July 3, 2026 Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Vol. 56, No. 28

THE CATHOLIC Spirit

Most Rev. Evelio Menjivar-Ayala Installed as Bishop

See coverage in next week's print edition of The Catholic Spirit

Most Rev. Evelio Menjivar-Ayala was installed as the 10th bishop of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston yesterday afternoon at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling. The Mass of Installation was celebrated after press time for this issue of The Catholic Spirit.

Full coverage of the Installation along with welcome and congratulations ads will be in next week's print edition of The Catholic Spirit.

Photo of Bishop Evelio Menjivar-Ayala is courtesy of the Archdiocese of Washington

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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.

The Catholic Spirit

June 5, 2026
Vol. 56, No. 24

Office: 1322 Eoff St.
Mailing: PO Box 230
Wheeling, WV 26003
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thecatholicspiritwv.org
dwc.org

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Member: Catholic Press Association, West Virginia Press Association, National Press Photographers Association, Inc.

Published every Friday by e-mail & printed 10 times a year. All issues sent to each registered Catholics free of charge. Donations to help offset the cost of producing The Catholic Spirit are welcomed. Out-of-diocese subscriptions are $25 annually. The Catholic Spirit intends its news reports to be fair and accurate in every regard. The opinions of correspondents do not necessarily reflect the opinions of The Catholic Spirit. Submission of news releases, stories and color photos welcomed and encouraged. Not responsible for unsolicited material.

The Catholic Spirit's Print Schedule for 2026

There are 10 print editions in 2026. Below are the names of the issues and the publishing dates. Please note, the publishing dates may or may not be on feast days. Digital issues are published every Friday, delivered by e-mail to subscribers, and posted on thecatholicspiritwv.org.

2026 Print Dates:
Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 14
Triumph of the Cross, September 11
Month of the Rosary, October 9
Advent, November 20
Christmas, December 18

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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Pope Leo XIV Calls for Solidarity, Prayers after Deadly Venezuela Quakes

By Junno Arocho Esteves

(OSV News) — Pope Leo XIV offered prayers for the victims of devastating twin earthquakes that struck Venezuela as the death toll continues to climb and rescuers race to save people trapped under collapsed buildings.

Speaking to pilgrims gathered outside St. Peter's Square June 28 after praying the Angelus prayer, the pope expressed his solidarity with the people of Venezuela and prayed for the dead and wounded.

"Praying to the Lord for the eternal rest of the deceased, I renew my spiritual solidarity with their families, the injured, and all who have been shaken by this tragedy," he said. "I also wish to express my gratitude and encouragement to those generously working on search and rescue efforts and providing assistance."

The twin earthquakes, which struck the northern Venezuelan state of La Guaira in the evening June 24, measured 7.2 and 7.5 in magnitude and were the strongest to hit Venezuela in more than a century.

According to The Associated Press, Venezuelan government officials reported June 28 that the death toll reached 1,450 and thousands more were injured. Rescuers from around the world have arrived in the country to assist in rescue efforts.

The United Nations said more than 2,200 rescuers and 140 search dogs from 27 countries were working to locate trapped survivors. In a statement published June 25, Tom Fletcher, the U.N. under-secretary-general for humanitarian affairs and emergency relief coordinator, said the coming days would "require a massive collective effort to support the Government-led response and help communities."

OSV News photo/Leonardo Fernandez Viloria, Reuters

People gesture as they search for casualties amid the rubble of a collapsed building in Caracas, Venezuela, June 25, 2026, following 7.2 and 7.5 magnitude earthquakes that rocked the country June 24. The death toll reached at least 1,450 and thousands more were injured, Venezuelan government officials reported June 28. Rescuers from around the world have arrived in the country to assist in rescue efforts.

"Even before these earthquakes, nearly 8 million people in Venezuela were in need of humanitarian support. This disaster risks deepening existing vulnerabilities," Fletcher said.

Hours after the back-to-back earthquakes struck the country, Pope Leo sent an initial emergency donation of 100,000 euros (US$115,000) through the Dicastery for the Service of Charity, Vatican News reported.

The pope and the College of Cardinals also remembered the people of Venezuela during the two-day consistory at the Vatican. In his concluding address June 27, the pope expressed his closeness and that of the cardinals, and assured "prayers for the victims, their families, and all those suffering the consequences of this tragedy."

"We also entrust to the Lord all those engaged in relief efforts and ask that the international community continue to show solidarity with that beloved nation," he said.

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Quakes...

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Bishops' conferences also mobilized relief efforts across Latin America, organizing fundraisers and solidarity campaigns to assist the people of Venezuela.

The Peruvian bishops' conference and Caritas Peru announced June 27 the launch of the "Solidarity with Venezuela" campaign, urging the faithful to make donations "for the purchase of essential food items, hygiene products, medicines, and other vital supplies for the affected families."

"Every contribution, no matter the amount, represents a concrete gesture of fraternity and hope for our Venezuelan brothers and sisters," Caritas said. "In times of sorrow, solidarity unites people and demonstrates that no one is alone when charity becomes action."

In Colombia, the bishops said they were also coordinating donations with its local Caritas and called on the "Catholic faithful, ecclesial communities, and all people of good will to demonstrate their solidarity through a generous, organized, and timely response that helps to address the needs of those who have been affected by this emergency."

Expressing its "closeness and solidarity" with the people of Venezuela, the Ecuadorian bishops' conference announced a collection July 5 in parishes across the country.

