



# Supreme Court overturns Roe v. Wade

## Leaders Say It's Time to Build Pro-Life Culture



CNS photo/Evelyn Hockstein, Reuters

Pro-life demonstrators in Washington celebrate outside the Supreme Court June 24, 2022, as the court overruled the landmark Roe v. Wade abortion decision in its ruling in the Dobbs case on a Mississippi law banning most abortions after 15 weeks.

By **Catholic News Service**

**WASHINGTON (CNS)** — Two leaders of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops hailed the Supreme Court’s June 24 decision to overturn the court’s 1973 ruling that legalized abortion nationwide and said it is time for “healing wounds and repairing social divisions” with those who take opposing views on

abortion.

The ruling marks a historic day for the United States after almost five decades during which “America has enforced an unjust law that has permitted some to decide whether others can live or die,” said Archbishop José H. Gomez of Los Angeles and Archbishop William E. Lori of Baltimore.

The prelates issued a joint statement as USCCB president and chairman of the bishops’ Committee on Pro-Life Activities, respectively.

The 5-4 ruling to overturn Roe came in the court’s decision in Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, which was a challenge to a Mississippi

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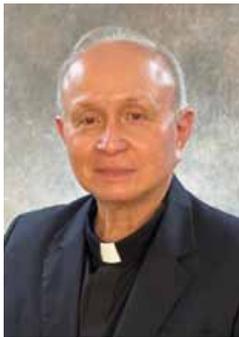
## Obituaries

### Father Luis Anthony Lacson

Father Luis Anthony Lacson died June 24, 2022, in Oak Hill, W.Va., at the age of 74. He was born on June 13, 1948, in Iloilo City, Philippines, to Eduardo and Fanny (Ledema). He was preceded in death by his parents.

He attended Ateneo de Manila University in Quezon City, Philippines, from 1967-1971, and Cardinal Stritch University in Milwaukee, Wis., from 1984 to 1986. He also attended Sacred Heart School of Theology in Hales Corners, Wis., from 1983 to 1986, and the Pontifical Urban University in Rome from 1987 to 1993. He received a Master of Divinity and doctorate in canon law.

Father Lacson was ordained to the priesthood Dec. 21, 1986,



in Bacolod, Philippines, for the Apostolic Vicariate of Southern Arabia. He was appointed to St. Joseph Cathedral in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates, from 1997 to 1999; St. Mary's in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, from 1999 to 2002; and Sacred Heart in Bahrain.

Father Lacson came to the United States in 2002 to serve at Walter Reed Medical Center in Washington, D.C. He went on to serve at St. Bernard Parish in Levittown N.Y.; Our Lady of the Valley in Napa, Calif.; and Siena Hospital in Las Vegas.

In the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, Father Lacson was chaplain of Wheeling Hospital from 2013 to 2015. He was then appointed administrator of St.

Peter Parish in Welch, Sacred Heart Parish in Powhatan, Our Lady of Victory Parish in Gary, and Christ the King Parish in War (all in West Virginia) in 2015. He was appointed pastor of these parishes on July 13, 2016, and served there until June 19, 2019, when he was appointed assistant priest in residence in Harrisville, W.Va., serving the Parish of St. John's in St. Marys, W.Va., and Christ Our Hope Mission in Harrisville. In 2020 he was appointed administrator of Ss. Peter and Paul Parish in Oak Hill.

Father Lacson became a U.S. citizen in 2005. He was a member of the National Association of Catholic Chaplains and served 10 years as a hospital chaplain.

The funeral was at Ss. Peter and Paul Church in Oak Hill June 28 with Bishop Mark E. Brennan presiding.

### Sister Angelina Cavallaro, CSJ

Sister Angelina Cavallaro, CSJ (99) died peacefully on June 27, 2022 at Mount St. Joseph in Wheeling, W.Va. She was lovingly attended by her sisters in community and staff. Sister Angelina was preceded in death by her parents, James and Mary Rose



Cavallaro, her brothers Charles, Nicholas, Ernest, Ray and her sister, Violet. She is survived by her sister, Louise (Thomas) Martin and numerous nieces, nephews and their children.

Sister Angelina Cavallaro was born May 31, 1923 and entered the Congregation of St. Joseph from her home parish of St. Francis Borgia in Anmoore, West Virginia, on August 15, 1941. Following her novitiate experience, she professed her vows on St. Joseph's day in 1944. Sister received a B.S.Ed. degree in elementary education from Duquesne University and an M.S.Ed. degree in special education from St. Louis University.

As a teacher, Sister Angelina served first in diocesan elementary schools: St. Agnes in Charleston; St. Peter School and St. Joseph Villa Kindergarten in Fairmont; St. Francis Xavier in Moundsville; and Blessed Martin in Wheeling. She also served as house parent and teacher at St. Vincent Home for Girls in Wheeling. From 1961 until 1969 she provided a Special Education Class for special needs students in Wheeling and neighboring cities.

From 1969-1979, she served as a faculty member in the Department of Education at West Liberty State College.

Following preparation and certification in clinical pastoral education, Sister Angelina embarked on a new career in pastoral

ministry in 1979. Until her retirement to Mount St. Joseph in 1997, she served the pastoral needs of patients and families at St. Francis Hospital in Charleston, United Hospital Center in Clarksburg, and St. Joseph Hospi-

tal in Parkersburg. She was also active in prayer ministry at Mount St. Joseph. Sister Angelina expressed deep gratitude to her family, her community and especially to God for all her life's blessings.

Due to continuing Covid restrictions at Mount St. Joseph, Sister Angelina's funeral services will be open to her family members and her religious community only.

The funeral liturgy will be live streamed on Friday, July 1 at 11 a.m. To offer online condolences and for a link to the live stream, visit Sister's obituary at [www.altmeyerfuneralhomes.com](http://www.altmeyerfuneralhomes.com).

**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](http://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](http://www.reportbishopabuse.org).

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

**To Report to Diocesan Authorities:** The diocese encourages reporting to the appropriate civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. The diocese also encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities. To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, contact one of the following designees at 1.888.434.6237 or 304.233.0880: Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; or Very Rev. Dennis Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., ext. 270. You may also call the Diocese's Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504. You may also call the Diocese's sexual abuse hotline at 833.230.5656. Complaint forms are available online at [www.dwc.org](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 Dr. Patricia Bailey at 304.242.6988. In addition to the methods listed above for reporting sexual abuse, the Diocese also has partnered with Navex Global to offer the EthicsPoint platform to report other, additional concerns, such as suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, religious, or lay employee of the Diocese or any Catholic parish or school in West Virginia. The EthicsPoint platform can be accessed via [www.dwc.org](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.

### Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

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



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# Historic St. Colman Church Lost to Fire, Arson Suspected in Investigation

By Colleen Rowan

**SHADY SPRING**—Historic St. Colman Church, which stood for 145 years on Irish Mountain near Shady Spring in Raleigh County, was lost to fire on the morning of June 26. Authorities are investigating the fire as arson.

The Beaver Volunteer Fire Department, which responded, posted on its Facebook page, "Upon arrival we found the structure was already burned to the ground and smoldering. At this time the fire is considered suspicious in nature and is being investigated as arson."

Also assisting were Ghent VFD, Coal City VFD, Ghent EMS, National Park Service, and the West Virginia State Police.

The church was placed on the National Register of Historic Places as it was built in 1877. The original families and their descendants are buried at the cemetery which sits at the edge of the forest behind the now charred remains of their beloved church. Masses were celebrated a few times a year at St. Colman's usually on Memorial Day Weekend.

Bishop Mark Brennan expressed his sorrow for the Catholic community of the area.

"We are united with them and we sympathize with the loss of this lovely chapel," the bishop said, hoping the people will not be discouraged. "The spirit of devotion where that church has been for 145 years can continue on that site where many of their ancestors worshipped and where many are buried."

St. Colman's was designated a chapel years ago and was part of a cluster of churches under St. Patrick Parish in Hinton. Father Romeo Bacalso, SVD, administrator of the cluster, said the loss of St. Colman's is tragic and overwhelming for the Catholic faithful of the community.

"Our parishioners and I are heartbroken," Father Bacalso said. "It's our treasure of faith. We gather as one family and community at St. Colman ... at least twice a year and clean/visit quarterly."

The church saw many visitors during summer, he shared.

A statement released by the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston June 27, said the diocese is saddened to hear of the devastating fire: "Thankfully, no one was inside the building when the fire occurred and the structure is a total loss. ....



Courtesy Photo by Beaver Volunteer Fire

Pictured is what remains of St. Colman Church.

The diocese is truly grateful for the response of so many fire departments in the area, but the little church burned quickly and nothing can be saved. The cemetery behind the church will continue to be maintained."

Anyone with any information

regarding the fire are asked to contact the West Virginia State Police, Trooper D. Daniels at (304) 256-6700, the WV State Fire Marshal's Arson Hotline at 1 (800) 233-3473 or Crime Stoppers of Raleigh County at (304) 255-STOP or [www.crimestopperswv.com](http://www.crimestopperswv.com).

## St. Colman, 'the Little Catholic Church in the Woods'

By Colleen Rowan

It was known as "the Little Catholic Church in the Woods," Art Sanda said of Raleigh County's beloved St. Colman Chapel on Irish Mountain. Sanda has been involved at the little church for more than 20 years. And in the aftermath of the June 26 fire that left it in ashes, St. Colman will be memorialized by the Catholic faithful.

Sanda is a member of St. Patrick Parish in Hinton which is part of a parish cluster that included St. Colman's. He said there are discussions as to a proper and fitting memorial.

"What was lost can't be restored, it can't be replaced," he said. "At the same time, the feeling is very strong that something has to be done to continue the spirit of St. Colman."

Over the years, thousands of people have visited St. Colman's, said Father Romeo Bacalso, SVD, pastor of St. Patrick's and St. Colman's. "We have dozens of



Courtesy Photo

St. Colman Church near Shady Spring before the June 26 fire.

completed guest books full of wonderful comments on the serenity and beauty of St. Colman, the peace and tranquility that it brought to them while taking a moment to reflect and to meditate," he said.

Visitors, Father Bacalso said, were Catholics and

non-Catholics alike; local people; and those from other cities, counties, states, and countries.

In recent years, sporadic vandalism has been a problem, Father Bacalso said. When that would happen, Sanda and fellow parishioners would make the neces-

sary repairs. Their commitment to St. Colman's is unwavering.

"For already I have spoke to many who expressed dismay and bewilderment at what has happened, but also with determination that something worthwhile absolutely must rise from the ashes of St. Colman," Sanda said. "Some monument that memorializes St. Colman, that keeps alive the pleasure and peace they have found visiting what some have called 'the Little Catholic Church in the Woods.'"

A fund has been established at St. Patrick Parish called "For the Restoration of the Spirit of St. Colman." Donations may be made payable to St. Colman/St. Patrick and mailed to St. Patrick Catholic Church, 2nd Ave., Hinton, WV 25951.

St. Patrick's provided the following history of St. Colman Church: After the Civil War in 1865, extension of the railroad through Hinton

brought a high volume of Irish immigrant laborers. They made their homes on Irish Mountain. There, the dedication of St. Colman Church and the adjacent cemetery was in 1878. The priest from St. Patrick's would ride the train from Hinton to Sandstone, from where he would be ferried across the New River to the foot of Irish Mountain, undertaking a four-mile ride via horse, mule, or buckboard to St. Colman.

Eventually, the descendants of these early settlers sought their fortunes elsewhere, though today a few families continue to occupy their ancestral homes. Regular Masses at St. Colman ceased and the church was designated a chapel.

For the last 20 years, members of St. Patrick's maintained the building and grounds and Mass was celebrated there a few times a year, one typically around Memorial Day Weekend.

# Statement of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

## Regarding SCOTUS Decision on Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston applauds the Supreme Court's decision today (June 24) in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization*. While this decision will offer greater protection for the unborn in some parts of the country, we call upon Catholics throughout the diocese to continue to foster a genuine respect for all human life throughout our country.

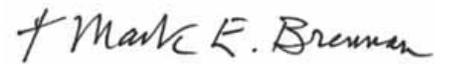
Now more than ever, we must show our fellow citizens that we are both pro-child and pro-woman. The diocese continues to offer positive help to pregnant women in our state. We have outreach centers for pregnant women, counseling services to help

women respect and cherish their unborn child, and outreach centers that provide parenting classes, baby clothes, diapers, and formula for mothers in need.

