

THE CATHOLIC
Spirit

National Eucharistic Pilgrimage Brings Christ down the Ohio River on a Sternwheeler



Colleen Rowan Photos

Clockwise from left: At the front of the sternwheeler, Bishop Mark Brennan bestows a Eucharistic blessing on the faithful gathered at Wheeling’s Heritage Port during the Eucharistic procession down the Ohio River for the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage June 24; Catholics at Heritage Port watch as the sternwheeler passes by; and 4-year-old Joseph Paul of Steubenville, Ohio, waves goodbye to Jesus as the Eucharistic procession leaves the Steubenville Marina.

By Colleen Rowan

The purpose of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage is to show the country that Catholics know the Eucharist is Jesus—body, blood, soul, and divinity. Sadly, a high number of Catholics today do not believe as Pew Research reported a few years ago. But it’s not at all hard for 4-year-old Joseph Paul of Steu-

benville, Ohio, to believe. He knows.

“Bye-bye, Jesus!” little Joseph yelled to our Lord from the banks of the Ohio River at the marina in Steubenville, Ohio, as the sternwheeler carrying the Most Blessed Sacrament in the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Route of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage’s procession down the Ohio River set off on its journey

June 23. The Paul family, who are members of Holy Family Parish in Steubenville, was among hundreds of Catholics from the city that came to the marina that morning. Little Joseph joyfully waved to our Lord as he watched the sternwheeler make its way down the river. “Bye, Jesus,” he said once again. Catholics who don’t believe in Christ’s Real Presence can learn

a lot from little Joseph.

Leading the Eucharistic procession down the river were Bishop Mark Brennan of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston and Bishop Edward Lohse, apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Steubenville, as well as priests, seminarians, and laity from the two dioceses. Also aboard

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the "Boater-cade" were perpetual pilgrims on the Seton Route including Father Roger Landry, a Catholic chaplain at Columbia University and the Thomas Merton Institute for Catholic Life in New York. A priest of the Diocese of Fall River, Mass., he is also one of the official preachers for the National Eucharistic Revival.

The perpetual pilgrims on the Seton Route left New Haven, Conn., May 17 and have traveled through 13 dioceses since then. The pilgrimage arrived in West Virginia June 20 in Weirton and, after a Eucharistic procession in the city that day and other events there and across the river, the perpetual pilgrims took to the waters of the Ohio River with our Lord for the June 23 Eucharistic procession.

At designated blessing spots on both sides of the river, West Virginia and Ohio Catholic faithful gathered to receive a Eucharistic blessing from their bishop. More than 80 Catholic faithful waited at the

Wellsburg Wharf, the second Mountain State blessing spot of the voyage. As the sternwheeler passed by, Bishop Brennan raised the monstrance holding the Most Blessed Sacrament and blessed the parishioners of St. John the Evangelist Parish in Wellsburg gathered with their pastor, Father Justin Golna, and parishioners of St. Anthony Parish in Follansbee with their pastor, Father Gerald Muoka.

"We feel very blessed to have the bishop stopping to bless us in our community today," said Susie Mullenbach, president of St. John's Altar and Rosary Society. "It's a great honor, and I'm just happy to be here."

Her parish saw this as an opportunity to publicly witness to the Catholic faith and to show their belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. As they waited for the sternwheeler, the people sang Eucharistic hymns that could be heard throughout the neighborhood.

"It's wonderful to be here with our congregation, our parish... waiting for the precious Body of Christ to appear with the bishop," said Monica Biery, director of religious education at St. John's.

She brought her four grandchildren from Preston County to the wharf to see the procession.

Daughters of Mary, Mother of Healing Love, Sisters were at almost every blessing site. And as the sternwheeler passed the Wellsburg Wharf, the sisters ran out on to the dock and knelt. They are following the Seton Route on their own the entire way to Indianapolis for the National Eucharistic Revival in July.

St. Anthony's parishioners Chris and Sarah Bayardi were also at the Wellsburg Wharf with their sons to experience the Eucharist in a new way.

"This is the great thing about being Catholic," Chris said. "Where else are you going to see Jesus go down the river on a sternwheeler in procession?"

After receiving the Eucharistic blessing from Bishop Brennan, the family then drove ahead to join those at the next blessing spot—the Wellsburg Bridge. At the center of the bridge's walkway priests and seminarians of the Steubenville Diocese knelt and prayed the rosary as Bishop Lohse bestowed the Eucharistic blessing to Ohio's Catholic faithful.

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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. You may also call 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:** please call Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC,

at 304.559.6742. In addition to the methods listed above for reporting sexual abuse, the Diocese also has partnered with Navex Global to offer the EthicsPoint platform to report other, additional concerns, such as suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, religious, or lay employee of the Diocese or any Catholic parish or school in West Virginia. The EthicsPoint platform can be accessed via www.dwc.org, under "Accountability", then "Report Misconduct" or by calling 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint is a third-party reporting system that reports to civil authorities where applicable and Diocesan authorities, and the identity of the person reporting is protected. Links and information: WV Department of Health and Human Resources: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. West Virginia State Police, Crimes Against Children Unit: 304-293-6400.

Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

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



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The Catholic Spirit's Print Schedule for 2024

(Digital issues will continue to be published by date every Friday, delivered by e-mail and posted on thecatholicspiritwv.org)

This is the new print publication schedule for The Catholic Spirit. Each print issue is named for a memorial, feast day, or celebration of the Church within the month of publication. The following provides the name of the issue; the date of the memorial, feast day, or celebration; and the publication date of the issue.

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Feast Day, August 15

The Catholic Spirit publication date for this issue is August 2

Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Feast Day, September 14

The Catholic Spirit publication date for this issue is September 6

Our Lady of the Rosary

Memorial, October 7

The Catholic Spirit publication date for this issue is October 4

Advent

First Sunday of Advent, December 1

The Catholic Spirit publication date for this issue is November 29

Christmas

Feast Day, December 25

The Catholic Spirit publication date for this issue is December 20

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In the photos on this page, clockwise from top left: Priests, seminarians, and faithful from the Diocese of Steubenville, Ohio, kneel and pray the rosary on the Wellsburg Bridge as the sternwheeler carrying the Most Blessed Sacrament passes below on the Ohio River; members of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Wheeling hold a banner as they wait with members of area parishes at Wheeling's Heritage Port for the sternwheeler; Sarah Bayardi and her son, members of St. Anthony Parish in Follansbee, wave from the Wellsburg Bridge to all aboard the sternwheeler passing on the river below; Robert D'Aurora of St. Patrick Parish in Weston, kneels as the Most Blessed Sacrament on the sternwheeler passes the Wellsburg Wharf; Cynthia Dimmey, OCIA coordinator at St. Vincent's, kneels and wipes tears from her eyes upon seeing the Most Blessed Sacrament pass the Heritage Port; Daughters of Mary, Mother of Healing Love, Sisters and others kneel on the dock at the Wellsburg Wharf as Bishop Mark Brennan gives a Eucharistic blessing to the faithful; and Bishop Brennan gives a Eucharistic blessing to the faithful at Heritage Port as seminarian Dominic Re kneels beside him.

Colleen Rowan Photos



Pilgrimage...

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"It's a once in a lifetime experience," said Stephanie West of St. Raphael Parish in Cleveland, Ohio, who stood on the bridge watching the Most Blessed Sacrament move on in the water below. "And especially important because the focus is on the Eucharist, which is the heart of our Catholic faith." Stephanie was with her husband, William, also a member of St. Raphael's. He is originally from Wheeling, growing up as a member of the Cathedral St. Joseph.