"We ask that this collection be encouraged during liturgical celebrations, in educational spaces, in parish communities, and in various pastoral works, encouraging the faithful and people of good will to collaborate generously, according to their means," the bishops said in a statement published June 25.

"Each contribution will be a concrete sign of closeness to those who today need to feel accompanied and supported," the statement read.

(Junno Arocho Esteves is an international correspondent for OSV News.)

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Grand Knight **Doug White** presents the proceeds check to **Lisa Thompson**, who facilitated the project. Her daughter Emma attends St. Mary's School.

BINGO FUNDRAISERS
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Clarksburg Council 872, Knights of Columbus, sponsored a bingo game on May 16 to benefit the Harrison County Catholic Schools. $6,254.06 was raised to give to St. Mary's and Notre Dame.

This was in addition to a bingo game we sponsored last October 11, where an additional $6,975.08 was raised for the schools, bringing the total we raised this last school year to **$13,229.14**.

We also participated in the WV State council of the Knights of Columbus by selling Football Frenzy tickets and a direct donation of $600.00 where the proceeds were given to the Diocese for Catholic education in West Virginia.

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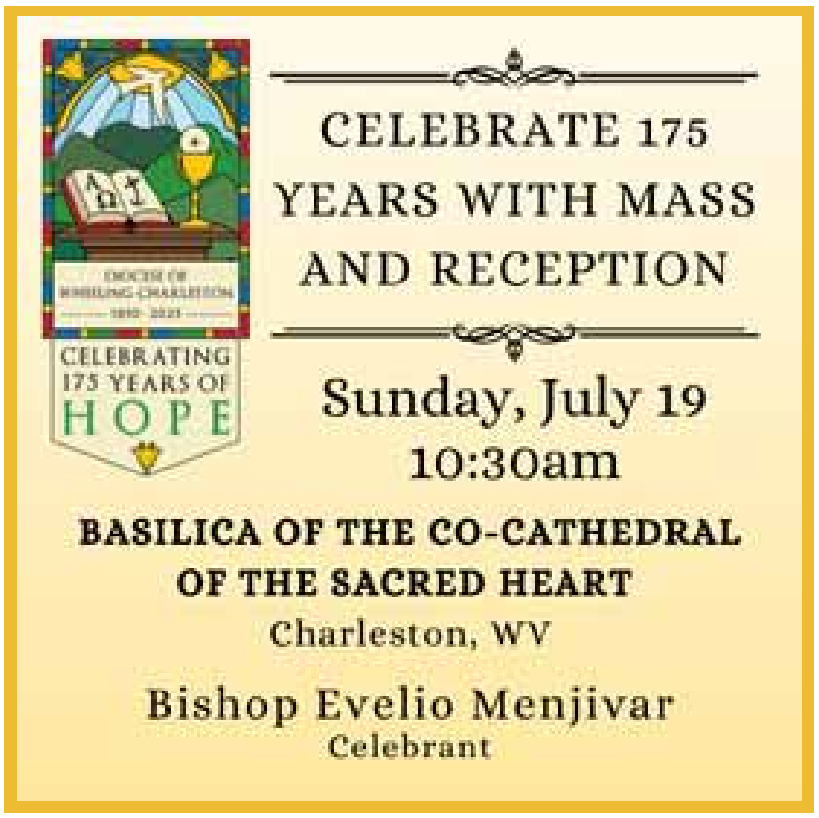
Beckley and Parkersburg Vicariates Celebrate Diocese's 175th Anniversary

Courtesy photo

Masses celebrating the 175th Anniversary of Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston were held June 25 at St. Francis Xavier Parish in Parkersburg and June 26 at St. Francis de Sales Parish in Beckley. Bishop Mark Brennan celebrated the Masses and priests of the vicariates concelebrated and deacons served. Shown above is the procession at the end of the Mass in Beckley. At top right, Bishop Brennan is pictured with altar servers at the Parkersburg Mass. The anniversary has been celebrated with Masses throughout the diocese. The final Mass for the anniversary will be celebrated by Bishop Evelio Menjivar-Ayala at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston at 10:30 a.m. on Sunday, July 19.



At Farewell Mass and Reception, Hispanic Catholics Thank Bishop Menjivar for Walking with Them

Catholic Standard photos by Mihoko Owada

Hundreds of Hispanic Catholics from throughout the Archdiocese of Washington attended the farewell Mass at St. Mary's Church. In the photo, people join Bishop Menjivar for a group photo afterward.

By Mark Zimmermann, editor of the Catholic Standard, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Washington

As a priest and as a bishop, Bishop Evelio Menjivar-Ayala has been known for walking with people, not only in processions honoring Our Lady of Guadalupe or in prayerful support of immigrants, but also for accompanying individuals and families in joyful and challenging times.

On June 13, hundreds of Hispanic Catholics from across the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Washington walked with the nation's first Salvadoran bishop, in a joyful procession to a farewell Mass that was followed by a reception at St. Mary's Church in Landover Hills, Maryland, where he served as the pastor from 2017 to 2023, when he became an auxiliary bishop of Washington.

On May 1, Pope Leo XIV appointed him as the new bishop of Wheeling-Charleston, West Virginia, and he will be installed as bishop there on July 2. The farewell Mass and reception at St. Mary's offered local Hispanic Catholics a chance to say adios and gracias to the priest and bishop who had walked with them.

The native of El Salvador was ordained as a priest of the Archdiocese of Washington in 2004, and in addition to serving as the pastor of St. Mary's in Landover Hills and Our Lady Queen of the Americas in Washington, he earlier served as a parochial vicar at Mother Seton Parish in Germantown, St. Bartholomew Parish in Bethesda, and at the Cathedral of St. Matthew the Apostle in Washington.