But our work is certainly not done. We must continue to strive to foster a culture of life in our society. We must strive ever more ardently to respect all life, from conception to natural death. This respect cannot be just for babies in the womb and their mothers. So too must we respect children in schools, those who attend churches, even those who just go to grocery stores to buy food—that they may do these things without threat of violence against them. We

must show our respect for all life by working to drive out racism and gun violence from our midst.

Every life is a gift from God. Every life is precious and deserves our respect and help. I call on all West Virginia residents to work together toward fostering a culture of life in the Mountain State.



+Mark E. Brennan  
Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston

### Court...

#### Cont'd from Page 1

law banning most abortions after 15 weeks.

However, Chief Justice John Roberts, while agreeing with the opinion on the Mississippi law, disagreed with the majority's decision that overturned the landmark 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision and the 1992 ruling in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*.

The latter case affirmed *Roe* and prohibited regulations that created an "undue burden" on women seeking an abortion.

Archbishops Gomez and Lori said the new ruling marks a "time to begin the work of building a post-Roe America."

"We thank God today that the court has now overturned this decision," they said. "We pray that our elected officials will now enact laws and policies that promote and protect the most vulnerable among us."

The archbishops recalled the lives of tens of millions of children who have lost their lives since 1973, saying the USCCB mourns their loss and that their souls have been entrusted to God.

"Our hearts are also with every woman and man who has suffered grievously from abortion," they said. "We pray for their healing, and we pledge our continued compassion and support. As a church, we need to serve those who face difficult pregnancies and surround them with love."

Archbishop Gomez and Archbishop Lori also credited the people who for five decades have worked peacefully together "to educate and persuade their neighbors about the injustice of abortion," to provide care and counseling to women, and to work for alternatives to abortion such as foster care and public policies that support families.

The Pontifical Academy for Life, under its president, Archbishop Vincenzo Paglia, joined the USCCB leaders in welcoming the Supreme Court's opinion, saying it points the

way for the world to follow.

"The court's opinion shows how the issue of abortion continues to arouse heated debate," an academy statement said. "The fact that a large country with a long democratic tradition has changed its position on this issue also challenges the whole world."

"The protection and defense of human life is not an issue that can remain confined to the exercise of individual rights but instead is a matter of broad social significance," it continued. "After 50 years, it is important to reopen a non-ideological debate on the place that the protection of life has in a civil society to ask ourselves what kind of coexistence and society we want to build."

Archbishop Paglia added, "In the face of Western society that is losing its passion for life, this act is a powerful invitation to reflect together on the serious and urgent issue of human generativity and the conditions that make it possible; by choosing life, our responsibility for the future of humanity is at stake."

Several state Catholic conferences and individual bishops echoed the USCCB leaders' sentiments in welcoming the court's decision. "The *Dobbs* case marks a new era for the work of the church and all those who strive to protect children in the womb," the Florida Conference of Catholic Bishops said. "We strive to continue to build a society that empowers women so that mothers are truly supported throughout pregnancy and beyond."

The Florida bishops also pledged to "remain passionate in the collective effort to change hearts and minds ... so that abortion is unthinkable, and to advocate for the legal protection of human life in the womb accompanied by profound care for mothers and their children."

The eight prelates of the New York State Catholic Conference said they were "overjoyed with the outcome of the court."

They also acknowledged "the wide range of emotions associated

with this decision" and called on "all Catholics and everyone who supports the right to life for the unborn children to be charitable, even as we celebrate an important historical moment and an answer to prayer."

Saying the court's ruling was "a judicial victory, not a cultural one," the New York bishops called for building a "culture of life" by enacting family-friendly policies that welcome children, support mothers, cherish families and empower them to thrive."

Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark, New Jersey, said in a statement the ruling recognizes "that even the most helpless and dependent human beings have a right to life and possess inherent dignity and worth."

Pointing to the words of Pope Francis, Cardinal Tobin said, "Abortion is not a religious issue; it's a human rights issue."

"We recognize that a woman's decision to have an abortion is often tragic and painful," he said. "A woman who takes this desperate action is often under great duress and is encouraged by social structures that are patently sinful."

"As people who care deeply for all women struggling with unplanned or unwanted pregnancies, we must ensure that life-giving options are available and our support does not end simply with the birth of a child."

In Milwaukee, Archbishop Jerome E. Listcki said that while pro-life people feel a renewed sense of hope for the future, "let us also remember that our struggle to preserve the sanctity of human life is only just beginning."

"Abortion laws now return to the individual states. Our challenge is to continue to promote that human life begins at conception and needs to be protected at all times," he said, appealing to the broad society "to work together to make the thought of abortion not only unthinkable, but also unnecessary."

Bishop Daniel E. Thomas of Toledo, Ohio, recognized the years of work by Catholics and others to support the life of children in the womb

and called for them to now ensure that life-affirming resources are accessible to families.

He also called on "all persons committed to the common good to advocate for life and pray that our local leaders and public servants uphold the dignity of each and every human person from the moment of conception until natural death."

The Association of U.S. Catholic Priests called the court's decision momentous. "Yet this day is no different than any other as we honor as always God's gift of life from conception to natural death," the association said in a statement.

"Whether in the womb or on death row, our choice must be the same: We choose life," the organization said. "At the border, in support of human dignity and racial harmony, or in opposition to nuclear weaponry, our choice must be the same: We choose life. In support of maternal health care, family leave and child care for those who needed assistance, we choose life."

The president of the Catholic Medical Association said the court's decision "signals a long-awaited return to consideration of the most innocent and defenseless of American citizens: the unborn child."

"We are filled with gratitude and relief, as Catholics, to know this heinous and medically unfounded law has been overturned," Dr. Craig Trep-tow said. "For too long it has influenced people to believe abortion is just, when in fact the truth is the exact opposite."

He expressed satisfaction knowing that medical advances that indicate life from the moment of conception were considered by the justices.

"I want to thank each of my colleagues in medicine around the country and the world whose research and dedication to their practice helped make this possible," Trep-tow added.

Others joining in celebrating the court's decision included university presidents, the heads of professional organizations and numerous experts studying life issues.

# West Virginia's Pro-Life Community Rejoices in 'Historic' End of Roe v. Wade

By Colleen Rowan

**WEST VIRGINIA**—"We celebrate this historic day that will save many lives—those of the unborn (and) their mothers. We love them both!" West Virginians for Life (WVFL) posted on its Facebook page June 24 after news broke of the Supreme Court overturning Roe v. Wade, the 1973 ruling that legalized abortion nationwide.

It was a day the Pro-Life community of West Virginia and of the U.S. has been praying for and working toward for almost 50 years.

"We are thrilled with the decision rendered by the Supreme Court today," said Dr. Wanda Franz, president of West Virginians for Life. She added, "We are so happy to be able to live in a country that is no longer damaged by the legalized killing of our most vulnerable members."

Outside of the court, tears of joy were shed and prayers of thanksgiving were offered. Groups cheered waving signs bearing the message, "I am the Post-Roe Generation."

West Virginia Gov. Jim Justice was one of the many that applauded the ruling returning abortion law to the states.

"I applaud the Supreme Court's courageous decision today," the governor said June 24. "I've said many times that I very proudly stand for life and I am rock-solid against abortion, and I believe that every human life is a miracle worth protecting."

"I will not hesitate to call a special session after consulting with the Legislature and my legal team if clarification in our laws needs to be made," Justice said.

WBOY 12 News reported that West Virginia is not one of the 13 states that had a "trigger ban" that would criminalize abortion the moment that Roe v. Wade was overturned, but before the Roe v. Wade ruling, abortion was illegal in the Mountain State. That law was never removed from the state code.

In a statement, Bishop Mark Brennan applauded the decision which he said will offer greater protection for the unborn and called upon Catholics to continue to foster a genuine respect for all human life. (See the bishop's full statement on Page 4.)

Bishop Brennan spoke further about the devastation abortion causes at the end of the closing Mass for the World Meeting of Families in the diocese he celebrated June 26 at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling.



Courtesy Photo

Members of St. James the Greater Parish in Charles Town are pictured in the parish's Fatima Garden where they gathered to pray the rosary in thanksgiving after the Supreme Court overturned Roe v. Wade June 24. With them is Very Rev. Timothy J. Grassi, V.F., pastor, front left; Deacon David E. Galvin, front right; and Deacon James T. Munuhe, back left.

In addition to the loss of the child's life, the bishop said: "Abortion does great damage to women when it catches up with them some years later that they have done the most unnatural thing a woman can do—to allow her child to be killed."

In his priesthood, he said he has counseled women and men who have chosen abortion and has seen the despair it brings to them. The bishop pointed to the ministry of Project Rachel, an outreach to women who have had abortions to help them through the grief and trauma they experience in the aftermath. The program helps bring them to repentance, healing, and peace, he said.

"Let us continue to pray for the end of the practice of abortion, now returned to the states to decide the laws and offer all the help we can to women not only counseling them not to abort their children but to provide practical help,"—a place to live, food, diapers, among the many other needs for them and their children.

"We are pro child, and we are also pro woman," the bishop said.

Very Rev. Dennis R. Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., dismisses the argument of some that the Catholic Church is too focused on efforts against abortion and not at all working in care for those who are pregnant, and mothers who have just given birth, and the care of their children.

"They fail to acknowledge that, other than the federal government (for which we all individually get credit because we all pay taxes), no

other institution comes close to doing more for women and children in need than the Catholic Church: Catholic hospitals, Catholic Charities, pregnancy problem centers, the Gabriel Project and other innumerable ministries on the parish level. Catholic Relief Services (CRS) provide these services and more on a worldwide level," said Father Schuelkens, who is pastor of St. Joseph the Worker and Sacred Heart of Mary parishes in Weirton.

One of those many ministries Father Schuelkens spoke of in West Virginia is Mary's Refuge, a maternity home in Martinsburg where pregnant women can find a home and support. The home is set to open later this summer.

"Thanks be to God, Roe v. Wade is gone," said Kimberley Roche, executive director of Mary's Refuge. "The power goes back to the states. May they choose wisely. This is the beginning of America turning back to God. Let's keep the momentum going. Let's turn the culture of death to a celebration of life. The battle continues. We must be warriors of Christ now. Pray, say the rosary daily. Join the fight!"

The West Virginia Knights of Columbus also reaches out to help women in crisis pregnancies. State Deputy Frank Koenig said the Knights will continue to support pregnancy centers and maternity homes through their latest initiative, "Aid and Support After Pregnancy" (ASAP) to aid new-mothers and their children.

The Knights have placed two ul-

trasound machines in West Virginia this past year, which allows pregnant mothers see their child in the womb and helps prevent abortions.

"We must continue to pray to end abortion and to build a culture of respect for all human lives, and to chose life, as every life should be valued and respected," Koenig said.

Koenig said the Knights have always supported all human life from conception to natural death.

"I never thought, in my lifetime, that I would see this day," said Skip Gjolberg, life director for the West Virginia Knights of Columbus State Council, the day after the news broke. "Going to the March for Life for so many years, praying for the rights of the unborn, advocating to legislators on behalf of human life, yesterday was a major milestone. Now we must keep fighting and be even more vigilant as the pro-abortion culture looks for ways to circumvent this landmark ruling. We are so blessed to live in the state of West Virginia where life is respected from cradle to grave."

Hours after the news broke of the end of Roe v. Wade, St. James the Greater Parish in Charles Town invited parishioners to gather that evening in prayer in the parish's Fatima Garden. "Join us in praying a rosary in celebration of the overturning of Roe v. Wade!" the parish posted on Facebook.

That day was also the Solemnity of the Sacred Heart of Jesus. On

**See "Pro-Life" on Page 6**

# Catholics Need Better Understanding of the Mass, Pope Says

By **Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service**

**VATICAN CITY (CNS)** — The “sense of mystery” and awe Catholics should experience at Mass is not one prompted by Latin or by “creative” elements added to the celebration, but by an awareness of sacrifice of Christ and his real presence in the Eucharist, Pope Francis said. “Beauty, just like truth, always engenders wonder, and when these are referred to the mystery of God, they lead to adoration,” he wrote in an apostolic letter “on the liturgical formation of the people of God.”

Titled “Desiderio Desideravi” (“I have earnestly desired”), the letter was released June 29, the feast of Sts. Peter and Paul. The title comes from Luke 22:15 when, before the Last Supper, Jesus tells his disciples, “I have earnestly desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.”