The voyage continued on with the bishops giving Eucharistic blessings at Maze-roski Park in Rayland, Ohio, and the Pike Island Locks and Dam for Ohio and West Virginia Catholics.

The roughly 100 Catholic

faithful at Heritage Port in Wheeling were undeterred by the rain and wind that came in as they waited. Priests and religious joined parishioners from Wheeling's cathedral, St. Vincent de Paul, St. Michael's, St. Alphonsus, and Corpus Christi parishes. When they saw the sternwheeler approaching many kneeled. Cynthia Dimmey, OCIA coordinator at St. Vincent's, wiped tears from her eyes as Bishop Brennan bestowed the Eucharistic blessing from the passing sternwheeler.

The Eucharistic procession docked at the Bellaire Marina in Bellaire, Ohio, and was met by Catholics of the area who continued the procession with Bishop Brennan and Bishop Lohse to nearby St. John Church.

Among those from the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston who joined Bishop Brennan



on the sternwheeler and the procession on land in Bellaire were seminarians Dominic Re and Michael J. Tupta; Bernadette McMasters Kime, director of Worship and

Sacraments; and Tyler (pastoral associate) and Christi Greenwood, and Martin Imbroscio (sacristan) from the cathedral.

Later that evening, the

Most Blessed Sacrament crossed the river back into West Virginia for a prayer vigil and all-night Eucharistic Adoration at the cathedral.

Proclaiming Christ's Real Presence

Bishop Brennan and Wheeling Catholics Join Perpetual Pilgrims of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage in Eucharistic Procession through the City



Colleen Rowan Photos

From left: In the Eucharistic procession through downtown Wheeling June 24 for the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Route of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, perpetual pilgrim Amayrani Higueldo joyfully sings and carries a speaker for the music; Father Roger Landry processes with the Most Blessed Sacrament; and perpetual pilgrims Dominic Carstens (left) and Zoe Dongas (playing the guitar) sing and provide music for the procession and walk with Brother Lazarus Mary, CFR, (center).

By Colleen Rowan

Catholics of Wheeling took to the streets of the city the morning of June 24 to show our belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist. The faithful joined Bishop Mark Brennan and the perpetual pilgrims of the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Route of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage in a Eucharistic procession from the Cathedral of St. Joseph to St. Alphonsus Church. The group of about 200 prayed, sang, and gave public witness to the Catholic faith meandering through a busy downtown on that Monday morning. As people stopped to watch, perpetual pilgrims and Daughters of Mary, Mother of Healing Love, Sisters would go to them explaining what the procession was all about. As employees at a local cafe along the procession route came out onto the front steps of the business looking on in wonder, perpetual pilgrim Marina Frattaroli ran over to explain to them that they were processing with Christ.

The day began with Mass celebrated by Bishop Brennan at the cathedral, which was nearly filled with area-Catholic faithful. Those attending had the great opportunity to hear a homily given by Father Roger Landry, one of the official preachers for the National Eucharistic Revival. He is a Catholic chaplain at Columbia University and the Thomas Merton Institute for Catholic



Colleen Rowan Photo

Seminarian Donvito Cortese carries the crucifix leading the Eucharistic procession through downtown Wheeling with Bishop Mark Brennan, area Catholics, and perpetual pilgrims of the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Route of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage June 24.

Life in New York. A priest of the Diocese of Fall River, Mass., he is joining the perpetual pilgrims on the Seton Route.

Father Landry began by thanking Bishop Brennan for welcoming them and for the privilege to preach on the Solemnity of St. John the Baptist at the diocese's cathedral,

"built for what the Eucharistic Revival celebrates—the great mystery of God with us in the holy Eucharist at Mass on the altar, reserved to welcome us in the Most Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle."

St. John the Baptist's birthday is celebrated as a solemnity, Father Landry said, because of his connection to the

Lord Jesus. "John the Baptist is the precursor of the Lord, the forerunner, the one who comes before to make straight his paths," he said. "By divine election, he was the new Elijah whom the Jews had been waiting for centuries to herald the coming of the Messiah when at last he appeared."

St. John the Baptist filled

that role of the forerunner, he said, first in the womb, giving recognition to Jesus. When he first heard the words of Jesus's mother, he leaped in the womb. He was the precursor of the Lord in birth and in public ministry, going out to preach, Father Landry added.

"And how interesting it is that St. John the Baptist's message and Jesus's first homily were identical saying the exact same words: Repent. Have a total revolution in the way you look at your life and look at the world because the Kingdom of God is at hand," Father Landry said.

St. John the Baptist, he continued, was a precursor of the Lord in imprisonment and in death.

"And here, in this beautiful Cathedral of St. Joseph, we see that he is likewise a precursor of the Lord in eternal life," Father Landry said, pointing to the apse mural of the Triumphant Christ towering behind him. "Straight up, in red, you can see him with his left hand pointing to Jesus reigning forever. That the same humble Lord who comes down from heaven at this altar this morning is simultaneously reigning above, and John the Baptist is the one who indicates him."

In the National Eucharistic Revival, Father Landry said, it is so important to grasp that St. John the Baptist, likewise, heralds Jesus in the Holy Eucharist. His whole life was

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pointing to the fulfillment of Jesus's mission, Father Landry said.

"And for the rest of my life, however long God will give me," he said, "I will continue to say the words that God loved us so much that he went way beyond the Incarnation. It wasn't enough for God's love that the eternal son of God take on our humanity and dwell within us. God's love didn't stop. Even at the passion and crucifixion of the Lord Jesus or at his resurrection which made eternal life with John the Baptist possible for us, blowing wide the doors of heaven where Jesus has gone and prepared a place for us."

Father Landry told the congregation and those watching the livestream of the Mass on the diocese's Facebook page, that God loved us so much that in the summit of salvation history, he wanted to remain with us always until the end of time and not just on the outside but the inside, so that he would remain in the world and "have us gnaw on his flesh and drink

times each day in the Masses that are celebrated from the rising of the sun to its setting that those words point out the Eucharistic Lord Jesus who remains with us to take away our sins and to do far more," Father Landry said. "Having taken away our sins to make a true life of loving communion, a life of holiness possible. And today, we celebrate the greatest born of woman and we likewise celebrate that mission to get us ready to live a truly Eucharistic life."

How does St. John the Baptist fulfill that mission as the precursor of the Lord with regard to the Holy Eucharist? Father Landry asked. The same way he fulfilled the other missions, he said. The same thing he did at the Jordan, he said, which we remember every Advent—he preached conversion.

"When we think about conversion, most of us think about a minor course correction in our life," Father Landry said. "...many of us think about conversion as eliminating a bad habit of gossip or maybe wasting time or impatience or anger. And conversion, of course, does in-



Colleen Rowan Photo

Wheeling Catholics of all ages participate in the Eucharistic procession.

his blood."

St. John the Baptist likewise points to this mission, Father Landry said. It could be thought that those words he said at the Jordan River when he saw Jesus coming toward him—"Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world"—would have been meant primarily for those who had become John's disciples. But in God's divine wisdom there was an even greater purpose—for all to follow the Lord Jesus.

"It was for the articulation of that truth at Mass which the church prays at least 500,000

volve those course corrections, but as Pope Benedict used to remind us conversion goes way beyond that."

When St. John the Baptist was preaching, a Greek word that synoptic evangelists remember means turn your mind around, Father Landry said.