The smiling bishop was greeted with applause as he arrived to join a crowd of hundreds of people in front of St. Mary's School for the procession to the church. Women waved colored cloths and many held red roses. As the procession began with joyful songs in Spanish honoring Jesus and the Blessed Mother, people walked across the parking lot, with some carrying statues of Mary from their Latin American countries, banners representing Hispanic Catholic groups including the Legion de Maria, Programa de Nueva Evangelizacion and Grupo de Oracion, and wearing shirts promoting El Salvador's patronal feast day in August, Divino Salvador del Mundo – Jesus as the Divine Savior of the World.

Bishop Menjivar greeted the people in the procession as they walked into St. Mary's Church, and some of the women and girls wore traditional dresses in the blue and white colors of

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Mass...

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El Salvador's flag. Inside the church, hundreds more people had gathered for the Mass. The singing at the Spanish-language Mass was led by a choir from Christ the King Parish in Silver Spring.

He commended St. Mary's parishioners for their food outreach to neighbors during the COVID-19 pandemic. "You have been close to those in need, and I am grateful for that," he said, noting the importance of having solidarity with immigrants in this challenging time, "so many who are afraid, so many who have lost hope for a better future in this country."

Bishop Menjivar, like Pope Francis and Pope Leo and Washington Cardinal Robert W. McElroy and other Catholic leaders, have decried the Trump administration's policy of mass deportation of undocumented immigrants.

Encouraging the local Hispanic Catholic community, Bishop Menjivar said, "We have to continue on this path with hope. The mission continues. The Church continues to walk with you. The Lord will continue to guide the community as He always has done."

In remarks after Communion, Alma Maltez – the program associate for the archdiocese's Office of Cultural Diversity and Outreach – thanked Bishop Menjivar for being "a priest, a brother and a friend who has always walked with us."

She thanked him for his service to the community, and his outreach to youth and to people with disabilities.

"You have given us hope and love. We are certain wherever you go, the Lord will walk with you," Maltez said. She added, "You have shown us we can all sit at the table… I have seen the love of Christ in you. Thank you for making us feel heard and loved."

The large congregation of people, ranging from senior citizens to young adults to families with children, then gave the bishop a standing ovation.

In his closing remarks, Bishop Menjivar invited people to join him at a Marian festival in Emmitsburg in October, and to bring images of the Blessed Mother from their native countries. He said he hoped to establish a place of pilgrimage in West Virginia dedicated to Our Lady of Guadalupe.

After processing from the altar after the Mass, the bishop posed for a group photo with the congregation, and then as he walked down the aisle, he was handed a baby that he held up and blessed. He continued greeting and blessing people as they left the Mass and headed downstairs to the reception.

After the Mass and during the reception, people reflected on the bishop and the impact he had on their lives.

Kevin Herrera – a 20-year-old student at the University of Michigan who is majoring in neuroscience and hopes to go to medical school – noted that then-Father Menjivar baptized and confirmed him at the Easter Vigil at St. Mary's Church when he was 16.

"He has always been a friend. He has always been more than a priest. He has been someone you can come to in all of your hardships," said Herrera.

The young adult was born in Virginia, and his mother is from Honduras and his father is from Guatemala. "We feel blessed that someone from our community is reaching these heights," he said, adding that Bishop Menjivar's example has inspired him to think about the priesthood, after "being able to see myself reflected in him."

Reflecting on his own journey of faith and the bishop's journey of faith, Herrera said, "Seeing the way in which God has favored him assures me that even in my time of uncertainty, everything that has come forth afterwards has always been with God's timing."

Rafael Diaz, a St. Mary's parishioner and native of El Salvador who is a tractor trailer driver in the Washington and Baltimore area, noted how then-Father Menjivar joined parishioners in distributing food in the parish parking lot during the COVID-19 pandemic. "He helped a lot of families in the neighborhood. He was there to do it personally. For me to see a priest do that, means a lot," Diaz said.

When Evelio Menjivar was a young adult and an immigrant from El Salvador living and working in the Washington area, he met Carlos Aquino and his wife Sonia Marlene, who were also participating in the youth ministry program at the Shrine of the Sacred Heart. Carlos Aquino, who is also an immigrant from El Salvador, now works as a systems engineer and remains as a Sacred Heart parishioner. The longtime friend of Bishop Menjivar noted how in his younger years, the future priest and bishop was active in youth ministry activities, and that became a priority of his pastoral ministry at the parish and archdiocesan levels.

Aquino praised Bishop Menjivar for his faith and his love for the community he serves, and for "always bringing people to the Virgin Mary and Christ." He said Bishop Menjivar's ministry has been inspirational to immigrants.

"I feel very proud. We came at a time when we escaped civil war. We had no hope. Look at him. He's preaching hope, and taking hope to other places," Aquino said.

In an interview during the reception, Elida Vargas, a member of St. Rose of Lima Parish in Gaithersburg who helps prepare Hispanic students for college, said, "We are going to miss him, but the community where he is going will be happy with him." She added, "Most importantly, he protects the immigrants. They need the support of all of us."

Father Mario Majano, who succeeded Bishop Menjivar as the pastor of St. Mary's Parish in Landover Hills, said, "He has a heart for the poor. You can really tell he feels what's happening in the community. He's in touch with people, with families. He's a pastor at heart. As a bishop, he leads with a pastor's heart."

