

# New U.S. Bishops' Report Identifies 5 Top Areas of Religious Liberty Concerns

**By Kate Scanlon**  
**WASHINGTON (OSV News)** — A new annual report by the U.S. bishops' conference identifies five top threats to religious liberty in the United States, including a federal regula-

tion it says could impose mandates on doctors to perform objectionable procedures and threats to the church's service to people who are migrants.

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' first an-

nual "State of Religious Liberty in the United States," published Jan. 16, said potential threats to religious liberty in the United States largely come in the form of federal regulations or cultural trends.

Five key areas of concern, the 48-page report said, include attacks against houses of worship, especially in the aftermath of the Israel-Hamas conflict; the Section 1557 regulation from the U.S. De-

partment of Health and Human Services, which the report said "will likely impose a mandate on doctors to perform gender transition procedures and possibly abortions"; threats to **See "Report" on Page 2**

## Red Mass to be Celebrated in Charleston Jan. 23

**By Colleen Rowan**  
**CHARLESTON** — Calling upon the Holy Spirit to guide members of the local bar association, members of the court, and other civil officials in the administration of justice and good government, the annual Red Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Mark Brennan at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston Jan. 23 at 6 p.m. All those who work in these professions are invited to the Mass no matter their religious affiliation.

This celebration has traditionally been offered "to call upon the Holy Spirit for wisdom, understanding, counsel and fortitude in the administration of justice and good government," said Matthew R. Bowles, an attorney and member of the basilica co-cathedral. "Lawyers, judges, lawmakers, and governmental officials are invited to come together to pray for guidance in offering their professional work for the common good."

At last year's Mass, Bishop Brennan prayed for those serving in the aforementioned professions and encouraged them to **See "Mass" on Page 3**

## Bishop Brennan Joins in Interfaith Prayer Service on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day



**B**ishop Mark Brennan (back row, third from right) joins religious leaders from around the Wheeling area and beyond for an Interfaith Prayer Service at Macedonia Baptist Church in Wheeling on Martin Luther King, Jr. Day (Jan. 15). The celebration also included the MLK March through the city as well as a discussion for high school and college students at Wheeling University's Troy Theater, among other events and gatherings.

Courtesy Photo

## Report...

### Cont'd from Page 1

religious charities serving migrants and refugees, "which will likely increase as the issue of immigration gains prominence in the election"; suppression of religious speech "on marriage and sexual difference"; and the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's Pregnant Workers Fairness Act regulations, which the report said "aim to require religious employers to be complicit in abortion in an unprecedented way."

The report's introduction said that due to a divided federal government, "most introduced bills that threatened religious liberty languished," resulting in threats in the form of "proposed regulations by federal agencies," or cultural trends such as growing partisanship over migration. The report noted the U.S. Supreme Court only heard two cases implicating religious liberty in 2023, "but in each case the Supreme Court ruled for broader protections — for religious exercise in the workplace, in *Groff v. DeJoy*, and for free speech based on religious beliefs, in *303 Creative LLC v. Elenis*."

Other areas of concern identified in the report include some state bills making clergy mandatory reporters for abuse without an exception for the seal of the confessional. As the report notes, "For Catholic priests, breaking the confidentiality of statements made during the Sacrament of Reconciliation — that is, breaking the seal of the confessional — is a grave offense, resulting in automatic excommunication from the Church."

The report also identified partisanship within the church as an area of concern. "This dynamic is not new, is not unique to Catholics, nor will it disappear anytime soon," it said. "But it will be especially salient in 2024, and the long-term standing of the Church in the public square requires a conscious and sustained turn — away from partisanship and toward the Gospel."

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, chair of the USCCB's Committee for Religious Liberty, who oversaw the report, told OSV News that the committee began this annual report in order to "educate the faithful" and "motivate people to get involved in promoting and protect-

ing religious liberty."

Bishop Rhoades noted that threats to houses of worship remain a significant cultural concern, as Catholic churches and organizations saw vandalism and other crimes in the wake of the U.S. Supreme Court's *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* decision in 2022 that overturned prior rulings by the high court making abortion access a constitutional right; other faith traditions have seen more violence occur at their places of worship, such as the 2018 mass shooting at a Pittsburgh synagogue.

Dan Balsarak, the USCCB's religious liberty director and assistant general counsel, told OSV News the committee's work has historically centered on "legal problems."

"Things are such now these days that we are actually having to worry about the physical health and safety of people in their place of worship," Balsarak said. "Which is pretty disturbing."

Both Bishop Rhoades and Balsarak said that a growing cultural divide on the issue of migration also threatens to imperil the church's service to people who are migrants and refugees.

"The church's mission, you know, is we're to serve, serve the poor and the needy. That's part of our mission to the corporal works of mercy, so welcoming the stranger," Bishop Rhoades said, an act of mercy demanded by Jesus Christ in Matthew 25 when he renders justice at the final judgment. "And we're talking here about basic needs: sometimes food, sometimes shelter, clothing and other kinds of assistance. The church has always done this and it's just part of our Christian responsibilities."

Bishop Rhoades said some have suggested that "somehow the church is contributing to illegal immigration" through such service.

"Comprehensive immigration reform is something that the Catholic Church in the United States has been advocating for for decades," he added. He said "our provision of humanitarian aid to human beings who are in need" is needed regardless of whether and how Congress would act.

Balsarak said, "It seems that the role that religious charities play in the immigration system as service providers — helping immigrants get a place to sleep, get a meal, understand their legal

obligations, the role that religious charities play in that regard — has been essentially scapegoated."

The real burden of responsibility is with Congress which has failed to address "the immigration problem that the immigration crisis has created."

Erroneous claims about the church's service to migrants, Balsarak said, could imperil their ability to partner with the federal government on services to migrants and on other projects.

"At the end of the day ... what's being proposed is basically if you exercise your religious beliefs in this particular way or area, we're going to penalize you," he said, calling those claims "a classic religious liberty threat."

Both Bishop Rhoades and Balsarak said the USCCB annual report concerns the landscape for domestic religious liberty, but the issue of religious liberty in the U.S. has echoes around the globe.

Bishop Rhoades said an erosion of that liberty would not only be "harmful to our country, and the principles on which our nation was founded, but also I think affects others around the world."

"If you've been paying attention to the international religious liberty front recently, we are incredibly blessed," Balsarak said. "For all the problems that we are talking about in this report, we are incredibly blessed to live in the United States." Balsarak said the best way for Catholics to respond to religious liberty threats is to "go out and do the things that we are fighting for your right to do."

"So what's under threat right now?" he said. "Our service to immigrants? Go volunteer at a shelter for immigrants. We see arsons (at) pregnancy resource centers — there's a threat to the continued operation of ministries meant to help pregnant mothers in need — go volunteer at a pregnancy resource center."

That "ground up approach," Balsarak said, "is the most viable long-term solution to current threats that we face to religious liberty."

