July 24, 2026 Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Vol. 56, No. 31

THE CATHOLIC Spirit

Bishop Menjívar Asks for Prayers after Flash Flooding Strikes West Virginia

Weston's St. Patrick School Damaged

By Colleen Rowan

UPSHUR COUNTY—Bishop Evelio Menjívar is asking for prayers after flash flooding struck Central West Virginia July 21 leaving communities devastated. Lewis and Upshur counties were the hardest hit as stroms dumped more than 6 inches of rain on the area in just 6 hours, according to the National Weather Service.

In a press conference in Buckhannon the next day, Gov. Patrick Morrisey said, "We had a significant amount of rainfall occur within a very short period of time. I'm told that in this area alone there were 4 1/2 inches of rain that dropped over a 37-minute period."

At the time of the presser, more than 30,000 people were without power. No

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Diocese Announces Special Collection for Flood Relief

WHEELING—Several West Virginia communities are once again devastated after another severe flash-flooding event that occurred July 21. The scope of the devastation is not yet fully clear as flood waters still restrict access to many communities. Many roads, hospitals, churches, and emergency communication centers all remain closed or inaccessible in the wake of severe weather.

Bishop Evelio Menjívar thanked all who have already come forward,

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Courtesy photo

Flood waters surround St. Patrick Church in Weston July 21. The parish rectory is next to the church and part of St. Patrick School is at left.

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Diocesan Official Appointments

Bishop Evelio Menjívar has made public the following appointments:

Very Rev. John Rice, V.G., V.F., is appointed Vicar General of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston and Moderator of the Curia for a term of six months, effective July 3, 2026. He is also appointed Vicar Forane of the Parkesburg Vicariate for a period of one year, beginning July 3, 2026, and ending July 2, 2027. These appointments are in addition to his current positions as Pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish, Parkersburg, and St. Monica Mission, Lubeck; and Designated Pastor of Parkersburg Catholic High School.

Very Rev. Sebastian Devasya, V.E., is appointed Episcopal Vicar for Clergy for a period of one year which is to expire on July 2, 2027. This position is in addition to his current positions as Pastor of St. Margaret Mary Parish, Parkersburg; and Designated Pastor of Parkersburg Catholic Elementary School.

Very Rev. Donald X. Higgs, Assoc. V.E., V.F., is appointed Associate Episcopal Vicar for Clergy. This appointment is for a period of one year which is to expire on July 2, 2027. He is also appointed Vicar Forane of the Charleston Vicariate for a period of one year, beginning July 3, 2026, and ending July 2, 2027. These appointments are made in addition to his current assignment as Rector of the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Charleston.

Very Rev. Timothy Grassi, V.F., is appointed Vicar Forane of the Martinsburg Vicariate for a period of one year, beginning July 3, 2026, and ending July 2, 2027. This appointment is made in addition to his current assignment as Pastor of St. James the Greater Parish, Charles Town.

Very Rev. Justin Golna, J.C.L., J.V., is appointed as Judicial Vicar of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston for a term of one year. This appointment is effective July 3, 2026, and shall expire on July 2, 2027. He is also appointed Delegate for Marriage. These appointments are made in addition to his current assignment as Pastor of St. John the Evangelist Parish, Wellsburg.

Very Rev. John P. McDonough is appointed Vicar Forane of the Clarksburg Vicariate for a period of one year, beginning July 3, 2026, and ending July 2, 2027. This appointment is made in addition to his current assignment as Pastor of St. Mary Parish, Star City.

Very Rev. Carlos Melocoton, V.F., is appointed Vicar Forane of the Wheeling Vicariate for a period of one year, beginning July 3, 2026, and ending July 2, 2027. This appointment is made in addition to his current assignment as Pastor of St. Michael Parish, Wheeling.

Very Rev. Binu Emmanuel, C.S.T., Assoc. V.F., is appointed Associate Vicar Forane of the Clarksburg Vicariate for a period of one year, beginning July 3, 2026, and ending July 2, 2027. This appointment is made in addition to his current assignment as Pastor of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish, Cheat Lake.

To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children: The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. We also encourage utilizing www.reportbishopabuse.org to make a report about any bishop in the U.S. If you have reason to believe that a bishop has engaged in sexual misconduct or has interfered with an investigation into sexual misconduct, please contact civil authorities in the applicable jurisdiction and visit www.reportbishopabuse.org. **To Report to Civil Authorities: Contact your local law enforcement:** numbers will vary based on your location. If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911. To confidentially report any incidence of suspected child abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse, contact the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families' Child Protective Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 800.352.6513. You may report anonymously to this hotline if you prefer. **To Report to Diocesan Authorities:** The diocese encourages reporting to the appropriate civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. The diocese also encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities. To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, contact one of the following designees at 1.888.434.6237 or 304.233.0880: Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; or Sr. Martha Gomez, ext. 264. You may also call the Diocese's Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504 or the Diocese's sexual abuse hotline at 833.230.5656. Additional methods of reporting are available at www.dwc.org, under "Accountability." Complaint forms are available online at www.dwc.org, click "Diocese" on the menu bar, then "Offices," then "Safe Environment", then "Download Files and Forms." The form is titled "Complaint Form for Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor." The form may be returned via U.S. mail to: Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003. **To Report to the Diocese's Victim Assistance Coordinator:** call Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, at 304.559.6742. The Diocese partners with Navex Global to offer EthicsPoint to report other concerns such as suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, religious, or lay employee of the Diocese or any Catholic parish or school in WV.EthicsPoint can be accessed via www.dwc.org, under "Accountability", then "Report Misconduct" or by calling 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint is a third-party reporting system that reports to civil authorities where applicable and Diocesan authorities, and the identity of the person reporting is protected. Links and information: WV Department of Health and Human Resources: https://dhhr.wv.gov/bss/services/Pages/Centralized-Intake-for-Abuse-and-Neglect.aspx West Virginia State Police, Crimes Against Children Unit: 304-293-6400.

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

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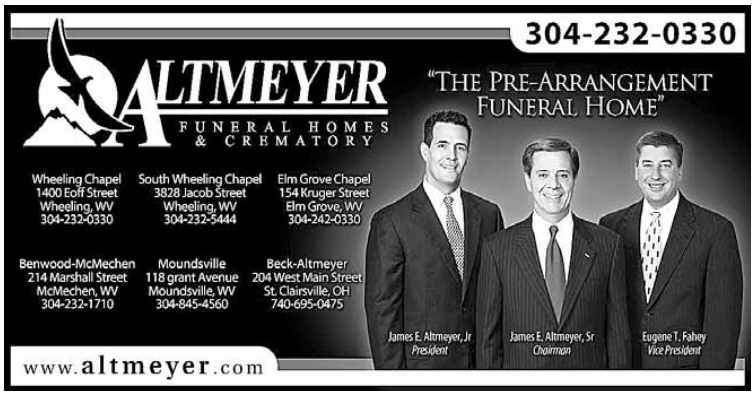

Alexis Wood photo

Flood waters submerge the Wal Mart parking lot in Weston.