In the letter, Pope Francis insisted that Catholics need to better understand the liturgical reform of the Second Vatican Council and its goal of promoting the “full, conscious, active and fruitful celebration” of the Mass. “With this letter I simply want to invite the whole church to rediscover, to safeguard and to live the truth and power of the Christian celebration,” the pope wrote. “I want the beauty of the Christian celebration and its necessary consequences for the life of the church not to be spoiled by a superficial and foreshortened understanding of its value or, worse yet, by its being exploited in service of some ideological vision, no matter what the hue.”

“The priestly prayer of Jesus at the Last Supper that all may be one judges every one of our divisions around the bread broken, around the sacrament of mercy, the sign of unity, the bond of charity,” he said.

While his letter offered what he called a “meditation” on the power and beauty of the Mass, Pope Francis also reiterated his conviction of the need to limit celebrations of the liturgy according to the rite in use before the Second Vatican Council.

“We cannot go back to that ritual form which the council fathers, ‘cum Petro et sub Petro,’ (with and under Peter) felt the need to reform, approving, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and following their conscience as pastors, the principles from which was born the reform.”

The liturgical books approved by “the holy pontiffs St. Paul VI and St. John Paul II,” he said, “have guaranteed the fidelity of the reform of the council.”

Although the post-Vatican II Mass is celebrated in Latin and dozens of vernacular languages, he said, it is “one and the same prayer capable of expressing her (the church’s) unity.”

“As I have already written, I intend that this unity be reestablished in the whole church of the Roman rite,” he said, which is why in 2021 he promulgated “Traditionis Custodes” (Guardians of the Tradition), limiting celebrations of the Mass according to the rite used before the Second Vatican

Council. The bulk of the pope’s new letter focused on helping Catholics learn to recognize and be astounded by the great gift of the Mass and the Eucharist and how it is not simply a weekly “staging” or “representation” of the Last Supper but truly allows people of all times and all places to encounter the crucified and risen Lord and to eat his body and drink his blood.

And, the pope wrote, it is essential to recognize that the Mass does not belong to the priest or to any individual worshipper, but to Christ and his church.

“The liturgy does not say ‘I’ but ‘we,’ and any limitation on the breadth of this ‘we’ is always demonic,” he said. “The liturgy does not leave us alone to search out an individual supposed knowledge of the mystery of God. Rather, it takes us by the hand, together, as an assembly, to lead us deep within the mystery that the word and the sacramental signs reveal to us.”

“Consistent with all action of God,” he said, the liturgy leads people into the mystery using symbolic actions and signs.

Pope Francis acknowledged that some people claim that in reforming the liturgy and allowing celebrations of the Mass in the language of the local congregation it has somehow lost what is “meant by the vague expression ‘sense of mystery.’”

But the mystery celebrated and communicated, he said, is not about “a mysterious rite. It is, on the contrary, marveling at the fact that the salvific plan of God has been revealed in the paschal deed of Jesus.”

The liturgy is uses “things that are the exact opposite of spiritual abstractions: bread, wine, oil, water, fragrances, fire, ashes, rock, fabrics, colors, body, words, sounds, silences, gestures, space, movement, action, order, time, light,” he said. Those concrete things proclaim that “the whole of creation is a manifestation of the love of God, and from when that same love was manifested in its fullness in the cross of Jesus, all of creation was drawn toward it.”

However, Pope Francis wrote, the words and gestures and symbols to be used are only those approved by the church.

“Let us be clear here: every aspect of the celebration must be carefully tended to — space, time, gestures, words, objects, vestments, song, music — and every rubric must be observed,” he wrote. Otherwise, the celebrant or ministers risk “robbing from the assembly what is owed to it; namely, the paschal mystery celebrated according to the ritual that the church sets down.”

Pope Francis said “the non-acceptance of the liturgical reform” of Vatican II, as well as “a superficial understanding of it, distracts us from the obligation of finding responses to the question that I come back to repeating: How can we grow in our capacity to live in full the liturgical action? How do we continue to let ourselves be amazed at what happens in the celebration under our very eyes?”

“We are in need of a serious and dynamic liturgical formation,” he said.

# Archbishop Asks Church to be in Solidarity with Migrants Who Died in Truck

By **Catholic News Service**

**SAN ANTONIO (CNS)** — The archbishop of San Antonio offered prayers for dozens of people found dead as well as more than a dozen survivors discovered June 27 in sweltering conditions in a semitruck.

Authorities said June 28 the death toll rose overnight to 50. Originally, first responders pulled 16 people — 12 adults and four teenagers — from the rig.

“We pray for the souls of the ... people who died in such a cruel, inhuman manner this evening,” Archbishop Gustavo García-Siller said in a statement soon after first responders made the gruesome discovery about 6 p.m. local time.

Authorities said the victims were migrants. They said the truck appeared to be part of a smuggling operation.

Roberto Velasco Álvarez, head of the Mexican government’s North American mission, said on Twitter June 28 that 22 of the victims were Mexican nationals, seven were originally from Guatemala and two were Honduran. The nationality of 19 others has not been determined.

Officials believe the tragedy is the deadliest smuggling incident of its kind in U.S. history.

Archbishop García-Siller also asked for prayers for the survivors who were hospitalized, their families and “the first responders who assisted and saved lives and must now carry with them the memories of this scene of carnage.”

In addition, he called on people of the archdiocese “to unite in solidarity, as these brothers and sisters are members of our family.”

News of the deaths reached Pope Francis, who tweeted June 28 that he was offering prayers for those who died in Texas as well as at least 23 sub-Saharan migrants who died June 24 while attempting to flee Morocco by scaling a border fence to cross into the Spanish enclave of Melilla in north Africa on the Mediterranean coast.

“Let us #PrayTogether for these brothers and sisters who died following their hope of a better life; and for ourselves, may the Lord might open our hearts so these misfortunes never happen again,” the pope’s tweet said.

San Antonio Police Chief Bill McManus told reporters hours after the discovery that three people were in police custody, although their connection to the situation was unclear.

The first call about the truck came from a worker in the area who had heard a cry for help and went to investigate, McManus said.

San Antonio Fire Chief Charles Hood said those found alive were conscious, “hot to the touch,” and suffering from heat stroke and exhaustion.

“There were no signs of water in the vehicle, and no visible working AC unit on that rig,” he said.

Temperatures in the San Antonio area ranged from the high 90s to low 100s, according to the National Weather Service. With a few days left in the month, meteorologists said this June was already the warmest June on record in San Antonio.

Smuggling operations working within the United States have been known to pack migrants into trucks or cargo trailers after they have already crossed the border in an attempt to sneak them past U.S. Border Patrol highway checkpoints.

## Pro-Life...

**Cont’d from Page 5**

its Facebook page, St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Weirton posted the message: “‘Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you...’ - Jeremiah 1:5

“SCOTUS has just overturned Roe v. Wade! Sacred Heart of Jesus, have mercy on us! Immaculate Heart of Mary, pray for us! In jubilant thanksgiving for this victory, please offer up a rosary to the Sacred Heart of Jesus and the Immaculate Heart of Mary!”

In a message to all its followers on Facebook, Mountaineer Catholic in Morgantown posted: “We have taken a step towards our fight for the protection of human life beginning in the womb. Now, we continue to do so through providing healthcare, support, and safe conditions for children in and out of the womb.

“Holy Virgin Mary, Mother of God, pray for us!”

# World Meeting of Families in West Virginia Celebrates Vocation, Fosters 'Path to Holiness'

**By Colleen Rowan**

**WEST VIRGINIA**—The 10th World Meeting of Families was celebrated in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston June 22-26. The celebration was held across the state with Masses, speakers, adoration, and a family festival. This year's theme was "Family Love: a Vocation and a Path to Holiness."

At the closing Mass at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling June 26, the diocese's director of Evangelization and Catechesis Daniel Maul welcomed all and thanked them for participating.

"This is a celebration the Holy See has been organizing for 30 years," Maul said in his welcome. "Usually, the big event is with the pope. This year he asked all the dioceses to celebrate World Meeting of Families on their own. Thank you so much for being with us."

Maul invited the gathered faithful to the diocese's chancery after Mass to listen to a lineup of three speakers discussing topics related to marriage and families and their Catholic faith. The speakers were Maul; Joyce Bibey, manager of Social Media in the diocese's Office of Communications and Marketing, and writer for the diocesan FaithInWV e-bulletin, #FaithInWV feature stories, and the FaithInWV.org website; and Nick Chancey, campus minister and director of the Marshall Catholic Newman Center at Marshall University in Huntington.

"Every diocese in the world is doing this, so we are part of a great number of Catholic people around the world focused on the welfare

and flourishing of marriages and families," Bishop Brennan said before the Mass at the cathedral began. Bishop Brennan celebrated the opening Mass in Charleston at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart.

Additional gatherings during the week were held at St. Leo Parish in Inwood and St. Francis de Sales Parish and St. Francis de Sales Central Catholic School in Morgantown, where a family festival was held.

In a welcome letter to West Virginia couples and families printed in the worship aids for the Masses, Maul said, "The Catholic Church has a good thing going with our teachings and beliefs about marriage and family life. It's good for us to come together to celebrate our Catholic identity. The first World Meeting of Families was celebrated in 1994 in Rome. These gatherings, which happen about every three years, are meant to promote the pastoral care of families so that they may ever be more able to fulfill their duties."

All of the speakers shared personal testimonies that address marriage and family life issues related with them. Other speakers throughout the celebration were Tim Bishop, director of Marketing and Communications for the diocese; Deacon Walter Calabrese, renowned author from the Diocese of Raleigh, N.C.; Colleen Criste, director of Programs and Development for Campus Ministry at St. John University Parish in Morgantown on the campus of West Virginia University; Seth Johnson of



John Sherwood Photo

At the World Meeting of Families celebration at St. Leo Parish in Inwood June 23 are, from left: Joyce Bibey, manager of Social Media in the diocese's Office of Communications and Marketing; Daniel Maul, director of Evangelization and Catechesis for the diocese; Nick Chancey, campus minister and director of the Marshall Catholic Newman Center at Marshall University in Huntington; Father Alfred U. Obiudu, pastor of St. Leo's; and Tyler and Sydney Kilbane with their child. He is a licensed therapist who established Known By Name Counseling Services and she is a licensed mental health therapist who works with Pastoral Solutions Institute, Catholic Counselors.

Franciscan University in Steubenville, Ohio; Tyler and Sydney Kilbane—he is a licensed therapist who established Known By Name Counseling Services and she is a licensed mental health therapist who works with Pastoral Solutions Institute, Catholic Counselors; and Micah Schlittenhardt, a student of theology, philosophy, and Catholic studies at the University of Mary

in Bismarck, N.D., where she is a member of the University Ministry Team.

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# Final Diocesan Synod Report Released and Submitted

Read the Report on Pages 9-12 of This Issue of The Catholic Spirit

**By Joyce Bibey**

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston announced June 29 that it has submitted the Final Synthesis Report to the US Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) as part of the Holy Father's Synod on Synodality.

The diocesan synod process began in October, 2021 with Mass celebrated by Bishop Mark Brennan at the Cathedral of St. Joseph, joining Pope Francis' charge to have the faithful to call upon the Holy Spirit to enlighten them as they discern, listen, and discuss how the Church can grow more fruitful in unity. The Holy Father's

plans for the global Synod for a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission were released in September, 2021.

Ninety-two parish reports from across the diocese were given to the writing team in May of this year. As a model of transparency, the members of the team were not employees of the chancery, but members of the faithful in the diocese. They included Sister Carmella Campione, a member of the Congregation of St. Joseph; Jacob Manning, parishioner of the Cathedral of St. Joseph; and Dr. Tom Michaud and Dr. Kim Michaud,

parishioners of St. Michael Parish in Wheeling. After a thorough review, they compiled a 10-page synthesis reflecting the parish contributions expressed by the faithful across the diocese. A draft report was presented on June 3 to all parish coordinators, giving them the opportunity to provide input and suggest changes.

The writing team thanked the bishop for the opportunity to serve. Sister Carmella Campione added that the synthesis report submitted by the diocese, "records the voice of the people in our diocese, which echoes what we are learning are the same

concerns in other dioceses across the country."