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

The link to the report: <https://usccb.cld.bz/Religious-Liberty-Annual-Report>

## Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

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

**To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children:** The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. We also encourage utilizing [www.reportbishop-abuse.org](http://www.reportbishop-abuse.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.reportbishop-abuse.org](http://www.reportbishop-abuse.org). **To Report to Civil Authorities: Contact your local law enforcement:** numbers will vary based on your location. If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911. To confidentially report any incidence of suspected child abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse, contact the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families' Child Protective Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 800.352.6513. You may report anonymously to this hotline if you prefer. **To Report to Diocesan Authorities:** The diocese encourages reporting to the appropriate civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. The diocese also encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities. To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, contact one of the following designees at 1.888.434.6237 or 304.233.0880: Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; or Very Rev. Dennis Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., ext. 270; or Sr. Martha Gomez, ext. 264. You may also call the Diocese's Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504. You may also call the Diocese's sexual abuse hotline at 833.230.5656. Additional methods of reporting are available at [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org), under "Accountability." Complaint forms are available online at [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org), click "Diocese" on the menu bar, then "Offices," then "Safe Environment", then "Download Files and Forms." The form is titled "Complaint Form for Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor." The form may be returned via U.S. mail to: Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003. **To Report to the Diocese's Victim Assistance Coordinator:** please call Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, at 304.559.6742. In addition to the methods listed above for reporting sexual abuse, the Diocese also has partnered with Navex Global to offer the EthicsPoint platform to report other, additional concerns, such as suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, religious, or lay employee of the Diocese or any Catholic parish or school in West Virginia. The EthicsPoint platform can be accessed via [www.dwc.org](http://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.



Office: 1322 Eoff St.  
Mailing: PO Box 230  
Wheeling, WV 26003  
(304) 232-0444  
Fax: (304) 233-8551  
Web site: [www.thecatholicspiritwv.org](http://www.thecatholicspiritwv.org)  
Diocesan Web site: [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org)  
January 19, 2024, Vol. 55, No. 3

**Publisher:** Bishop Mark E. Brennan.....  
**Executive Editor:** Colleen Rowan, Ext. 347 ..... [crowan@dwc.org](mailto:crowan@dwc.org)  
**Advertising:** contact Colleen Rowan  
**Freelance Writers:** Martina Hart, John Sherwood,  
**Member:** Catholic Press Association, West Virginia Press Association, National Press Photographers Association, Inc.



Print edition publishes on the first Friday of each month. Electronic edition is delivered by e-mail every Friday. All print issues sent to each registered Catholic household free of charge. Donations to help offset the cost of producing The Catholic Spirit are welcomed. Out-of-diocese subscriptions are \$25 annually. The Catholic Spirit intends its news reports to be fair and accurate in every regard. The opinions of correspondents do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Catholic Spirit. Submission of news releases, stories and color photos welcomed and encouraged. Not responsible for unsolicited material.

# Mass...

**Cont'd from Page 1**

pray for God's guidance and strength.

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.

"The celebration of the Mass is central to the Catholic faith, and the Red Mass fits within that tradition," Bowles said. "In particular, the Red Mass is an opportunity to remember that our ordinary lives and professional practice impact those around us. The Red Mass is an opportunity to pray for the strength to order the small matters of our personal and professional work around the teachings of Christ."

First celebrated in West Virginia at the basilica co-cathedral in 1995, the reinvigoration of the Red Mass in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston in recent years has been directly connected with Bishop Brennan's continuing support, Bowles said. He added that next week's celebration will be the third consecutive year for the Red Mass at the basilica co-cathedral.

A reception will be held following the Mass.



**LEWIS GIANOLA PLLC**

**Webster J. Arceneaux • Matthew R. Bowles • James A. Gianola  
John F. Gianola • Sandra H. Kinney • Mark A. Sadd**

Charleston | Morgantown  
A West Virginia law firm [www.lewisgianola.com](http://www.lewisgianola.com)

**NATIONAL Eucharistic Revival**

**Have You Heard?**  
GOD IS DOING SOMETHING NEW—AND HE IS CALLING YOU TO BE A PART OF IT!

Jesus desires to heal, renew, and unify the Church and the world. How will he do it? By uniting us once again around the source and summit of our faith—the Holy Eucharist. The National Eucharistic Revival is the joyful, expectant, grassroots response of the entire Catholic Church in the U.S. to this divine invitation.

Scan the code below to learn more about the exciting journey ahead, and sign up for weekly updates on what's happening in this unprecedented national movement!

[eucharisticrevival.org](http://eucharisticrevival.org)

## SAVE THE DATE

### RED MASS

The annual Mass, calling on the Holy Spirit to guide members of the local bar association, members of the court, and other civil officials in the administration of justice and good government.

---

Tuesday, January 23, 2024  
6:00 pm  
*Reception to follow.*

Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart

DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

## PRIESTHOOD *Discernment* Retreat

- FOR MEN 18 AND OLDER
- PRAY, SHARE MEALS, AND ATTEND SEMINARY CLASSES WITH WV SEMINARIANS
- HEAR TALKS ABOUT PRIESTLY LIFE AND DISCERNMENT

**MOUNT ST. MARY'S SEMINARY**  
16300 OLD EMMITSBURG RD, EMMITSBURG, MD 21727

**SUNDAY**  
MARCH 10  
12:30PM

→

**MONDAY**  
MARCH 11  
10:00PM

TO APPLY, CONTACT FR. PHILLIP SZABO AT [PSZABO@DWC.ORG](mailto:PSZABO@DWC.ORG) TO ARRANGE A TIME FOR A BRIEF PHONE INTERVIEW.

# Pray, and Take action to Proclaim Life is God's 'Precious Gift,' Says U.S. Bishops' Pro-Life Chair

By OSV News

**WASHINGTON (OSV News)** — Even with the U.S. Supreme Court's 2022 decision overturning the landmark Roe ruling, "human life remains gravely threatened by legalized abortion in most states and it continues to be aggressively promoted at the federal level," the U.S. bishops' pro-life chairman said Jan. 16.

"Our prayers, sacrifices, and efforts to protect human life have never been more essential," Bishop Michael F. Burbidge of Arlington, Virginia, said in a statement issued to mark the Jan. 22 anniversary of the Roe v. Wade decision, which in 1973 legalized abortion nationwide.

The Catholic Church designates Jan. 22 as the Day of Prayer for the Legal Protection of Unborn Children. It is a particular day "for prayer, penance, and our personal recommitment to the cause of life," said the bishop, who heads the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

With its June 24, 2022, ruling in Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization, the Supreme Court negated its own precedent that made abortion access a constitutional right and returned abortion policy to the states.

"While we as the Church have rejoiced that this scourge on our nation no longer stands as the law of the land, we mourn for the more than 65 million children who died during Roe's nearly 50-year reign, and for those that continue to die in places where abortion remains legal," Bishop Burbidge said.

The church also recognizes "the millions of mothers, siblings, and family members whose lives have been impacted by the death of these children," he added.

"We remain steadfast in our commitment to work for the legal protection of every human life from conception to natural death. This is a responsibility that we all must share — especially now when this very protection is being undermined," Bishop Burbidge said, noting the U.S. bishops during their November general assembly reaffirmed that "abortion remains our pre-eminent priority."



OSV News Photo/Bob Roller  
A woman holds her daughter during the opening Mass of the National Prayer Vigil for Life Jan. 19 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington.

In the wake of the Dobbs decision, "more and more states are impacted by sweeping new proposed laws and ballot referenda to enshrine abortion-on-demand," Bishop Burbidge said, so "it is critical that everyone, whatever their role, take the initiative to learn about such threats to life in their area, and to then speak out compassionately with their family, friends, colleagues, and representatives."

He added, "The truth is seldom easy, but it is necessary. The truth is with us."

