



Pope Leo Calls For Ceasefire in Middle East, Special Prayers for Lebanon

By Junno Arocho Esteves

(OSV News) — Pope Leo XIV called for an immediate ceasefire in the Middle East and condemned the “atrocious violence” of the U.S.-Israeli-led war on Iran, which has spread across the region.

After praying the Angelus with pilgrims gathered in St. Peter’s Square March 15, the pope expressed his alarm about the deteriorating situation in Lebanon and called for “lasting solutions to the serious ongoing crisis for the common good of all Lebanese people.”

“In the name of the Christians of the Middle East and of all women and men of goodwill, I appeal to those responsible for this conflict: Cease fire! Let the paths of dialogue be reopened,” he said.

As the conflict enters its third week, Tehran accused the United States of launching attacks from the United Arab Emirates, further escalating tensions that have sent global oil prices into a volatile spiral.

According to a March 15 report by The Associated Press, President Donald Trump confirmed the U.S.

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Mohamed Azakir, Reuters
A child watches a cat eating in a school March 11 that has been turned into a shelter for people displaced from Beirut’s southern suburbs and southern Lebanon, following an escalation between Hezbollah and Israel amid the U.S. and Israel-Iran war, in Beirut.

Anthropic Fight with the Pentagon Amid Iran War Puts Ethics of AI Warfare in Focus

By Kimberley Heatherington, (OSV News) — While the smoke was still rising from its ruins and rescuers were extracting 175 bodies from the rubble of the Shajarah-Tayyebah elementary school in Minab, Iran, Feb. 28, the questions started about how this could have happened in the opening hours of

the U.S and Israel war with Iran. Preliminary reports suggest the school was misidentified as a military site due to outdated human intelligence when it was struck by a U.S. Tomahawk cruise missile. But the incident has also drawn attention to the complex interplay between the use of generative artificial

intelligence for mass processing the data it is given into thousands of potential military targets, identified and ranked for human reviewers to approve. In what some commentators are calling “the first AI war” — the current war between the United States, Israel and Iran — there are a host of

both old and new ethical considerations. But many revolve around the same concern: that AI should not be left to its own devices. Yet on Feb. 27, the eve of Operation Epic Fury, President Donald Trump directed government agencies to no longer work with tech **See “AI” on Page 4**

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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:

The Annunciation of the Lord, March 13 (Solemnity, March 25)
 Easter, April 10 (Easter Sunday, April 5)
 Month of Mary, Mother of God, May 15
 Month of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, June 12
 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

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Pope ...

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“obliterated” military sites on Iran’s Kharg Island and warned that the country’s oil infrastructure could be the next target if interference with shipping in the Strait of Hormuz continues.

In response, Iran threatened to retaliate against U.S.-linked energy assets across the region, while Trump has called on international allies to deploy warships to secure the vital waterway, which carries one-fifth of the world’s oil supply.

Pope Leo’s appeal for peace, particularly in Lebanon, comes after the recent death of Lebanese Maronite Catholic priest Father Pierre al-Rahi, who was killed March 9 after sustaining wounds from Israeli tank fire on a house in Qlayaa, a village in southern Lebanon.

“Thousands of innocent people have been killed, and many others forced to abandon their homes,” the pope told the faithful. “I renew my prayerful closeness to all those who have lost their loved ones in the attacks, which have struck schools, hospitals and residential areas.”

Calling the escalating conflict in Lebanon “a matter of great concern,” the pope appealed for an end to the war and for those involved to return to the negotiating table for the sake of the people.

“Violence can never lead to the justice, stability, and peace that the people await,” Pope Leo said.



OSV News photo/Karamallah Daher, Reuters
 People mourn over the coffin of Father Pierre al-Rahi during his funeral in Qlayaa in southern Lebanon March 11. The Lebanese Maronite Catholic priest died March 9 after sustaining wounds from Israeli tank fire on a house in Qlayaa following an escalation between Hezbollah and Israel amid the U.S.-Israeli war with Iran.

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AI ...

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giant Anthropic, amid a critical difference in views on acceptable uses of its technology by the Department of Defense, also known as the Department of War. In response, Anthropic — whose tools analyze imagery and intelligence data — filed suit against the Pentagon March 9.

Anthropic CEO Dario Amodei — citing mass domestic surveillance and fully autonomous weapons — stated, “In a narrow set of cases, we believe AI can undermine, rather than defend, democratic values. Some uses are also simply outside the bounds of what today’s technology can safely and reliably do.”

On March 13, a group of 14 Catholic moral theologians filed a friend-of-the-court brief in support of Anthropic. They noted Anthropic’s objections to use of AI for mass surveillance of Americans is “aligned” with Catholic teaching on privacy and subsidiarity, and argued from the Church’s teaching on justice in war that “lethal autonomous weapons problematically obscure human agency, dangerously shifting responsibility away from human decision-makers to machines.”