"Change your worldview totally," he said. "Begin to look at God, at yourself, at your choices, at your whole life in a thoroughly fresh way. The conversion isn't just about eliminating certain harmful things from our life. Rather, conversion is about a totally



Joyce Bibey Photo

The Eucharistic procession through Wheeling reaches St. Alphonsus Church.

new life rather than trying to do things on our own, call all the shots, be our own lord. Conversion is about recognizing we need a new life and that Jesus has come to show us the path of life. He's come to give us that life to overflowing. But in order for us to be able to receive it, we need to change and change big time. Jesus, as we wander on our own paths, comes to us and says 'I am the way. Follow me.' He is the one who shows us this route to a new life and it involves following him the distance. Entering into his passion through our own sufferings and crosses. Entering into his death through our death to self, which happens in the baptismal font."

We are meant to renew those baptismal promises each day as part of conversion, Father Landry said, to enter with the Lord into risen life.

"Jesus wants us to experience that all," he said. "But as John teaches, we have to convert."

"Today," Father Landry said, "as we continue on the 38th day of the 65-day Seton Route of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, as we prepare to take the Lord Jesus out to the streets of Wheeling on this procession to St. Alphonsus, St. John the Baptist is here to help us make straight the paths. First, for the Lord to come to us and then for us to go out with the Lord into the streets of the city, out into the world."

"John the Baptist is that great intercessor. He's going to be using us as divine signpost so that we can continue his mission and with our own left hands and our own right point

to the Lord, who Bishop Brennan is going to be lifting high as the savior of the world and saying, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world, who has come to give you a new life.' Join us in that procession," Father Landry implored, "because the Christian life is a journey. Jesus is constantly saying, 'Come. Come with all your labors and burdens and I'll refresh you. Come follow me, and then go. Go to the lost sheep of the House of Israel, go to the lost sheep of your own family, go to the ends of Wheeling and the ends of the world proclaiming the gospel to every creature, like John baptizing for the forgiveness of sin, teaching everything I've commanded you and remembering that I am with you always until the end of time.'

"We're being sent out today with the Lord Jesus as John the Baptists to make this indication," Father Landry said.

"First to the people who will see us, but then to learn from this that our whole life is meant to carry on that mission."

St. John the Baptist was constantly pointing to God, who does grace, Father Landry said, "who comes into the world so that through our relationship with him first in Holy Communion—the most wondrous thing that can ever happen to a human being—but then in Eucharistic Adoration, we might enter into God's life according to our nature as Christians, as creatures."

To listen to Father Landry's full homily, visit catholicpreaching.com/wp/

The Eucharistic procession was the culmination of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage's four-day stop in West Virginia. The pilgrims arrived the morning of June 20 in Weirton and joined

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Colleen Rowan Photo

Employees at a local cafe along the Eucharistic procession route in downtown Wheeling look on in wonder on the front steps of the business as perpetual pilgrim Marina Frattaroli explains that they are processing with Christ.

Perpetual Pilgrim Shares How Jesus Broke through Walls of Her Heart in Eucharistic Adoration

By Colleen Rowan

On the evening of June 23, Natalie Garza went to the ambo at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling to introduce herself, as “one of the perpetual pilgrims who has the greatest privilege in the history of the church since the time of the apostles. ... I get to walk for 65 days with Jesus across the northeast part of the country.”

Garza was there to give her testimony as a perpetual pilgrim on the St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Route of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, which came to West Virginia for four days. That evening was the pilgrimage’s third day in the Mountain State. The perpetual pilgrims arrived with the Most Blessed Sacrament for an evening prayer vigil and all-night Eucharistic Adoration.

In considering what she wanted to share in her testimony, Natalie said she was reminded of her first encounter with Jesus in sustaining her to greater life through his Eucharistic presence.

She shared that by the time she was 14 years old, she believed that religion was a coping mechanism, and she renounced the faith. Her parents were amazing in their wisdom, Natalie said, not knowing that this was in her heart they signed her up for a confirmation class. She remembered thinking, “I’ll just do this to please my parents and to not get in any more trouble than I naturally get into.”

Through confirmation class, she learned a lot, but none of it really stuck. And after receiving the sacrament of confirmation, she said she was done.



Colleen Rowan Photo

Perpetual pilgrim Natalie Garza attends the prayer vigil and all-night Eucharistic Adoration with Bishop Mark Brennan at the Cathedral of St. Joseph.

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parishioners of St. Joseph the Worker Parish and Sacred Heart of Mary Parish and their pastor, Father Dennis Schuelkens, Jr., for Mass at St. Joseph’s followed by a Eucharistic procession through part

of the city to Sacred Heart of Mary Church. They also attended Eucharistic Adoration at St. Paul Church in Weirton and events in the Diocese of Steubenville, Ohio, and Franciscan University of Steubenville.

The pilgrimage gatherings in Wheeling began June 23 fol-

“I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that this was God. That he’s real.”

—Natalie Garza, perpetual pilgrim

Two months later her sister, who had a life changing encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist at a Franciscan University of Steubenville conference, asked her if she wanted to come to church with her.

“And I said, heck no,” Natalie recalled. But her sister persisted and told her that her best friend would be there, so Natalie agreed.

They went to Eucharistic Adoration. This was only the second time in her life Natalie went to adoration, and she went in with the attitude that God isn’t real. But as soon as the priest brought the Most Blessed Sacrament to the altar, everything changed for Natalie.

“I don’t even recall them saying that this is actually Jesus,” she said, “but I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that this was God. That he’s real. And I have a lot to change in my life. It was as though all of the walls, all of the hardness that I’ve experienced in my life, all of the ways I pushed Jesus away because I was struggling with mental health at the time, and all of the deep questions of the heart that I had coming up, ‘If God is so good, why does he allow me to suffer?’ It was like all those walls were broken apart by Jesus’s presence in the Eucharist.”

Looking back on that moment and asking Jesus why it was his Eucharistic presence that broke through to her heart, Natalie said, “He reminds me of the cross, the fact that as we look at Jesus in the Eucharist, we see him who is crucified and glorified.”

“He is not a far off God,” she said, adding that God was actually with her in the suffering of mental health, in the struggles of adolescence, through high school, and everything in her life.

After that one Eucharistic encounter with Jesus, now 11 years ago, he gave Natalie many people who walked with her and let her ask hard questions. And one of the most important things they taught her was to go back to Eucharistic Adoration.

“Whenever I don’t understand who he is, go back to Eucharistic Adoration. Whenever I kind of got a bone to pick with things going on in my life, go back to Eucharistic Adoration and tell him. Whenever I’m joyful and think that my life is going great, especially because it was something I did, go back to Eucharistic Adoration,” Natalie said.

“I’m sharing this story with you because I ac-

lowing the Eucharistic procession on the sternwheeler down the Ohio River led by Bishop Brennan and Bishop Edward Lohse, apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Steubenville. That evening, the pilgrimage came to the cathedral which held a prayer vigil and then all-night Eucharistic Adoration.



Colleen Rowan Photo

Perpetual pilgrim Natalie Garza gives her testimony at a prayer vigil and all-night Eucharistic Adoration at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling.



Colleen Rowan Photo

Perpetual pilgrim Natalie Garza prays with Daughters of Mary, Mother of Healing Love, Sisters at Heritage Port in Wheeling.

tually felt that in this revival, walking 65 days with Jesus, I’m reminded once more that at every moment he just wants to be with me,” she said. “Jesus sees me at 7 a.m. and I am grumpy as all get out. ... He also sees me when I’m tired after walking for 16 miles and he sees me when I’m joyful after sharing a meal with many people whom I’ve never met before. So, this is who Jesus has been to me through the whole course of this pilgrimage and really throughout my whole life. He has been Emmanuel, God with us. And his Eucharistic presence is the proof of his promise and his fulfillment that he would be with me, that he would be with us always even until the end of the age.