Bishop Burbidge stressed that "each of us" is called to "radical solidarity with women facing an unexpected or challenging pregnancy," pointing out that "the most immediate way to protect babies and mothers from abortion is to thoroughly surround mothers in need with loving support, 'walking with' them in their journey of motherhood."

He invited dioceses, parishes and individuals "to come alongside vulnerable mothers and children" through the USCCB's nationwide, parish-based initiative "Walking with Moms in Need."

Launched in March 2020, the initiative encourages parishes to strengthen their outreach to pregnant and parenting mothers in their communities who are in difficult circumstances, through personal accompaniment and connecting these women with needed resources. Bishop Burbidge thanked "the millions of Catholics who are already personally living out this Gospel call."

"Each of us is called to help mothers in our own community secure material, emotional, and spiritual support for embracing the gift of life," he said. "Likewise, we must also support policies that assist women and their children and help families to flourish."

"We must likewise extend the hand of compassion to all who are suffering from participation in abortion. The Church offers Christ's forgiveness, healing and hope to women and men through the sacraments and abortion healing ministries like Project Rachel Ministry," he added.

He prayed that all people of faith and goodwill "proclaim that human life is a precious gift from God and that each person who receives this gift has responsibilities toward God, self, and others. And may we work together toward the day when society, through its laws and institutions, protects and nurtures human life at every stage of its existence."

As the bishops' pro-life chairman, Bishop Burbidge was the principal celebrant of the Jan. 18 opening Mass of the National Prayer Vigil for Life Jan. 18-19 at the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception.

In his own diocese, just across the Potomac River from the nation's capital, thousands of participants from across the country were expected to attend the "Life is VERY Good" event Jan. 18-19. It opened with an evening of prayer Jan. 18, which organizers said is "an opportunity to pray for the success of the March for Life in changing our hearts and those of others in this country." The Jan. 19 morning rally then sends participants to join the national march in Washington "to make our voices heard as we proclaim the gospel of life."



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

**To start this ministry in your parish, contact:**

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



**Respect life**

"Let God move minds and hearts,  
but we must be the ones who now  
speak and work for Him."

-Bishop Mark Brennan

# As Iran Hits Northern Iraq, Prelate Says Middle East is 'Like a Volcano,' Christians are Targeted

By Dale Gavlak

**AMMAN, Jordan (OSV News)** — The Iraqi Catholic community feels unsettled after Iran launched ballistic missiles, striking upscale neighborhoods of Irbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, signaling the latest spate of violence targeting northern Iraq.

Iran's powerful Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps claimed it targeted a spy base for Israel's intelligence agency, Mossad, close to the U.S. consulate in Iraq Jan. 15, a charge refuted by both the region's prime minister and the United States.

The strikes killed four, including Kurdish real estate tycoon Peshraw Dizayi and Christian businessman Karam Mikhaïl, owner of Al-Rayyan Iraq Group, who attended a social gathering at Dizayi's home.

Pope Francis wrote on X, formerly Twitter, on Jan. 17: "I express my closeness and solidarity with the victims, all civilians, of the missile attack that hit Erbil, in Iraqi Kurdistan. I urge everyone to avoid any steps that might escalate tension in the Middle East and other war-torn areas."

On Jan. 17, Iraqi Kurdish Prime Minister Masrour Barzani canceled a meeting with Iran's foreign minister at the World Economic Forum at Davos in Switzerland in protest over Iranian missile strikes on the Iraqi Kurdish city of Irbil, a source told Reuters.

Barzani earlier called the attacks "unjustifiable and cowardly," urging "the Baghdad government to adopt a firm position against this violation of Iraqi sovereignty." Barzani also called on "our partners within the international community to put an end to these brutal attacks."

The U.S. condemned the action, with State Department spokesperson Matthew Miller describing it as "Iran's reckless missile strikes."

Chaldean Catholic Archbishop Yousif Thomas Mirkis of Kirkuk and Sulaimaniya told OSV News that the entire Middle East region "is like a volcano," with the expectation that anything can happen at this time.

This, he said, was a consequence of the ongoing war in Gaza between Israel and Hamas, troubles in Syria and Lebanon, and the targeting of commercial shipping in the Red Sea by Yemen's Iran-backed Houthi rebels, now under fire by the U.S. and Britain.

Archbishop Mirkis pointed to several distressing incidents also affecting Christians, considered injustices caused by the government in Baghdad against the dwindling community.

Baghdad has still not reinstated the title of Chaldean patriarch to Iraq's Chaldean Catholic Cardinal Louis Sako. Iraqi President Abdul Latif Rashid revoked his title July 3, 2023, and this usurped the clergyman's position both as the officially recognized head of Iraq's Catholic Chaldean Church as well of his position and powers to administer the Chaldean religious endowments, including church properties.

Cardinal Sako left Baghdad at the time and remains in Irbil "in protest over the decree."

Both the cardinal and media in Iraq say the action was likely instigated by Rayan al-Kildani, a leader of a nominally Chaldean Catholic militia in Iraq, the Babylon Brigades, closely tied to Iran. Its political wing holds four seats in parliament reserved for Christian candidates.

"We still don't know what's happening," Archbishop Mirkis said, regarding Cardinal Sako. But he pointed to the Christian seats taken by al-Kildani's Babylon Brigades, despite the fact that al-Kildani was sanctioned in 2019 by the U.S. Treasury Department for alleged human rights abuses. Critics accuse al-Kildani of seeking control of Chaldean Church assets, which Cardinal Sako oversees.

"The Christian quota is taken by a militia that's supposed to be Christian, but is not," Archbishop Mirkis explained. "They want to marginalize the Christian votes, so we feel very weak in this situation," likely because al-Kildani has backing by Baghdad and Iran.

"Although the intention of this allocation is to ensure Christian representation in these provincial councils, Iraqi election law allows anyone, Christian or not, to vote for these seats," wrote Yaqoub Beth-Addai, an Iraqi expert on Iraqi militias at The Washington Institute for Near East Policy. "This loophole has enabled Iranian-affiliated parties to hijack the reserved seats by mobilizing mostly Shia (Shiite) Arab voters behind the Babiliyoun (Babylon) Movement."

Archbishop Mirkis said there is a cloud hanging over the Christian community following the tragic wedding hall fire in Qaraqosh in September 2023. This led to a cancellation of Christmas and New Year celebrations out of safety concerns.

"The wedding fire in Qaraqosh killed 132 persons and has created a sense of depression about the future for Christians," he said. "Some 200 families from Qaraqosh left for Amman in the hopes of



OSV News Photo/Marko Djurica, Reuters  
Worshippers are pictured in a file photo praying during Mass at St. George Chaldean Catholic Church in Tel Esqof, Iraq. The Iraqi Catholic community feels unsettled after Iran launched ballistic missiles late Jan. 15 striking upscale neighborhoods of Irbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, signaling the latest spate of violence targeting northern Iraq.

emigrating abroad."

Iraqi church leaders expressed their concerns to Baghdad in an official statement on Nov. 28, 2023. "All we fear now is that the state will continue not to take serious action to preserve the rights of Christians, provide them with justice, and return their usurped property ... but no one responds to our request," they said.

"There is division inside every community," Archbishop Mirkis observed. "The Kurds are divided, the Arabs likewise. Some Shiites are with Iran, others are not. There are even Christians now that say what will we lose if we go with Rayyan al-Kildani? The challenge of unity, being strong together, this is one of the signs of our time."