St. Mary's pastor added that Bishop Menjivar "really understood that being elevated to bishop gave him an opportunity to take all these things happening in the community and shed light on it. He uses himself to be a voice for the people."

Anahi Herrera, who moved with her family to Frederick, Maryland, where she works in the financial office of a hospital, said her children who were altar servers and in the youth group at St. Mary's when then-Father Menjivar was pastor insisted that their family continue to attend the Landover Hills parish, even though it is more than an hour's drive away. She expressed gratitude for how Bishop Menjivar took care of the youth in that parish. "He knows they're the future of the Church," she said.

The reception honoring Bishop Menjivar featured traditional Salvadoran food, including pupusas and tacos. As joyful music played, women and girls in traditional blue and white dresses danced along with men in straw hats, blue shirts and white slacks. The bishop smiled and posed for photos with guests who lined up to see and thank him.

After speaking at the Mass, Alma Maltez in an interview at the reception reflected on Bishop Menjivar's ministry, which she first witnessed as a volunteer and then as the director of religious education at St. Mary's Parish. She also noted how as St. Mary's pastor, then-Father Menjivar lifted boxes out of the trucks during the parish's food distributions to help people get through the pandemic, and he also brought food to people waiting in cars and talked with them.

"For him to show them the love of God through that service to the community was powerful," she said.

Maltez said the immigrant community "sees him as a person who is there to speak up. He understands the immigrant community, because he himself is an immigrant. He knows suffering. He knows about being afraid."

After working with Father and then Bishop Menjivar for more than a decade, Maltez said sharing God's love has been a hallmark of his ministry. She said when he begins serving in West Virginia, "he will come to listen to his people, to get to know them in humility, to engage with people, to walk with them, that is what is strong about him."

Obituary—Sister Mary Palmer

Sister Mary Palmer (87), died peacefully on June 26, 2026, surrounded by her family and sisters in religion. She was the daughter of the late Robert F. and Sadie Namey Palmer. Her brothers and their wives, Robert F. (Shirley) Palmer Jr. and John A. (Peggy) Palmer Sr. preceded Sr. Mary in death.

She is survived by nephews and nieces: Jack & Rose, Cathy & Tony, Jim & Stacie, Joey(deceased) & Jane, Susan & George, Chris & Randy, Mary & Vince, Bob III & Sandy, and Lisa & Bruce as well as many, many grand nieces and nephews. Special mention goes to Rose Marie Carroll and Jim of the Ruggiero family.

Sr. Mary attended Sacred Heart Grade School and Mount de Chantal Academy in Wheeling. She entered the Congregation of St. Joseph on September 7, 1957. She received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education from Duquesne University, a Master of Arts Degree in Administration from West Virginia University, and did Post Graduate coursework at both Marshall University and Rutgers University.

Her teaching experience included: St. Mary's, Corpus Christi, Blessed Trinity, and St. Vincent de Paul in Wheeling; All Saints in Bridgeport; St. Peter's in Fairmont; and St. Francis Xavier in Moundsville. She was Principal at St. Francis Xavier and Blessed Trinity. From 1969-1972, she was part of a missionary experience in Jalapa, Guatemala, which greatly enriched and broadened her outlook on life. She also worked as a Resident Counselor at a Girls Group Home for troubled teenagers in Wellsburg, West Virginia. She served as Principal and President at Wheeling Catholic Elementary for twelve years.

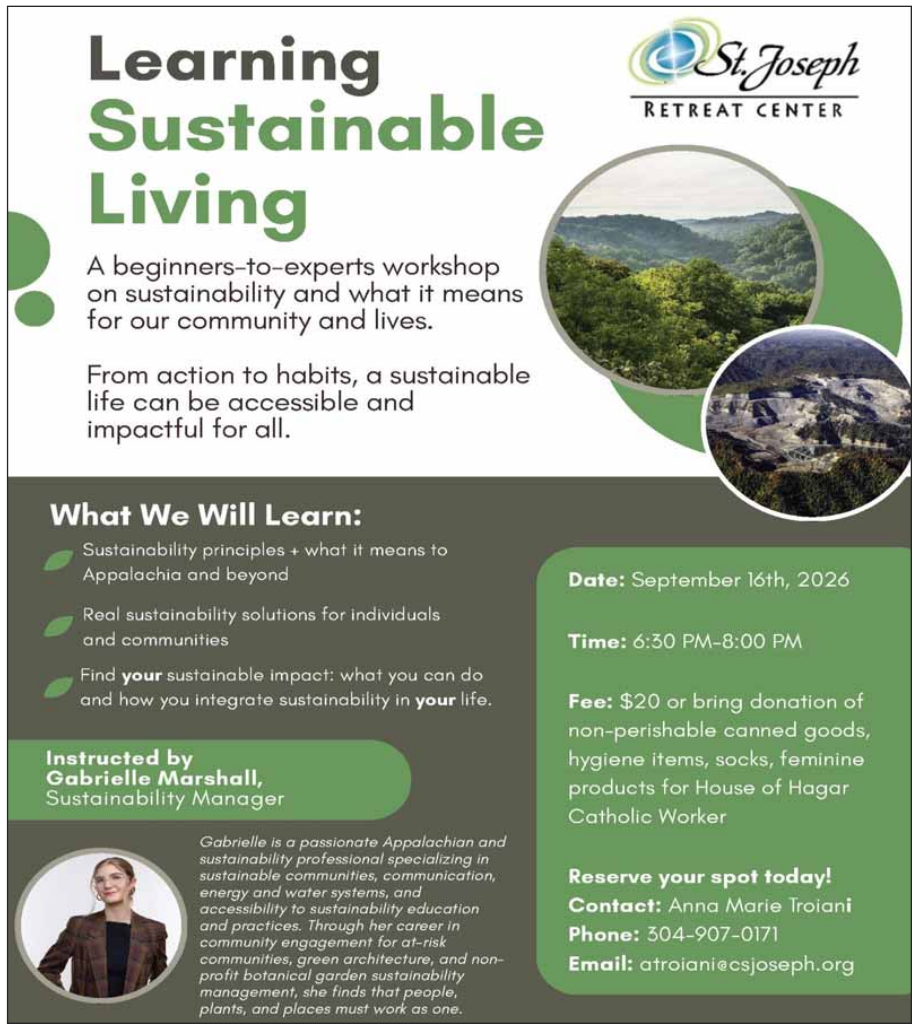
Since 2002, Sister Mary ministered in congregational positions including: Director of Mission Advancement for the Wheeling Founding Sisters. She was the Archivist for the Wheeling Center since 2007. She served as a member in the following organizations: National Communicator Network for Women Religious and the Board of Directors of the Children's Museum of the Ohio Valley. Sr. Mary was a member of Kiwanis Club of Wheeling, from which she received the Distinguished President award in 2011; Wheeling Hospital Board of Directors; Archivists for Congregations of Women Religious; and the Board of Directors of the Sisters Health Foundation.

