholic Foundation

WHEELING—Recovery efforts continue across the Mountain State after the severe flooding that occurred earlier this month. Several counties have experienced generational flooding resulting in loss of life, property, and livelihood. More than ten counties in our state remain under a State of Emergency. With many roads just being re-opened, the scope of the dev-

astation is becoming more visible.

Most Rev. Mark Brennan, Bishop of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, has approved a special collection to be held the weekends of February 22-23 and March 1-2 in all parishes and missions throughout the diocese to support recovery efforts related to the series of disasters that have occurred. Checks should be made

out to your respective parish with “Disaster Relief” on the memo line. Donations can also be made on the diocesan website at <https://dwc.org/disaster-relief/>.

All of the money collected will remain in West Virginia and will be managed by Catholic Charities West Virginia (CCWVa). Money will

See “Fund” on Page 4

Inside: Pope’s Condition Stable; Tests Show Some Improvement, Page 2

U.S. Bishops’ Lenten Message to Those Grieving an Abortion: Jesus’ Love is Unconditional, Page 5

Pope's Condition Stable; Tests Show Some Improvement



CNS photo/Pablo Esparza

Votive candles and flowers are seen at the base of a statue of St. John Paul II outside Rome's Gemelli hospital Feb. 19 where Pope Francis is being treated for double pneumonia.

By Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Pope Francis' doctors described his condition as "stable" late Feb. 19 even though "blood tests, evaluated by the medical staff, show a slight improvement, particularly in the inflammatory markers," which are used to monitor infections, a Vatican medical bulletin said.

As further proof that the pope was stable, the Vatican said the pope had had a 20-minute private meeting at Rome's Gemelli hospital with Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni.

The prime minister had announced her afternoon visit several hours before the Vatican did.

"I am very happy to have found him alert and responsive," Meloni said in the communique issued by her office. "We joked as always. He has not lost his proverbial sense of humor."

The Vatican medical bulletin Feb. 18 had said that a CT scan revealed the onset of double pneumonia, adding that the pope's history of lung problems and repeated bouts of bronchitis have resulted in "bronchiectasis," a widening of the airways that makes a person more susceptible to infection, and "asthmatic bronchitis" which makes "therapeutic treatment more complex."

Still, Pope Francis was reportedly getting out of bed each day, reading and doing some work. Although the doctors' orders for

"complete rest" meant he generally was not receiving visitors, his secretaries were at the hospital with him.

Most evenings at 7 p.m. he was making his regular phone call to Holy Family Parish in Gaza, where the priests and sisters on staff are giving shelter to hundreds of people.

A source, who was not authorized to give details of the pope's medical condition, said the pope's heart is "holding up well" and that he has not needed a ventilator, oxygen mask or CPAP (continuous positive airway pressure) machine.

The source also confirmed that a couple of days before Pope Francis agreed to be hospitalized, he had gone to Rome's Gemelli Isola Hospital for tests. He has been an inpatient at the main Gemelli hospital since Feb. 14.

Two Masses are celebrated each day in the St. John Paul II Chapel on the first floor of the main Gemelli hospital. Obviously, prayers are always offered for the current pope, particularly when he is a patient there.

But the Italian newspaper La Repubblica reported that special prayers were added Feb. 19 by Father Nunzio Currao, the hospital chaplain, who prayed that the Lord would watch over the pope and strengthen him so that he could return to leading the church "with his wisdom and love."

The priest added that he prayed God would heal the pope "soon, in human terms."

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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Flooding ...

Cont'd from Page 1

Jan Williams, secretary/bookkeeper for St. Peter's and Sacred Heart, told The Catholic Spirit on Tuesday, Feb. 18. "Underpasses were blocked by trees and debris."

Williams wasn't sure how bad the situation was on the other end of town that morning as it was unreachable because of water, mud, and debris.

"We couldn't go much farther than the courthouse," she said.

In that part of town is Welch Community Hospital, whose parking lot was flooded. "You couldn't get to the hospital," Williams said, adding that water and debris also reached the railroad trestle.

Williams could not get to Welch until Tuesday because of flooding in her own community of nearby Coalwood, also in McDowell County. She and her husband David lost their home in the horrific flood of 2002. They stayed, rebuilt, and are now living through the latest flooding from the Clear Fork River. Comparing it to the devastation of 23 years ago, she said, "It's pretty close."

A half hour down US 52 in McDowell County is Sacred Heart Mission in Powhatan, one of the four churches in the cluster with St. Peter's. Sacred Heart Church did not sustain flooding but members are anguished over the devastation in the area.

"Thinking about what's going on in Welch... it's just heartbreaking," said Lori Bishop, a member of Sacred Heart who heads the food pantry there. "The kids are out of school; no return in sight."

Water continues to run off the mountains, she said, making recovery difficult.

"They can't keep up with

pumping water out of places," Bishop said. "They think they've made some progress during the day and it fills up again at night. Service trucks couldn't get in, the roads are washed out, the bridges are damaged."

As she spoke to The Catholic Spirit that morning of Wednesday, Feb. 19, snow was falling and temperatures were heading toward below zero as a winter storm began its assault on an already suffering region.

Also taking the brunt of last weekend's flooding was neighboring Mingo County, especially in Williamson. The flood wall protects downtown up to 63 feet. Major flooding occurred in the surrounding area submerging the Williamson Railyard, businesses, roads, and homes.

Power, cell service, and city water were still out in parts of the area on Tuesday, Feb. 18, when Father Biju Paul Parampil, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Williamson, spoke to The Catholic Spirit.

"Many of our communities are cut off," he said. "I couldn't get to Chattaroy," where many parishioners live.

With those services down, he said a number of his parishioners went to Charleston for accommodations.

As Williamson sits on the state line, Father Parampil said that half of Sacred Heart's parishioners live in Kentucky where the death toll from flooding in the state has reached 14.

"We need people to pray for us," he said.

It may take time, but he and the parish will continue checking to see if anyone is in need of help. "People are just holding on," he said.

Father Parampil is also pastor of St. Francis of Assisi



Photo courtesy of John Burchett

The Tug Fork River outside of the downtown Williamson flood wall in Mingo County is shown Feb. 16.

Parish in Logan, and St. Edmund Chapel in Man—both in Logan County. Logan also sustained flooding from the Guyandotte River.

Morrisey said in his Feb. 20 press conference that out of 64,000 accounts of power outages in the southern region of the state, only 138 remain without power. There are challenges in water service disruption, he said. More than 10,000 people have disruption in the water delivery with a significant number of them in the Logan Northern Regional PSD District. Engineers are working on the situation.