Anthony Granado, associate general secretary at the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, told OSV News that “Pope Leo XIV has described the implications of AI technology for humanity as a ‘digital revolution.’”

“And the U.S. bishops have underscored what the Holy Father has said, reminding lawmakers that AI impacts a very wide range of issues which the Church considers important for human life and dignity,” he said.

In emailed comments, Granado enumerated several aspects of the war that seem to hold an answer to Pope Leo’s query.

“AI is neither neutral in its implementation nor by its design. The decision to take life in warfare or to undertake war itself must be guided by the moral law and ethical considerations,” he explained. “The bishops have expressed their deep concern about the development and use of autonomous weapons and any attempt to replace or undermine human decision making, which they urge, remains essential to mitigate what they refer to as ‘the horrors of warfare and the undermining of fundamental human rights.’”

U.S. Navy Adm. Brad Cooper, the head of U.S. Central Command, said in a March 11 video the United States is using a variety of advanced AI tools to conduct strikes.

“These systems help us sift through vast amounts of data in seconds, so our leaders can cut through the noise and make smarter decisions faster than the enemy can react,” Cooper said. “Humans will always make final decisions on what to shoot and what not to shoot, and when to shoot. But advanced AI tools can turn processes that used to take hours and sometimes even days into seconds.”

But 120 Democratic lawmakers in a March 12 letter to Defense Secretary Pete Hegseth raised concern about reports that U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran have hit “schools, hospitals, gymnasiums, public gathering spaces, and a UNESCO heritage site.” They asked what role AI was playing in selecting targets, assessing intelligence, making legal determinations — and at what point was it subject to human review for verification — including the Feb. 28 strike on the Shajarah-Tayyebah schoolchildren.

Historically, the ethics of warfare have been guarded by broad safety rails and rules of engagement, strictly overseen by the Department of Defense and the federal administration, John Slattery, executive director of the Carl G. Grefenstette Center for Ethics in Science, Technology, and Law at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, told OSV News.

“These ostensibly would also apply to any technological system — even before generative AI, you still had technology-enhanced tracking systems. You still had an early form of artificial intelligence doing a lot of work; drone warfare, and tracking systems, and targeting, and things like this,” he said. “All of these fell under the broader impulses of rules of engagement — targeting innocent people — and these were hotly debated well before the Trump administration.”

Observers, however, have voiced concerns over the administration’s stance concerning how warfare is conducted. Hegseth has referred to a military ethos of “maximum lethality, not tepid legality.”

“Both Secretary Hegseth — as well as President Trump — have openly said that they don’t want guardrails on AI. They don’t want to be restricted by international law on inter-

national rules of wartime engagement,” noted Slattery. “And that raises a lot of problematic questions — because if you take some of these guardrails off, we already know that generative AI is highly biased, even with guardrails on ... If you start to take these off, there’s no telling what types of things it could be recommending.”

The Pentagon’s pitched battle with Anthropic has some in the business world questioning the placement of a federal thumb on the scales of corporate independence.

“I wouldn’t say that Catholic social teaching says the state can never dictate what companies can do; that’s clearly wrong,” said Anthony Cannizzaro, associate professor of international business and strategic management as well as vice dean at The Catholic University of America Busch School of Business.

“But the idea that you would remove any sort of moral checks from technology is problematic,” he qualified. “So then the question becomes, from whom do those moral checks stem — should it stem from the creator of the product, or should it stem from the government?”

The argument, Cannizzaro said, leans toward the Catholic principle of subsidiarity: That larger institutions in society, such as the state or federal government, should not overwhelm or interfere with smaller or local institutions, such as the family, local schools, the Church community — or in this case, a corporation.

According to subsidiarity, “Anthropic has a prerogative to build its own values into that product — and it’s not really the government’s role to come into lower levels of society,

whether it be individuals or organizations, and dictate what those values would be,” he explained.

Msgr. Stuart Swetland, a canon lawyer and former U.S. Navy officer, who is president of Donnelly College in Kansas City, Kansas, agreed.

“I think Anthropic and other corporations do have responsibilities — as part of being a good corporate actor — to want to see their products used only appropriately and ethically,” he told OSV News. “And they have every right to place in their contract limitations on the use of their product. If a buyer — in this case, the government — doesn’t want to live by those restrictions, they don’t have to interact with the company, and they don’t have to purchase their service or their product.”

“There’s limits to what can ethically be done in war,” Msgr. Swetland said. “And the Church has been consistent ... that there has to be involved a human in decision-making in the application of just war criteria.”