Courtesy photo

The flooded basement of St. Patrick School in Weston is shown.

Flooding...

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fatalities have been reported, but search and rescue efforts continued at press time.

The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources and other emergency agencies conducted more than 100 rescues, many of them by boat from the Wal Mart in Weston, Morrisey said. Flood waters also submerged a portion of Interstate 79 and Rt. 33 between Weston and Buckhannon.

Like many homes and buildings in Weston, St. Patrick Church and rectory and St. Patrick School were surrounded by flood waters. Diocesan Director of Buildings and Properties John Reardon said both the school and rectory sustained significant flooding, but the full scope of the damage is yet to be determined.

The school posted an update on its Facebook page July 22, but first offering prayers for school families and neighbors.

"Our hearts and prayers are with all of our St. Patrick School families and everyone in Weston who has been affected by the recent flooding," school officials posted. "The floodwaters rose beyond anything we could have imagined, making their way past our basement level and completely submerging it. While the damage is significant, we place our trust in God, knowing He remains with us through every trial."

They thanked their school staff, volunteers, parents, parishioners, alumni, and community members for the outpouring of prayers, generosity, and hard work in responding to the catastrophe.

"Your willingness to serve has been a true reflection of Christ's love and the strength of our St. Patrick family," school officials said in the post.

"While the recovery process is only beginning, we ask that you continue to keep our school, our families, and all those affected by this devastating flood in your prayers," they said. "With God's grace, we know brighter days are ahead."

In Buckhannon, Holy Rosary Church was spared while flood waters ravaged the city. Buckhannon Mayor Robbie Skinner, III, said it has been "heartbreaking" to see this happen to his community.

"Keep us in your prayers," he said at the press conference.

Morrisey has deployed 500 National Guard troops in Upshur and

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Collection...

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including volunteers from our parishes, schools, and Catholic Charities West Virginia (CCWVa) to assist in the relief efforts as well as the first responders who continue to assist the victims of this horrific event.

"I ask you to join me in prayer for all those affected by the devastating flash flooding that occurred in many areas of our state on July 21," the bishop said. "I am thankful to see so many reports of people coming together from all parts of the state to lend support and comfort to their neighbors in need. Now is the time to put our faith into action, assisting our sisters and brothers in love and care for one another. Let us be the answer to their prayers for help and comfort. These beautiful mountains that we call home, carry within itself also many risks to human life, but every unfortunate event presents us an opportunity to rise up."

To aid the relief efforts, Bishop Menjívar is asking all parishes and missions within the Diocese to conduct special collections on the weekends of August 1-2 or August 8-9. Checks should be made out to your respective parish with "Disaster Relief" on the memo line. Immediate donations to the relief effort can also be

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Flooding...

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Lewis counties who are conducting debris removal and support to victims. Shelters are open at Buckhannon Nazarene Church, Lewis County High School, and Philippi Middle School.

Morrisey declared a State of Emergency for all 55 counties as the severe storms moved across the state. Reardon said that St. Joseph Central Catholic High School and St. Joseph Grade School in Huntington suffered flooding as well. Damages are not yet known.

In the aftermath of the flooding, Bishop Menjívar said, "I ask you to join me in prayer for all those affected by the devastating flash flooding that occurred in many areas of our state on July 21. I am thankful to see so many reports of people coming together from all parts of the state to lend support and comfort to their neighbors in need."

Notre Dame High School and St. Mary Central Grade School in Clarksburg asked their families to join in praying for their fellow Catholic school community in Weston.

"We lift up our brothers and sisters at St. Patrick's Catholic School who have been affected by the devastating flooding," the schools posted to Facebook. "Surround their students, families, faculty, and staff with Your peace, protection, and strength during this difficult time.

"Grant them hope in the midst of uncertainty, comfort to those who are hurting, and the support they need as they begin to recover. May our Catholic community come together in faith, compassion, and service, reflecting Your love in all that we do."

Collection...

Cont'd from Page 3

made today on the diocesan website at https://dwc.org/disaster-relief/.

All of the funds collected will remain in West Virginia and will be managed by CCWVa. Monies will support both immediate and long-term needs met by CCWVa and affiliated Catholic agencies and will be allocated along a four-tier priority list as follows:

1. Parishes in and around the affected area who directly assist families will receive funds from this collection to give aid to those in need.

2. CCWVa Regional staff will receive funding for direct, short-term recovery assistance to victims.

3. Partner agencies who work with CCWVa to administer relief to West Virginia residents affected by the flooding.

4. Any funds remaining will be given to CCWVa for long-term humanitarian and recovery efforts. This fund will assist families long after other organizations have moved out, helping families and individuals in the rebuilding process to restore safe, secure, and sanitary living conditions.

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

Courtesy photo

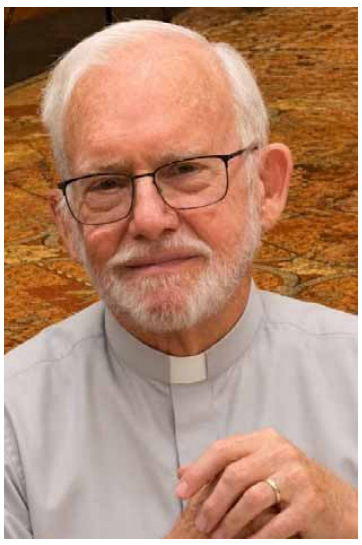
Flooding in Buckhannon is shown.

Obituary—Deacon Jerry Showalter

With sympathy and love, we share that Deacon Jerry Showalter (88) passed peacefully on the morning of Wednesday, July 22, 2026, at Camden Clark Medical Center in Parkersburg, while morning prayers were being said by his bedside.

Jerry was foremost a father to his three daughters and five sons, and the example he set through 69 years of adoring marriage served as a powerful and successful example to his children. Jerry was unapologetically Catholic and raised his children in the Faith, but he left room for each of his children to find God as individuals. He preferred to model his beliefs, rather than debate them, and three generations of his offspring cherished the constant presence of his love. Jerry often recalled truly hearing God for the first time in the silence of the Hughes River, rowing a boat as a child, and he continued to find spiritual clarity and strength in the stillness of the outdoors.