Outreach to Flood Victims

Sacred Heart Mission in Powhatan is helping flood victims in its monthly food pantry on Friday, Feb. 21, from 11 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. Lori Bishop, who started the pantry eight years ago, said it will be open at the same time on Saturday, Feb. 22, to serve those who



Photo courtesy of John Burchett

A road in Williamson is flooded Feb. 16.

are unable to get there on Friday.

Sacred Heart parishes in Bluefield and Princeton are donating supplies and water for McDowell County flood victims. Volunteers will be taking a van load of water, cleaning supplies, trash bags, paper towels, toilet tissue, and some non-perishable food items to Powhatan. Parishioners are invited to bring donated items to Masses this weekend to add to the collection.

Sacred Heart Princeton's Mommy Ministry held a pop-up event the day after the floods to support families with babies and young children impacted by the floods. They also gave out small care packages with soaps and baby blankets from the parish's knitting/crocheting group.

During the event, the Mommy Ministry accepted donations and gave out diapers, wipes, and baby food to anyone who came by looking for help, said

Very Rev. Sebastian Devasya, V.E., pastor of Sacred Heart parishes in Bluefield and Princeton.

"The FB post (advertising the initiative) garnered a request from a mother for a portable crib, which the ministry purchased and will deliver on Friday," he said.

Father Devasya said the Salvation Army in Princeton is the support facility for McDowell County, so Mommy Ministry leader Renee Green dropped off several care packages of baby items for them to distribute.

The Mommy Ministry is planning an additional pop-up event for Saturday morning, Feb. 22, at the church in Princeton.

To help support the Sacred Heart Food Pantry in Powhatan, e-mail Bishop at twinmomma86@gmail.com. To help with efforts at Sacred Heart in Bluefield, call (304) 327-5623 and Sacred Heart in Princeton, call (304) 425-3664.



WV VOAD photo

Flood waters and mud overtake a section of Welch during flooding Feb. 15-16.

Fund ...

Cont'd from Page 1 be allocated along a four-tier priority list as follows:

1. Parishes in and around the affected area who directly assist families will receive funds to give aid to those in need.
2. CCWVa Regional staff will receive funding for direct, short-term recovery assistance to victims.
3. Partner agencies who work with CCWVa to administer relief to West Virginia residents affected by the flooding.
4. Funds will be given to CCWVa for long-term humanitarian and recovery efforts. This fund assist families long after other organizations have moved out help families and individuals in the rebuilding process to restore safe, secure, and sanitary living conditions.


To help jumpstart the collection and speed funding to assist West Virginia families, Bishop


Brennan, has authorized a challenge grant in the amount of \$50,000 through the West Virginia Catholic Foundation. These funds will be immediately distributed for relief efforts in our state. Bishop Mark hopes the donation will spur others to give generously to help our neighbors in need.

Please remember in prayer all those whose lives have been changed in the wake of these disasters. Let us come together now to support our brothers and sisters in Christ who have been injured and lost their homes, cars, employment, and access to food and water.

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U.S. Bishops' Lenten Message to Those Grieving an Abortion: Jesus' Love is Unconditional

By OSV News

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — In sharing the U.S. bishops' Lenten message this year, their pro-life chairman used it "to speak to all who carry the unbearable sadness and guilt of an abortion experience" and remind them that Jesus' love knows no bounds.

"Be assured that Jesus keeps on loving you, no matter what," Bishop Daniel E. Thomas of Toledo, Ohio, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities, said in the Feb. 19 message.

"The blessed ashes distributed on our foreheads on Ash Wednesday remind us that we are all sinners; broken, imperfect, yet very precious in the eyes of God and so well loved by Him," he said. "The ashes are both a reminder of our need for repentance and the graces that flow from our Lord's death and resurrection."

Ash Wednesday, which is March 5 this year, marks for the Latin Church the beginning of Lent, a 40-day period of fasting and prayer. Most Eastern Catholic churches, which together with the Latin Church headed by the bishop of Rome make up the global Catholic Church, typically mark Lent beginning a few days earlier on Monday, which some call "Clean Monday." The Catholic Church has long used ashes as an outward sign of grief, a mark of humility, mourning, penance and morality.

Bishop Thomas said this Lent, he wanted to "personally invite" all those suffering from an abortion "to come home to Jesus, who eagerly awaits your return, and come home to the Church."

"Some stay away from the Church because they fear judgment of past sins," he said. "Yet as Pope

Francis reminds us in his letter announcing the Jubilee of Hope, (God's judgment) 'is meant to bring us to a definitive encounter with the Lord.'"

"Jesus' voice is calling out to you as His beloved daughters and sons," Bishop Thomas said, "and He is waiting to meet you in the Sacrament of Reconciliation. He desires a relationship with you."

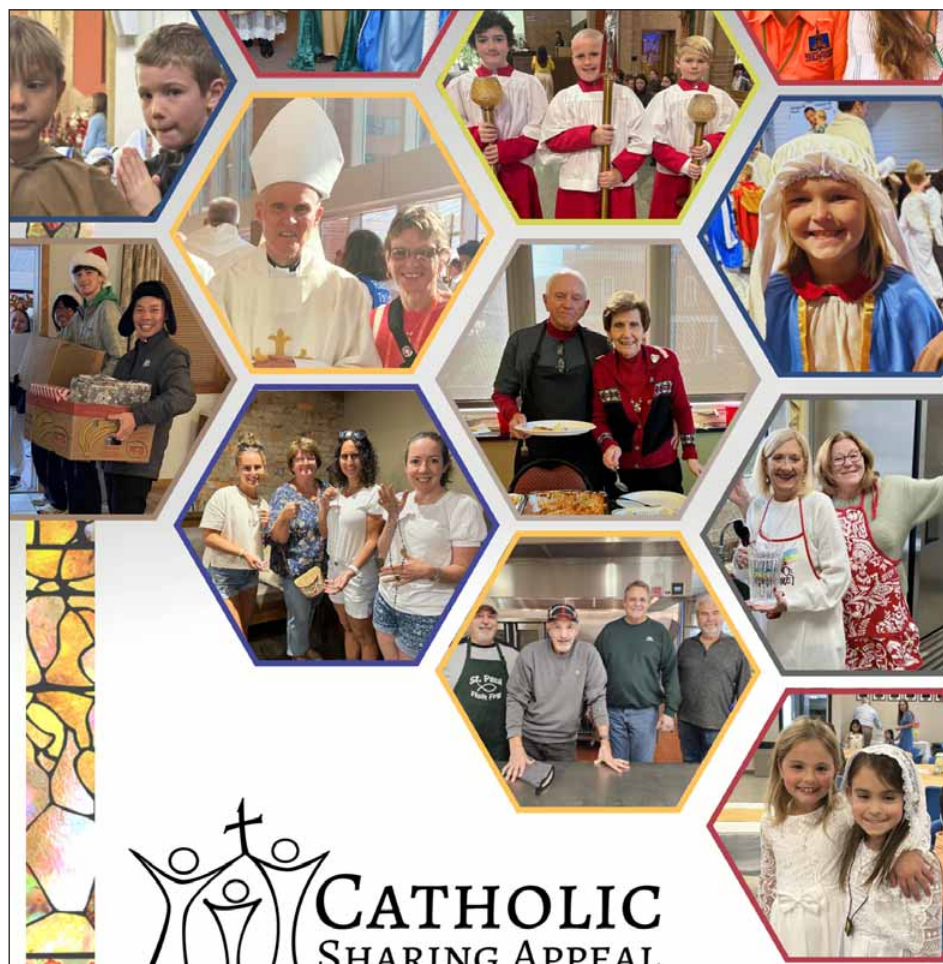
"God's gift of hope allows you to expect His comfort as you grieve for the loss of your aborted children," he continued, and, quoting from St. John Paul II's 1995 encyclical "Evangelium Vitae" ("The Gospel of Life"), he added that this hope "also provides assurance that 'you can with sure hope entrust your child' to the Father and His mercy."