“So, my brothers and sisters as a testament of this Eucharistic Revival,” Natalie said, “I share this with you. And my great hope, my desire is that you would actually take a moment right now to consider where, when was the time that Jesus showed himself to be Emmanuel, to be the God who was with you. And go back to that moment with him during this time and allow Jesus to revive that grace of the young love that I experienced when I was 14 that is coming back to me throughout this whole journey.”



DIocese of WHEELING-CHARLESTON

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June 28, 2024

A Letter from Bishop Brennan to West Virginians on Gun Ownership and Use

My fellow believers and citizens,

For some time, I have been reflecting on the tragic phenomenon of deaths by firearms, both murders and suicides, in our state. I previously addressed the need to ban assault-style weapons. It is in the spirit of concern for my fellow West Virginians regarding handgun violence that I write to you.

I will limit myself in this letter to asking this question: does possession of a firearm actually make you safer? Or does the widespread possession of firearms contribute to gun violence?

To put this topic in a wider context, consider that there are actually more guns in civilian hands in the United States than there are people in the country: about 101 per 100 persons. The next highest nations are Serbia with 58.2 and Yemen with 54.8 per 100 inhabitants (*World Atlas*, 2024).

What is the result of widespread gun ownership? In 2019, the United States had 12.1 firearm-related deaths per 100,000 persons, while nearby Canada had 4.1 per 100,000 persons. The US rate for gun homicides was 2.5 times higher than for similar high-income nations (*American Journal of Criminal Justice*, 2023, 48 (1), pp. 21-50). There are few gun deaths from homicides, suicides and accidents in the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan and Norway, where civilian gun ownership is rare. In our country, the states with the highest rates of gun violence, like Mississippi, Alabama, Alaska, Wyoming and Montana, “tend to have high gun ownership rates. In comparison, states with low gun violence per capita, like Massachusetts, Hawaii, New Jersey and New York, have lower rates of gun ownership and stricter gun regulations” (2021 *World Population Review*).

What about West Virginia? According to a CBS new report of April, 2022, 58.5% of West Virginians had guns in their homes, among the highest rates in the nation. There are 17.3 gun deaths in West Virginia per 100,000 persons for an average of 320 deaths per year (*Centers for Disease Control and Prevention*, April 17, 2024). The number of homicides from gun use in our state rose 83% between 2013 and 2022 (CDC). Seventy percent of gun fatalities here are suicides. As a West Virginian, active in suicide prevention, whose relative killed himself with a gun, said, “If firearms aren’t accessible, it’s rare that someone searches for another means to end their life.” But guns are easily available in West Virginia.

Why do many West Virginians own guns? Apart from hunting, in which rifles rather than

handguns are usually used, gun owners believe they and their families are safer because a gun is available to defend against an intruder in their home or someone assaulting them on the street. Is that true? One study says: “Victims who use guns defensively are less likely to be harmed than those using other forms of self-protection” (*Rand Corporation*, March, 2018). Another says: “There are no statistically significant benefits to a would-be victim during a criminal confrontation” who uses a gun in self-defense; running away or calling the police would be more effective (*JT Chan School of Public Health*, 2022, Harvard University, David Hemenway). It is simply difficult to know how effective possessing a gun is in deterring crime and protecting intended victims.

What we do know, as I cited above, is that guns are used with regularity in West Virginia to commit homicides and suicides. If there is no clear evidence that possessing a gun makes us safer and much evidence that it results in the death of a significant number of our neighbors, why do we hold on to this relic of the frontier days? It seems to be another instance of that exaggerated American individualism that shouts “My body, my choice” or “I can change my gender if I feel like it” or “No one can tell me or my children to get vaccinated.”

In Catholic thinking the freedom of the individual person, a great value, must be balanced by respect for the common good, which is also a great value. You have the personal freedom to drive a car, but you must first have the requisite age and pass a driver’s test to obtain a license and then you must obey the traffic laws. The restrictions on your freedom reflect a concern for the common good: the safety of drivers and pedestrians. So, I ask: does not the widespread ownership of handguns tip the balance too far in the direction of personal freedom in disregard of the common good?

What can be done? I ask gun owners to seriously consider whether owning a gun to protect oneself or one’s family actually provides that protection. If there is conflicting evidence about the matter, why keep a gun handy when the widespread possession of firearms puts all West Virginians at risk? I trust that many gun owners store their guns in locked safes or drawers and store ammunition separately. But how safe is this? The key is kept someplace and that can hardly be kept a secret in most homes. The problem is solved if no gun is available.

While the Second Amendment allows us to possess guns, it does not require that we own

them or use them. My concern is that the broad possession of handguns in our state poses a clear danger to everyone who lives here. God has commanded us: *You shall not kill*. That applies both to killing others and to killing oneself. Life is a precious gift which we should respect and cultivate in ourselves and others. If the easy availability of firearms puts our people’s lives in danger, which I believe it does, then prudence should lead us to reduce their number and availability and take other measures to ensure public safety. I ask you to pray and think about this matter. May the Holy Spirit guide you as you do.

As we approach our nation’s birthday, may God grant you much peace and joy in your faith and in your love of God and neighbor!

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Blessed Carlo Acutis Youth Camp Officials Overjoyed as Namesake Heads Toward Canonization

By Colleen Rowan, OSV News

HUTTONSVILLE — Its mission is to lead young people to a deep relationship with Jesus Christ through his church. And the Blessed Carlo Acutis Youth Camp does just that each summer for young Catholics in West Virginia.

Set deep in the southern region of the state in the small town of Huttonsville amid the breathtaking mountains of Randolph County, the camp has offered generations of children and young people the opportunity to grow closer to Christ while enjoying the summer camp experience. And the last three years of this ministry has been presented to young Catholics reflecting the love of and dedication to the Most Blessed Sacrament that the teenage boy, for whom the camp is named, had in his life.

“It’s no coincidence that as we begin preparing for an incredible summer of Catholic camping, that our namesake should formally be on the way to canonization,” said Nick Chancey, director of the Office of Youth and Young Adult Discipleship for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

“Blessed Carlo Acutis loved Jesus in such a unique and beautiful way, most especially in the real presence of the Blessed Sacrament,” he said. “It’s unique, in part, because he was so young and had very few people around him to support him in his work and in his devotion to the Eucharist.”

“I think many of the young people who come to our camp can relate to that, especially in the face of an ever-secularizing world,” he told *The Catholic Spirit*, newspaper of the statewide diocese. “What better way then, than to bring them together in the beautiful mountains of West Virginia, where they can have fun, make lifelong friendships, and come to know our Lord the same deeply intimate way that Blessed Carlo did, in the Eucharist.”

Pope Francis will hold a consistory with cardinals in Rome July 1 for the final approval of the canonization of several sainthood candidates, including Blessed Carlo Acutis, according to the master of papal liturgical ceremonies. The date or dates for the canonizations could be announced during the ceremony.

Activities at Camp Carlo include a high ropes course, a giant swing, swimming, water slide, horseback riding, backpacking, camping, fishing, canoeing, field games and more. At the center is Christ, camp officials said, “and humbling ourselves in front of the true presence of our Lord during Mass and adoration.”

The camp was founded 59 years ago by the late Father Leon Alexander as the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston’s youth camp with the title Camp Tygart. After a few named changes throughout the years, the camp was renamed Blessed Carlo Acutis Youth Camp in 2021 in honor of the first millennial to be beatified. With the new name came a new motto: “Cum Ipso in monte” (With Him on the Mountain), referencing the Transfiguration, according to the Camp Carlo website. It further notes, “A reflection of the Transfiguration, life at Blessed Carlo Acutis Youth Camp draws young people into direct encounter with the divinity of Christ.”