Where does the report go from here? Locally, Bishop Brennan has stated that he will use the information contained in the parish reports to develop new ministries in the diocese as well as make concrete changes to strengthen the Church in West Virginia.

The USCCB will compile all input and feedback to formulate syntheses that reflect the vision of the faithful. The worldwide conferences will submit their summaries by Aug. 15, 2022. The continental phase will take place from September, 2022 to March,

2023. All of this information from around the world that began at the ground level in our parishes will ultimately be used by the Assembly of the Synod of Bishops in October of 2023. This Vatican council of bishops, selected from around the world, will counsel and consult the Pontiff on how the People of God with the Holy Spirit as their guide discerned the Church should journey together to carry out her mission and continue the work of Jesus Christ.

You can read the report at: <https://dwc.org/synod/> and on Pages 9-12 of this issue of The Catholic Spirit.

## Bishop Brennan Instates Courage in West Virginia

**By Colleen Rowan**

**MORGANTOWN**—Encounter Christ, discover yourself, and grow in holiness. This is the message of Courage International, a Roman Catholic apostolate for men and women who experience same-sex attraction and those who love them. This ministry is now expanding into West Virginia through the newly established chapter of the Courage apostolate in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

Bishop Mark Brennan said it is important for the church to welcome those who have same-sex attraction and let them know they are valued, respected, and loved.

"Courage International is a way to allow same-sex attracted Catholics to understand and embrace more fully the full range of Catholic teaching and to generally be an active part of the faith along with other things they may do in their parishes or universal chaplaincies," Bishop Brennan said. "This is a way to show that we do care about those who have same-sex attraction and want them to be actively involved. Courage certainly fosters that attitude and that participation."

Bishop Brennan has appointed Father Brian Crenwelge of Morgantown to lead the ministry as chaplain. Members of Courage, Father Crenwelge said, are committed to helping one another to live chaste lives marked by prayer, fellowship, and mutual support.

"Courage members are guided by priest chaplains who offer reconciliation and direction for the spiritual life," he said. "Courage members are inspired by the Gospel call to holiness and the Catholic Church's teachings

about the goodness and inherent purpose of human sexuality. Together they pursue the five goals of Courage."

Father Crenwelge, who is also pastor of St. John University Parish in Morgantown and director of Vocations for the diocese, went on to say that each member of Courage is expected to practice those five goals of Courage in daily life. The goals are: "1) To live chaste lives in accordance with the Roman Catholic Church's teaching on homosexuality (Chastity); 2) To dedicate our entire lives to Christ through service to others, spiritual reading, prayer, meditation, individual spiritual direction, frequent attendance at Mass, and the frequent reception of the Sacraments of reconciliation and holy Eucharist (Prayer and Dedication); 3) To foster a spirit of fellowship in which we may share with one another our thoughts and experiences, and so ensure that no one will have to face problems alone (Fellowship); 4) To be mindful of the truth that chaste friendships are not only possible but necessary in a chaste Christian life; and to encourage one another in forming and sustaining these friendships (Support); 5) To live lives that may serve as good examples to others (Good Example/Role Model)."

Father Crenwelge said that to be a pastor means to shepherd one's flock in the truth. "Bishop Brennan is showing a true pastoral concern for his flock by instating a Courage chapter in West Virginia," Father Crenwelge said. "The bishop has clearly seen a need for West Virginia Catholics who experience same-sex attraction to have the sup-

port and guidance necessary in living the beautiful vocation that Christ has chosen for them. It is not popular to live the church's teaching on chastity these days, especially as the world around us wants those with same-sex attraction to do the opposite. Yet, we will only be truly fulfilled when we live the Commandments and teachings of Christ and His Church."

Ultimately, Father Crenwelge said, Courage allows Catholics with same-sex attraction to have a community life that is supportive to the daily living out of the church's teaching on homosexuality.

"I would think Catholics with same-sex attraction could feel very alone at times because one's sexual orientation can be a very personal topic. Often times, a person will reveal his or her struggles with same-sex attraction to a priest in the confessional, but he or she might have never ad-

mitted or shared with anyone else his or her orientation or struggles. Courage allows the person to have a friendly and faithful outlet and community in order to pursue holiness and be faithful to the Magisterium of the church. I am humbled to be asked by Bishop Brennan to help shepherd this group of Catholics," Father Crenwelge said.

The Courage chapter will meet monthly in Morgantown beginning in September. Each meeting will be about one to two hours and will be led by Father Crenwelge. It is a closed meeting only for Catholics with same-sex attraction who agree to live by the five goals of Courage.

Those interested in attending, should send an e-mail to [couragedwc@gmail.com](mailto:couragedwc@gmail.com).

For more information about Courage International, visit <https://couragerc.org>.

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# The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

## Synod Synthesis

### Prefatory Information

#### In terms of the process of consultation, what were the main steps taken in the diocese?

Diocesan staff, appointed by the Vicar General, held training sessions for parish coordinators, who were appointed by pastors in each parish, in the diocese's six vicariates. Coordinators were trained to conduct synod listening sessions and create synthesis reports using materials provided by the Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops.

#### What were the main questions posed?

Coordinators used the questions provided by the Secretary General of the Synod of Bishops. The diocesan bishop added additional questions related to the Mass and the belief of the true presence of Christ in the Eucharist.

#### What was done to engage as many participants as possible and to reach out to peripheries?

The diocese and its parishes made use of the promotional materials and online resources available on the website [synod.va](http://synod.va). Additionally, bulletin materials and newspaper articles were used in parishes. Social media and personal invitations to attend sessions were also utilized. Coordinators were encouraged to engage those on the peripheries in their respective parish.

#### Approximately what proportion of people in the diocese participated in one way or another?

Not all the submitted parish reports included attendance. Of those reports that did, 2,214 people attended one of the 259 reported sessions held in the diocese. Eighty-seven of the diocese's 92 parishes have submitted synod reports. Sessions were also held with women religious congregations in the diocese with their report submitted to the diocese. Additionally, at least three reports were submitted by university students, where multiple listening sessions were held. Three reports were also offered by representatives from other faith traditions in the state. One group, Lay Catholic Voices for Change, submitted a report to the diocese, and to the best of our knowledge, one other group, The Catholic Committee of Appalachia, submitted a report directly to the Holy See.

### Current Profile of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston (DWC)

This profile draws from and synthesizes the Synod reports received from DWC parishes, religious congregations, the Diocesan Pastoral Council, college centers, and ecumenical participants. This profile is important and relevant because the DWC is, perhaps, an exceptional diocese. Our current circumstances and recent history may be unmatched among US dioceses. It is worthwhile to identify and

elaborate the traits and conditions that contribute to our exceptional status.

First of all, the DWC is one of few dioceses in the country that encompasses an entire state. Also, the entire diocese is in Appalachia. Still, WV's population is only about 5.5% Catholic, and its Catholic population is principally centered in the northern and eastern panhandles and Charleston area of the state. There are many small parishes in small towns, some of which are 50 miles or more from another Catholic parish. Some smaller parishes also share a single pastor, and in some areas three parishes share one pastor.

The communities in which these small parishes are located vary in regard to their attitudes toward Catholics. To paraphrase a report from a small parish, "We (Catholics) feel as if we are the minorities in our communities." Other small parishes express concern that Catholics are viewed with suspicion in their communities. Again, to paraphrase a report from a small parish, "In our area, some other denominations seem to shy away because we are Catholic... Catholics are seen as 'different' and any association is discouraged by some denominations." There are long-standing historical and socio-cultural reasons for such sentiments toward Catholics, but it is a hopeful sign that these small parishes report that they vigorously engage in interfaith service ministries that help to leaven their presence and acceptance within their communities.

Involvement in service ministries and ecumenical engagement is a second trait of the DWC's exceptional status. Every single parish reports numerous examples of such involvement. Although it is also reported that COVID protocols and restrictions have had a detrimental impact on the vitality of their service and ecumenical ministries. Parishes are presently rebounding and reinvigorating these ministries. Some of these varied and numerous ministries include: The Gabriel Project, House of Hagar, 18th Street Center in Wheeling, Ladies Guild, various ministries to the homebound, the Food Closet and Food Pantry, the Egg Factory (Easter Eggs are made and sold to support the needy during Christmas), the local ecumenical Ministerial Association, Community Vacation Bible Schools for all denominations, interfaith prison retreats, and interfaith pro-life rallies.

The DWC has also developed a significant network of primary and secondary schools throughout the state. Presently there are 18 elementary schools and six high schools operating in the DWC. Given the size of the Catholic population in the state, the fact that there are 24 Catholic schools and that their quality is much more than respectable, the DWC remains supportive of its Catholic schools. In addition, there are two Catholic universities in the diocese: Wheeling University which is aligned with the diocese and The Catholic Distance University—an independent, fully online institution operating out of

Charles Town, WV.

The detrimental effects of COVID restrictions and protocols were suffered by dioceses and parishes throughout the country. The DWC is not exceptional in this regard, but in a state with a proportionately small Catholic population, some parishes were strongly adversely affected. Reports regarding the COVID impact include: "[Paraphrased] COVID has seriously hampered our smaller parishes in becoming a more welcoming community." "We have a lot of Catholics that have not returned since COVID." "[Paraphrased] COVID-spawned Sunday Mass on TV has made it easy for parishioners to fulfill their Mass requirement, and some find it hard to return to the parish for Sunday Mass." "[Paraphrased] We need to stop streaming Masses and lift all of the COVID restrictions." "Some participants felt that it wasn't wise to deny the sacraments in the way they were during the COVID lockdown." Still, as the DWC is rebounding from the pandemic, some Catholics see holy lessons in the COVID experience, "The COVID pandemic has served to highlight what is important to us by the cessation of many opportunities to serve others together." "The Synod process has been exactly what the parish needed coming out of COVID isolation."

The COVID pandemic emerged in just the second year of Bishop Mark Brennan's leadership of the DWC. COVID's tragedies and detrimental effects made an already challenging position for Bishop Brennan all the more difficult. With the termination of and scandal surrounding our former bishop, Archbishop William Lori served as an interim administrator until Bishop Brennan was installed in August 2019. There remains a degree of scorn and enmity toward the "sex and money Bransfield minisaga," as a parishioner reports. Numerous other parishioners report that the Bransfield situation remains a barrier to participation in the Church. One report questioned, "[Paraphrased] Why is he still being paid? Many people who left the Church will not return if there is no definitive closure." In contrast to the leadership of Bransfield, parishioners are calling for as much transparency as possible from the diocesan leadership. This situation is another aspect of the exceptional status of the DWC.

The challenges for Bishop Brennan are substantial. Although some parishioners question the timing of this Synod being so close to the pandemic, others believe that, "This Synod process has been a sign for the future and a hope for our Church." There is, moreover, a certain faithful confidence in the leadership of Bishop Brennan expressed in the reported statements. "Bishop Brennan has been a healing presence for the diocese." "The current Bishop [Bishop Brennan] has done a good job of being transparent." "... a deeply felt gratitude goes to our Bishop, Mark Brennan. We are fortunate to have

**See "Synod" on Page 10**



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[dwc.org/synod/](http://dwc.org/synod/)

## Synod...

Cont'd from Page 9

him. He has been most caring to this wounded and disillusioned diocese. We appreciate his presence among us." "Bishop Brennan is making efforts to restore trust in our leadership, our faith and our Church." [Paraphrased] "Bishop Brennan's reinstatement of the Diocesan Vicariate Council (aka, Diocesan Pastoral Council) is a step in the right direction of gathering information and working together."

There is, nevertheless, some limited discontent with Bishop Brennan's leadership so far. Some parish reports exhort Bishop Brennan to be sure to visit rural and smaller churches, which in some cases have not had a visit from the DWC Bishop in very many years.

There were also concerns about the Bishop's letter that encouraged parishes to emphasize communion in the hand. One parish, for example, used a kneeler in front of the priest, so congregants could kneel and receive the Eucharist on the tongue. The parish had agreed unanimously to this practice but were saddened when their pastor was instructed by the Bishop to remove the kneeler according to GIRM (General Instruction of the Roman Missal) protocols.