Bishop Thomas prayed that "God plants a seed of hope in every heart that is overwhelmed by sadness and despair from participation in abortion. This Lent, the Lord's mercy awaits you. Allow Him to heal you and lift your sadness into joy."

He also highlighted the "non-judgmental, compassionate help" that is available to those grieving an abortion "from experienced clergy and laypeople through the Church's diocesan abortion healing ministry, most often called Project Rachel Ministry." The ministry's websites, in English and Spanish, are HopeAfterAbortion.org and EsperanzaPosAborto.org, and they have a "Find Help/Busca Ayuda" link to find a local arm of the ministry.

Through this ministry, Bishop Thomas said, "all who suffer from abortion can find a listening ear, comfort, and help."

Project Rachel's websites are here in English <http://HopeAfterAbortion.org> and in Spanish at <http://EsperanzaPosAborto.org>



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Bishops Sue Trump Administration, Say Halting Refugee Resettlement Funds Will Cause Harm

By **Maria-Pia Chin, OSV News**

(OSV News) — The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops sued the Trump administration Feb. 18 over the suspension of funding of refugee resettlement assistance.

In the lawsuit, filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia, the bishops called this suspension “unlawful and harmful to newly arrived refugees,” The Associated Press first reported.

The bishops also stated in their legal complaint, a copy of which OSV News has obtained, that the suspension — which they described as “a textbook arbitrary-and-capricious agency action” — “violates multiple statutes” and “undermines the Constitution’s separation of powers.”

A USCCB spokesperson told OSV News that the lawsuit urges the government “to uphold its legal and moral obligations” to refugees and to restore the funding needed to ensure that faith-based and community organizations can continue their work with refugees.

The USCCB’s Migration and Refugee Services is one of 10 national resettlement agencies that work with the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program, which was established by Congress in 1980, formalizing the process by which refugees are legally resettled in the United States.

USRAP was suspended through an executive order signed by President Donald Trump Jan. 20 and is being evaluated to see whether refugee resettlement

“is in the national interest.” The State Department issued suspension notices to domestic resettlement agencies, including the USCCB, on Jan. 24, which has impacted resettlement agencies’ ability to carry out services for refugees, including those under the Reception and Placement Program, according to an alert to support refugee resettlement seen in USCCB’s Action Alert Center.

The R&P Program is a domestic effort that provides assistance to newly arrived refugees to meet initial needs such as housing and job placement during the first 90 days that they are in the country. According to AP’s reporting on the lawsuit, the USCCB’s president, Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, said that “the conference suddenly finds itself unable to sustain its work to care for the thousands of refugees who were welcomed into our country and assigned to the care of the USCCB by the government after being granted legal status.”

Chieko Noguchi, USCCB spokesperson, told OSV News Feb. 18 that the lawsuit filed by the USCCB “challenges the suspension of the funding for refugee assistance we have run for decades.”

“Refugees are individuals who have undergone special screening and vetting procedures by the U.S. government and are fleeing hardship and persecution in their home countries to resettle in the United States,” she said in an email. “Throughout this long-time

partnership with the U.S. government, the USCCB has helped nearly a million individuals find safety and build their lives in the United States.”

Under the U.S. Immigration and Nationality Act, refugees are persons who have left their countries of origin and are unwilling or unable to return due to actual or well-founded fear of persecution on account of race, religion, nationality, social group or political opinion. As the lawsuit states, the USCCB “runs the largest non-governmental refugee-resettlement program in the United States” and currently serves approximately 17% of refugees being resettled in the United States.

“We are urging the government to uphold its legal and moral obligations to refugees and to restore the necessary funding to ensure that faith-based and community organizations can continue this vital work that reflects our nation’s values of compassion, justice, and hospitality,” Noguchi said.

In their lawsuit, the U.S. bishops specify three counts of violations against the Administrative Procedure Act, which governs how federal agencies make rules. The USCCB claims the “blunderbuss” funding suspension contravenes appropriations statutes, while failing to follow standard notice and comment requirements in rule-making.

The bishops said that in suspending the program funding, “the government utterly failed to consider the dire consequences of its actions” or entertain al-

ternatives.

The suit also took aim at the Trump administration’s “first rationale” for the suspension, which alleged the move aligned with Trump’s executive order halting foreign assistance. The bishops said such foreign assistance, “whatever its meaning, cannot plausibly include awards to an American non-profit for refugees in the United States.”

The bishops also noted in their complaint the government “did not explain why its agreements” with the USCCB no longer fit the administration’s unspecified priorities, “a particularly glaring omission given that the government has continuously funded USCCB’s refugee programs for decades.”

Moreover, they said, “in issuing the Refugee Funding Suspension, the government also ignored its own regulations.” The USCCB seeks to have the funding suspension set aside, with the administration “temporarily, preliminarily, and permanently” enjoined from taking any action against the USCCB in the matter. The bishops also ask to have the USCCB reimbursed “for all expenses it has incurred or will incur” as part of its current resettlement program agreements, along with legal fees for its case against the Trump administration and “such other relief as this Court may deem just and proper.”

(Maria-Pia Negro Chin is the Spanish editor for OSV News. Gina Christian, multimedia reporter for OSV News, contributed to this article.)

Bishops Defend Catholic Charities Work with Migrants, Refugees as Obedience to Jesus

By **Kimberley Heatherington, OSV News**

(OSV News) — The numbers alone are impressive: 16 million people and 28 million meals served; services supporting strong families for 500,000 clients; basic needs and emergency financial services for 2.8 million people; behavioral health and wellness services for 526,000 individuals; 2.8 million nights of emergency shelter; emergency housing services for 295,000 without lodging; 52 disasters responded to in the U.S. and its territories.