Jerry later felt strongly called to the clergy. Jerry was ordained a Catholic permanent deacon in 1981 and became the longest serving permanent deacon in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. Over forty-five years of service, Jerry supported parishioners across West Virginia and adjacent states, and he became a fixture at his home parish of St. Margaret Mary in Parkersburg, where he supported wide-ranging programs, helped celebrate the Mass, proclaimed the Gospel, and preached homilies



that often focused on the earthly requirements of living a good, spiritual life. He understood he had committed to always serve as a deacon and strived to set an example and care for the spiritual and physical welfare of others regardless of time or place.

Many people will remember Jerry from his thirty-one years as a union ironworker, building infrastructure across the mid-Ohio Valley and as far away as Washington, DC, and Louisville, KY. Jerry never planned this route in life, but when his own father was injured on a construction site in 1955, Jerry went to work to support his mother and family in the closing days of his senior year at Parkersburg High School, returning only to graduate with his class.

Over the following decades, Jerry was frequently forced to take work far from home to provide for his steadily growing family, but he would travel hundreds of miles after finishing each week to spend as much time as possible at home. After his own injuries led him to retire from ironworking in 1986, Jerry would often share the joy he had felt looking out on creation from high upon the iron, and he would sometimes recall the hardships of working in the bitter cold and the blazing heat. On rare occasions, he would describe the terrible day in April 1978 when he, his crew, and his eldest son helped recover bodies from the Willow Island cooling tower collapse — the deadliest construction accident in U.S. history.

After ironworking, Jerry went on to complete a master's degree in education, and former students will remember his service as a K–8 public school teacher in Parkersburg/Wood County and the surrounding area from 1990 to 2000. Jerry loved being a teacher and treasured helping young people understand the practical value of the material they learned. Jerry ended his working life over a wonderful five-year period of accompanying his youngest son in traveling over the plains of Ohio and the mountains of West Virginia to perform surveying projects — and stopping for an ice cream cone at the end of each day, when possible. Jerry was an avid reader, loved writing and creating art, appreciated fine food, and would not say "no" to a drop of whiskey, served neat, if offered.

He is survived by his loving wife of 69 years, Bobbie (Brown); his children Lyman, Steven, Catherine (Wharton), Susan (Showalter-Bucher), Patrick, John, and William; his sons-in-law Deacon Steve Wharton, Michael Oliver, and Richard Bucher; his daughters-in-law Marcy (Hoard), Karen (Hughes), Rachel (Twardzik), Janel (McCarthy), and Jill (Ritchie); and, at last count, 62 grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Jerry was predeceased by his beloved daughter Linda (Oliver) in April 2026 and by his sisters Jennie (Stephenson) and Josie (Canary).

Mass of Christian Burial will be Monday (July 27) at 11 a.m. at Saint Margaret Mary Catholic Church in Parkersburg with Bishop Emeritus Mark E. Brennen officiating. Interment will follow at Mount Carmel Cemetery. Visitation will be Sunday (July 26) 2-5 p.m. at the Leavitt Funeral Home, Parkersburg with Catholic wake service immediately following, Bishop Evelio Menjívar officiating.

Online condolences may be sent to the family at www.leavittfuneralhome.com.

Diocese Announces Four New Seminarians

Colleen Rowan photo

Bishop Evelio Menjívar is pictured with the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's seminarians. In the front row, from left, are Bryan Tedeschi, Patrick Childers, Christopher Nelson, Andrew Dean, Bishop Menjívar, Dominick Beckman, Dominic Massimino, and Father John Soplinski, director of Vocations for the diocese. In the back, from left, are Deacon Michael Aiello, Joseph Derico, Sebastian Lasko, Donvito Cortese, Isaac Lucas, Michael J. Tupta, Nathan Schmidt, Timothy Kawash, and John "Brady" Jordan.

By Colleen Rowan

The diocese of Wheeling-Charleston has four new, homegrown seminarians hailing from parishes in the northern, eastern, and central regions of the state.

Father John Soplinski, director of vocations, was pleased to make the announcement on July 22 in Wheeling.

"It is a testament to the prayer of the people," he said, that these four men have entered priestly formation and are now preparing for seminary.

The diocese's Vocations Office provided the following information on the new seminarians: Patrick Childers is a parishioner of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Wheeling. This fall, he will be attending the Pontifical College Josephinum in Columbus, Ohio, entering into his Propaedeutic Year of seminary. Patrick enjoys exercising, reading, wood carving, and playing games. He won the 2023 Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Aquinas Award and is also an Eagle Scout.

John "Brady" Jordan is a member of St. Patrick Parish in Weston. This fall, he will be attending Pope St. John Paul II Seminary in Washington, D.C., entering into his Propaedeutic Year. Brady enjoys studying Church history and the Catechism, playing sports, as well as farm work and fishing. He won the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Aquinas Award and has also been an active member of the St. Patrick Pro-Life Club.

Isaac Lucas is a member of Immaculate Conception Parish in Clarksburg. This fall, he will be attending Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Md., entering into his Propaedeutic Year. Isaac spends a lot of his free time reading as well as watching documentaries and sports. He enjoys playing video games and walks in the park. He volunteers weekly at the Clarksburg Mustard Seed, a non-profit food and clothing pantry.

Dominic Massimino is from Harpers Ferry and is a member of St. Agnes Parish in Shepherdstown. This fall, he will also be attending Mount St. Mary's Seminary entering into his Propaedeutic Year. Dominic enjoys going to the

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Seminarians...