### Summative Synthesis of Reports' Main Topics and Issues

The following seven items result from a summative analysis of the main topics and issues which appeared throughout the reports. The first four topics are rank ordered as the topics that were most frequently addressed or recommended in the reports. The final three topics were often indicated in the reports. These three topics all concern inclusion issues, and the fifth topic had the highest quantitative frequency of the three. With many of the topics, there were numerous opposing statements which reflects a polarization in our diocese that is, perhaps, not unlike the cultural/political divisions in our nation. Many of the parish reports are based on a limited number of participants in comparison to the total size of a parish. In addition, the "samples" of the participants were self-selected, so that in one case, for example, there were 59 participants in the discussions with a median age of 60+ in a parish of 900 members. The reports, therefore, though generally well-written and respectful of the participants' input, are not by any means scientifically representative of the various congregations' overall views on the topics and issues posed by the Synod's questions. It would be unwise to rely on the reports as any sort of "final word" from the DWC's population.

Finally, some of the quoted statements from participants are specified as [Paraphrased] because the wording and/or syntax of the statement was altered due to grammatical, proper vocabulary use, verb tense or other composition problems, but the meanings of the statements were never altered.

### 1. Catechesis, Catholic Education Opportunities and Faith-Based Bible Study

The vast majority of reports identified this item as vitally important. There were many varied reasons given to support its importance, and it is an item that cuts across the polarization that is characteristic of some of the other items. To name some effects of this issue, it deals with affirming the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist (Some estimates are that 70% of Catholics do not affirm the Real Presence.), inclusion, ecumenism, strengthening our common mission, and the formation and defense of the faith.

Representative statements from the reports are:

"Provide opportunities to be engaged in learning sessions with academic based theologians and Catholic teachers through online courses or compensate a theologian to conduct multi-week teaching sessions."

"Confirmation is not the end of faith formation. There is not a culture of learning in the Church. Parishes need to do more to support spiritual and theological understanding."

"Clarify Church teachings on birth control, abortion and the history of the Church. We need better catechizing to best communicate our positions of our faith and our positions on issues."

"Protestants can quote the Bible; we need more adult Bible Study to be more familiar with it." "We need more education about our core beliefs. Catholics are the minority [in our area] and other religions have preconceived ideas about what Catholics do and say. If we are clear on who we are, what we believe about other faiths, they might not be as afraid. When you are the minority, it takes a lot of effort and education to come together with the majority."

"Develop a 'Topic of the Month' to foster discussion and offer growth opportunities for the parish."

"Faith formation, especially regarding the Real Presence, is lacking across parishes. There is a serious lack of catechesis in this regard."

"[Paraphrased] We need proper catechesis around the Holy Eucharist being the Body of Christ because this is a primary building block of our faith. The basic tenet of Catholic faith is that we receive Jesus in the Eucharist."

"[Paraphrased] Some Bishops are allowing pro-abortion figures and politicians to receive Holy Communion. This just rationalizes sin. Catechesis about the Eucharist should focus on preparation, being in a state of grace and receiving confession. Without proper reverence, it is understandable that more and more Catholics don't believe the Eucharist is Jesus Himself."

"People are leaving the Catholic Church because we have not given them any 'meat to chew on' with our catechetical content." "We need faith-based Bible Study. Catholics are poorly catechized, which could be a big part of why so many have left the Church."

"We are not educating our adult parishioners to be mature Catholics. We need opportunities to be fed in our faith and be able to explain and defend the Catholic Faith, including an opportunity to learn apologetics."

"Perpetual adoration at every parish would be an amazing way to help us all grow in our faith."

"The Catechism of the Catholic Church is an invaluable resource of Truth."

"The status quo within the Church is too diplomatic and too tolerant of falsehoods. Christ commanded His Apostles to teach specific truths and He Himself set the example. All confirmed Catholics have a responsibility to help others get to heaven, and to follow Jesus Christ in words and actions."

"[Paraphrased] The Synod's prepared questions imply that the mission of the Church is serving society, but our parish participants believe that the mission is to share our faith and save souls. More catechesis is needed to teach how social justice serves the mission of saving souls. We should not promote social justice for its own sake but rather for the purpose of bringing those we serve closer to Christ."

"Catholics are 'sacramentalized' but not catechized – they go through motions but are not given the information or history behind the practice."

### 2. Continuing the Transparency, Listening, Dialogue and Synodality within the Church

This topic is wide-ranging in its relevance. It relates to matters of hierarchical authority, consultation in decision-making, financial and organizational management, and participation in our Church's common mission. To apply some of the reports' views, there was an expressed need to have clear guidelines for communicating with the hierarchy. The process, protocols and content parameters need to be articulated for the laity. Also, a type of flow chart that identifies the offices, committees, councils, and names of the staff and clergy that should be contacted given various types of inquiries. When possible, parishes should have elected parish councils and publicize their names and notes from meetings. Some reports also noted the same with respect to the Diocesan Pastoral Council. At the parish and diocesan levels financial matters should be entirely transparent regarding budgets, project costs, and educational funding, and as much as possible expert financial consultants, including and especially from the laity, should have substantial input regarding budget decisions, investments, and real estate projects and purchases.

Representative statements from the reports are:

"Pastors' ultimate authority should be limited to matters of faith and morals. Other decisions, like financial matters and parish outreach efforts should be made by lay councils."

See "Synod" on Page 11

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## Synod...

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A system where the pastor has all the power, including veto power, and then only delegates to a council when and if he wants to, makes the people feel powerless and disengages them."

"Results of council meetings should be made widely available and councils should seek the opinions of as many people as they can."

"Priests who are outspoken about injustices and sacrileges within the Church (e.g., blessing same-sex marriages, woman priests, pro-death politicians receiving communion, etc.) are admonished by their Bishops. If Bishops don't listen to their priests, then why would we expect them to listen to the faithful?"

"[Paraphrased] We need more transparency for how the Bishop makes decisions and with whom are decisions made. We should put consultative decision-making into practice throughout the diocese explaining how decisions are made, publishing statements about decisions in *The Catholic Spirit*, sending info to parish priests to disseminate to parishioners, and offering full financial disclosure."

"The 'former Bishop's' case engenders the idea that lay people should participate in choosing a Bishop." "Parishioners have no say, not involved in any way, in the process of selecting a new pastor."

"Laity should have the freedom to question actions of parishes, priests, or hierarchy without criticism or fear of retribution."

### 3. Stimulate more Participation and Growth in the Parish, especially among Minorities, the Young, and Special Needs Persons

This is no doubt a perennial issue for the Church. We are, nonetheless, presently faced with the aftermath of COVID isolation and a rapidly dwindling overall population in West Virginia. Add to those daunting circumstances the Sex Scandal and the former bishop's misbehaviors, and the DWC is truly facing some distress. It is no wonder why a sizable majority of parish Synod meetings and reports devoted much discussion and attention to growing the parish with older and younger members, as well as the disabled and special needs people. Discussion themes focused on why we are losing members and participants in parish activities, and why are we not retaining or gaining youth members. Some reports also expressed the need that we should be proactively welcoming disabled and special needs folks. One sagacious and successful practice for encouraging more participation from parishioners that many parishes employ is for those who are leading or involved in a project, ministry, or activity etc. to reach out personally to others who might be able to join in. The "personal touch," no matter the size of the parish is the best way to cultivate new participants. This personal touch is maybe even more effective if it is done by the parishioner leader and the priest

pastor, associate pastor, or deacon. The responses from parishes on this issue were very practical. Also, the responses which attempted to explain the decrease in participants and parish members, as well the losses with the youth, were astute.

Finally, several reports discussed the need to address immigration issues as well as our outreach to minorities. Several noted the increase in our growing Hispanic population and the need to provide, for example, bilingual Masses. Some also noted that Catholic Charities of West Virginia provides immigration services to those who need it and noted that that work was important and should be encouraged. Others noted that in some areas of the state, being a welcoming parish means welcoming native speakers of possibly 30 different languages. Bilingual Masses are not an easy solution.

Some of the representative statements on this issue are:

"Becoming more welcoming is an ongoing task...but be especially welcoming at Easter, Lent, Advent and Christmas. These are times when not only does attendance increase but the Church is at its best, most solemn, reverential and most joyous."

"Even though we have many 'ministry sign-up' Sundays, many ministries are not filled. We have to try harder to personally recruit rather than wait for folks to volunteer. Don't leave it up to those few who always volunteer."

"Provide child care for Masses and adult events."

"We need to develop strategies for outreach with special attention to diversity and people on the margins..."

"To listen we need to solicit. Is the Church seeking the opinions of women and minorities? We can't expect them to reach out to us. Jesus would have searched out these people. Does the Church?"

"Recruit children and teenagers to participate – kids greeting kids." "Updated music at services for the young."

"[Paraphrase] Parents should be recognized as integral to our common mission and this should be passed to their children."

"Better use of social media to encourage youth and young families to become involved." "[Paraphrased] Maybe a young person who is well-versed in social media could lead the parish use of social media for the young."

"Youth need to hear the 'Good News' of the 1st Century in 21st Century terms."

"Have children and teen rosaries to attract and involve youth."

"Offer more catechesis for young people." "Society does not believe there is right and wrong, but our youth need to learn from the Church that there are morals and ethics which lead to the concept of right and wrong."

"Be sure to involve youth in all events whenever possible, especially those fun events like fairs, picnics and trips."

"...Young people are disproportionately those

who attend Latin Masses and traditional Novus Ordo Masses...this should be a sign to the Church hierarchy to maintain tradition."

"Retreats help spiritual growth. When our parish had a strong CYO presence, youth had the chance to interact with other Catholic youth in the region and state. But when CYO was reduced to something less focused on social recreational activities, participation dropped significantly. We need to keep young people active in the Church."

"A lack of authenticity can keep young people away, it gives the image that, 'No one there believes what they say,' but authentic reverence keeps the young people coming."

Youth group participants said themselves, "There need to be more community service opportunities for teens and Confirmation classes." "We want something that we can do together socially." "Need more stimulation and interactive activities in Faith Formation classes."

"[Paraphrased] 'A special mention was made for those with special needs and how to include them.' 'Be more aware of special needs individuals and the needs of the elderly.'"

### 4. Divorce, Remarriage and Annulment Barriers to Participation

Divorce and remarriage have become much more prevalent in our current society so that parishes and the Church as a whole face the challenge of addressing this social problem. Among issues mentioned in the reports, this one received the most comments indicating need for procedural improvements, especially in the annulment process. Many reports mentioned difficulties faced in this process. Given the prevalence of divorces and remarriages, it would seem prudent for the Church to require firmly that couples to participate in some Pre-Cana retreat and education and to receive catechesis on being married in the Church. Experienced couples from the DWC would be excellent resources for conducting such Pre-Cana teaching. Finally, there seems to be some confusion about what a divorced Catholic is able to do in the Church. Couples in Pre-Cana should be taught as to what the Church's instructions truly are. Overall, the reports also acknowledged a need for catechesis on the sacrament of matrimony, as well as education about divorce and remarriage.

Representative statements from the reports include:

"50% of Catholic marriages will end in divorce. These members are lost as long as divorced Catholics can't enjoy full membership."

"Archaic notions of marriage and divorce are too strict and annulment rules are inconsistent"

"My annulment took 10 years and cost thousands of dollars." "Divorce and remarriage and the annulment process for Catholics are very challenging obstacles."

See "Synod" on Page 12



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## Synod...

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"Pre-Cana for couples preparing for marriage...examples of what married couples have experienced are vital for these couples and what to expect as they go through life..."

"We need greater support service for families in crisis. When a marriage fails, the wounded spouses face the loss of worthiness to receive the Blessed Sacrament. The annulment process is traumatic, painful, and overly long. Need counseling and support when undergoing this process."

"Catholics who are divorced allow their fear of being judged keep them from coming back to the Church. They hate the annulment process; it promotes living together out of wedlock."

### 5. Inclusion of Traditional/Conservative Catholic Views

Virtually every single report contained a number of traditional/conservative statements on a wide variety of topics and issues. The designation "traditional/conservative" is used because it was used by some of the participants themselves. In regard to sheer volume, these views were certainly by far the 'heaviest' of any of the other inclusion perspectives offered. Traditional/Conservatives generally expressed thoughtful insights and communicated a knowledgeable grasp of the history and doctrines of the Church. In addition, they manifest a considered understanding of what Catholics are facing in current culture and society. They also, however, generally expressed a certain sorrow and maybe even a resentment over not being included and heard as amicably as with other groups.

Following statements are representative of traditional/conservative input on many different topics and issues.

"A main group that needs to be better included and is oftentimes shunned is traditional/conservative Catholics."