These figures represent the work of Catholic Charities USA and its 168 diocesan affiliate agencies, work that has come under scrutiny by Vice President JD Vance, himself a Catholic, and some in the media.

In a Jan. 26 interview on

CBS’s “Face the Nation,” Vance questioned the motives of the U.S. bishops’ criticism of the new Trump administration’s hardline immigration policies — including allowing raids on churches and schools — asking whether it had more to do with losing federal resettlement funding and “their bottom line.”

Fox News Channel’s Laura Ingraham, also a Catholic, said in a Jan. 29 broadcast, “I mean, no one wants to criticize Catholic Charities, but you can’t be facilitating illegal immigration.”

Such claims have ignited a vigorous rebuttal from U.S. Catholic bishops in defense of the church’s charitable agencies.

“Certain news outlets continue to make claims that Catholic Charities

See **“Work” on Page 7**



OSV News photo/Go Nakamura, Reuters
Migrants seeking asylum in the U.S. walk into a temporary humanitarian respite center run by Catholic Charities of the Rio Grande Valley in McAllen, Texas, April 8, 2021.

Work ...

Cont'd from Page 6

participates in illegal immigration and human trafficking, earning large profits while doing so," Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, said in a Feb. 3 message to the faithful. "As your Bishop and Chairman of the Board of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, I can assure you these are false claims levied against our Catholic Charities agency."

"The complete opposite is true," he said. "Our diocesan Catholic Charities participates in pathways for legal immigration and supports survivors of human trafficking, while operating those programs at a fiscal deficit."

According to Catholic Charities USA, only 5% of the services provided by its agencies last year were immigration and refugee services.

"Catholic Charities agencies serve migrants not because they are newcomers to the U.S., but because they are vulnerable and in need, like all those we serve. This work is a response to the Gospel mandate to feed the hungry, clothe the naked and welcome the stranger," the CCUSA website states.

Catholic Charities agencies provide essential services, such as food, clothing and a place to sleep, as part of how the church puts the Gospel mandate from Jesus Christ into action.

Federal, state, and local governments have asked some Catholic Charities agencies — especially those near the U.S.-Mexico border — to assist migrants the federal government has processed and released with pending immigration court proceedings. Others also offer legal assistance to migrants navigating the complicated immigration legal system.

Such assistance, Bishop Rhoades emphasized, should not be mistaken for abetting illegal immigration — especially since federal authorities have regularly brought migrants to local Catholic Charities agencies after processing them through U.S.-Mexico ports of entry.

"This does not mean that we support open borders

and disregard the rule of law," he said.

"While the Catholic Church recognizes and respects the right of every nation to regulate its borders for the common good, we must balance this with the rights of vulnerable migrants to access protection, and with the fundamental right of all to life and dignity as human persons; as well as," Bishop Rhoades added, "the rights of parents and the family, the cradle of life and love, the first and most vital cell of society."

Bishop Rhoades also explained how Catholic Charities worked as a "contracted resettlement agency" working under the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"Funds received are used to provide financial support for the first 90 to 240 days after arrival, until the refugee families become economically self-sufficient; provide immigration legal services as they study to become U.S. citizens; as well as to partially pay for the staff that provide those services," he said.

In his own diocese, he said, Catholic Charities in the latest fiscal year "received \$3.0 million in contract revenue and spent \$3.2 million to administer the program."

Bishop Joseph J. Tyson of the Diocese of Yakima, Washington, also spoke out concerning immigration and refugees in his Feb. 2 pastoral letter, "A Light for the Gentiles," citing his six years leading the U.S. bishops' efforts for the pastoral care for migrants and refugees. He had sharp words specifically for Vance's "Face the Nation" claims.

"We follow the command to 'love our neighbor' and to 'welcome the stranger,' which are commands from the words of Jesus himself," Bishop Tyson said, rejecting charges that the church's assistance encourages illegal activity or profits from its immigration efforts.

"We receive no money to resettle 'illegal' migrants," he said. But when it resettles refugees, he said the church loses money "on every resettlement."

"The government contracts do not cover the cost of resettlement," he explained.

He noted Washington state no longer has a Catholic Charities office that offers these services, because the church "could not sustain the loss."

"In Central Washington, neither the Diocese of Yakima nor Catholic Charities receive any money from the government for resettling refugees or migrants. Not a single penny!" he said.

The bishop's diocese is located in one of the world's leading sources of apples and other produce, largely harvested through migrant labor. Any welcome extended to migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers, he said, is due to the diocese's generous parishioners.

Bishop Tyson emphasized that people without legal immigration status are "our fellow parishioners and neighbors." Regarding them, he shared how hundreds of Catholic youth in his diocese now fear their parents may be deported. He condemned Vance's eager affirmation of deliberately instilling fear — such as by making schools generally open to immigration raids — as an immigration enforcement tactic.

"That the vice president — who refers to himself in the CBS interview as a devout Catholic — would want to engender fear as a tactic is deeply disturbing," he wrote. "It's also contrary to the teaching of Christ and the teachings of the Church."

Bishop Rhoades also denounced attacks on the U.S. Refugee Admission Program, or USRAP, which his diocesan Catholic Charities agency has participated in since that federal program was launched in 1980.

"USRAP is the formal process by which people are legally resettled in the United States as refugees. Resettlement through USRAP is distinct from the U.S. asylum process," he said.

Individuals resettled through USRAP are "screened, vetted, and approved by the U.S. government while outside of the United States," he explained.

Bishop Tyson likewise in his letter emphasized that refugees resettled by the Catholic Church underwent 12-24 months of screening.

"That screening is conducted by the federal gov-

ernment itself. So, if there's a problem with screening, it's not because we have failed the federal government as a partner," he said. "It's because the federal government has failed us."

More bishops have come to the fore to defend the church's ministries to migrants and refugees.

In a Jan. 24 interview with Vatican News, Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, president of the USCCB, likewise talked about the U.S. church's "tremendous network — of Catholic Charities, of migration services that respond to people in these difficult situations — and we want to make those possibilities available to those most in need."

Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, who offered prayers at both of President Donald Trump's inaugurations — also expressed frustration with Vance's comments on "Face the Nation" calling them "not only harmful" but demonstrably "not true," pointing to the church's audited financials.

"You think we make money caring for the immigrants? We're losing it hand over fist," Cardinal Dolan said Jan. 29 on his SiriusXM Catholic Channel. He said Vance's remarks were a "let down" from "a guy that struck me as a gentleman and a thoughtful man and

from whom I'm still expecting great things."

At the same time, Bishop Mark J. Seitz of El Paso, Texas, who heads the U.S. bishops' migration committee, told attendees at a Georgetown University event Feb. 12 that he wanted to offer the vice president an opportunity to dialogue over the church's work with migrants and refugees.