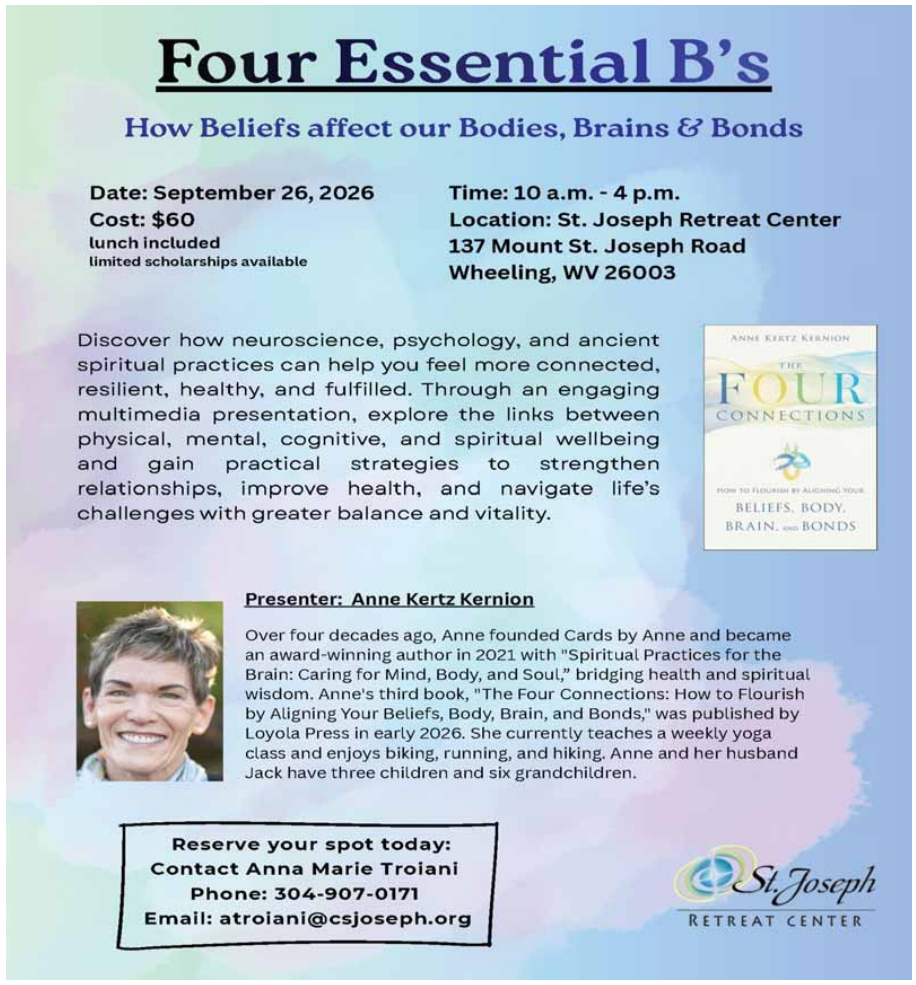
In Sr. Mary's own words: "My vocation began in grade school through the guidance and example of the Sisters of St. Joseph. Sr. Evelyn Polosky taught me in several grades and kept in contact with me while I attended Mount de Chantal Visitation Academy. After graduation, she became my mentor in preparing me to enter. What meant the most to me over the years was the opportunity to give back to the children that I taught all that I learned from the example of the sisters who taught me. The greatest gifts were living with sisters who inspired me and showed me by their example, the spirit and charism of our congregation. One of my greatest joys was to be able to live and work in Jalapa, Guatemala. Even today I keep in contact with the daughter of Don Chico, our catechist. My life has been one of gratitude. At every phase there were sisters, family, and friends who supported and encouraged me through good times and bad times. I am forever grateful to the staff and women of Emmaus House in New Jersey."

Sr. Mary had a deep love for her family that was demonstrated by remembering everyone on their birthdays and at Christmas and showing up at so many family gatherings. Sr. Mary had the gift of gracious hospitality. She was the warm, smiling face that welcomed you to the house and tended to all your needs. Sr. Mary was a good listener and supported those around her with compassion and wisdom. She was also lots of fun and instigated all kinds of mischief in her days before and during her life as a Sister of St. Joseph.