Archbishop Mirkis said this is particularly poignant as the church dedicates Jan. 18-25 as the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity. "When I invite people to pray together for unity, they smile and say what for? Even Chaldeans are divided." He expressed a strong need for hope to be restored.

(Dale Gavlak writes for OSV News from Amman, Jordan.)

Now is the  
time to  
Talk!

*Kepner*  
FUNERAL HOMES  
CREMATORY

304.232.5110 | [KepnerFuneral.com](http://KepnerFuneral.com)  
James B. Kepner President | Melissa Hill COIC

**COLEMAN'S  
FISH MKT.**

Established  
1914  
Centre Wheeling  
Market House  
304-232-8510  
110 Years



# WV Will Be Represented!

## *Thanks, Catholic Sharing Appeal!*

**By Joyce Bibey**

Let's Gooooooooooo!  
Did you see the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's National Eucharistic Congress flyer or article in your parish bulletin last week? Did you catch it in the FaithInWV e-bulletin (FaithInWV.org), The Catholic Spirit, or the diocesan social media?

Thanks to Bishop Mark Brennan and the Catholic Sharing Appeal each parish and mission in the diocese has an opportunity to be represented at the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis July 17-21. Last Fall the Office of Worship and Sacraments worked with our priests and Eucharistic Revival Parish Point Persons to alert them that 250 five-day passes (valued at \$360 each) were purchased for the national congress. Each parish/mission was allotted one to four tickets for a representative(s) of the parish/mission to attend. Only twenty parishes claimed their tickets by the extended deadline, therefore the unclaimed passes are now available to any faithful (registered parishioner) in the diocese - yes, as a gift to you, so YOU CAN BE A PART OF THE WV DELEGATION! The complimentary pass ticket is part of the travel package for this life-changing Catholic pilgrimage. For more details go to: <https://dwc.org/year-of-the-eucharist/>

This gift available to the faithful in each of our parishes and missions was thanks to Bishop Mark and \$50,000 from the Catholic Sharing Appeal (CSA).

The CSA is one of many ways that we are united in God's love as Catholics and as members of our Dioc-

san Family. It is the CSA that raises funds for our parishes and missions, but also enables us to bring Christ to others in West Virginia through essential support for ministries and programs, including funding for Camp Carlo, social ministries, tuition assistance, parish food pantry programs, emergency services, and outreach efforts.

"Through the generosity of faithful donors within the diocese we are not only able to carry out the work of Christ and the Church, but also feel the love and joy that comes from being blessed to be a blessing," said Krissie Benson, Director of Stewardship and Development. "As St. Teresa of Calcutta taught us, God knows 'the love we put in the giving.'

"Knowing each parish and mission would be receiving the opportunity to claim one to four five-day passes to the National Eucharistic Congress, was knowing we were giving back to the heart of the Church - our faithful that work hard to live out Christ's call to love and serve like He taught us," she said.

Bishop Mark is eager to join the faithful of WV in Indianapolis.

"This is an opportunity the whole parish will benefit from so, I encourage our priests and parishes to work together to find ways to finance the travel package for participants," he said.

Watch for information in your parish on how to support national congress attendee(s) from your parish - fish fries, spaghetti dinners, special collections, and sponsorships from Parish Council, Knights of Columbus, Ladies Guild, Rosary groups, etc.

*Join Bishop Mark  
this summer!*

**National Eucharistic Congress July 17-21, 2024**

**WILL YOU BE ONE OF 250  
in the WV delegation  
to receive a complimentary  
5-day event pass?  
Sign up now  
for our travel package  
today!**

[dwc.org/year-of-the-eucharist](https://dwc.org/year-of-the-eucharist)

**REGISTER NOW** >

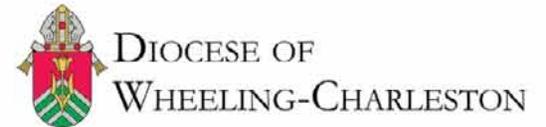


# TOGETHER IN HOLINESS™ CONFERENCE SERIES

## A CATHOLIC MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT CONFERENCE

**FEBRUARY 10, 2024 | 10:45 AM - 6:00 PM**  
**ST. JAMES THE GREATER | CHARLES TOWN, WV**

**PRESENTED BY**



### SPEAKERS



**JOSHUA P. BITTING, Ph.D.**  
Program Director, St. John Paul II Foundation



**RENZO AND MONICA ORTEGA**  
Co-founders of Two Become Family



**VERY REV. TIMOTHY J. GRASSI**  
Pastor, St. James the Greater Catholic Church



**JOHN AND ANNIE DEJAK**  
Parishioners of St. John the Baptist, Front Royal

**Click here to register**

#### **JOSHUA P. BITTING, PHD PROGRAM DIRECTOR, ST. JOHN PAUL II FOUNDATION**

Joshua P. Bitting, Ph.D., serves as Program Director at the St. John Paul II Foundation where he oversees the Together in Holiness Formation series, a year-round marriage enrichment for small communities of spouses. Born and raised in Wichita, Kansas, Joshua came into full communion with the Catholic Church on June 22nd, 2003, the Feast of Corpus Christi while completing his B.A. in philosophy at Southwestern College (Winfield, Kansas). Joshua attended Franciscan University of Steubenville where he earned his M.A. in theology. Afterwards, he had the opportunity to study at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross (Santa Croce) in Rome, Italy. Since then, he has served the Church in various capacities at both the parish and diocesan levels. He recently completed his Ph.D. in theology and catechetics from the University of Notre Dame, Australia. Joshua and his beautiful wife, Amanda, have seven children, and enjoy sharing the Gospel of the family in their primary vocation as spouses and parents.

# Welty Corporation Honors Late Medical Director Dr. John J. Battaglino, Jr.

**WHEELING** — Officials of the Welty Home and Good Shepherd Nursing Home this week dedicated the beautiful Welty Home courtyard on Washington Avenue in memory of Dr. John J. Battaglino, Jr., who served as medical director of the facilities from 1970 until his death in 2020.

Donald R. Kirsch, Welty Corporation CEO,

said a bronze plaque was installed in the courtyard in recognition of Battaglino's service. "In his capacity as medical director, he developed the standard of care utilized today at the Welty Home and Good Shepherd," Kirsch said. "Dr. Battaglino's compassion for the aged, coupled with his medical knowledge, helped the Welty Home for the Aged become one of the most

compassionate and medically professional elder care providers in West Virginia."

Longtime Welty Board member Lawrence Bandi praised Battaglino as a visionary in the care of senior citizens. "He was dedicated to the organization's mission of providing outstanding care for the elderly, and his commitment to each resident was inspiring," he said.



Courtesy Photo

From left are Donald R. Kirsch, Welty Corporation CEO; Morgan Murphy, Good Sheperd assistant administrator and Regulatory and Compliance director; Michelle Ruckman, new Welty Home Manager; Tess Gaudino, recently retired Welty Home Manager; Father Paul Cabrita, SM; and Welty Corporation Board Members Elizabeth Gates and Lawrence Bandi.