"I would love to sit down sometime with Vice President Vance and talk to him about these issues in regard to our resettlement work and things like that because he clearly has been misinformed," he said.

"That is so unfortunate when it comes from a person who has a loud megaphone," Bishop Seitz said. "It can be very harmful to this work of the church to very vulnerable people."

(Kimberley Heatherington writes for OSV News from Virginia. OSV News staff reporter Kate Scanlon contributed to this report.)

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Trump's IVF Order Fuels Mass Destruction of Human Embryos, Not Birth Rate

By **Kimberley Heatherington**
Peter Jesserer Smith, OSV News

(OSV News) — President Donald Trump's Feb. 18 executive order on in vitro fertilization is the president's first step toward fulfilling a campaign trail promise to expand IVF — an action the Catholic Church and other experts warn will fuel large-scale destruction of embryonic human life, while doing little to increase the nation's overall birth rate.

Trump's executive order "directs policy recommendations to protect IVF access and aggressively reduce out-of-pocket and health plan costs for such treatments," according to a statement issued that same day by the White House. It quoted Trump as saying, "We want more babies, to put it very nicely."

But the actual outcome, as Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of Arlington, Virginia, pointed out in a statement Feb. 19, is likely to be much different.

"Expanding access' to IVF as described in this executive order is likely to unjustly promote IVF in a way that will result in the abandonment or death of millions of embryonic human persons, involve all taxpayers with a serious moral injustice, provide federal subsidies for already lucrative IVF businesses, and ignore the risks to parents and children of America's broadly unregulated IVF industry," he said.

IVF treatments — which fertilize an egg outside the body in a laboratory dish — are opposed by the Catholic Church because they frequently involve the destruction of human embryos, in addition to other ethical and moral issues.

"In my experience, I have observed that many Catholics have only a vague notion of what the church teaches about IVF, since they have usually not received significant formation on the issue," noted Father Tad Pacholczyk, director of education and a senior ethicist at the National Catholic Bioethics Center.

"The typical Catholic is often unable to explain why IVF is wrong," he told OSV News.

Out of more than 413,000 artificial reproductive technology cycles recorded in 2021, only 112,088 resulted in pregnancy. Of those, only 97,128 babies were successfully born, according to U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data.

Multiple embryos are typically created for use in an IVF cycle, so the

number of human embryos currently created each year by IVF in the U.S. runs into the hundreds of thousands with the majority typically lost through what fertility clinics on their websites explain as "IVF attrition."

In one example provided by an IVF clinic, 10 harvested mature eggs may yield eight human embryos through IVF; of these embryos, just three to four may develop into embryos viable for transfer after cryopreservation. Typically one embryo — or two in some cases — is then implanted in each attempted transfer. CDC data shows 45% of embryo transfers on average result in a single live birth for women under 35, and the average diminishes to 23% for women under 40.

"Donum Vitae" ("The Gift of Life") — issued in 1987 by the Vatican's Congregation (now Dicastery) for the Doctrine of the Faith — equates IVF with abortion, saying it comes out of the "abortion mentality" and "can lead to a system of radical eugenics."

"Development of the practice of in vitro fertilization has required innumerable fertilizations and destructions of human embryos," it stated, explaining that "through these procedures, with apparently contrary purposes, life and death are subjected to the decision of man, who thus sets himself up as the giver of life and death by decree."

In "Dignitas Personae" ("Dignity of a Person") — issued by the doctrinal congregation in 2008 — the church recognized couples who can't conceive do suffer, but counseled that "the desire for a child cannot justify the 'production' of offspring."

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states, "Techniques involving only the married couple (homologous artificial insemination and fertilization) ... remain morally unacceptable." It adds, "The act which brings the child into existence is no longer an act by which two persons give themselves to one another, but one that entrusts the life and identity of the embryo into the power of doctors and biologists and establishes the domination of technology over the origin and destiny of the human person."

Father Pacholczyk amplified these official teachings.

"IVF substitutes an act of laboratory manipulation for an act of bodily union between spouses," he said. "It turns procreation into production. IVF is really the flip-side of contraception:

rather than trying to have sex without babies, we now try to have babies without sex."

The commodification of offspring — even if the end result is the gift of life — is a critical moral concern for the church.

"By doing IVF, we act against the human dignity of our children by setting up a subclass of those who originate in petri dishes and test tubes rather than in the intimacy of the one-flesh union of spouses," said Father Pacholczyk, while emphasizing "the problem with IVF is never with the child."

"Humans are meant to be loved into being through that mutual spousal self-gift of the marital act," he said, "rather than produced through manufacturing methods and laboratory protocols."

Prior to the Feb. 18 executive order, Trump publicly professed his backing for IVF multiple times on the campaign trail and called himself "a leader on IVF." At an Aug. 29 campaign stop in Pottsville, Michigan, Trump pledged that "your government will pay for — or your insurance company will be mandated to pay for — all costs associated with IVF treatment. Because we want more babies, to put it nicely."

What Trump's executive order on IVF leads to precisely remains to be seen. But experts previously noted the IVF mandate Trump proposed on the campaign trail would not increase fertility while saddling taxpayers and premium payers with costly IVF bills.

Whatever the finer points of an IVF policy might be, Lyman Stone, senior fellow and director of the Pronatalism

Initiative at the Institute for Family Studies, told OSV News, "there's not going to be an IVF baby boom."

"That's just not how IVF works," he said.

IVF procedures are, Stone clarified, "very disproportionately composed of first births to older women." While that still sounds like increased fertility, "the other thing that happens is when you have more reproductive technology options, people have a tendency to delay fertility," explained Stone. "So you freeze your eggs when you're 31, and you say, 'Well, I don't need to be in any particular rush, because at the end of the day, I've got all the time in the world.'"

But given some of the inherent difficulties in births to older mothers, that's not always true.

"These two factors more or less cancel out. So the net result is that there are no extra babies," Stone said. "That's why we say this policy won't work — the delay effects offset the other possible effects."

"We see this from many actual cases where places have actually implemented these policies," added Stone. "We can see what happens. And the answer is, that there's no big change in fertility."

Patrick T. Brown, a fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, has crunched the numbers.

"According to the Department of Health and Human Services, the cost per successful IVF outcome ranges somewhere around \$61,000, and over 90,000 babies were born via IVF in 2022

See "IVF" on Page 10

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‘Through the intercession of Saint Blaise...’

Following Masses at St. Anthony Parish in Follansbee Feb. 8-9, the faithful were invited forward for a blessing through the intercession of Saint Blaise. Father Gerald Muoka, administrator, bestows the blessing, saying: “Through the intercession of Saint Blaise, bishop, and martyr, may you be cured of every disease and illness.” Faithful at parishes across the diocese had the opportunity to receive the blessing as well. Courtesy photo

IVF ...