The Funeral Liturgy was Wednesday, July 1, 2026. Both the Vigil service & Funeral Liturgy were live streamed. Interment followed in Mount Calvary Cemetery, Wheeling, WV.

You are invited to honor Sr. Mary's life with a donation to the Congregation of St. Joseph by visiting www.AltmeyerFuneralHomes.com.





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Franciscan University Launches Historic Summer of Conferences and Evangelization

STEUBENVILLE, OHIO—Franciscan University of Steubenville will welcome thousands of Catholics from across the country this summer as it celebrates the 50th anniversary of its iconic Steubenville Youth Conferences and continues a decades-long tradition of evangelization, renewal, and formation through its nationally recognized summer conference ministry.

Following last summer's celebration of the 50th anniversary of the University's adult conferences, this year marks a major milestone for the Steubenville Youth Conferences, which have impacted generations of young Catholics through dynamic worship, the sacraments, inspiring talks, and encounters with Jesus Christ.

"Of the priests ordained in the United States this year, 18 percent attended a Steubenville Conference as a teen," said Brian Kissinger, executive director of Conferences at Franciscan University. "We are humbled and honored by the many ways that God continues to reach thousands of young people each year through our conferences, and the profound impact that these events have on the faith and vocations of young men and women. Steubenville South is celebrating its 30th anniversary, while Steubenville St. Paul celebrates its 25th. In March we had our first ever Steubenville Belize youth conference, and we're excited to see where the Lord sends us next."

This summer, Franciscan University will host four sold-out youth conferences on campus in Steubenville, Ohio, while an additional 15 Steubenville Youth Conferences will take place across North America. Since their founding, the conferences have become one of the most influential Catholic youth evangelization movements in the United States, helping young people deepen their relationship with Christ and discern their vocations.

Youth conference speakers this summer include Father Mike Schmitz, host of The Bible in a Year Podcast; Chris Stefanick, author, speaker, and television host; Father Leo Patalinghug, author, podcast host, and priest of the Diocese of Baltimore; Katie Prejean McGrady, author and Catholic radio host; Paul J. Kim, speaker, author, and musician; Jackie Francois Angel, author, worship leader, and singer/songwriter; Sarah Swafford, founder of Emotional Virtues Ministries; Sister Bethany Madonna, SV, and many more.

Franciscan University's adult summer conference season began June 5-7 with the return of Glory: Women's Gathering, a women's conference launched last summer. Other major conferences included or will include the Power and Purpose Conference on June 12-14, the Priests, Deacons, Seminarians Retreat from June 15-19, the St. John Bosco Conference from July 20-23, the Applied Biblical Studies Conference from July 29-31, and the Defending the Faith Conference from July 31-August 2.

Featured speakers throughout the adult summer conference season include Father Dave Pivonka, TOR, president of Franciscan University; Dr. Scott Hahn, professor of biblical theology at Franciscan University; Heather Khym, co-founder of Life Restoration Ministries; Gavin Ashenden, associate editor of The Catholic Herald; Dr. John Bergsma, theology professor at Franciscan University; Father Carter Griffin, author and priest of the Archdiocese of Washington, D.C.; Dr. Jeffrey Morrow, theology professor at Franciscan University; Kimberly Hahn, author, speaker, and podcaster; Dr. Shane Owens, theology professor at Franciscan University; Dr. Andrew Swafford, professor of theology at Benedictine University; Dr. Marcus Peters, biblical theologian and EWTN host; Michelle Benzinger, podcast host and author; and many others.

This year's Defending the Faith Conference will also feature expanded programming focused on evangelization and Catholic witness in the digital age, including a new interactive panel discussion titled "Defending the Faith in the Digital Age." The panel will feature prominent Catholic content creators Keith Nester, Brian Holdsworth, Ana Munley, and Emily Dinneny.

The discussion will equip attendees and livestream viewers with practical tools for evangelization in online spaces, responding with charity amid division, navigating spiritual warfare, and fostering discernment and prayer in today's digital culture. The featured guests will also host a live-recorded podcast during the conference.

"Registration is strong for our adult conferences. Glory: Women's Gathering is returning for the second year and we're excited to welcome back both new and returning guests," said Kissinger. "This summer we're expanding opportunities for encounter through open sessions, a free livestream, live podcasts, and conversations about sharing the faith in today's digital world. We're also crafting new social events for building community, and as always, we're providing opportunities for prayer and renewal through reverent liturgies and powerful worship."

For more information about the Steubenville Conferences, including schedules, speakers, and registration information, visit the website: steubenvilleconferences.com