Blessed Carlo, being an incredible figure of what young holiness can look like, shows young Catholics that they too can be saints, Chancey said.

“We now have this beautiful modern example,” Chancey said. “This 21st-century boy who devoted his whole life, his whole being really to promoting the Blessed Sacrament in the Eucharist. What better figure for us, whose primary goal is the evangelization of young people, than Blessed Carlo Acutis. And that love and that devotion that he had for Jesus in the Eucharist — that’s what we’re hoping to instill in these young people.”

Upon learning of the news that Pope Francis had recognized a second miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Carlo Acutis, clearing the way for him to be formally recognized as a saint, Camp Carlo’s new director Kara Milinovich was overwhelmed with excitement.

“Having a young person so passionate for their faith and our Eucharistic Lord is wonderful but having them canonized so close to their death is incredible!” she said. “What an example for each of us.”

Kara co-directs the camp with her husband, Steve. The ministry of the camp, she said, reflects the life of Blessed Carlo and his love of the Most Blessed Sacrament in many ways.

“At Camp Carlo, we are blessed with busy priests from the diocese coming to (celebrate) daily Mass, hear confessions, and offer adoration and benediction this summer,” she said. “Camp Carlo has the Eucharist at the center of camp life. As Catholics we are blessed with Jesus truly present — body, blood, soul, and divinity. And at camp we celebrate and embrace this. Blessed Carlo made Mass and adoration the key part of his day and, at camp, we do too.”

The camp is open to high school



Photo Courtesy of Blessed Carlo Acutis Youth Camp
Campers attend adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament in the chapel at Blessed Carlo Acutis Youth Camp in Huttonsville.

students and children in grades three to 12. Campers are led by 14 young adults who serve as camp counselors. According to the camp website, all staff members are required to comply with the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston’s Safe Environment protocol. The Safe Environment protocol entails a background check, acknowledgement of the diocese’s policy relating to abuse, and completion of awareness training. They also receive a code of conduct for working with and supervising children and are educated regarding the state of West Virginia’s 24-hour reporting requirement.

As the camp looks to have a successful summer, Chancey is looking to add a permanent tribute to the camp’s namesake. He is currently in talks with a Catholic artist who has provided a rendering of a Blessed Carlo statue, “hopefully soon to be St. Carlo Acutis statue,” he said.

As for a possible location, Chancey envisions the statue to stand at the center of the camp’s small courtyard, saying, “That really is the heart of the camp.”

It’s the perfect place to honor a boy who loved Christ so much and was so drawn to the Most Blessed Sacrament, knowing Christ’s real presence in the Eucharist.



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Bishop Brennan Ordains 20 Permanent Deacons in Historic Ordination for Diocese

By Colleen Rowan (This story originally ran in the June 14, 2024 digital edition of *The Catholic Spirit*)

On a historic day for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, Bishop Mark Brennan ordained 20 men as permanent deacons for ministry in West Virginia and an additional two men as transitional deacons for the Glenmary Home Missioners. Fittingly celebrated on the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus (June 7), the bishop said, a feast “which proclaims Christ’s love for us,” the ordination drew faithful from all over who filled the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston.

“The diaconate and this feast are intimately connected since the Lord’s heart beats with an inextinguishable love for his people,” the bishop said. “And deacons, in their varied ministries, are vehicles of his love.”

This was the first ordination of permanent deacons for the diocese in eight years and the only one with 20 candidates, who processed into the basilica co-cathedral with their wives. Also present for the ordination were the deacons’ families as well as priests, deacons, religious, and seminarians.

God has called the deacons from all corners of the state, Bishop Brennan said in his homily, announcing that he was appointing them as permanent deacons at their home parishes. Many of them have been appointed to more than one parish (see full appointments on Page 6 of this issue).

The following are the newly ordained deacons for the diocese and their home parishes: Deacon William Richard Allen, II of St. Francis de Sales Parish in Beckley, Deacon John Anthony Basil of St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Weirton, Deacon Emarjun Capuno Brucal of Sacred Heart Parish in Williamson, Deacon Michael Allen Brumley of St. Patrick Parish in Weston, Deacon John David Butler of St. Matthew Parish in Ravenswood, Deacon Victor Francis Cwynar, Jr. of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Parkersburg, Deacon Michael Anthony Kawash of the basilica co-cathedral, Deacon William Joseph Klug of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in New Martinsville, Deacon Robert Joseph Krall of St. Michael Parish in Wheeling, Deacon Jacob Andrew Manning of the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling, Deacon James David McCullough of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Stonewood, Deacon Thomas Joseph McFadden of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Wheeling, Deacon Patrick Francis Michel of St. Joseph Parish in Martinsburg, Deacon Jason Scott Miller of St. Paul Parish in Weirton, Deacon Anthony Michael O’Leary of Blessed Sacrament Parish in South Charleston, Deacon Ronald Piaskowski of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Hun-



Colleen Rowan Photo
Bishop Mark Brennan ordains Deacon William Klug of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in New Martinsville to the diaconate at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston June 7. Deacon Klug was one of 20 men ordained permanent deacons (many of them pictured at right) that day for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

tington, Deacon Tommy Bryan Ross also of Blessed Sacrament Parish, Deacon Aaron Nicholas Talbott of St. Brendan Parish in Elkins, Deacon Bryce Burl Timberlake of St. James the Greater Parish in Charles Town, and Deacon David Andrew Torlone of St. Leo Parish in Inwood.

Deacon Joseph Maundu and Deacon Calvine Okello, ordained for Glenmary, are from Kenya.

The Rite of Ordination began with the Election of the Candidates as each were called by name.

The heart of the diaconate is service, Bishop Brennan said in his homily.

“It’s not so much an honor as a call to imitate the Lord Jesus, who came not to be served but to serve,” he said. “To put himself last and others first.”

Along with visiting the sick and the imprisoned, assisting the poor, and listening to people who are beset by various kinds of troubles, deacons also proclaim the gospel, preach and teach God’s word, and celebrate some of the sacraments, the bishop said.

The ministry of the first deacons was feeding hungry widows. The bishop said St. Stephen (a deacon) was soon charged to proclaim Christ as the Messiah, and St. Philip (a deacon) baptized the Ethiopian eunuch who had come to the faith.

“Be aware deacon candidates that when you stand at the altar assisting the priest, you are an icon of the unity of faith and charity,” Bishop Brennan said. “Faith and charity cannot be separated. In your very person you will live that unity and represent it for your people.”

While they are being assigned to their home parishes, Bishop Brennan told the deacon candidates that he or his successors may call upon them for a broader diocesan ministry.

“There are prisons, hospitals, schools, and many works of charity and justice that fall under the diocesan umbrella in West Virginia and some deacons already are involved in those broader ministries,” the bishop said. “You who are to be ordained might well be called upon also to engage in them.”

In their parish ministry, the bishop urged them to respect and cooperate with the pastor or administrator. At the same time, he encouraged pastors and administrators to work with deacons, giving them work but to work with them in a spirit of fraternal charity and real collaboration. He further urged priests who will receive new deacons and priests who already have deacons serving at their parishes to understand that the sacrament of marriage is

the deacon’s first way of living out his baptismal vocation to service and must remain healthy and life giving in order for the husband to render effective diaconal ministry.