Cont’d from Page 9

(2.5% of all births nationwide),” Brown shared. “If we just take those numbers and assume a second Trump term would cover them with taxpayer money, that would be somewhere around \$55 billion over 10 years.”

Two other factors complicate projections; Brown said an insurance mandate could mean “very large increases” in premiums, while increased IVF availability could also translate to increased demand — “making \$55 billion over 10 years a very, very conservative estimate.”

“Whether it’s paid for by insurance premiums or by public money,” Stone noted, “there’s a transfer involved here. Older, less fertile, and LGBT couples are receiving a benefit — a benefit they’re likely to use — and younger people with natural fertility are paying for it,” he emphasized.

A host of coverage questions also arise, noted Timothy P. Carney, senior fellow at the Washington-based American Enterprise Institute: At what age and for how long? Is IVF only for married couples? Would surrogacy — where another woman is impregnated with IVF-conceived embryos and carries the child (or children) to term for the intended parents — be included?

“All of those questions are wide open — and it’s not easy to draw lines. Would it be discrimination if you said, ‘No, we only cover married couples,’ or what about not-married couples? What about cohabitating couples?” he asked. “Can you imagine that Congress or Health and Human Services has the bandwidth — the wisdom, the prudence — to make these finer distinctions?”

While Carney’s rhetorical question seems to answer itself, he predicted thorny deliberations. “All of those things are totally unexplored — and it would be a really difficult debate. It would raise all sorts of issues,” Carney concluded. Conscience issues must

also be considered if the Trump administration ever moves to some type of IVF mandate.

“Such a mandate would be immoral,” Father Pacholczyk observed — echoing arguments heard in 2011 when the Obama administration attempted to compel the Little Sisters of the Poor to include abortifacient coverage in their employee health coverage — “since insurers and employers would presumably be forced, and therefore complicit in, financially subsidizing in vitro fertilization procedures for their employees.”

It would, Father Pacholczyk added, “constitute an intrusion into the religious works and governance of the church and represent a federally mandated violation of her members’ consciences.”

Ultimately, Trump’s embrace of IVF complicates his relationship even further with the American pro-life voting bloc, and particularly with Catholics. “The reality is,” Stone said, “it’s a thing many Catholics and other people who believe life begins at conception may have problems with — that is also unlikely to do anything demographically.”

Bishop Burbidge’s statement underscored the point: “In practice and principle, IVF is incompatible with the president’s evident support for the good of human life and his desire to encourage family formation.” He proposed “life-affirming and positive actions” that President Trump and federal and state lawmakers take instead: “Consider concrete ways to encourage earlier marriage and family formation, establish programs to address direct pregnancy and childbirth-related expenses that may act as a barrier to the growth of families, and expand coverage for life-affirming and restorative fertility care.”

“We must work for building up families,” he said, “in ways which do not entail the destruction of human life.”

(Kimberley Heatherington writes for OSV News from Virginia. Peter Jesserer Smith is the national news editor for OSV News.)

Morgantown Magnificat Inspirational Prayer Breakfast Set for Saturday, March 8

MORGANTOWN—Morgantown Magnificat Inspirational Prayer Breakfast, will be held Saturday, March 8, at St. John University Parish Hall.

“Looking to deepen your faith? Join us at the next Morgantown Magnificat Inspirational Prayer Breakfast... Magnificat is a ministry to Catholic women aimed at strengthening and sharing our faith,” organization officials said. The event will be held from 9:15 - 11:45 a.m. (doors open 8:45 a.m.).

The inspirational speaker is Leslie Cervantez, a Catholic convert who grew up in a home marked by hardships of abuse, fear, shame, and rejection. Leslie will share her story of how freed by God’s grace she began a journey of inner healing that lifted her from a life of pain, resentment, and trauma.

Tickets are \$25 per person, \$13 for students, and a buffet breakfast will be served. Register online at <https://giving.parishsoft.com/app/giving/morgantownwvmagnificat>, and click on the Home tab. For mail-in reservations, print registration form at [Webpage-event-Reservation-Form.pdf](#) (magnificat-ministry.net). Mail to Morgantown Magnificat, c/o 12 Whites Run Court, Morgantown, WV 26508, by March 1, 2025.

St. John University Parish Hall is located at 1481 University Ave., Morgantown. Questions? Email Claire Mey at CLRPL09@gmail.com, or call Mary Paul at (304) 319-2747.

A message from the West Virginia Knights of Columbus State Council

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Franklin Koons Awarded Aquinas Medal at St. Joseph School in Martinsburg

MARTINSBURG — A two-sport athlete who plays two instruments and is learning how to play two more is the 2024-25 recipient of the most prestigious honor awarded to a student from the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

St. Joseph School (Martinsburg) eighth-grader Franklin Koons, 13, of Shepherdstown, was awarded the Aquinas Medal during a Feb. 7 assembly in the school's gym in front of family members, staff and students in grades kindergarten through eight.

The award is named for Saint Thomas Aquinas, the patron saint of scholars who imparted knowledge infused with an awareness of God. One student at the highest academic grade level at each of the 24 Catholic schools in the diocese is recognized for embodying excellence in learning, faithful discipleship, leadership, and service to school, parish and community.

Before announcing his name at the assembly, Princi-

pal Maria Byrd said teachers and peers described Koons as having unwavering faith and exceptional talents, and noted his commitment to serving others. She said he consistently strives for academic excellence, and exhibits perseverance and a love for learning. "This student's ability to balance his academics, music, athletics and service to others speaks strongly about his hard work, work ethic and commitment to his personal growth," Byrd said. "This student leads by example. He's a shining light in our school community. ... In short, this student is an original, a quiet leader, and a faithful Catholic; a remarkable person, I believe."

Among Koons' academic highlights are qualifying for academic honors each year by earning all A's and B's; placing second in the chemistry category of the 2024-25 Berkeley County Science Fair; qualifying in seventh grade for the Eastern Panhandle Science and Engineering Fair; and participating in the Berkeley

County Social Studies Fair in sixth grade.

The son of Katie and Timothy Koons, he was a member of the SJS cross-country team for three years and was deemed the fastest male runner in eighth grade. He was on the tennis team in seventh grade and intends to play again this spring.

Koons was chosen to play trumpet in Region IX Honor Band in seventh and eighth grades, but he also is a pianist and is learning to play guitar and ukulele. He frequently serves as an acolyte during school Masses at St. Joseph Parish and also fills that role in weekend Masses at the church. He is preparing for confirmation.

Koons' brother, Byron, 6, is a kindergartner at Saint Joseph School. Franklin was just 2 years old when he started attending the only private Catholic school in the Eastern Panhandle and remembers fearing he would never get all the way to eighth grade.