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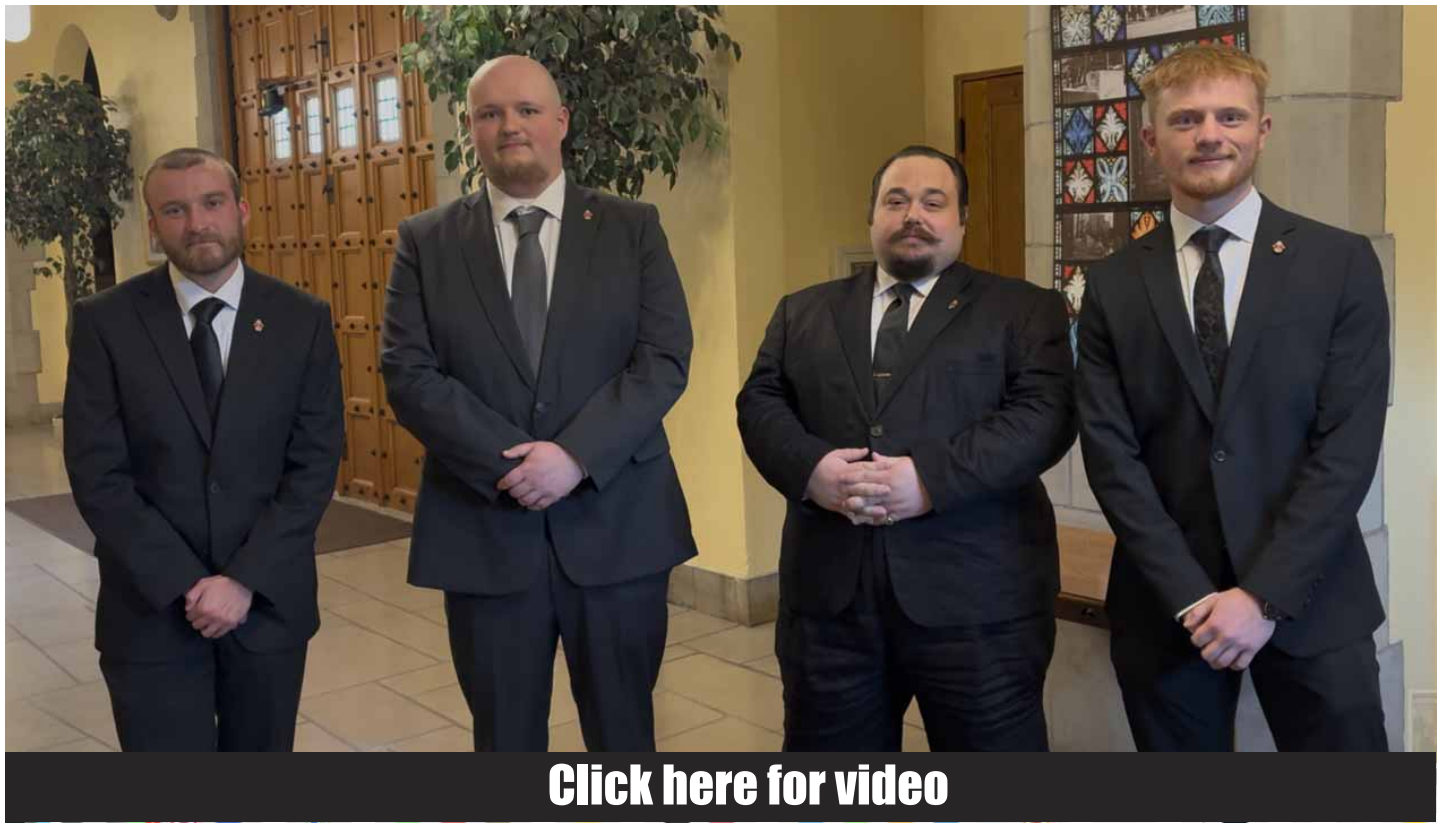
theatre, ballet, and opera as well as listening to music, spending time with friends, and going on walks. He has been a Grand Knight for the Knights of Columbus for three years and has been granted the honor of being named Knight of the Holy Sepulcher.

Father Soplinski made the announcement of the new seminarians as all 15 of the dioceses' seminarians were in Wheeling for meetings with Bishop Evelio Menjívar July 22-24. During that time, they attended Mass celebrated by the bishop and prayed the rosary for vocations at the Cathedral of St. Joseph and attended the Wheeling Serra Club Burse Dinner next door at Central Catholic High School.

Father Soplinski ended his remarks with a plea to the faithful: "Please continue to pray that the Lord may grant laborers for his harvest."



Colleen Rowan photo

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's four new seminarians Patrick Childers, Isaac Lucas, Dominic Massimino, and John "Brady" Jordan (from left) introduce themselves in a video. Click above to view.

Bishop Menjívar Concludes 175th Anniversary Year of the Diocese at Basilica in Charleston

Martina Hart photo

Bishop Evelio Menjívar celebrates the closing Mass of the 175th anniversary year of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston on July 19.

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By Martina Hart

CHARLESTON — Bishop Evelio Menjívar celebrated the closing Mass of the 175th anniversary year of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart on July 19.

It was also the first time at his Co-Cathedral in the southern part of West Virginia since being installed as the tenth bishop of the diocese at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling on July 2. Joining Bishop Menjívar were Bishop Mark E. Brennan, bishop emeritus of the diocese; Very Rev. Donald X. Higgs, Assoc. V.E., V.F., rector of the Basilica; Father Prakash Kerketta, vice rector; Father William K Matheny, Jr., retired; Deacon Michael Kawash; and Deacon Michael Aiello; as well as seminarians of the diocese and altar servers. Basilica parishioners and other faithful from the area filled the church for the joyful occasion.

Leading them in worship were the combined adult and youth choirs under the direction of music director Rosemary Severn, accompanied by principal organist Gregory Gray and other instrumentalists. Bishop Menjívar thanked Bishop Brennan and Father Higgs for welcoming him with open hearts.

"For me, one of the most moving moments during the installation ceremony on July 2 – and even today we did that – was when I stood in front of the closed doors of the Saint Joseph Cathedral," he reflected during his homily. That moment for him seemed like an eternity with the "whole world" watching him via livestream channels and on EWTN. "But at that moment, I stood there in front of a closed door, not just as a bishop performing a customary ceremony.

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Basilica...

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I stood there as Evelio, the man, the immigrant, the newly arrived person in West Virginia, the new member of this local church," he recalled.

Finally, the moment arrived when the door was opened by Bishop Brennan – who as Father Brennan had opened the door for Evelio Menjívar-Alaya more than 30 years earlier to enter priestly formation for the Archdiocese of Washington – greeting him with, "Bienvenido! Welcome!" Bishop Menjívar said in these few weeks in the diocese he had experienced the same openness and kindness time and again from the tremendously welcoming people of West Virginia who have been receiving him with open arms and open hearts.

"Therefore, now I do not only have a religious obligation towards the diocese, but also, I have the obligation to be a herald of good news to others, of this beautiful hospitality, of the beautiful things, of the positive things happening here in West Virginia. ... It is your way of life," he said.

Bishop Menjívar considered it providential that the beginning of his ministry here coincided with the 175th anniversary celebration of the diocese, an occasion to thank God for all the good things that had been accomplished here during that time.