“So, when marital or family time is needed, pastors be understanding of your deacon’s situation,” the bishop said. “A deacon may sometimes be asked to respond to a serious pastoral need even when inconvenient for the family. I’d ask that the wives and children to understand that serving when it is not convenient is part of carrying our cross for others as the Lord Jesus carried his for us. I commend you, wives and children, for the support you have already shown your husbands and fathers.”

The bishop urged the candidates to be ordained to the diaconate, to turn to the Lord for the strength to offer faithful service to God and his people. He pointed to the responsorial psalm for the Mass: “My strength and my courage is the Lord, and he has been my savior” (Is 12:2-3, 4, 5-6).

The bishop urged the men to find time for prayer each day both in the Liturgy of the Hours and private prayer and to know that the Lord loves them. As the prophet Hosea said of God’s love for Israel, “When
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Deacons...

Cont'd from Page 9

Israel was a child I loved him, out of Egypt I called my son" (Hos 11:1,3-4,8c-9).

The bishop told the deacon candidates that the Lord has called them, "because he loves you and he invites you to share as deacons in his shepherding of his people. Hosea's words about the Israelites then apply to you too: 'I drew them with human cords, with bands of love; I fostered them like one who raises an infant to his cheeks'" (Hos 11:1,3-4,8c-9).

The bishop encouraged them to find strength for all aspects of their Christian life in faithful prayer and reflection on God's word.

"It will make you a better husband, a better father, and a good deacon," he said. St. Paul, he added, rejoiced that God had called him "to preach to the Gentiles the inscrutable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for all what is the plan of the mystery hidden from ages past in God who created all things, so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church..." (Eph 3:8-12, 14-19).

"By your direct preaching

and teaching and by your indirect preaching of the gospel, through your service to those in need, you will shed light on the mystery of God's immense and enduring love for all people which is the essence of the wisdom of Christ in his gospel," Bishop Brennan said to the deacon candidates. "I hope you will find in Christ our Redeemer, as Paul did and as I have, that boldness of speech and confidence of access through faith in him that will give vigor to your preaching and teaching and affirm trust in the Lord when you pray to him for yourselves, for your families, and for those whom you serve.

"Finally, I make my prayer for you that of Paul: 'I kneel before the Father, from whom every family in heaven and on earth is named, that he may grant you in accord with the riches of his glory to be strengthened with power through his Spirit in the inner self, and that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, rooted and grounded in love, may have strength to comprehend with all the holy ones what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which



Colleen Rowan Photo

Newly ordained deacons process from the basilica co-cathedral at the end of their ordination June 7.

surpasses knowledge, so that you may be filled with all the fullness of God" (Eph 3:8-12, 14-19).

"Deacons to be," the bishop said, "you will experience Christ's love, I pray, in your prayer and worship, in your family life, and in the places where you exercise your diaconate. Fortified by his love, endowed with God's spirit, you will imitate the Lord Jesus who 'went about doing good and freeing those in the grip of the devil, for

God was with him' (Acts 10:38). God will be with you too and enable you to do much good for others to the glory of God."

Following the homily, each of the elect came to stand before the bishop and promised to serve the people of God as deacons. The congregation then knelt and prayed with the bishop for the men about to be ordained as they prostrated themselves before the altar during the Litany of Supplication. Each of the elect

then knelt before the bishop who laid his hands upon their heads and prayed the prayer of ordination. The newly ordained deacons were then vested with the stole and dalmatic by their wives and a chosen priest or deacon. The bishop, followed by their brother deacons, then offered the Kiss of Peace to the newly ordained.

After the ordination, a reception was held at St. John XXIII Pastoral Center in Charleston.



Colleen Rowan Photo
Deacon Richard Allen, II of St. Francis de Sales Parish in Beckley is vested by his wife Julie, right, and Deacon Harry Evans, also of St. Francis de Sales.

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‘Preach and Teach the Truth of the Catholic Faith,’ Bishop Says to Newly Ordained Father Soplinski

By Colleen Rowan (This story originally ran in the June 7, 2024, digital edition of The Catholic Spirit)

It was in a standing room only Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling—filled with priests, deacons, religious, seminarians, and the Catholic faithful—that Bishop Mark Brennan ordained Father John Soplinski to the priesthood May 31. This, the first presbyteral ordination in West Virginia in three years, was indeed joyful for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, but even more so for two Wheeling parish communities as the bishop announced he was assigning Father Soplinski as vice rector of the cathedral and parochial vicar of St. Alphonsus Parish in Wheeling. His announcement was met with joyful applause.

Noting that the ordination was being held on the Feast of the Visitation of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Bishop Brennan said that same charity and concern for others in our Blessed Mother when she visited Elizabeth is seen in Father Soplinski. “And we will see that in him as a priest as well, leading others to the Lord and being a source of strength, comfort, and encouragement for them,” he added.

The Rite of Ordination began with the Election of the Candidate.

“Relying on the help of the Lord God and of our Savior Jesus Christ, we choose this our brother for the Order of the Priesthood,” Bishop Brennan said.

In his homily, he spoke of the three main dimensions of priestly ministry—preaching and teaching the word of God; sanctifying parishioners by offering the sacra-



Colleen Rowan Photo

Newly ordained Father John Soplinski receives applause and congratulations from the faithful as he processes from the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling at the end of his ordination to the priesthood May 31.

ments of God’s grace; and offering them the guidance and encouragement and, at times, correction of a faithful shepherd.

The bishop then spoke of the saying, “People die for lack of knowledge.” He encouraged Father Soplinski to “Preach and teach the truth of the Catholic faith. For it does far more than fill the head with information. It imparts a wisdom that will enable your people to live sane, virtuous lives meeting their responsibilities and making their communities better places and preparing them for heaven. This is the wisdom that will enable them to take God seriously, to pray

and to worship, to care for their neighbor, to stand up for justice, to foster reconciliation and peace. The world needs to hear the truth of the gospel and ... you will have many ways in your ministry to proclaim that truth.”

Bishop Brennan continued his homily discussing how people find the strength to live the truth. He stressed that we are not strong enough on our own to live by the teachings of Christ. “... We need the strength that comes from God,” he said. “The risen Christ gives it to us, especially through the sacraments.”

Bishop Brennan pointed to the words of Pope St. Leo

the Great in the 5th century: “All that was visible of our Redeemer has passed into the sacramental rights of the church.”

This is a primary way which the Lord Jesus fulfills his promise to be with us until the end of the world, the bishop said.

“When you baptize a child or an adult you will be God’s agent in joining that person to Jesus Christ to his saving death and resurrection,” Bishop Brennan said to Father Soplinski. “You will nourish the Christ life in him or her by the other sacraments especially the holy Eucharist and the sacrament of penance. The Lord will use

you in all the sacraments.”

Father Soplinski’s own sacrament of holy orders, the bishop said, exists precisely to give him the spiritual power to strengthen Christ’s disciples in their fidelity to him.

“Rejoice in the Lord’s gift and share it with others,” the bishop said to Father Soplinski. “You received without cost, without cost you are to give.”

In priesthood, the bishop said to Father Soplinski: “People will sometimes seek you out because of troubles that beset them. Lend them a compassionate ear. Some

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Soplinski...

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will need guidance for a difficult moral or spiritual dilemma. Pray for the wisdom to guide them well."

Father Soplinski may see a need in his parish or the local community for some work of charity and justice or people may bring that need to his attention, the bishop said, and he encouraged him to rouse the people to meet it.

The bishop also asked Father Soplinski to respect the competence and the faith of the laity and work with them to promote the gospel values.

"And as you go about your priestly work," the bishop said, "remember Peter's words which echo the Lord's: 'Do not lord it over those assigned to you but be examples to the flock' (1 Peter 5:3). A priest is a leader in the church, but the best leaders lead by example. Be that good example."