"Attending Catholic school has influenced my



Courtesy photo
Franklin Koons, third from left, is congratulated Feb. 7 for being named the Aquinas Medal winner at St. Joseph School in Martinsburg by, from left, Jennifer Hornyak, superintendent of Catholic schools for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston; Principal Maria Byrd; mother, Katie Koons; and brother, Byron Koons.

life astronomically," Koons wrote in a biography submitted to the diocese. "When you attend Catholic school, you feel a certain feeling of community and friendship. Going to Catholic school has also influenced my faith and helped it grow. Attending Catholic school is the best thing that has happened to me."

He plans to attend Saint

James School in Hagerstown, Md., in the fall. While he's not sure what college he wants to attend or what vocation he wants to pursue, he does feel called to help people.

"I am very grateful that I was awarded the Thomas Aquinas Medal, and I couldn't have done it without my family, my friends and God," Koons wrote.

Vincent Cook Awarded Aquinas Medal at Fairmont Catholic

Congratulations to Vincent Cook for being chosen the St. Thomas Aquinas Award Winner for the 24-25 school year at Fairmont Catholic, school officials said. Vincent has been at FCS since kindergarten and is a third generation graduate. His experience at FCS has given him a lifetime of memories and has brought him closer to God. God Bless you, Vincent Cook. He is pictured fourth from left, with family, clergy, religious, and FCS officials.



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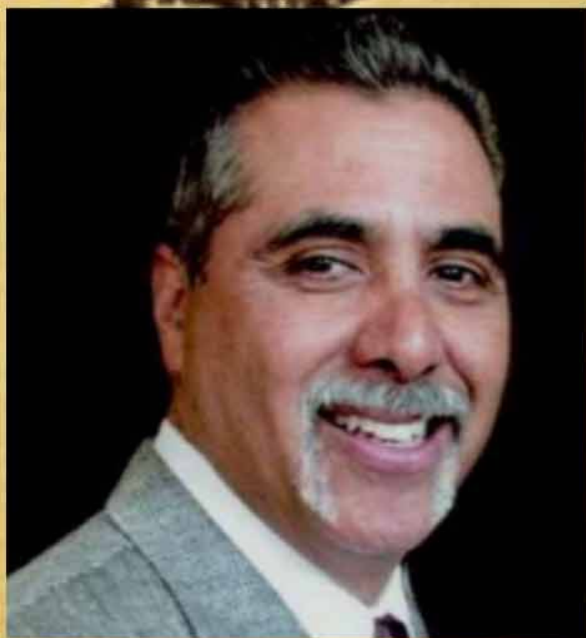
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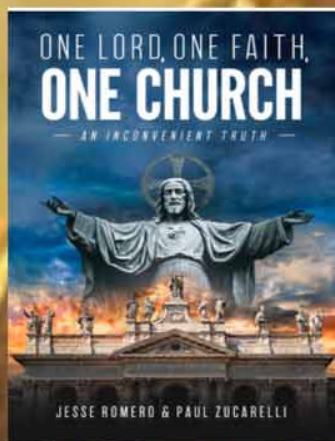


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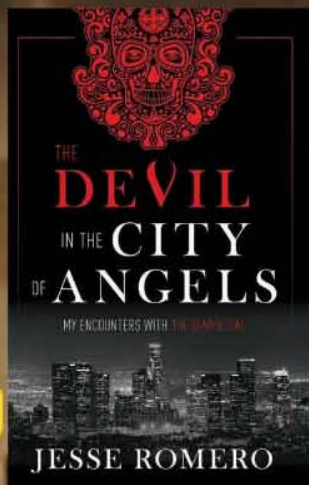
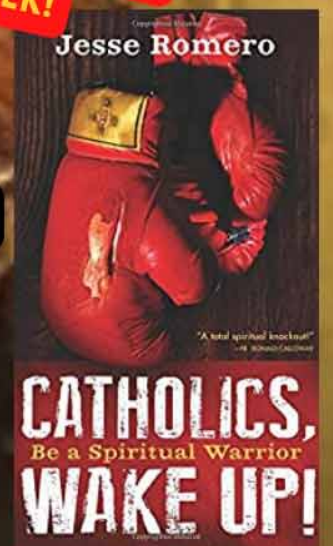


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May 19	AT HOME IN THE WEB OF LIFE, PART I – Beth Collins
June 23	AT HOME IN THE WEB OF LIFE, PART III
July 28	AT HOME IN THE WEB OF LIFE, PART III
August 25	THE TELLING TAKES US HOME, PART I – Rodica Stoicoiu
September 22	THE TELLING TAKES US HOME, PART II
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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.
- Sunday, June 8:** Sacred Heart, Bluefield, 4:30 p.m.



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Inmigrantes: Nuestros vecinos, amigos y compañeros creyentes

14-02-25

Cuando yo era niño, a veces nos preguntábamos unos a otros: "¿Qué eres?". No era una pregunta sobre nuestro sexo o sobre qué posición jugábamos en el béisbol o el fútbol; era una pregunta sobre de dónde venía nuestra familia. "Soy irlandés", respondía alguien. "Mi familia vino de Italia", añadía otro. "Soy mitad inglés y mitad polaco", decía un tercero. Éramos conscientes de que nuestras familias provenían de otros países: a veces de nuestros padres o de nuestros abuelos u otros antepasados más remotos en el tiempo.

Nosotros, los niños, éramos conscientes de una verdad que algunos estadounidenses de hoy han olvidado: todos somos inmigrantes o descendientes de inmigrantes. Los afroamericanos, cuyos antepasados fueron traídos aquí encadenados, han hecho esfuerzos denodados por descubrir sus orígenes en el continente africano. Incluso nuestras tribus indígenas, que han estado aquí durante milenios, provienen de inmigrantes que cruzaron a las Américas desde Asia. La inmigración ha sido tan importante en la historia de nuestro país que una importante exposición en el Instituto Smithsonian, nuestro museo nacional, durante nuestro Bicentenario en 1976 se tituló "Una nación de naciones".

¿Por qué la gente abandona su tierra natal, donde conoce el idioma, el clima, la cultura y la historia de su tierra y tiene múltiples vínculos con familiares y amigos? A veces por amenazas a su seguridad.

Una mujer de mi última parroquia tenía una pequeña tienda en El Salvador. La pandilla local le dijo que la protegerían si les daba la mitad de sus ganancias. Ella dijo que no quería su protección y se negó a su demanda, por lo que mataron a su hermano. Cerró su tienda y vino a los Estados Unidos. ¿Puede culparla?