"Anniversary celebrations ... are never simply about remembering the past," he said, "they are opportunities to celebrate God's faithfulness, to give thanks for His countless blessings, and to renew our commitment to the mission He has entrusted to us."

He recalled the recent celebration of the 250th anniversary of the signing of the Declaration of Independence, a milestone commemorated by the bishops of the United States by consecrating the nation to the Sacred Heart of Jesus during their Spring Plenary Assembly in Florida in June.

"We recognize that the future of our country ... ultimately is in God's loving hands," he said. "For the Sacred Heart of Jesus to reign in our world and in our land ... our hearts must be transformed by His love and mercy."

Bishop Menjívar stated that over the past 175 years the people of God in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston witnessed the gospel concretely with their actions, by establishing educational and charitable ministries as well as vibrant parishes while at the same time also enduring moments of darkness and deep suffering. He invited those gathered to likewise transform society and culture by witnessing the values of God's kingdom and not to become indifferent.

"In his final encyclical letter 'Dilexit Nos' (He loved us) Pope Francis invited us to ask a simple yet a profound question when confronting suffering and challenges: Do I have a heart?"

"As we gather here at this beautiful Basilica of the Sacred Heart," he explained, "the pierced Heart of Jesus invites us to approach Him with trust and confidence, knowing that Jesus never lets us down. God has a heart, a loving and merciful heart."

Martina Hart photo

Parishioners of Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston present the gifts to Bishop Evelio Menjívar.

Bishop Menjívar was happy to see many children and young people present "because you are not only the future of the church, ... but you are already the present of this church."

"My hope is that ... 25 years from now, when we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the diocese, ... the new generations, your children and then grandchildren, will be able to say what we say today of those who came before us: They trusted the Lord. They served the Lord, and they served His people. They made a difference in the life of others, and by God's grace, they kept the faith."

Before the final blessing Cindy McGhee, a member of the Basilica's parish finance council thanked Bishop Brennan for his leadership and welcomed Bishop Menjívar as their new pastor. Her words were echoed by those of Father Higgs.

"Thank you, Bishop Mark, our bishop emeritus, for your seven years as our bishop," he said. "You brought great healing, restored trust and through your prophetic words have called us to care for others."

He then continued, "Bishop Evelio, we welcome you to your other cathedral. And we look forward to your prophetic words, calling us to walk with Jesus as we walk with each other. We offer you our prayers as we look forward with joy and hope as you shepherd us after the Sacred Heart of Jesus."

The joyful celebration continued with a reception in the Commons of Charleston Catholic High School. It provided an opportunity for pastor and parishioners to meet and get to know one another.

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The Telling of the Story Takes Us Home

By Father Andrew M. Switzer

On this Fourth of July, the 250th anniversary of our independence, let us remind ourselves that we still have a long way to go in realizing the American Dream. The installation of Bishop Evelio, though, gives me great hope. In the words of Martin Luther King Jr., "The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice." My brothers and sisters, it is our responsibility as a Church to take up that prophetic call and, by the grace of God, help bend it.

I am convinced that the Lord called Bishop Evelio to be our bishop in West Virginia at this critical time for our state and country. I first met Bishop Evelio when Bishop Mark Brennan sent Father Tommy Gallagher and me to El Salvador to learn and experience the prophetic Church of El Salvador. Out of all of my spiritual experiences, I was the most deeply moved by the people of El Salvador, their faith, and their prophetic witness. I witnessed a vibrant Church, a prophetic Church, a Church that stood with the people.

In the cathedral, when Bishop Romero's name was mentioned by Bishop Brennan, we could hear shouts and applause because there are those of us in Appalachia who know the great courage that Bishop Romero showed, giving his life for the people of El Salvador as he prophetically and courageously stood for the gospel against injustice. I believe Bishop Romero's intercession brought Bishop Evelio to our mountain state. Bishop Romero knew we needed a bishop who would boldly witness to the gospel and who would have the courage and humility to rely on the grace of God to shepherd us.

The Gospel shows us that a good shepherd is a good listener, and having gotten to know Bishop Evelio, I can say that he is a great listener. He acts only after deeply listening. Bishop Evelio listens to the voice of the voiceless. I spoke with him after his installation, and he said he had lost his voice. I replied, "Yes, because you chose, as our shepherd at your installation, to be the voice of the voiceless."

Bishop Evelio, in such a short time and through such deep listening, gave us a vision for our diocese in his opening homily. Listen, people of God, to what he has called us, as our shepherd, to be: "The Church is at her best when she stands with those on the margins, defending the dignity of every human person, working tirelessly for justice rooted in the Gospel of Jesus Christ."

The theme of Bishop Evelio's homily was "home." Bishop Evelio told us in his homily that he was not going to give a theological dissertation on "Country Roads, Take Me Home." Yet he spoke to our hearts, naming something deeply present in every human heart: the longing for home.

He then reflected on our history. After all, we West Virginians could have no more fitting bishop than Bishop Evelio—an immigrant bishop, earned his GED, went on to college and seminary, became the Auxiliary Bishop of Washington, D.C., and then came home to become the Bishop of West Virginia. Can we not see that this story is the story of the American Dream?

We, as the Church in West Virginia, are a Church of immigrants, just as Bishop Evelio chose to carry the crosier of Bishop Donahue, another immigrant bishop who became a champion and advocate, a voice for the voiceless.

I recently spoke with Denise Giardina, a historian whose historical fiction may be one of the best ways to study the story of Appalachia. Denise, an Episcopal deacon, has done great ecumenical work over the years with the Roman Catholic Church and other churches for justice in our mountain state. She told me that, knowing the history of West Virginia, she believed Bishop Evelio was the perfect bishop for our state and that El Salvador and West Virginia have many similarities.

I have walked the country roads through the mountains of El Salvador with Bishop Evelio on pilgrimage, and they certainly reminded me of the mountains of West Virginia. The truth is that Appalachia has often had its resources exploited by outsiders. This is also the story of St. Óscar Romero and the Church of El Salvador. But Bishop Romero helped the people rise up and stood for the dignity of every human person.

I believe Pope Leo XIV, who took his name in continuity with Pope Leo XIII—the pope who stood for the rights of workers and for social justice—understands this tradition well. Right here in our mountain state, worker-priests, religious sisters, and laypeople stood against injustice and for the rights of workers and the dignity of every human person.

If we watch the movie Matewan, another great way to study Appalachia, we see a Church of immigrants. As the United Mine Workers came here to organize, they insisted that there could be no discrimination within the union. They recognized that those with money and power wanted to divide them and that, if they were divided, it would be impossible for them to organize and to build a home founded upon the dignity of every human person.