"Throughout the ages, the Church, as the Presence of Christ on Earth, has been called to 'baptize' the current culture. After three centuries of persecution, the Church finally prevailed over the culture of Ancient Rome retaining what was good and noble in that culture and replacing its idolatry and violation of human dignity with Gospel values. In our 21st century, the Church must confront what is evil in our ambient culture, calling it to conversion. Unfortunately we see signs of misguided efforts on the part of some in high positions in the Church to compromise and flirt with the depraved values of our secular world. May the timeless doctrine of the Catholic Church be upheld by our bishops and pastors, and handed on by our devoted catechists to the next generation."

"I see a huge problem of 'not listening/non-synodality' in the way traditional Catholics are vilified and labeled as 'rigid' and 'judgmental.'"

"There is tension between parishes' focus on personal and family spiritual growth as Catholics and social justice as the principal sense of

Catholic spiritual growth and faith."

"The Church needs to not oppose but stress the unity of the New Mass and the Traditional Latin Mass (TLM). Rhetoric that the TLM is based on a defective or outdated theology denigrates the historical unity of the liturgy." "The TLM is being oppressed by the hierarchy of the Church."

"The Church is more involved with social justice than teaching people about Christ. We need to focus more on matters of salvation."

"Church leaders need to stop worrying about being politically correct. Revert and stay fast to the true teaching of the Church. Stop being afraid to tell the flock what is required to be a practicing Catholic."

"Changing the liturgies to become more Protestant has encouraged Protestants to remain where they are rather than come to the belief that the Catholic Church has something unique and transcendent in the Holy Eucharist...such measures do not in fact attract people to the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass and the Catholic Church. Both converts and cradle Catholics argue for the recovery of our sense of the sacred and transcendent in the liturgy."

"I left another denomination for the Catholic Church because of liberalism. I am now seeing liberalism come into the Catholic Church via the bishops."

"Why isn't the Church speaking out against globalism, socialism and communism?"

### 6. Better Inclusion of Women in the Church

This issue has been within the Church for many years and it is a concern expressed in the reports. Should women be accepted as deacons and ordained as priests in the Catholic Church? Although it was not mentioned with the quantitative frequency of the above topics, this topic should be included in this synthesis since it was reported many times. Participants' statements imply that serious discernment is necessary for a better understanding of this issue.

Statements which represent various and some opposing perspectives on this issue are:

"Catholics seem to be a patriarchal society. Recently more women are stepping up." "The opinions of women should be treated as important as those of men and their roles should be expanded."

"Male centered language can disenfranchise women. The role of women has changed and the Church should change with the times. Could we at least have women deacons?"

"We need to work more to incorporate women and the laity at national and global church gatherings such as Masses, papal pilgrimages, and Eucharistic congresses."

"Diversity is regularly discussed in terms of women as deacons and priests – the archaic structure of the Church is male authority."

"Women in the priesthood – is this our future considering the shortage of priests?"

"There is always the ongoing discussion about married and women priests and deacons, but there are also other positions for women

that can be just as important."

"Having female altar servers is like saying women have to become men to be equal to them. Women should be fostered in vocations that they can seek, which begins with a larger presence from religious sisters."

### 7. Better Inclusion of LGBTQ Persons in the Church

This issue has arisen in recent years. Its mention in the reports is less frequent than the issue of women in the Church, but it should be included in this synthesis since it was indicated in a number of reports. Participants generally encouraged welcoming LGBTQ persons into the Church. Many indicated that it is important that LGBTQ persons are familiarized with the actual Church teachings regarding same-sex relationships. As one participant noted, "...the truth can be spoken both boldly and with charity."

Some of the statements about this topic are:

"We need to do more to be inclusive of LGBTQ segments of society." "We need to be more open to LGBTQ communities."

"Gay monogamous marriage should be honored in the Church, but some people don't want to hear and discuss this." "Can we recognize same sex marriage as a sacrament?"

"It could be helpful to reach out to different communities who may broadly feel alienated by Catholic teaching (e.g., LGBTQ community), and lovingly teach them true Catholic teaching – not agreeing to condone sinful activity, but teaching why we believe what we believe, and how this is authentic love/charity."

"Another barrier is exemplified by the LGBTQ community who misunderstands and/or misinterprets Church doctrine and teachings that make them feel excluded."

"It seems that certain leaders of our Church have been more influenced by society rather than society being affected by the Church. The Church is being pressured to accept same-sex marriage and compromise its Biblical position on homosexuality."

"The Church should encourage people to share truth in charity, even when it comes with a shock to secular culture; particularly pertaining to issues of abortion, homosexuality, gender dysphoria & divorce...the truth can be spoken both boldly and with charity..."

"One mother said her son was a part of this group (LGBTQ) but still wanted to go to Church. Some of these people may not know or understand the position of the Catholic Church on this subject...it should be made known to those in the LGBTQ community."

"There seems to be a lack of consistency from parish to parish when it comes to the 'truth'. As Catholics we should absolutely welcome and embrace others regardless of their sexual orientation, and all parishes should speak the truth of the Church regarding homosexual acts."

"Inclusion of others is the Christian duty of the parishioners. Loving someone and including them does not mean enabling them or supporting decisions or lifestyles contrary to Church teachings."

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# Higher Learning Commission Grants Accreditation to Catholic Distance University

**WEST VIRGINIA**—On June 23, the Higher Learning Commission (HLC) granted initial accreditation to Catholic Distance University for its undergraduate and graduate degree programs.

Accreditation by the HLC provides assurance that an institution meets high standards in all aspects of educational quality, institutional capabilities, and governance, with a commitment to continuous improvement. HLC is the largest of six historically regional accreditors in the United States recognized by the Department of Education to accredit the nation's institutions of higher education. In response to new regulations from the Department of Education, several of the historically regional ac-

creditors have recently eliminated their geographic boundaries, expanding their accreditation service area to the entire United States.

Dr. Marianne Evans Mount, who has served as president of CDU since 2008, lauded the landmark accomplishment.

"Catholic Distance University celebrates with joy our welcome as an accredited member of the Higher Learning Commission and the broader higher education community of accredited schools," she said. "The hard work and adherence to high academic accrediting standards and practices have strengthened CDU and given further assurance to our students and graduates of the value of their educational credentials. We look

forward to the witness of their service to the Catholic Church and the world, as they strive to serve the common good and especially the underserved."

"CDU is now recognized with the same accreditation as many of the most prestigious brick and mortar universities in the U.S.," said Board Chairman Steve Pryor. "This major milestone marks the beginning of the next stage of CDU's mission: to communicate the mind and heart of the Church to a wider audience. As trustee Sr. Mary Brendon Zajac observed, this should be viewed '...as a commencement rather than a graduation....the real work is just beginning.'"

University Chancellor Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, who heads the Arch-

diocese for the Military Services, USA, said, "The news that the Higher Learning Commission has accredited Catholic Distance University offers a significant recognition to the commitment of the CDU community to academic excellence. I hope that this decision will be an impetus for the growth of the university and one more sign of its role in forming committed scholars especially in the theological sciences."

Students will benefit in newfound ways from HLC accreditation, which ensures a quality of education that the general public has the right to expect and that the educational community recognizes widely.

CDU, founded in 1983, offers its programs com-

pletely online: an AA degree in Liberal Arts with a concentration in Catholic Studies; a BA in Theology degree completion program; MA degrees in Theology and Theology and Educational Ministry; a Catechetical Diploma program; several graduate certificates; an undergraduate certificate; and non-credit continuing education certificates and courses. CDU also continues its active outreach to the incarcerated Church and underserved Catholics without access to local Catholic institutions of higher education worldwide. The non-profit university has been continuously accredited by the Distance Education Accrediting Commission since 1986.

To learn more, visit [cdu.edu](http://cdu.edu).

## CDU Offers Affordable, Fully Accredited College Degrees

**WEST VIRGINIA**—Enrollment in fall classes is underway at Catholic Distance University, which is waiving the application fee through the end of 2022 to give students a break during these tough economic times. Students appreciate CDU's eight-week-long online courses, affordable tuition, and faithfully Catholic focus. The university is also known for its exceptional faculty, personalized approach to education, and small class sizes.

According to the U.S. Department of Education's College Affordability and Transparency list, CDU falls in the lowest 10% for tuition rates among 4-year not-for-profit universities nationwide. Once admitted, students can

begin classes in either the Fall I term, which starts on August 22nd, or the Fall II term, which begins on Oct. 24.

Because all of CDU's programs are offered online, students living at home have no room and board costs to pay, and many choose to work part-time while attending. All of these factors help CDU students earn their degrees while avoiding the debt that has become so common in higher education today. Because classes have no set meeting times, students can manage work and family responsibilities while completing coursework at times that fit their schedules.

At the undergraduate level, CDU offers an AA degree in Liberal Arts with

a concentration in Catholic Studies and a BA degree completion program in Theology. Transfer credits are generously accepted. Some students choose to earn the AA degree and then transfer to another institution to pursue a Bachelor's degree in a variety of majors. The university also offers a Catechetical Diploma program and an Undergraduate Catechetical Coordinator Certificate program. At the graduate level, CDU offers an MA degree in Theology and an MA degree in Theology and Educational Ministry, which is ideal for Catholic school teachers and those involved in religious education and lay ecclesial ministry. Graduate certificate programs are offered as well.

All of CDU's academic degree and certificate programs are accredited by the Higher Learning Commission, the largest of six historically regional accreditors in the United States recognized by the Department of Education to accredit the nation's institutions of higher education.

Unlike many universities, CDU allows students to begin taking courses part-time. Students may choose to begin with one or two classes. Fall is the perfect time to earn college credits! For more information, or to complete the free application and enroll in the fall terms, see [cdu.edu](http://cdu.edu) or contact admissions director Todd Nolan at [admissions@cdu.edu](mailto:admissions@cdu.edu).

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By Joyce Bibey

When his second-grade teacher at Sacred Heart Grade School in Charleston gave the class a homework assignment to write about what they wanted to be when they grew up, he wrote he was going to be a priest. Little Tommy Gallagher pictured himself in the shoes of his pastor, Monsignor Edward Sadie. Fast forward to the teenage and college years and that picture may have blurred, but it never completely faded. Thankfully for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, the sweet daydream of that dark-haired youngster, whose eyes smile right along with his tight-lipped grin, took the Kanawha County boy all the way to Rome, the heart of the Church in the Eternal City, to learn the ministry of St. Peter – the rock of the Church.

The faithful of St. Joseph Parish and Knights of Columbus Council 1169 in Martinsburg describe Father Tom Gallagher as the rock of their faith community. Father Gallagher was named Priest of the Year by the WV Knights of Columbus for being an outstanding example of what a holy priest should be.

He grew up in Cross Lanes, West Virginia, a suburban area of Charleston, attended Sacred Heart Grade School, and graduated in 2002 from Charleston Catholic High School.

Father Gallagher is the third of seven children of Thomas and Suzette Gallagher. His parents moved to West Virginia from St. Louis for his father's job when he was an infant. His father was a coal company lawyer.

Looking at family photos, it's evident he looks like his late father with the dark wavy hair, brown eyes, and same smile. He also mirrors his father's high set of ideals and drive to remain focused and not over-complicate things.

While both of his parents treasured their faith, Father Tom's spirit truly reflects his mother, who has always been a role model for the attention she gives to others and her reverence to her faith.

As a child it was his mother that would make the Gallagher children sit for the "dreaded family rosary," he said with wide eyes and a grin, recalling his childhood. Then changing his face to sheer fondness added, "she has always encouraged me, encouraged us in our faith, but specifically me toward the priesthood," maybe call it a mother's intuition.

Whether it was attending Mass, a funeral at the family's parish the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, or the Santo Nino Novena and celebrations, Suzette Gallagher's devotion to the Church, the faithful, and the community has inspired the young priest.

Even in his teens and early twenties when he was "slowing the breaks down" on his call to the priesthood, she was persistent in her encouragement, "which was some-

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## Fr. Tom Gallagher - Priest of the Year

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Clockwise from top left: Father Thomas Gallagher receives the Priest of the Year Award from West Virginia Knights of Columbus State Deputy Frank Koening with Bishop Mark Brennan (left) and Father John Rice (right) with them; Father Thomas Gallagher, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Martinsburg; little Tommy Gallagher; and the Gallagher family visiting the grave of their grandfather Thomas Raymond Gallagher at Arlington National Cemetery (left to right: Eileen (being held), Meghan, Erin, Brendan, Mom (Suzette), James (being held), Kathleen, Dad (Tom), and young Frater Tom Gallagher, who like his father was also named after his grandfather.