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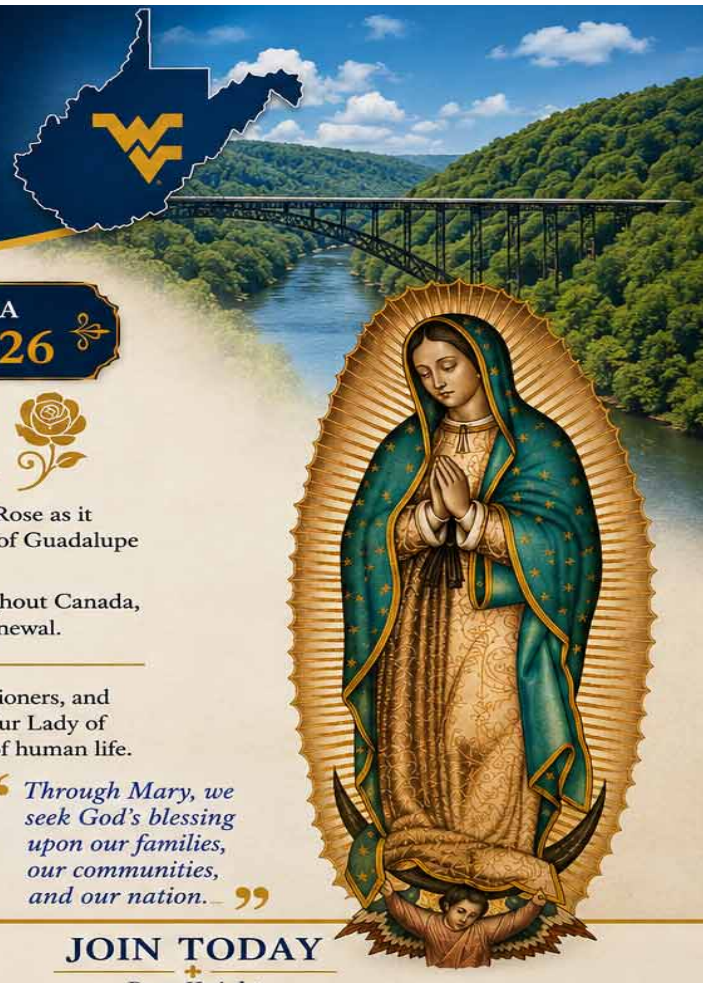

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‘Gracias a Dios por dejarme ser su obispo’, dice obispo Menjívar a feligreses

Foto/Mihoko Owada

Monseñor Evelio Menjívar Ayala (centro) posa junto a los fieles reunidos en la parroquia Santa María de Landover Hills al concluir su misa de despedida el sábado 13 de junio.

By Miguel Vivanco, El Pregonero

ComunidadLa misa de despedida de monseñor Evelio Menjívar Ayala en la parroquia Santa María de Landover Hills estuvo cargada de alegría, recuerdos y oraciones. El sábado 13 de junio el obispo dio gracias por las bendiciones recibidas durante su trabajo pastoral en la Arquidiócesis de Washington, pero también agradeció a Dios por haberle permitido ser pastor de la creciente y comprometida comunidad hispana capitalina.

Con profunda gratitud, monseñor Evelio Menjívar Ayala agradeció a la comunidad hispana de la Arquidiócesis de Washington por el acompañamiento, las oraciones y el apoyo que recibió durante su ministerio episcopal, especialmente desde que fue nombrado obispo auxiliar en diciembre de 2022.

“Cuando uno recibe un regalo que ha sido dado por pura generosidad, aprende a valorarlo y agradecerlo. Por eso hoy quiero dar gracias a Dios y a cada uno de ustedes por permitirme ser su obispo”, expresó el obispo durante la celebración eucarística que congregó a casi un millar de fieles.

Recordó que su nombramiento como obispo fue una noticia inesperada. Tras una misa en la catedral de San Mateo Apóstol, el entonces cardenal Wilton Gregory le comunicó la decisión del papa Francisco: “Mi primera reacción fue decirle que en la arquidiócesis había sacerdotes mucho más preparados que yo. Pero él me respondió con sencillez: ‘A ti te eligieron’. Desde entonces he procurado responder confiando siempre en la misericordia de Dios”.

Monseñor Menjívar agradeció la oportunidad de caminar junto a miles de fieles cuyas vidas, dijo, han sido testimonio de fe, esperanza y perseverancia. También expresó su reconocimiento a los sacerdotes, líderes pastorales, catequistas, jóvenes y familias que han servido a la Iglesia con generosidad.

Dirigiéndose a los niños y jóvenes que acompañó durante años en la preparación sacramental, destacó la fortaleza de su fe: “Ustedes tienen una fe probada en medio de las dificultades. Gracias por enseñarme tanto con su ejemplo, especialmente en los tiempos del Covid-19”.

Al recordar su más de tres décadas de ministerio pastoral en Estados Unidos desde su llegada en 1992, reconoció los desafíos que enfrentan actualmente muchas familias inmigrantes y dijo que es hora de mirar el problema en su verdadera dimensión, como verdaderos cristianos e iniciar acciones para ayudar a miles de personas, en especial mujeres y niños, que quedan desprotegidos después que un familiar queda detenido por los agentes de inmigración.

“Hay personas que viven con miedo, que han perdido la alegría y la esperanza en el futuro. Sin embargo, ustedes han demostrado y deben seguir demostrando una enorme solidaridad con sus

continúa

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hermanos. Ustedes, gente sencilla, humilde y con pocos recursos, han sabido sostenerse mutuamente y seguir adelante aun en tiempos difíciles", afirmó monseñor Menjívar.

El obispo también aprovechó la ocasión para pedir perdón por cualquier error cometido durante su servicio pastoral: "Reconozco que mi ministerio no ha sido perfecto. Tengo limitaciones como cualquier ser humano. Si alguna vez no supe acompañarlos, o si mis palabras o acciones les causaron dolor, les pido sinceramente perdón", manifestó.

Al referirse a su próxima misión pastoral al frente de la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston en West Virginia, expresó su alegría por la presencia en la misa de varios representantes de esa comunidad que será ahora su nueva familia espiritual.