To be the kind of priest the people need him to be, Bishop Brennan told Father Soplinski that he must stay close to the Lord Jesus in his daily prayer, daily Mass, retreats, and spiritual devotions. All of these, the bishop said, will help him draw even closer to Jesus Christ. The bishop pointed to the gospel reading for the Mass, "It was not you who chose me but I who chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit that will remain" (John 15:9-17).

"Seek the Lord's wisdom and strength every day," Bishop Brennan said to Father Soplinski, "trusting that the one who called you will never abandon you but always uphold you in the good days and the bad. He says to you as he says to us all, 'I have called you friends' (John 15:11). Ask your good friend. As your good friend as well as your Lord and Savior, Jesus will give you the support you need when things do not go according to plan or you just get something wrong. There will be days like that."

Mother Teresa of Calcutta must have had some days like that, the bishop said, for she said God has not called us to be successful, but to be faithful. "In the wry humor of God even our failures can give him glory if we are faithful," the bishop said, "and that is its own kind of success."

In ending his homily, Bishop Brennan shared that

it is his hope that Father Soplinski will find great happiness in being a priest.

"When I was ordained 48 years ago, I was frankly a rather timid young man," the bishop recalled. "I began to discover that there is great joy in serving God's people and sharing their blessings and their sorrows. As a priest, you will remind them, simply by your presence, that God is with them at those happy and sad times. Jesus said to his disciples, 'I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and your joy may be complete' (John 15:11). Loving the Lord and serving his people faithfully, you will I trust experience that joy. So, welcome to the Catholic priesthood, John. There's much work to do but your hands will make my work and that of your brother priests a little lighter. May the Lord bless you and his people with many years of joyful and fruitful service."

The Rite of Ordination continued following the homily as Father Soplinski stood before the bishop and promised to serve the people of God as a priest. The congregation then joined the bishop in praying for Father Soplinski as he prostrated himself before the altar for the Litany of Supplication.

Father Soplinski then knelt before the bishop, who laid his hands upon his head and called upon the Holy Spirit to make him an ordained priest. Each of his fellow priests gathered came forward to lay their hands upon his head as well. Father Soplinski was vested with his stole and chasuble by Msgr. Robert Saly, his uncle, and Father Martin Smay, pastor of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Thomas and Our Lady of Mercy Mission in Parsons.

Father Soplinski again knelt before the bishop, who anointed his palms with holy chrism. The bishop then presented the paten of bread and chalice of wine to



Colleen Rowan Photo
Bishop Mark Brennan ordains Father John Soplinski to priesthood at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling May 31. Standing are, from left, Deacon Paul Lim, Deacon Doug Breiding, and Deacon John Yaquinta.

him, saying, "...receive the oblation of the holy people, to be offered to God. Understand what you will

do, imitate what you will celebrate, and conform your life to the mystery of the Lord's cross."

The bishop, followed by his fellow priests, then offered Father Soplinski the Kiss of Peace.



Colleen Rowan Photo
Father John Soplinski is vested with his stole and chasuble by Msgr. Robert Saly (right) and Father Martin Smay.




Joyce Bibey Photo
Father Brian Crenwelge offers the Kiss of Peace to newly ordained Father John Soplinski (left). Waiting to do the same are Very Rev. Sebastian Devasya, V.E. (back, right), and Msgr. Joseph Peterson, V.G.



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Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Senior Classes of 2024

By Joyce Bibey

The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Catholic Schools announces our Class of 2024 graduates! With over \$20 million in scholarship awards across our six high schools, approximately 98% of 194 graduating seniors will

be furthering their academic careers at a wide variety of colleges and universities.

We want to also extend congratulations to our four National Merit Semi-Finalists, 39 Presidential Scholars, and WVU Bucklew Scholar among many academic

honors. We thank all students and school communities for their commitment, dedication and contributions throughout this class's Catholic school education.

Join us in congratulating these outstanding graduates and wishing them the best in a new chapter in

their lives! Please visit each school's website for more information.

*Notre Dame High School,
Clarksburg*



Courtesy Photo
Twenty-three graduates; Valedictorian Anna Weber; Salutatorians Christian Arnold, Cole Goldizen, and Brian Nguyen Ngo

Central Catholic High School, Wheeling



Sixty-six graduates; Valedictorian Kathryn Tiu, Salutatorian Thomas Ryncarz

Courtesy Photo

Madonna High School, Weirton



Courtesy Photo
Thirty graduates; Valedictorian Grace Parker, Salutatorian Mia Pietrantoni

Charleston Catholic High School



Courtesy Photo
Forty-nine graduates; Valedictorian Joseph Muchow, Salutatorian Nicole Gao

Courtesy Photo

Parkersburg Catholic High School



Courtesy Photo
Twelve graduates; Valedictorian Mary Ellen Tokodi-Ruth, Salutatorian Rachel McClung

St. Joseph Central Catholic High School, Huntington



Courtesy Photo
Fourteen graduates; Valedictorian Andrew Vilseck, Salutatorian Lillith Comeau

U.S. Medical Professionals Call for Halt to Transgender Practices on Children

By **Gina Christian, OSV News**

(OSV News) — A number of pediatricians and other medical professionals are urging the nation's medical organizations to halt hormonal and surgical interventions on children with gender dysphoria — a feeling of distress at perceived mismatch between one's biological sex and gender identity — and to not double down on these practices amid mounting evidence of their harm.

The American College of Pediatricians recently issued the Doctors Protecting Children Declaration, calling on the American Academy of Pediatrics, the Endocrine Society, the Pediatric Endocrine Society, the American Medical Association, the American Psychological Association, and the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry to “immediately stop” promoting “social affirmation, puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and surgeries for children and adolescents who experience distress over their biological sex.”

The ACP's declaration — first unveiled at a June 6 press conference in Washington — urged its colleagues to both “follow the science and their European professional colleagues” who have increasingly halted such interventions based on substantial long-term research. The ACP called on medical professionals to treat gender dysphoria with “comprehensive evaluations and therapies” that address the “underlying psychological co-morbidities and neurodiversity” that can accompany the condition or predispose a person to it.

“These doctors are saying, ‘We want what's best for children. We want children and adolescents to thrive and to be healthy and to have a fulfilled life,’” Dr. Jane E. Anderson, ACP's vice president, told OSV News. “And it is not going to happen when they are directed and almost forced into gender-affirming care that harms them, mutilates them and makes them patients for the rest of their lives.”

So far, 18 organizations — including the Catholic Medical Association — representing more than over 75,000 physicians and health care professionals have signed the declaration, as have dozens of professionals from over 50 countries.

Anderson, a retired clinical professor of pediatrics from the University of California, San Francisco, said that “despite the great research studies that have come out of Europe recently ... the professional medical organizations in America are not ‘following the science’” of the impact that puberty blockers, cross-sex hormones and genital surgeries have on developing children.

The ACP declaration notes that “gender-affirming” clinics in the U.S. follow “standards of care” developed by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, which has come under scrutiny following the March leak of hundreds of messages and recordings indicating members knew of links

between cancer and hormone therapy, while admitting adolescent patients were sometimes too young to fully grasp the life-changing impact of interventions on their fertility.

“The foundation of WPATH guidelines is demonstrably flawed and pediatric patients can be harmed when subjected to those protocols,” said the ACP's declaration.

Anderson also pointed to the Cass Review, a final report issued in April by Dr. Hilary Cass, a former president of the Royal College of Pediatrics and Child Health, whom National Health Service England appointed in 2020 to conduct an independent analysis of its gender identity services.