Photo Illustration by Joyce Bibey

times not so encouraging," he said laughing. "She knew I was trying to dodge (the call to the priesthood), make excuses.

"As an adult I look back with such fondness of what she's done for me and my faith formation," he said. "She would take us to events and Masses that were beyond the Sunday obligation. At the time, I reacted like a typical kid – so, yes, I can totally identify with the kids I'm around now with that same look of dread," he said and added, "as I got older, I was like, 'Oh! I do see the lessons she taught me.' She wouldn't just go to church she would stay after and talk to people, because she cared. She didn't just attend a funeral or event; she would linger and give her love and attention to others. She still does this."

After high school Father Tom went to Wheeling Jesuit University and graduated with a degree in Philosophy.

"I so remember going back and forth with this idea of being a priest," he said. "I struggled. I wanted to be 100-percent all in with no doubts, but then I realized I need to try this out. It's okay if I don't know. I remember vividly I was in a metro sta-

tion in New Carrollton (Maryland, just outside Washington, D.C.) I was sick and tired of going back and forth in my head with my feelings. I did everything you should do to discern – prayer, reflection, etc. – then it hit me that this doesn't need to be seamless or some big boom of a feeling. I said, 'Fine!'"

That was the end of his senior year of college. He completed the application to be a diocesan priest – an application he had started and stopped several times in the years prior. Once accepted he was sent to St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe for one year before going to the Pontifical North American College in Rome for four years.

"I saw many people come and go those first years in seminary, but that's okay," he said. "I didn't look at them as failures, but as being strong enough to be immersed in their discernment. I was happy to be a part of that true fraternity. I was part of a group that encouraged each other to be simply and profoundly good priests."

He was ordained on June 22, 2012, at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling. Since then, he has served

as the priest secretary to the office of the bishop, associate pastor of St. Michael Parish in Wheeling, pastor of St. Anthony in Follansbee, and since 2017 the pastor of St. Joseph in Martinsburg.

He is credited for bringing Catholic identity back into the activities of the parish and Knights of Columbus. Having a large number of Spanish speaking parishioners and members of the Martinsburg area, Father Gallagher learned Spanish and has expanded the Hispanic ministry of St. Joseph. In fact, part of the celebration for his 10th Ordination Anniversary Mass was spoken in Spanish.

Father Gallagher's picture of a strong and growing parish community. See "Gallagher" on Page 15

#FaithInWV

Do you know an exceptional Catholic in West Virginia, someone or a group who are shining examples of #FaithInWV? Email Joyce Bibey your feature idea to jbibey@dwc.org. Visit FaithInWV.org and every issue of The Catholic Spirit to read more inspiring stories.

# Nine Children Enter the Church at St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Weirton



Courtesy Photos

From left, Father Dennis R. Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., administers the sacraments of baptism to Nevaeh Butto and confirmation to Garrett Pettit. They are two of nine children who came into the church at Masses May 14 and 15 at St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Weirton.

By Colleen Rowan

“I am quite adept at holding my feelings in check, but whenever I witness the baptism of a child or adult, I am almost always overcome with a powerful surge of emotion that I can hardly contain,” said Mark Tirona, director of Religious Education at St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Weirton. He was not alone in feeling this way at the weekend Masses on May 14 and 15 but was joined by the entire parish community in that emotion as nine children came into full communion with the church.

They were St. Joseph the Worker Grade School students Payton Brown, Cassidy Halfin, Kalie Moore, Garrett Pettit, and Gabriel Roupe along with Parish School of Religion (PSR) students Jacob Butto, Nevaeh Butto, Bella Swear-

## Gallagher...

Cont'd from Page 14

Father Gallagher's picture of a strong and growing parish community is clear. It is one that is confident in their Catholic identity, formation, and actions.

“I want to live the faith and I want the same for my parish,” he said. “I am by no means perfect, but I do know that I rely on faith – our faith. It's what leads us to charity and to do good works.

“We have to encourage each other in faith so we can have a devotional life,” he said. “Attending the Mass and the Eucharist the source and summit of our faith is paramount, and in addition we need to have the wisdom to know it is our actions that bring us to the fullness of faith.”

ingen, and Donald Swearingen V.

Tirona, who has been in his role for two years, said it is hard to find anything comparable to being a witness to the newness of life gifted to the newly baptized through their divine adoption by God in baptism made possible by Christ's Paschal Mystery in concert with the Holy Spirit. He worked with all five of the fifth-eighth grade students from St. Joseph the Worker and all four of the second-fourth grade students from the PSR.

It was a very emotional experience as well for Theresa Moore, the fifth-eighth grade religion teacher at St. Joseph the Worker, who also helped the children in their formation.

“The thing that impresses me the most about these kids is that they chose this on their own,” she said. “They were not forced by family members or anyone else around them. They simply desired to be closer to Christ and become a part of his family! The moments when each of these students came up to me and said, ‘Ms. Moore, I want to become Catholic, what do I do?’ were some of my proudest moments as a teacher! It really showed who they are as people and their strong desire to love God! I also have to pay tribute to their parents who have raised such wonderful children and worked with them along this process.”

The children received sacraments of baptism, first holy Communion, and confirmation from Very Rev. Dennis R. Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., pastor of the parish, who celebrated the Masses. This brings the total number of young people that have come into the church from

the parish's schools to 15 as six Madonna High School students entered the church in February at a weekly school Mass.

Father Schuelkens attributes all of this to two main things at the schools—a mission that is palpable, knowable, and understandable by every person in the building and teachers that are not afraid to share their faith.

“And, in particular, you have to have a religion teacher that loves the faith and is excited about it,” he said. “And it's not just educating, but they themselves are sharing the gift of faith that they have. We have Theresa Moore, a graduate of Franciscan University. It doesn't matter if it's the middle school or all the way down to the little ones, she has them fully engaged.”

At the high school level he points to Amy Granato, campus minister.

“At Madonna we gather every single day in the atrium of the school and pray,” Father Schuelkens said. “It is student led. At the end, we say our mission statement, ‘Faith, Family, and Service through Mary. At Madonna we are followers of Christ,’ and they (students) say, ‘Leaders of the world.’”

Mass is one of the highlights of the educational week and participation is key for St. Joseph the Worker students. There are 50 kids in the choir and 30 altar servers.

“At every school Mass we have at least seven servers,” Father Schuelkens said, bearing the incense, book, cross, and candles, and then one who works at the altar.

Father Schuelkens said he

pushes the envelope on one thing—altar servers do not have to be Catholic. But this decision proved to be a good one as two of the non-Catholic servers were among the nine kids who entered the church in May. To see them and a light in their eyes and the excitement to serve and the desire to know God and to be closer to God—“It's kind of why you go into the priesthood,” Father Schuelkens said.

“Ultimately, you answer a call but you want to preach the gospel in such a way and live the gospel in such a way that it stirs a curiosity in mind and heart that draws people to God speaking to them,” he said.

There is also Father Schuelken's teaching homily at the school Masses that engages the kids. He developed a catechetical or teaching program called Visualized Integrated Catechesis (VIC) and it is based on the saints. The kids are shown items and are asked, “Who is the saint?” A question that engages every single kid whether they raise their hand or not, Father Schuelkens said.

For example, the kids are shown handcuffs and keys. The saint is Pope John Paul II, the handcuffs are the handcuffs of hate, and the keys are the keys to forgiveness. It is the story of St. John Paul II, who forgave the man who shot him. That is the lesson.

If it is a difficult question, the student that has the correct answer gets a coupon for a free slushy. If it is an impossible question, Father Schuelkens tells the kids that if someone gets it right, there is a free dress down day.

# En la decisión anticipada de Dobbs, Corte Suprema anula Roe

Por Carol Zimmermann, Catholic News Service

**WASHINGTON (CNS)**—El 24 de junio, en una decisión de 5-4, la Corte Suprema de Estados Unidos anuló su decisión de casi 50 años en *Roe v. Wade*, el caso que legalizó el aborto en el país.

El fallo de 213 páginas de la corte en *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health Organization* no fue del todo inesperado debido a la filtración de un borrador de opinión un mes antes. El fallo enfatiza que no existe el derecho constitucional al aborto en Estados Unidos.

El caso de *Dobbs* se centró en la Organización de Salud de la Mujer de Jackson, una clínica abortista en Mississippi que desafió la ley estatal que prohíbe el aborto después de las 15 semanas de embarazo.

Dicho fallo de la Corte Suprema sobre el aborto hace que las decisiones de política de aborto queden en manos de los estados. Al menos la mitad de los estados planean prohibir o restringir abortos con esta decisión vigente, y 13 estados tienen leyes desencadenantes, establecidas para prohibir abortos inmediatamente después de la revocación de *Roe*.

"Sostenemos que *Roe* y *Casey* deben ser anulados", escribió el juez Samuel Alito en la opinión mayoritaria de la corte. *Casey v. Planned Parenthood* es la decisión de 1992 que confirmó *Roe*.

A Alito se unieron los jueces Clarence Thomas, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh, y Amy Coney Barrett.

La votación para mantener la re-

stricción del aborto en Mississippi fue de 6 a 3, y el presidente del Tribunal Supremo, John Roberts, votó con la mayoría. En una opinión separada, Roberts manifestó que no habría anulado la decisión de *Roe* de la corte.

Alito, escribiendo para la mayoría, dijo: "La Constitución no hace referencia al aborto, y ningún derecho de este tipo está protegido implícitamente por ninguna disposición constitucional, incluyendo aquella en la que ahora se basan principalmente los defensores de *Roe* y *Casey*: la Cláusula del Debido Proceso de la Enmienda 14".

Los obispos católicos de Estados Unidos que han apoyado la revocación de *Roe* reaccionaron de inmediato de manera positiva a la decisión de la corte, que llega al final del mandato de este año.

La Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos calificó la decisión como un "día histórico en la vida de nuestro país, uno que estimula nuestros pensamientos, emociones, y oraciones".

"Oramos para que nuestros funcionarios electos ahora promulguen leyes y políticas que promuevan y protejan a los más vulnerables entre nosotros", expresaba la declaración del 24 de junio del arzobispo de Los Ángeles, José H. Gómez, presidente de la USCCB, y el arzobispo de Baltimore, William E. Lori, presidente del Comité de Actividades Pro-Vida de la USCCB.

"Damos gracias a Dios por la decisión de hoy... Esta decisión justa salvará a innumerables niños inocentes que simplemente esperan nacer", in-

dicaban los obispos católicos de Nueva York en un comunicado poco después de que se diera a conocer la opinión de la corte.

Aquellos en ambos lados del asunto estaban fuera de la corte cuando se emitió el fallo y continuaron manifestándose con fuerza durante toda la tarde con carteles, megáfonos, abrazos, y gritos.

Las multitudes han estado fuera de la corte, bloqueada ahora por vallas de seguridad, durante días, anticipando esta decisión, tal como lo estaban cuando se filtró un borrador de opinión a principios de mayo.

Comentando desde la Casa Blanca el 24 de junio, el presidente Joe Biden dijo que la decisión de la corte fue, "en mi opinión, un día triste para el país, pero no significa que la lucha haya terminado", e instó a los estadounidenses responder con sus votos en las próximas elecciones.

También instó a los manifestantes "mantener todas las protestas pacíficas", y agregó: "Debemos oponernos a la violencia en cualquier forma, independientemente de su razón".

La opinión de *Dobbs* es muy similar al borrador filtrado que calificó a *Roe* como "extremadamente erróneo desde el principio".

Los jueces Stephen Breyer, Sonia Sotomayor, y Elena Kagan escribieron una disidencia conjunta que enfatizó la importancia de las decisiones anteriores de la corte sobre este tema.

Ellos agregaron, "Cualquiera que sea el alcance exacto de las próximas leyes, un resultado de la decisión de hoy es seguro: la reducción de los dere-

chos de las mujeres y de su condición de ciudadanas libres e iguales".

En su disidencia, los jueces también señalaron que sentían "tristeza por este tribunal, pero más por las millones de mujeres estadounidenses que hoy han perdido una protección constitucional fundamental".

Cuando la corte anunció el año pasado que tomaría este caso, luego de considerarlo más de una docena de veces desde 2020, los jueces dijeron que solo revisarían una de las tres preguntas que se les presentaron: "Si todas las prohibiciones de pre viabilidad sobre los abortos electivos son inconstitucionales".