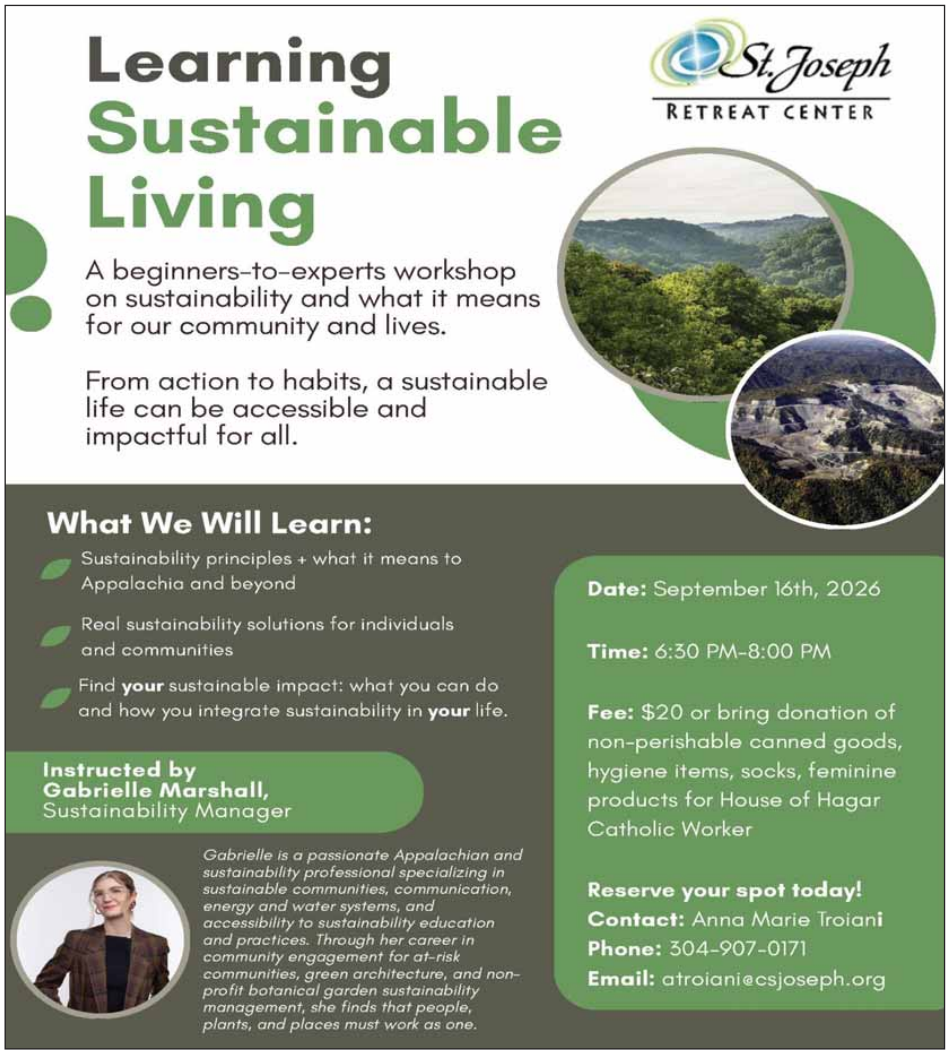
This story is also the story of El Salvador. Wealthy elites sought to exploit the people, but Óscar Romero united the people and chose to lead a prophetic Church that stood for social justice.

Bishop Evelio is familiar with work of the Catholic Committee of Appalachia (CCA) and the three great pastoral letters: This Land Is Home to Me, At Home in the Web of Life, and The Telling Takes Us Home. They are a vision for Appalachia that Bishop Evelio articulated so well in his homily. In the homily, he said he was not going to give a dissertation on Appalachia, but he knows that these letters are just that—a dissertation written by the people.

When people ask me about these letters and who wrote them, I always tell them that the people of Appalachia wrote these letters. The hollows of Appalachia were traveled, listening sessions took place, and the people themselves were the experts.

I have spent some time working in the mountains of Appalachia as a chaplain, listening to and ministering to the dying. Again and again, I heard stories from people who wanted to die in their home, on their land. I was overwhelmed as I listened to the great lessons of the dying. They could see heaven, or the Kingdom of God, in the land and place where they lived. In a

See "Story" on Page 11



Story...

Cont'd from Page 10

sense, it was already there, and yet not fully realized. Their home pointed them toward their true home.

I began to reflect on the rich spirituality of Appalachia. As I listened to Catholics, people of different religions, those who were spiritual but not religious, and people of all goodwill, I encountered a deeply rich spirituality. We as a Church are called to come alongside and accompany those on the journey. As Bishop Evelio reminded us, we are not to proselytize or have a hidden agenda. We know that the Church in Appalachia has at times exploited and abused people in this way. Rather, we are called to accompany people, to bring out the best in them just as they are, and to attract people by what Pope Francis called in The Joy of the Gospel the "law of attraction."

How do we find our way home? We tell our stories. We listen to one another's stories. We realize that what unites us is greater than what divides us and, as Bishop Evelio reminds us, that in all of us the deepest desire is to find our way home. The telling of the story takes us home.

The last pastoral letter, The Telling Takes Us Home, was written by my friend Michael Iafrate, and he approached it with a collaborative spirit. Michael, I believe, had a prophetic call. Sadly, he died far too young from cancer. Michael was ahead of his time, and like many who are called to be prophets, he faced the persecution that often comes with speaking truth to power.

When he wrote The Telling Takes Us Home, he made sure to lift up voices that had been silenced or abused. At a time when the Church in West Virginia was at the height of the abuse crisis, Michael chose to go out and listen, to be the voice of the voiceless, as all with a prophetic calling are called to do. He listened to those who had been abused by the church, to those who had experienced discrimination in our state, to veterans who carried the scars of war, and to coal miners who suffered from black lung or whose loved ones had been killed in mining accidents caused by corporate greed, and many others who have been marginalized. The letter by standing in solidarity and deeply listening to others hurts, also honors and gives agency to their dreams.

Michael wrote by sitting on people's porches and listening with his heart. Micheal never finished his formal dissertation. The truth is though I think he did write his dissertation because Micheal choose not to do theology from an ivory tower but to do it with the people of Appalachia.

As I reflect on what Bishop Evelio shared in his homily about the pastoral letters, I am convinced that Michael Iafrate's true dissertation was The People's Pastoral — a work born not from academic isolation but from accompaniment, listening, and honoring the lived wisdom of Appalachian communities. In their diversity, he recognized them as the experts of their own reality. Michael understood that the voice that matters is the voice of the people of God—the voice of Appalachia. By honoring that voice and telling those stories, we will find our way home.