A veces hay persecución religiosa. Miles de cristianos han abandonado Irak y Siria porque son perseguidos por su fe. Un sacerdote iraquí, amigo de un sacerdote que sirvió conmigo hace unos años, fue asesinado por terroristas del Estado Islámico en su iglesia. Muchos de los feligreses huyeron del país. ¿Pueden culparlos?

La pobreza extrema puede provocar un éxodo de todo lo que nos resulta familiar. La Gran Hambruna que azotó Irlanda a mediados del siglo XIX hizo que muchos abandonaran su patria, entre ellos mis bisabuelos, Thomas y Mary Farrell. Tenían miedo de morir de hambre, así que ahorraron y pidieron dinero prestado para pagar el pasaje a Estados Unidos. ¿Pueden culparlos?

En la actualidad, existe una gran preocupación por la inmigración ilegal. Contrariamente a lo que muchos suponen, la mayoría de los inmigrantes (el 77 %) se encuentran en este país de manera legal. De todos los residentes nacidos en el extranjero, el 49 % se han convertido en ciudadanos estadounidenses, el 24 %

tienen residencia permanente ("tarjeta verde"), el 4 % tienen residencia temporal legal y el 23 % son indocumentados o ilegales. Otra forma de verlo es que aproximadamente el 14,3 % de todas las personas que viven en este país actualmente son nacidas en el extranjero, pero quienes están aquí sin permiso del gobierno representan aproximadamente el 3,5 % de la población total. (Véase el boletín del Pew Research Center de septiembre de 2024.)

La Iglesia Católica reconoce el derecho y el deber de los gobiernos de regular sus fronteras para proteger a sus ciudadanos y promover su bienestar. Por lo tanto, el gobierno federal tiene el deber de poner orden en sus fronteras y tiene todo el derecho de expulsar a asesinos, violadores, miembros y traficantes de los cárteles de la droga, traficantes de personas, terroristas y otras personas que dañan o podrían dañar a nuestro pueblo.

Al mismo tiempo, el derecho del gobierno no es absoluto. Dios dijo a los primeros seres humanos, que representan a toda nuestra raza: "Llenad la tierra y sojuzgadla" (Génesis 1:28). Dios dio la tierra a toda la raza humana; las fronteras nacionales son una creación humana secundaria. En segundo lugar, las personas tienen derecho a irse a otro lugar si viven en condiciones intolerables. Por lo tanto, los gobiernos, especialmente los de los países grandes y ricos como los Estados Unidos, deben ejercer su responsabilidad humanamente y ser generosos al responder a quienes, en apuros, deben abandonar sus países de origen.

Cuando los inmigrantes llegan aquí, nosotros los católicos tratamos de satisfacer sus necesidades de comida, ropa, alojamiento y otras necesidades. Dios nos dice: No molestarás ni oprimirás al extranjero, porque también vosotros fuisteis extranjeros en la tierra de Egipto [Éxodo 22:20]. En nuestra situación, eso significa: "Tratad al inmigrante con justicia y compasión; vuestros antepasados también fueron inmigrantes". El niño Jesús fue un refugiado en Egipto, huyendo del rey Herodes [Mateo 2:13]. El Señor adulto nos dice: Fui forastero y me acogisteis, tuve hambre y me alimentasteis, estuve desnudo y me vestisteis [Mateo 25:35-36]. Nuestra preocupación inicial como católicos no es el estatus legal del inmigrante, sino su necesidad humana. Escucharemos a nuestro Señor y acogere- mos al extranjero.

El vicepresidente Vance criticó recientemente a los obispos por ayudar a reasentar a los refugiados. Consideren esto: el gobierno federal investiga a quienes solicitan el estatus de refugiados y, en el caso de los que aprueba, contrata a grupos como Catholic Charities para que los instalen en nuestro país.

El gobierno paga estos servicios, a menudo con retraso, pero los fondos recibidos no cubren todo el costo; la Iglesia pierde varios millones de dólares cada año para ayudar a reasentar a los refugiados. Lo hacemos como un acto de misericordia, siguiendo la ense-

ñanza del Señor [Catholic News Agency, 3 de febrero de 2025].

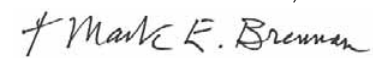
Como he señalado antes, el problema fundamental es que la inmigración a este país es un proceso muy largo y engorroso. Alguien que quiere casarse con un ciudadano estadounidense a menudo debe esperar tres años para obtener una visa para ingresar a los Estados Unidos. Mientras que los profesionales extranjeros con títulos avanzados o talentos excepcionales pueden ingresar más rápidamente, la gente común que solo quiere trabajar para alimentarse a sí misma y a sus familias a menudo debe esperar quince años (ver Stilt, 10 de abril de 2024). Para entonces, podría morir de hambre o ser encarcelado por sus creencias políticas o religiosas. Las personas en situaciones desesperadas corren el riesgo de venir aquí sin papeles legales.

El camino a seguir, que nosotros los obispos católicos hemos estado defendiendo durante décadas, es reformar el proceso de inmigración para que sea más sencillo y más expedito. Es ilustrativo que en el período de mayor inmigración, a finales del siglo XIX y principios del XX, el proceso del gobierno para permitir la entrada de inmigrantes era mucho más rápido y fácil de seguir. En ese momento, Ellis Island, en el puerto de Nueva York, recibió millones de inmigrantes, de los cuales el 98% fueron admitidos. Los enfermos fueron hospitalizados y admitidos cuando se recuperaron. Sólo los anarquistas, las prostitutas y los locos fueron excluidos. (Folleto del Servicio de Parques Nacionales de Ellis Island.) Al igual que el dueño de casa que puede sacar de su almacén tanto lo viejo como lo nuevo (Mateo 13:52), nuestro gobierno civil debe considerar la práctica pasada y adaptarse en consecuencia.

La actual administración presidencial ha adoptado algunas políticas en materia de inmigración que son aceptables según la doctrina católica: una estrategia razonable para poner orden en las fronteras del país y deportar a los verdaderos criminales. Pero cualquier política que separe a los padres de sus hijos o niegue la ciudadanía estadounidense a los niños nacidos aquí o emprenda deportaciones masivas, que no sólo perjudicarán a los inmigrantes comunes sino también a la economía estadounidense, debería abandonarse. Un principio médico básico es: no hacer daño. El gobierno debería aplicar ese principio en sus políticas de inmigración.

¿Qué eres? Eres un inmigrante o descendiente de inmigrantes. Muestra respeto y bienvenida fraternal a quienes llegan a nuestras costas hoy. Honrarás a tu Dios y a tus antepasados.

Sinceramente en Cristo,



+Mark E. Brennan

Obispo de Wheeling-Charleston

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 variarán 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 eclesiales 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. The position will offer a salary of \$60,000 to \$68,000.

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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