**304-232-0330**

**ALTMAYER**  
FUNERAL HOMES & CREMATORY

"THE PRE-ARRANGEMENT FUNERAL HOME"

Wheeling Chapel  
1400 Eoff Street  
Wheeling, WV  
304-232-0330

South Wheeling Chapel  
3828 Jacob Street  
Wheeling, WV  
304-232-5444

Elm Grove Chapel  
154 Kruger Street  
Elm Grove, WV  
304-242-0330

Benwood-McMechen  
214 Marshall Street  
McMechen, WV  
304-232-1710

Moundsville  
118 Grant Avenue  
Moundsville, WV  
304-845-4560

Beck-Altmeier  
204 West Main Street  
St. Clairsville, OH  
740-695-0475

James E. Altmeier, Jr.  
President

James E. Altmeier, Sr.  
Chairman

Eugene T. Fahley  
Vice President

[www.altmeier.com](http://www.altmeier.com)

**Panhandle** 800.504.7054  
CLEANING & RESTORATION  
Wheeling • Morgantown • Charleston  
Pittsburgh • Sarasota  
PanhandleCR.com

FIRE SMOKE WIND MOLD SEWAGE WATER

**W** "CALL THE RESTORATION COMPANY THE MOUNTAINEERS CALL" **W**

# Dunbar Parish Holds Fundraiser to Benefit Cross Roads Pregnancy Care Center

“Do not just say, I am pro-life, do something! Actions speak louder than words!”

—Nancy Kogoy, parishioner at Christ the King Parish in Dunbar

**DUNBAR** — Parishioners at Christ the King Parish in Dunbar sponsored a Silent Auction Fundraiser to support the work of Cross Roads Pregnancy Care Center, a pro-life organization located in Charleston, said parishioner Celeste Peggs who helped organize the event.

The fundraiser was held on Nov. 4 in the parish hall. Cross Roads, a non-profit medical clinic, ministers to those faced with unplanned pregnancies, assisting them with testing, ultrasound, childbirth, parenting classes and material needs.

A committee was formed at Christ the King Church, with the

ultimate goal, to plan a successful event. Many new items and 20 theme baskets were donated for the auction. The fundraiser was advertised in church bulletins, mailings, social media and by reaching out to families, friends and neighbors.

In addition to fundraising for Cross Roads, Christ the King Church organizers wanted the day to also provide a time for fellowship and fun. It was an exciting and rewarding day.

Lori Greathouse represented Cross Roads and provided an informational video and answered questions regarding the organization's purpose and services. A fa-

vorite part of the day was enjoying a delicious lunch, prepared and served by volunteers from the parish. Christ the King pastor, Father Chapin Engler, led the attendees in prayer and singing.

Christ the King Parish is grateful to all who helped make this fundraiser a success.

“We appreciate the shoppers,

the donors and all our dedicated volunteers,” said parishioner Nancy Kogoy. “We encourage other parishes to sponsor and host fundraising events for Cross Roads and other similar organizations that support life and provide services for individuals in need of help. Do not just say, I am pro-life, do something! Actions speak louder than words!”

**We Are Now A Full Service Hardware Store!**

**Do it Best** We Also Specialize in Plumbing, Heating & Cooling

**Lou W. Nau, Inc.**

69 Edgington Lane, Wheeling Phone (304) 242-6311

[louwnau.doitbest.com](http://louwnau.doitbest.com)

*Daily Living*  
with Fr. Chapin

**Sunday Mornings**

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

Plus watch online at - [www.mydailyliving.com](http://www.mydailyliving.com) and YouTube

**CORPUS CHRISTI SCHOOL**

Excellent Academics from Pre-School through Eighth Grade



**Safe learning environment**

**Middle School Electives**



**Tuition Assistance**



*Believe & Succeed*

**OPEN HOUSE**  
Sunday  
January 28th  
11:30am-12:30pm

1512 Warwood Ave  
Wheeling, WV 26003

**Open Registration for NEW students begins on Monday, January 29.**

# Shepherdstown's St. Agnes Parish Thanks all for Joining Effort to Help the Homeless

**SHEPHERDSTOWN** — St. Agnes Parish in Shepherdstown thanked its parishioners and parishioners of Shepherdstown Presbyterian Church for reaching out to help the homeless in the community. St. Agnes Parish thanked all for donating all the supplies that go into making sleeping bags and those parishioners that have donated old, used sleeping bags for this outreach.

"This year we have made 34 sleeping bags, along with 18 donations of used and new sleeping bags," St. Agnes Parish officials said. "This gave us a total of 52 sleeping bags distributed to two agencies who serve the homeless: JCCM in Jefferson County and Immanuel's House in Berkeley County."

St. Agnes officials said the parish is always in need of donated blankets, comforters (any size), and used sleeping bags (clean and in fair condition) for this outreach. Items can be dropped off at the parish center.

"Please join our team of sewers!" officials said. For more information, contact Barbara Mueller by email at [barbaramueller596@gmail.com](mailto:barbaramueller596@gmail.com).

**JOHNSON BOILER WORKS, INC**  
 53 Marshall St.  
 Benwood, WV 26031  
 (304) 232-3070  
 Steam Boiler Repairs

**Foodservice Equipment, Supplies, Disposables, Janitorial and more**



1 Fourteenth Street,  
 Wheeling, WV 26003  
 304-233-2270  
 Stop in or call us today!



**Duplaga's TOP NOTCH LANDSCAPING and SUPPLY LLC**  
 Mowing • Landscaping • Patios • Retaining Walls

**Supply Yard**  
 Chris Duplaga, Owner  
 140 Peninsula Street, Wheeling  
 www.topnotchlandscape.com



office@topnotchlandscape.com (304) 233-0332

**Have You Heard?**  
 GOD IS DOING SOMETHING NEW—AND HE IS CALLING YOU TO BE A PART OF IT!

We are in the midst of a National Eucharistic Revival. Why? Because the Church needs healing, and the world needs Jesus. The Holy Spirit is inviting us to return to the source and summit of our faith—the Eucharist.

Scan the code to learn more about the exciting journey ahead, and sign up for weekly updates on what's happening in this unprecedented national movement!

[eucharisticrevival.org](http://eucharisticrevival.org)




# Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament is Topic of Series at St. Leo's, Inwood

**INWOOD**—Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament, the second in the series of Welcome to the Table gatherings, will be held on Jan. 21. This gathering will be held in the church between Masses. There will be Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament along with a discussion about adoration and some suggestions on how to make a meaningful holy hour of adoration.

"We hope to see you there," parish officials said. "Christ's great love for us was shown when he was crucified on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and give us eternal life. He loves us without limit, and offers Himself to us in the holy sacrament of

the Eucharist. Can we not give Jesus an hour of love and adoration in return?"

Parish officials said a good resource on how to pray a holy hour can be found at <https://media.benedictine.edu/how-to-pray-a-holy-hour>. "There is no wrong way to pray," they said, "but this guide can be a help if you find yourself unsure about what to do during your hour in front of the Blessed Sacrament."

Parishioners are encouraged to share their experiences of the Eucharist or Eucharistic Adoration by e-mail to [luckymama58@gmail.com](mailto:luckymama58@gmail.com) or turn them into the office.

**20/20 VISION SERIES**

**A YEAR WITH THE SAINTS**

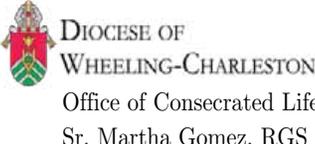
Join us as we journey throughout the year focusing on various Saints and their legacies, presented by those among us who live out these legacies in their lives and in their communities.

Note: Each session will begin at 7 pm and will be presented via Zoom.