Monseñor Menjívar alentó además a los fieles a no desanimarse por su partida y recordó que la misión de la Iglesia continúa más allá de las personas: "La Iglesia sigue caminando porque es el Señor quien la guía. La misión continúa. Así como las parroquias han seguido creciendo cuando los sacerdotes son trasladados, también nuestra comunidad seguirá adelante porque Cristo permanece con nosotros".

Asimismo, pidió a los hispanos apoyar al obispo auxiliar electo Robert Boxie, quien en breve asumirá algunas de las responsabilidades pastorales relacionadas con la comunidad hispana que él desempeñaba: "Me reuní recientemente con él y está muy animado en aprender español y caminar junto a la comunidad hispana. Les pido paciencia, apoyo y cercanía para que pueda conocer mejor sus realidades y necesidades".

Finalmente, invitó a los fieles a seguir construyendo puentes dentro de la Iglesia y en la sociedad, evitando el aislamiento y participando activamente en la vida arquidiocesana.

"No se encierren únicamente en sus grupos o movimientos. Continúen tendiendo puentes, participando en los eventos de la arquidiócesis y defendiendo la dignidad de los inmigrantes y de todos aquellos que trabajan honradamente para sostener a sus familias", exhortó.

Concluyó recordando que la vocación cristiana nace del Bautismo y se vive con confianza y generosidad: "No tengan miedo. Vivan con libertad y alegría la misión que Dios les ha confiado. Hemos sido elegidos por el Señor y también hemos sido enviados. Todo lo que somos y tenemos es gracia de Dios".

Voces parroquiales

Entre las numerosas muestras de afecto hacia monseñor Evelio Menjívar Ayala destacó el testimonio del guatemalteco Óscar Castañeda, quien recuerda con profunda gratitud los años en que el entonces padre Menjívar ejercía su ministerio en la parroquia Santa María de Landover Hills.

Castañeda relató que desde el primer día que llegó a la comunidad parroquial recibió palabras de aliento sobre el amor de Dios, la importancia de la familia y el valor de contar con un trabajo estable para cumplir con las responsabilidades del hogar.

"Lo que el entonces padre Menjívar no sabía era que yo no quería vivir, que no encontraba sentido a mis días y que mi fe era casi inexistente. Sus consejos me hicieron reflexionar y, una noche mientras manejaba, experimenté una sensación única de paz. Estoy seguro de que Dios tocó mi corazón. Desde hace once años soy un hombre nuevo, comprometido con mi fe y al servicio de la Iglesia. Las palabras del hoy obispo me rescataron de las tinieblas", expresó.

Los mexicanos Maricela Galván y Goyo Sauno también evocaron con cariño las enseñanzas y el ejemplo de servicio que recibieron de monseñor Menjívar durante su etapa como párroco en Santa María de Landover Hills. Ambos formaron parte del grupo de voluntarios encargado de preparar alimentos para actividades parroquiales, celebraciones religiosas y reuniones comunitarias.

"Durante la pandemia de Covid-19 el templo permaneció cerrado por varios meses, pero con monseñor Menjívar aprendimos que la Iglesia nunca cierra sus puertas a los más necesitados. Continuamos preparando y distribuyendo alimentos para cientos de familias. Servir a nuestros semejantes nos ayudó a comprender lo que significa ser una Iglesia en salida y predicar con el ejemplo", señalaron.

También llegaron hasta Santa María de Landover Hills los salvadoreños Edgar Mejía, Esmeralda Mejía y Angélica de García, miembros de la parroquia San Juan Evangelista de Clinton, para despedirse del obispo Menjívar Ayala y expresarle sus mejores deseos en la nueva misión pastoral que le ha sido encomendada por el papa León XIV en la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston, en West Virginia.

"El trabajo pastoral del obispo Menjívar ha sido extraordinario. Su presencia y sus mensajes dirigidos a las parroquias con ministerios hispanos siempre fueron constantes y formativos. Gracias a su liderazgo crecieron grupos como la Legión de María, los grupos de oración, los ujieres y los servidores del altar. Su huella permanecerá entre nosotros y le pedimos a Dios que continúe bendiciendo su ministerio", afirmaron.

Por su parte, el salvadoreño Jonathan Méndez, líder hispano de la parroquia Santa María de Laurel, destacó el profundo aprecio que su comunidad siente por monseñor Menjívar Ayala debido a su permanente cercanía con la vida parroquial y su interés por fortalecer los distintos ministerios.

"Cada vez que nos visitaba para celebrar la misa dominical nos transmitía alegría, fortalecía nuestra fe y nos recordaba la importancia de transmitir nuestras tradiciones religiosas a las nuevas generaciones. Lo vamos a extrañar mucho, pero también nos hemos comprometido a orar para que su labor pastoral en la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston sea tan fructífera como lo fue aquí en la Arquidiócesis de Washington", manifestó.

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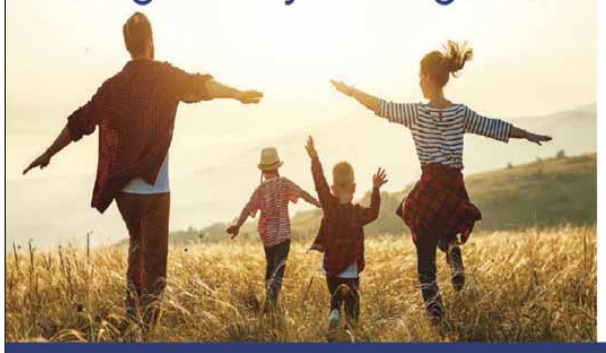

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