Cited extensively in the ACP declaration, the Cass Review — which prompted NHS England to cease automatically prescribing puberty suppressing hormones to child patients at its gender identity clinics — found in its final 338-page report that evidence supporting gender interventions for children and teens was both insufficient and fraught. A growing list of countries that includes Denmark, Finland, France, Norway and Sweden have also limited such usage.

Anderson told OSV News that the issue of gender dysphoria in the U.S. medical community has “become a legal battle.”

“Whereas in reality it is a medical, scientific conflict over what's real, what's true research and what's best for children,” she said.

“The sad thing is that much of this (gender affirming) care is being promulgated as saying — and promoted as saying — this is going to help children and adolescents feel better and improve their mental health,” she said. “It does not do that.”

Anderson pointed to a 30-year study from Sweden following persons who had undergone sex reassignment surgery that showed the cohort had — in the words of the study authors — “considerably higher risks for mortality, suicidal behavior and psychiatric morbidity.”

“We would really advocate that these children and adolescents ... need to be treated for their mental health concerns before ever looking at something like gender-affirming care, which is not helpful,” said Anderson. She claimed a plurality of these youth experience underlying mental health concerns, which can include depression or anxiety, autism, or even prior emotional trauma or sexual abuse.

“We are dealing with adolescents, children and adolescents whose brains are immature,” she said, adding they are not in a position at that age to make drastic decisions regarding their bodies.

The ACP declaration, Anderson said, will continue to add signatures as people learn about it. The “bottom line,” said Anderson, is that “we don't want to harm children; we want to help them. So we need to go back to helping them with their mental health, and making that a priority.”

(Gina Christian is a multimedia reporter for OSV News.)

En Español

Obispos de EE.UU. aprueban nuevo marco pastoral para jóvenes y jóvenes adultos

LOUISVILLE, Kentucky (OSV News) -- La Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos aprobó un nuevo marco pastoral nacional para la juventud, titulado "Escuchar, enseñar, enviar: un marco pastoral nacional para ministerios de jóvenes y Jóvenes Adultos" al obtener los votos necesarios días después de la conclusión de su Asamblea Plenaria de Primavera.

Al no alcanzar inicialmente el umbral de dos tercios necesario para ser aprobado por dos votos en la asamblea de obispos del 12 al 14 de junio en Louisville, la USCCB en Washington anunció el 18 de junio que el marco fue aprobado con 188 votos a favor, cuatro en contra y cuatro abstenciones, siguiendo un escrutinio de obispos elegibles para votar.

El obispo Robert E. Barron de Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, quien dirige el Comité sobre Laicos, Matrimonio, Vida Familiar

y Juventud, presentó el marco el 13 de junio en la asamblea de obispos. Está diseñado para apoyar a pastores, líderes ministeriales, familias y jóvenes a evangelizar a sus pares y abordar temas como la sexualidad, la salud mental, la desafiliación y la justicia racial, invitándolos a un camino de "discipulado misionero y liderazgo cristiano".

El obispo Barron destacó que el último compromiso directo de los obispos estadounidenses con el ministerio de jóvenes y jóvenes adultos fue la Jornada Mundial de la Juventud de 1993 y dos marcos nacionales publicados en la década de 1990, y desde entonces "el entusiasmo ha disminuido y la desafiliación ha aumentado".

El marco tiene como objetivo revitalizar los ministerios de jóvenes y jóvenes adultos, tras el Sínodo de los Jóvenes de 2018 y la exhortación del Papa Francisco de 2019 "Christus Vivit".

Para denunciar presuntos casos de abuso sexual de niños: La Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston alienta a informar ante las autoridades civiles ante todo si se ha cometido un delito. También alentamos a utilizar www.reportbishopabuse.org para hacer un informe sobre cualquier obispo en los EE. UU. Si tiene motivos para creer que un obispo ha cometido una conducta sexual inapropiada, comuníquese con las autoridades civiles de la jurisdicción correspondiente y visite www.reportbishopabuse.org. **Para informar a las autoridades civiles:** comuníquese con la policía local; los números variarán según su ubicación. Si cree que alguien está en peligro inmediato, llame al 911. Para informar confidencialmente cualquier incidencia de sospecha de abuso o negligencia infantil, incluido el abuso sexual, comuníquese con la Oficina de Servicios de Protección Infantil de Niños y Familias de West Virginia llamando a la línea directa de abuso infantil al 800.352.6513. Puede informar anonimamente a esta línea directa si lo prefiere. **Para informar a las autoridades diocesanas:** La diócesis alienta a informar a las autoridades civiles apropiadas, ante todo, si se ha cometido un delito. La diócesis también alienta a informar a las autoridades eclesiales apropiadas. Para reportar casos sospechosos de abuso sexual de niños por parte del personal de la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston a la Diócesis, comuníquese con uno de los siguientes designados al 1.888.434.6237 o 304.233.0880: Sr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Sr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; Muy Reverendo Dennis Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., ext. 270; o Sor Martha Gómez, ext. 264. También puede llamar a la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro de la Diócesis al 304.230.1504. También puede llamar a la línea directa de abuso sexual de la Diócesis al 833.230.5656. Los formularios de queja están disponibles en línea en www.dwc.org, haga clic en "Diócesis" en la barra de menú, luego en "Oficinas", luego en "Ambiente seguro", luego "Descargar archivos y formularios". El formulario se titula "Formulario de queja para denuncias de abuso sexual de menores". El formulario se puede devolver por correo de EE. UU. A: Office of Safe Environment, Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003. **Para informar al Coordinador de Asistencia a Víctimas de la Diócesis:** llame a la Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, al 304.559.6742. Además de los métodos enumerados anteriormente para denunciar el abuso sexual, la Diócesis también se ha asociado con Navex Global para ofrecer la plataforma EthicsPoint para informar otras inquietudes adicionales, como sospecha de mala conducta financiera, profesional y personal de un sacerdote, diácono, religioso, o empleado laico de la Diócesis o cualquier parroquia o escuela católica en West Virginia. Se puede acceder a la plataforma EthicsPoint a través de www.dwc.org, en "Rendición de cuentas", luego "Informar mala conducta" o llamando al 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint es un sistema de informes de terceros que informa a las autoridades civiles cuando corresponda y a las autoridades diocesanas, y la identidad de la persona que informa esta protegida. Enlaces e información: Departamento de Salud y Recursos Humanos de WV: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. Policía Estatal de Virginia Occidental, Unidad de Crímenes contra Niños: 304-293-6400.

WVU Children's Hospital Honors Fairmont Catholic School Teacher



Courtesy Photo

Franchesca Aloï, a teacher at Fairmont Catholic School (center), holds the plaque presented to her by WVU Children's Hospital. With her are Marissa Sayre, director of Marketing and Development for the hospital (left), and Taylor Griffith, director of Children's Miracle Network.

FAIRMONT—Franchesca Aloï, a teacher at Fairmont Catholic School, was honored by WVU Children's Hospital.

Marissa Sayre, director of Marketing and Development for the hospital, and Taylor Griffith, director of Children's Miracle Network, visited Fairmont Catholic School to present Aloï with a plaque honoring her for making a differ-

ence for the children at the hospital.

They plan to return to the school on Sept. 13 bringing in the mascot and WBOY TV to host an assembly in Aloï's honor. The ladies thanked Principal Diane Burnside for the school's donations and Alaska's and BC Bank for donations to the WVU Children's Hospital.

Daily Living
with Fr. Chapin

Sunday Mornings

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

Plus watch online at - www.mydailyliving.com and YouTube

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