Bishop Evelio, welcome home as our shepherd. As we tell each other's stories, may the telling, like the story of Emmaus, remind us that Jesus walks with us on these country roads. In the telling, with the one who at first seemed like a stranger but was Jesus, we discover that the telling takes us home.

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Bishop Menjívar Gathers with Hispanic Catholic Community in Star City

By Pam Queen

STAR CITY — Bishop Evelio Menjívar made his first visit to Morgantown celebrating Misa Por la Communidad de la Parroquia (Mass for the parish community) Saturday, July 18, at St. Mary Church in Star City.

The July 18 Mass was celebrated mostly in Spanish. St. Mary's is one of six parishes in the diocese with weekly Masses in Spanish. There are 93 Catholic parishes in West Virginia and the bishop said he is just beginning to visit each one.

Joining the bishop were Very Rev. John McDonough, V.F., pastor of St. Mary's; Msgr. Paul Hudock, who leads Hispanic Ministry at the parish; and Father Gary Naegele, chaplain JW Ruby Memorial Hospital and Mon Health Medical Center in Morgantown. Deacon Luis Pagano of St. Leo Parish in Inwood served as deacon for the Mass.

Songs, prayers, the readings and Gospel were all in Spanish. Bishop Menjívar gave his homily mostly in Spanish but did add a few comments in English.

"God changes our plans," he said. "Mary had a plan and God asked, 'Mary will you cooperate with my plans?' She said, yes, and she knew her life would change."

Later, he said, "May we open our hearts to Mary and to strangers who arrive in our lives. If we open our hearts, we are also welcoming Jesus. It's a beautiful experience to be here with you. It's truly a blessing. I was a stranger and you have welcomed me."

Pam Queen photos

Clockwise from top: Bishop Evelio Menjívar meets with the faithful and Msgr. Paul Hudock (third from left) at St. Mary Church in Star City before celebrating Misa Por la Communidad de la Parroquia (Mass for the parish community) July 18; the bishop offers Communion to the faithful; altar servers lead the procession at the end of Mass; and the bishop processes out of the church with Deacon Luis Pagano of St. Leo Parish in Inwood.

Msgr. Hudock celebrates Masses in Spanish at both St. Mary's and Immaculate Conception Parish in Clarksburg. He said 60-100 congregants attend those Masses most weeks. He was happy to have the bishop share a Spanish Mass at St. Mary's.

"It means a lot," Msgr. Hudock said. "It's an initial opportunity for the new bishop to visit. It's a blessing when the bishop shows up. There's a little bit more of the holy spirit here."

Msgr. Hudock said Latino Catholics and the community were invited to attend the Mass and meet the bishop. Also, representatives from the Consulate of Guatemala were set up in Peace Hall, offering legal services to anyone needing help.

Marilena Mazariegos attends the weekly Spanish Mass at St. Mary's. She was the lector for the July 18 celebration.

"This is a great blessing," Mazariegos said prior to the start of the Mass. "It's a good opportunity to know we have a Hispanic bishop. You don't see that often. (We) are pretty happy. That is why (we) are here today."

Prior to the final blessing, Bishop Menjívar said he hoped to be in his position for 25 years.

"I hope to come back to celebrate Mass in English and in Spanish," he said. "I want to get to know how can I serve you better."

Following celebration, Bishop Menjívar visited with many of the congregants at a reception hosted by the church.

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West Virginia Knights of Columbus Prepare for a Year of Growth and Excellence

Organizational Meeting emphasizes leadership, membership growth, and stronger parish engagement

West Virginia** Knights of Columbus State Council leadership gathers during the 2026 Organizational Meeting at St. Alphonsus Church in Wheeling. **Pictured** from left are **State Deputy Brian Gordon, State Secretary Tom Burke, State Treasurer Carmen Romano, State Advocate Greg Hilleary, State Warden Glenn King,** and **Immediate Past State Deputy Frank Koenig.

The West Virginia Knights of Columbus State Council gathered July 10–12 at St. Alphonsus Church in Wheeling for its annual Organizational Meeting, bringing together state officers, district deputies, and program directors to prepare for the 2026–2027 fraternal year.

Throughout the weekend, leaders reviewed statewide goals, membership initiatives, and administrative responsibilities while preparing councils for another year of service. State Deputy **Brian Gordon** welcomed the leadership team and encouraged officers to continue strengthening councils, supporting pastors, and serving Catholic families across the Mountain State.

The meeting also included presentations by state directors covering membership growth, council administration, and planning for the coming fraternal year. Leaders discussed strategies for increasing church drives, expanding Faith in Action programs, and improving communication among councils.

The annual meeting concluded with a renewed commitment to help every council achieve excellence while continuing the Order's mission of Charity, Unity, and Fraternity throughout West Virginia.

Supreme Regional Growth Director Brandon Brown challenged West Virginia leaders to build a true culture of invitation by personally inviting Catholic men to become Knights. Rather than simply recruiting, Brown emphasized evangelizing through personal relationships and parish involvement.

Brown presented four guiding principles for council success: Early is Easy, Culture of Invitation, Opportunities, and Partnerships. He encouraged councils to see every parish activity as an opportunity to invite Catholic men to grow in faith and fraternity through the Knights of Columbus.

The Organizational Meeting also featured an overview of the 2026–2027 Big Four Award Updates, highlighting revised requirements for the Star Council, Star District, McGivney, Founders, and Columbian Awards. Emphasis was placed on timely reporting, Safe Environment compliance, meaningful Faith in Action programs, and sustained membership growth.

As preparations begin for the new fraternal year, state leaders left Wheeling united in their commitment to strengthen councils, support parishes, welcome new members, and continue extending the charitable mission of the Knights of Columbus throughout West Virginia.

El obispo Menjívar se reúne con la comunidad hispana en Star City

Por Pam Queen

STAR CITY — El obispo Evelio Menjívar realizó su primera visita a Morgantown para celebrar la Misa por la Comunidad Parroquial el sábado 18 de julio en la iglesia de Santa María, en Star City.

La misa se celebró principalmente en español. Santa María es una de las seis parroquias de la diócesis que celebran misas semanales en español. Hay 93 parroquias católicas en Virginia Occidental y el obispo afirmó que ya empezó su recorrido para visitar a cada una.