January 29	St. Elizabeth Ann Seton – Sr. Mary Clark, SC
February 26	St. Brigid of Kildare – Sr. Karen Kirby, CSJ
March 18	St. Joseph – Sr. Kathleen Durkin, CSJ
April 29	St. Mary Euphrasia – Sr. Martha Gomez, R.G.S.
May 20	Blessed Virgin Mary – TBD
June 24	Marcellin Champagnat – Brother John Byrd, FMS
July 29	St. Ignatius of Loyola – Lou Volpe
August 26	St. Dominic – Sr. Ellen Dunn, OP
September 30	St. Lorenzo Ruiz – Fr. Carlos Melocoton
October 28	Jesuit Martyrs – TBD
November 18	Servant of God Dorothy Day – Kate Marshall
December 16	St. Stephan – Deacon John Yaquinta

(Series originated by Ms. Shirley Carter, B.A., M.A.A.T.)

**Cost for complete series: \$120.00 Or \$15.00 per session.**  
**RSVP – Anna Marie Troiani: [atroiani@csjoseph.org](mailto:atroiani@csjoseph.org)**

# St. Joseph the Worker Church, Weirton

## St. Joe's Parish Lenten Mission

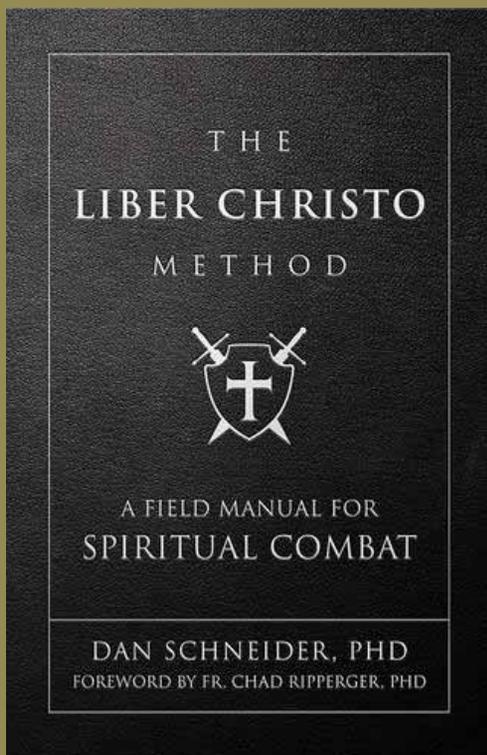
With Dr. Dan Schneider

(personal assistant to world renowned exorcist Fr. Chad Ripperger & author of the Liber Christo Method!)

### Feb. 19-21, 2024

7:00 – 8:00 PM: TALK

8:00 PM – TBD: CONFESSION, MEET & GREET, BOOK SALES, ETC.

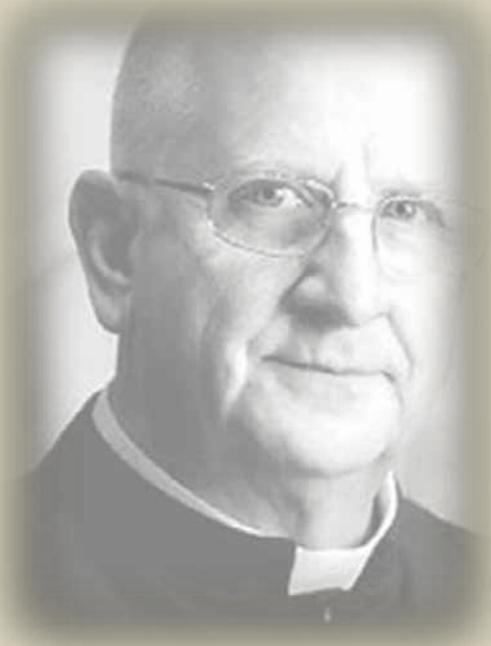


### SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Learn from one of the very best experts serving on the front lines of today's spiritual combat!

All Are Welcome

Refreshments available



# Martinsburg's St. Joseph School Students Show True Meaning of Christmas in Posters

**MARTINSBURG** — St. Joseph School students ages 5 to 14 used imagery and words to portray the true meaning of Christmas through the posters they created for a contest sponsored by the Knights of Columbus.

The 11-by-17-inch artwork was judged on how clearly the "Keep Christ in Christmas" message was presented and how effectively the creations captured people's attention. Many featured images of the holy family, the wise men, angels and shepherds.

The winners among the 5- to 7-year-olds were first-grader Emmy Impellizzeri, first place; first-grader Kar-syn Butler, second place; and first-grader Cynthia Nguyen, third place.

The winners for ages 8 to 10 were fourth-grader Alexandra Kithcart, first place; third-grader Lily Soltis, second place; and third-grader Kayden Sadat, third place.

The poster created by sixth-grader Karina Vasyliuk was deemed the best among those submitted by students ages 11 to 14. Second place went to sixth-grader Chana Dinh and third place was awarded to sixth-grader Gwendolyn Mack.

SJS art teacher Jane King judged all of the entries.

The first-place winners



**Jonathan A. Noyalas, right, a member of Monsignor Lackey Council 1169 of the Knights of Columbus in Martinsburg, awards St. Joseph School students, from left, Kayden Sadat, Lily Soltis, and Alexandra Kithcart, for placing third, second, and first place, respectively, in the "Keep Christ in Christmas" poster contest.**

Courtesy Photo

received framed certificates and gift cards on Jan. 4 from Jonathan A. Noyalas, a member of Monsignor Lackey Council 1169 of the Knights of Columbus in Martinsburg. Those who placed second and third received ribbons.

The gift cards were donated in memory of Noyalas' grandfather, Robert Klementovicz, who died in 2008. Klementovicz, born in 1918, was part of the "Greatest Generation" and served in the Pacific during World War II. The son of

Polish immigrants, he was devoted to his family and loved children. He was a fan of big-band music and the arts, which Noyalas

celebrates with the poster contest prizes.

The posters by the first-place winners will be judged at the district level.

## Morgantown-area Knights to Conduct Food Packing Event

**MORGANTOWN**—The Morgantown-area Knights of Columbus are partnering with other local charities and corporations to conduct a food packing of at least 50,000 meals for the hungry. Ten percent of these meals will stay in West Virginia, with the remainder heading for locations of extreme poverty (in the past they were sent to places such as Guatemala and Honduras).

"This is the latest round of a program that was started years ago and at this event, we will pack our 1 millionth meal!" knights said.

To be successful, they said, help is needed, and they are asking for donations of time and treasure. On Saturday, Jan. 27, volunteers will work together to package meals of rice, beans, and vegetables for those in need. All ages welcome. The event starts at 9 a.m. at Stepping Stones, 400 Mylan Park Ln in Morgantown. Those who can help are asked to contact: Scott Nale at (304) 216-1866 or by e-mail to snalewv@gmail.com.

"Funding is also needed," knights said, "so please reach out if you wish to provide a monetary donation."

## Weirton Knights Hosting Mardi Gras Dinner

**WEIRTON**—Knights of Columbus Weirton Council #3734 will host a Mardi Gras Dinner on Friday, Feb. 9, at 7 p.m. at the Blue Steel Café Restaurant of Steel Valley Lanes. Authentic New Orleans food will be served, and music provided by the Matt Hill & Friends Jazz Band. Reservations are \$30 per person to cover the cost of dinner and reservations are due by Jan. 22. Seating is limited, so please respond early to Larry DeRosa at (304) 670-4513, Nick Yoklic at (304) 914-6582, or Jim Gerlando at (304) 604-2785.