Ese punto de viabilidad -- cuando se dice que un feto puede sobrevivir por sí mismo -- fue un punto clave en este caso, porque la Corte Suprema había dictaminado consistentemente que los estados no pueden restringir el aborto antes de las 24 semanas, o cuando un feto puede sobrevivir por sí mismo".

Un escrito de "amigo de la corte" presentado por la USCCB enfatizó que el aborto no es un derecho creado por la Constitución y lo llamó "inherentemente diferente de otros tipos de decisiones personales a las que esta corte ha otorgado protección constitucional".

Refiriéndose a las principales decisiones de aborto de la corte, el informe también advirtió que, si la Corte Suprema "continúa tratando el aborto como un tema constitucional", enfrentará más preguntas en el futuro sobre "qué tipo de regulaciones de aborto son permisibles".

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

**Para informar a las autoridades diocesanas:** La diócesis alienta a informar a las autoridades civiles apropiadas, ante todo, si se ha cometido un delito. La diócesis también alienta a informar a las autoridades eclesásticas apropiadas. Para reportar casos sospechosos de abuso sexual de niños por parte del personal de la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston a la Diócesis, comuníquese con uno de los siguientes designados al 1.888.434.6237 o 304.233.0880: Sr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Sr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; o Muy Reverendo Dennis Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., ext. 270. 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 Dra. Patricia Bailey al 304.242.6988. 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.

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More than 170 years ago the house at 110 15th Street in East Wheeling served as the original Wheeling Hospital, now thanks to the Sisters of the Congregation of St. Joseph, it will remain a house of hope as it will accommodate the offices and operations of Grow Ohio Valley a non-profit urban agricultural initiative.

The Sisters of St. Joseph came to West Virginia in 1853 from St. Louis to staff the hospital and teach and care for orphans. The property has been cherished by the sisters, who were able to purchase the property in 1996. The congregation has been supportive of the mission of Grow Ohio Valley since its inception

On June 24, the sisters, associates, and friends from the Congregation of St. Joseph gathered at the site with members of Grow Ohio Valley for a prayer service and a blessing of the property by Bishop Mark Brennan.

Grow Ohio Valley noted a portion of the house may also be used by AmeriCorps volunteers to live in while they are working in Wheeling.

Several of the sisters who have lived in the home attended the ceremony celebrating the transfer of ownership. Sister Kathleen Durkin, a board member and longtime supporter of Grow Ohio Valley, said, "It is wonderful that those who are inheriting this house are young, energetic, creative and loving. We are thrilled that our former home will continue to be a presence in the neighborhood into the future."

"Grow Ohio Valley has been working to build a just and equitable food system in the East Wheeling neighborhood for many years with the support of the Congregation of St. Joseph," said Glynis Board, interim executive director. "It has long been a dream of ours to be an extension of the sisters' values and work in our community. This house provides us an opportunity to do that. We are extremely grateful to the Congregation of St. Joseph for offering us your beloved house in East Wheeling."



## Sisters give Grow OV House of Hope



Photo Illustration by Joyce Bibey  
 Clockwise from top Sister Kathleen Durkin, board member and longtime supporter of Grow Ohio Valley, and Glynis Board, interim executive director of Grow Ohio Valley; Original Wheeling Hospital; Bishop Mark Brennan blesses the property; Grow Ohio Valley sign; honor to the sisters; historical photo of the Sisters of St. Joseph; and Bishop Brennan with the sisters and members of Grow Ohio Valley June 24.

## Finding Light in the Darkness



Thousands of West Virginians experienced damage to their homes and businesses after a double derecho tore through parts of northern West Virginia on June 14. In Ohio County, more than 60% of residents were without power.

In Wheeling, the buildings that house the Catholic Charities Neighborhood Center (CCNC) as well as the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston (DWC) Chancery were effected.

Without power at their offices, DWC employees joined the Catholic Charities team to pack meals by lantern light at our Neighborhood Center.

"We appreciate the support of our friends at the diocese," said Diana Bell, CCNC coordinator. "They helped pack meals for our meal delivery service which provides home-delivered meals to those who are homebound or unable to leave their homes."

The Neighborhood Center continued to operate without power to provide uninterrupted services to its clients/neighbors. Area churches, including St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Wheeling, offered their refrigerators for CCNC to store cold food.

"The community came together, as they always do in times of crisis," said Bell. "We are incredibly grateful."

To learn more about Catholic Charities West Virginia, including information about taking advantage of HomeCare services, please visit [www.CatholicCharitiesWV.org](http://www.CatholicCharitiesWV.org).

The Mission of Catholic Charities West Virginia: Guided by God's love, Catholic Charities collaborates with community partners, parishes, and families to provide caring and compassionate services to people in need and work toward lasting and meaningful change.



Courtesy Photo  
 CCNC Kitchen Manager Betty Simeth (left) and CCNC Coordinator Diana Bell (right) prepare meals during a power outage.

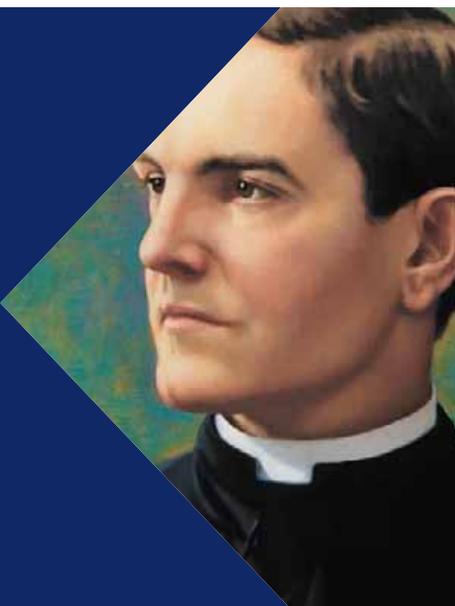


Courtesy Photo  
 Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston staff members pack meals at the Catholic Charities Neighborhood Center in Wheeling.

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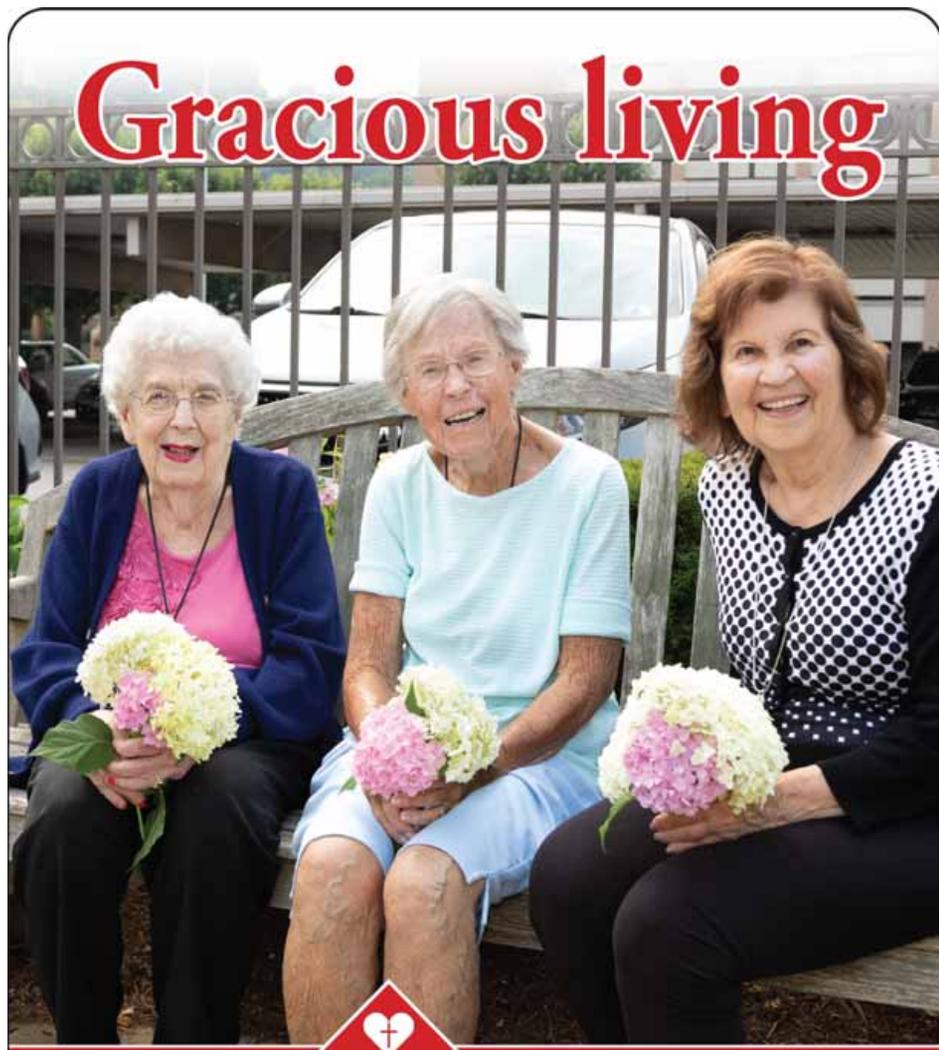



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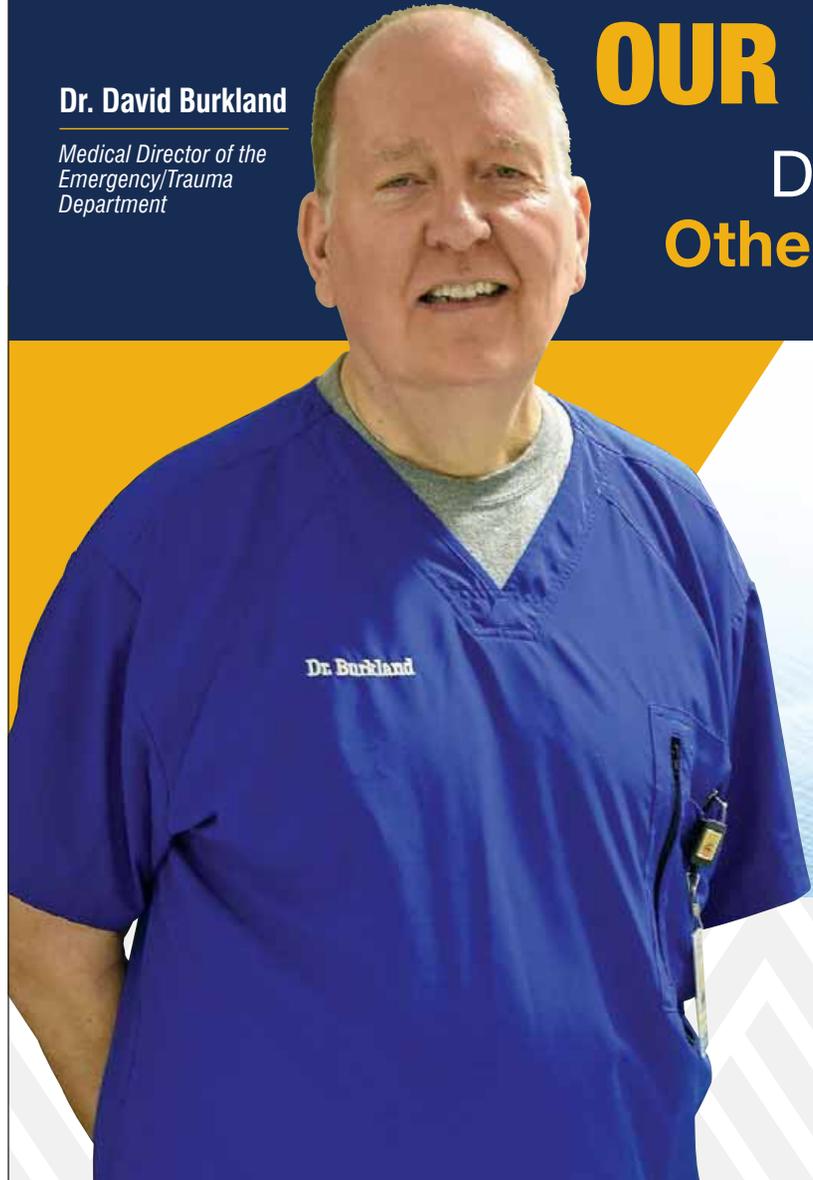
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