El obispo fue acompañado por monseñor John McDonough, V.F., párroco de Santa María; monseñor Paul Hudock, responsable del Ministerio Hispano de la parroquia; y el padre Gary Naegele, capellán del JW Ruby Memorial Hospital y del Mon Health Medical Center de Morgantown. El diácono Luis Pagano, de la parroquia de San León en Inwood, sirvió de diácono en la misa.

Los cantos, las oraciones, las lecturas y el Evangelio fueron íntegramente en español. El obispo Menjívar pronunció su homilía principalmente en español, aunque añadió algunos comentarios en inglés.

"Dios cambia nuestros planes", dijo. "María tenía un plan y Dios le preguntó: ¿María, cooperarás con mis planes? Ella respondió que sí, y sabía que su vida cambiaría".

Más tarde, añadió: "Abramos nuestros corazones a María y a los desconocidos que llegan a nuestras vidas. Si abrimos nuestros corazones, también estamos dando la bienvenida a Jesús. Es una experiencia preciosa estar aquí con

continúa

Fotos/Pam Queen

Izq. a der., desde arriba: El obispo Evelio Menjívar se reúne con los fieles y con monseñor Paul Hudock (tercero desde izq.) en la iglesia de Santa María, en Star City, antes de celebrar la Misa por la Comunidad Parroquial el 18 de julio; el obispo ofrece la comunión a los fieles; los monaguillos encabezan la procesión al final de la misa; y el obispo sale en procesión de la iglesia junto al diácono Luis Pagano, de la parroquia de San León en Inwood.

continúa

ustedes. Es verdaderamente una bendición. Yo era un forastero y ustedes me han acogido".

Monseñor Hudock celebra misas en español tanto en la parroquia de Santa María como en la de la Inmaculada Concepción, en Clarksburg. Según comentó, entre 60 y 100 feligreses asisten generalmente a esas misas. Se mostró feliz de que el obispo celebrara una misa en español en Santa María.

"Significa mucho", dijo monseñor Hudock. "Es una primera oportunidad para que el nuevo obispo nos visite. Es una bendición que el obispo se presente. Aquí se siente un poco más la presencia del Espíritu Santo".

Monseñor Hudock explicó que se había invitado a los católicos hispanos y a toda la comunidad de fe a asistir a la misa y a conocer al obispo. Además, en el Peace Hall se instaló un puesto con representantes del Consulado de Guatemala, que ofrecían servicios jurídicos a quien necesitara ayuda.

Marilena Mazariegos, quien asiste a la misa semanal en español de St. Mary, fue la lectora de la celebración del 18 de julio.

"Esto es una gran bendición", dijo Mazariegos antes del inicio de la misa. "Es una buena oportunidad para saber que tenemos un obispo hispano. No es algo que se vea a menudo. Estamos muy contentos. Por eso estamos aquí hoy".

Antes de la bendición final, el obispo Menjívar dijo que esperaba permanecer en su cargo durante 25 años.

"Espero volver para celebrar la misa en inglés y en español", afirmó. "Quiero saber cómo puedo servirles mejor".

Tras la celebración, el obispo Menjívar se reunió con muchos de los feligreses en una recepción organizada por la iglesia.

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La diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston te exhorta a denunciar cualquier delito ante las autoridades civiles. Para realizar una denuncia en contra de cualquier obispo en todos los Estado Unidos, favor de reportarlo en la página web www.repostbishopabuse.org. Y si, además, existen motivos para creer que un obispo ha cometido alguna conducta sexual inapropiada favor de comunicarse con las autoridades civiles de la jurisdicción correspondiente y también puede realizar un reporte en la página web antes mencionada. **Para informar a las autoridades civiles:** comuníquese con la policía local; los números varían según su ubicación. Si considera que alguien está en peligro inmediato, favor de llamar al 911. Para informar de forma confidencial sobre cualquier sospecha de abuso o negligencia infantil, incluido el abuso sexual, favor de comunicarse con la Oficina de Servicios de Protección Infantil de Niños y Familias de West Virginia, llamando a la línea directa de abuso infantil al 1-800.352.6513. **Para informar a las autoridades diocesanas:** La diócesis exhorta a informar primeramente a las autoridades civiles correspondientes, cuando la denuncia incluye un delito, y también alienta a informar a las autoridades eclesiásticas correspondientes. Para reportar casos sospechosos de abuso sexual de menores por parte del personal de la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston, comuníquese directamente con la diócesis a los teléfonos 1.888.434.6237 o 304.233.0880 para hablar con cualquiera de las siguientes personas asignadas: Sr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Sr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; y si desea hablar en español con Sor Martha Gómez, ext. 264. También puede llamar a la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro de la diócesis al 304.230.1504 o a la línea directa de abuso sexual de la diócesis al 833.230.5656. Los formularios de quejas están disponibles en línea en la página web www.dwc.org, favor de hacer clic en "Diócesis" en la barra de menú, luego en "Oficinas", en "Ambiente seguro" y en "Descargar archivos y formularios". El formulario se titula "Formulario de queja para denuncias de abuso sexual de menores". El formulario se puede enviar por correo en Estados Unidos a: Office of Safe Environment, Diocesis of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003. **Para informar al Coordinador de Asistencia a Víctimas de la Diócesis:** Favor de llamar a Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, al 304.559.6742. Además de las vías mencionadas anteriormente para denunciar el abuso sexual, la diócesis se ha asociado con la compañía Navex Global que ofrecer la plataforma EthicsPoint para informar cualquier inquietud adicional, como sospecha de mala conducta financiera, profesional y personal de un sacerdote, diacono, religioso, o empleado laico de la diócesis o cualquier parroquia o escuela católica en West Virginia. Puede acceder a la plataforma EthicsPoint a través de la página web www.dwc.org, en "Rendición de cuentas", luego "Informar mala conducta" o llamando al 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint es una herramienta de denuncia confidencial y anónima, ellos se encargarán de transmitir su denuncia directamente a las autoridades civiles y a las autoridades diocesanas correspondientes, y lo más importante al denunciar a través de ellos, la identidad de la persona que denuncia está protegida. **Enlaces e información:** Departamento de Salud y Recursos Humanos de WV: https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp. Policía Estatal de Virginia Occidental, Unidad de crímenes contra a menores: 304-293-6400.

Bluefield Knights Host the Silver Rose

The Bluefield Knights of Columbus host the Silver Rose July 21 at Sacred Heart Church in Bluefield. Members, together with parishioners, prayed the Rosary for Life and honored Our Lady of Guadalupe. The Silver Rose is traveling through West Virginia promoting respect for all human life. *Courtesy photos*

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