**DISCOVER YOUR MISSION.  
BECOME A KNIGHT.**

Empowering men to live their faith at home, in their parish, at work and in their communities.



**Knights of Columbus**  
West Virginia State Council

For more information visit:  
[kofc.org/join](http://kofc.org/join)





## Central Catholic Students Lend a Helping Hand with Chrism Mass Prep at the Chancery

Central Catholic High School students lend a helping hand to the diocesan Office of Worship and Sacraments in preparation for the Chrism Masses at the chancery in Wheeling Jan. 12. Sophomores Michael Hutnick, Luke Magruder, and Grady Mullin (from left) wash out the bottles which contained old Holy Oils from the Chrism Mass to be reused this year. Chrism Masses will be celebrated by Bishop Mark Brennan March 25 at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston and March 26 at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling. Both Masses begin at 4 p.m.

## Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston CONFIRMATION SCHEDULE – Spring 2024 Bishop Mark E. Brennan, Celebrant

**Sunday, March 17:** St. Margaret Mary, Parkersburg; 2:00 p.m.

**Saturday, April 6:** St. Francis de Sales, Morgantown; 5:15 p.m.

**Wednesday, April 10:** Our Lady of Peace, Wheeling; 6:00 p.m.

**Thursday, April 11:** St. Joseph the Worker, Weirton; 7:00 p.m.

**Sunday, April 14:** SS Peter and Paul, Oak Hill; 10:30 a.m.

**Monday, April 15:** Corpus Christi, Wheeling; 6:00 p.m.

**Saturday, April 20:** St. Sebastian, Kingwood; 6:00 p.m.

**Sunday, April 21:** Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Stonewood; 10:00 a.m.

**Sunday, April 28:** St. Jude, Glen Dale; 9:00 a.m.

**Sunday, May 5:** St. Brendan, Elkins; 11:00 a.m.

**Saturday, May 11:** St. John the Evangelist, Wellsburg; 11:00 a.m.

**Saturday, May 11:** St. Vincent de Paul, Wheeling; 5:00 p.m.

**Sunday, May 12:** Immaculate Conception, New Cumberland; 8:30 a.m.

**Monday, May 13:** St. Michael, Wheeling; 5:30 p.m.

**Sunday, May 19:** St. Agnes, Charleston; 10:30 a.m.

**Wednesday, May 22:** Immaculate Conception, Clarksburg; 6:00 p.m.

**Saturday, May 25:** St. James, Charles Town; 10:00 a.m.

**Saturday, May 25:** St. Vincent de Paul, Berkeley Springs; 5:00 p.m.

**Sunday, May 26:** St. Joseph, Martinsburg; 4:00 p.m.

**Saturday, June 1:** St. Francis Xavier, Moundsville; 4:00 p.m.

**Saturday, June 8:** Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Charleston; 5:30 p.m.

**Sunday, June 9:** Sacred Heart, Princeton; 11:00 a.m.

**Saturday, June 15:** St. Francis de Sales, Beckley; 5:00 p.m.

**Sunday, June 16:** St. John the Evangelist, Summersville; 9:00 a.m.

**Mansuetto**  
Roofing & Sheet Metal

**N.F. Mansuetto & Sons, Inc.**  
Roofing and Sheet Metal Contractors

Serving West Virginia, the Ohio Valley and the Catholic Community  
Since 1945  
Three Generations of Family Management  
116 Wood Street  
Martins Ferry OH 43935  
740-633-7320

# Nuevo informe de los obispos de EE.UU. identifica 5 áreas principales de preocupación por la libertad

Por Kate Scanlon, OSV News

**WASHINGTON (OSV News)** — Un nuevo informe anual de la conferencia de obispos de Estados Unidos identifica cinco amenazas principales a la libertad religiosa en Estados Unidos, incluida una regulación federal que, según dice, podría imponer mandatos a los médicos para realizar procedimientos objetables y amenazas a servicios de la Iglesia a las personas que son inmigrantes.

El primer informe anual de la Conferencia de los Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos (USCCB), "El estado de la libertad religiosa en los Estados Unidos" ("State of Religious Liberty in the United States"), publicado el 16 de enero, dijo que las amenazas potenciales a la libertad religiosa en los Estados Unidos vienen, en gran medida, en forma de regulaciones federales o tendencias culturales.

Según el informe de 48 páginas, entre las cinco principales áreas de preocupación se encuentran los ataques contra lugares de culto, especialmente después del conflicto entre Israel y Hamás; la regulación de la Sección 1557 del Departamento de Salud y Servicios Humanos de EE.UU. (HHS por sus siglas en inglés), que según el informe "es probable que imponga a los médicos la obligación de realizar procedimientos de transición de género y, posiblemente, abortos"; las amenazas a organizaciones benéficas religiosas que sirven a inmigrantes y refugiados, "que probablemente aumentarán a medida que el tema de la inmigración adquiere importancia en las elecciones"; la supresión del discurso religioso "sobre el matrimonio y la

diferencia sexual"; y la normativa de la Comisión para la Igualdad de Oportunidades en el Empleo sobre la Ley de Equidad para Trabajadoras Embarazadas de la Comisión de Igualdad de Oportunidades en el Empleo, que según el informe "pretende exigir a los empleadores religiosos a ser cómplices del aborto de una manera sin precedentes". La introducción del informe decía que, debido a un gobierno federal dividido, "la mayoría de los proyectos de ley presentados que amenazaban la libertad religiosa languidecieron" dando lugar a amenazas en forma de "reglamentos propuestos por agencias federales" o tendencias culturales como el creciente partidismo en torno a la migración.

El informe señaló que la Corte Suprema de Estados Unidos solo escuchó dos casos que implicaban la libertad religiosa en 2023, "pero en cada caso la Corte Suprema falló a favor de protecciones más amplias: para el ejercicio religioso en el lugar de trabajo, en *Groff vs. DeJoy*, y para la libertad de expresión basada en creencias religiosas, en *303 Creative LLC vs. Elenis*".

Otras áreas de preocupación identificadas en el informe incluyen algunos proyectos de ley estatales que obligan al clero a denunciar abusos sin una excepción para el secreto de confesión. Como señala el informe, "Para los sacerdotes católicos, romper la confidencialidad de las declaraciones hechas durante el Sacramento de la Reconciliación, es decir, romper el sello del confesionario, es un delito grave que resulta en la excomunión automática de la Iglesia".

El informe también identificó el partidismo dentro de la Iglesia

como un área de preocupación.

"Esta dinámica no es nueva, no es exclusiva de los católicos y tampoco desaparecerá pronto", afirmó. "Pero será especialmente destacado en 2024, y la posición a largo plazo de la Iglesia en la plaza pública requiere un giro consciente y sostenido, lejos del partidismo y hacia el Evangelio".

El obispo Kevin C. Rhoades de Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, presidente del Comité para la Libertad Religiosa de la USCCB, quien supervisó el informe, dijo a OSV News que el comité inició este informe anual para "educar a los fieles" y "motivar a la gente involucrarse en la promoción y protección de la libertad religiosa".

El obispo Rhoades señaló que las amenazas a los lugares de culto siguen siendo una preocupación cultural importante, ya que las iglesias y organizaciones católicas vieron vandalismo y otros delitos a raíz de la decisión de la Corte Suprema de Estados Unidos *Dobbs vs. Jackson Women's Health Organization* en 2022 que anuló fallos anteriores del alto tribunal que había hecho del acceso al aborto un derecho constitucional. Otras tradiciones religiosas han visto más violencia en sus lugares de culto, como el tiroteo masivo de 2018 en una sinagoga de Pittsburgh.

Dan Balsarak, director de libertad religiosa y asesor general adjunto de la USCCB, dijo a OSV News que el trabajo del comité se ha centrado históricamente en "problemas legales".

"La situación actual es tal que tenemos que preocuparnos por la salud física y la seguridad de las personas en sus lugares de culto",

dijo Balsarak. "Lo cual es bastante inquietante".

Tanto el obispo Rhoades como Balsarak dijeron que una creciente división cultural sobre el tema de la migración también amenaza con poner en peligro el servicio de la Iglesia a las personas que son inmigrantes y refugiados.

"La misión de la Iglesia es servir, servir a los pobres y necesitados. Eso es parte de nuestra misión con las obras de misericordia corporales, es decir, dar la bienvenida al forastero", dijo el obispo Rhoades, es un acto de misericordia exigido por Jesucristo en Mateo 25 cuando imparte justicia en el juicio final.

"Y estamos hablando aquí de necesidades básicas: a veces comida, a veces alojamiento, ropa y otros tipos de asistencia. La Iglesia siempre ha hecho esto y es simplemente parte de nuestras responsabilidades cristianas", expresó.

El obispo Rhoades dijo que algunos han sugerido que "de alguna manera la Iglesia está contribuyendo a la inmigración ilegal" a través de dicho servicio.

"Una reforma migratoria integral es algo que la Iglesia católica en Estados Unidos ha estado pidiendo durante décadas", añadió. Dijo que "nuestra provisión de ayuda humanitaria a los seres humanos que la necesitan" es necesaria independientemente de si el Congreso actuaría y cómo lo haría.

Balsarak dijo: "Parece que el papel que desempeñan las organizaciones benéficas religiosas en el sistema de inmigración como proveedores de servicios (ayudar a los inmigrantes a conseguir un

**Continúa en la consulta 'Informe' en la página 15**

**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](http://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](http://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 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; Muy Reverendo Dennis Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., ext. 270; 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](http://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](http://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.

## 'Informe' ...

continúa de la página 14

lugar para dormir, comer, comprender sus obligaciones legales, el papel que desempeñan las organizaciones benéficas religiosas en ese sentido) ha sido esencialmente un chivo expiatorio".

La verdadera carga de responsabilidad recae en el Congreso, que no ha abordado "el problema de inmigración que ha creado la crisis migratoria".

Las organizaciones benéficas que garantizan que "los recién llegados que vienen a Estados Unidos merezcan que se satisfagan sus necesidades humanas básicas" a veces son acusadas de "cosas conspirativas y extravagantes, como usted sabe, facilitar 'el gran reemplazo'".

La teoría del "gran reemplazo" (o "la gran sustitución") es una teoría conspirativa propuesta por su-

premacistas blancos en la que afirman que personas de otras razas conspiran para eliminar a la raza blanca. La teoría racista fue amplificada recientemente por Vivek Ramaswamy en un debate de las primarias presidenciales del Partido Republicano antes de abandonar la carrera después de un distante cuarto puesto en las asambleas electorales de Iowa del 15 de enero.

Balserak dijo que las afirmaciones erróneas sobre el servicio de la Iglesia a los inmigrantes podrían poner en peligro su capacidad para asociarse con el gobierno federal en servicios a los inmigrantes y en otros proyectos.

"Al final del día... lo que se propone es básicamente que, si ejerces tus creencias religiosas en esta forma o área en particular, te vamos a penalizar", dijo, calificando esas afirmaciones como "una clásica amenaza a la libertad reli-

giosa".

Tanto el obispo Rhoades como Balserak dijeron que el informe anual de la USCCB se refiere al panorama de la libertad religiosa nacional, pero que el tema de la libertad religiosa en los Estados Unidos tiene ecos en todo el mundo.

El obispo Rhoades dijo que una erosión de esa libertad no sólo sería "dañina para nuestro país y los principios sobre los que se fundó nuestra nación, sino que también creo que afectaría a otros en todo el mundo".

"Si has estado prestando atención al frente internacional de la libertad religiosa recientemente, somos increíblemente bendecidos", dijo Balserak. "A pesar de todos los problemas de los que hablamos en este informe, tenemos la increíble suerte de vivir en Estados Unidos".

Balserak dijo que la mejor manera para que los católicos respon-

dan a las amenazas a la libertad religiosa es "salir y hacer las cosas por las que luchamos por su derecho a hacer".

"Entonces, ¿qué está amenazado en este momento?" él dijo. "¿Nuestro servicio a los inmigrantes? Vaya como voluntario en un refugio para inmigrantes. Vemos incendios provocados en centros de recursos para embarazadas; existe una amenaza para el funcionamiento continuo de los ministerios destinados a ayudar a las madres embarazadas necesitadas; vaya como voluntario en un centro de recursos para embarazadas".

Ese "enfoque desde la base", dijo Balserak, "es la solución más viable a largo plazo para las amenazas actuales a las que nos enfrentamos contra la libertad religiosa".

(Kate Scanlon es reportera nacional de OSV News que cubre Washington.)



## ¿Has oído?

¡DIOS ESTÁ HACIENDO  
ALGO NUEVO—Y ÉL TE ESTÁ  
LLAMANDO A SER PARTE!

Estamos en medio de un Avivamiento Eucarístico Nacional. ¿Por qué? Porque la Iglesia necesita sanación, y el mundo necesita a Jesús. El Espíritu Santo nos invita a volver a la fuente y cumbre de nuestra fe: la Eucaristía.

Escanee el código a continuación para obtener más información sobre la emocionante jornada que viene y regístrese para recibir actualizaciones sobre lo que está sucediendo en este movimiento nacional sin precedentes!

[avivamientoeucarístico.org](http://avivamientoeucarístico.org)



**Ask your doctor to refer you to Good Shepherd for:**



- Physical therapy
- Speech therapy
- Occupational therapy

**Welty**  
Home for the Aged

**GOOD SHEPHERD**  
NURSING HOME

304.242.1093  
[www.weltyhome.org](http://www.weltyhome.org)

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





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

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




To Register/More Info:

✉ Sister Martha Gomez, RGS,  
[mgomez@dwc.org](mailto:mgomez@dwc.org)

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

**ESTABLISHED LEADER IN STRUCTURAL HEART CARE**

**THE MOST ADVANCED TREATMENTS IN WEST VIRGINIA**

Learn more at: [MyWVUHeart.com](http://MyWVUHeart.com)  
**Appointments: 304-243-8362**

**The nation-leading cardiologists and surgeons of the WVU Heart and Vascular Institute Structural Heart Program at Wheeling specialize in problems with the heart's valves, walls, or chambers.**

We have a multidisciplinary team of experts, including interventional cardiologists, **cardiac and vascular surgeons, dedicated nursing staff, and other specialists**, to ensure our patients receive the most comprehensive care available for common and complex structural heart conditions.

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

Our expert team uses the latest catheter-based techniques to treat all forms of structural heart disease, including aortic, mitral, and tricuspid valve diseases and conditions and congenital defects.

**OUR TEAM**



**David Michael Campsey MD**  
Interventional Cardiology



**Deepak Hooda MD**  
Interventional Cardiology



**Sushant Sharma MD**  
Cardiology

**WVU Heart & Vascular Institute**