The Catechism of the Catholic Church states the basic conditions of just war criteria, including that aggressors must have inflicted lasting damage; all other means of ending aggression must have failed; there must be a prospect of success; and the use of weapons shouldn’t produce a graver evil.

“Dehumanizing war, even more than it already is, will make it way too easy to use deadly force,” Msgr. Swetland said. “And the dangers of that leading to all kinds of disproportionate effects have to be closely guarded against.”

(Kimberley Heatherington is an OSV News correspondent. She writes from Virginia.)

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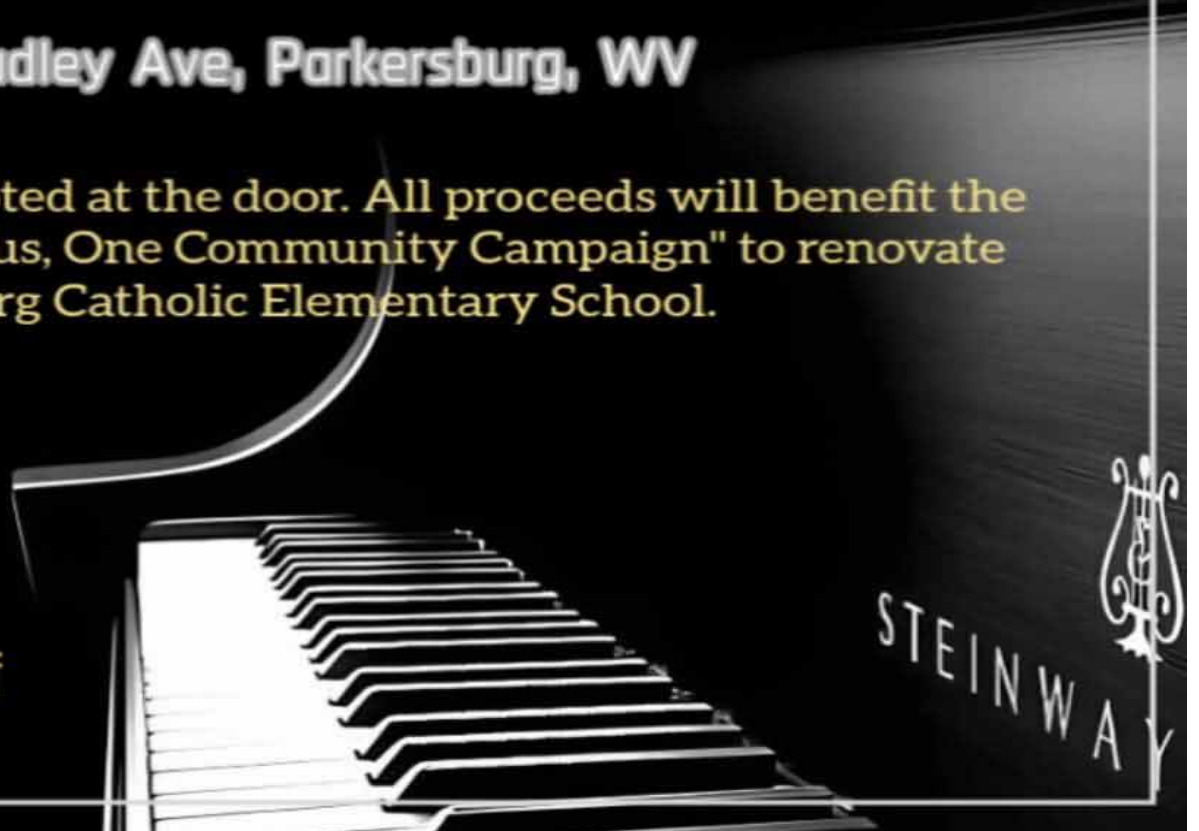
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Fairmont Parish's Evangelization Team Presents Ministry Fair as Part of Action Plan

FAIRMONT — St. Anthony Church in Fairmont enjoyed a Ministry Fair as part of our Evangelization Team's action plan. Under the priority of Parish Renewal, our team decided to try to get more participation from our parishioners. By offering the chance to see what our parish has to offer and ask questions, the Ministry Fair provided this experience.

Over 100 of our parishioners attended the event held March 14 and 15 after the Masses in our parish hall.

Hospitality was also celebrated in conjunction with the fair.

We had 14 tables with each of our ministries represented plus one for our local Knights of Columbus. A table was also there for parishioners to make suggestions for additional ministries here at St. Anthony. Many handouts and materials were available for the parishioners to view.

Our pastor, Father Romeo Bacalso, provided a hands on video to help our parishioners download our MyParish app on their phones. This app allows parishioners to view our bulletin, our website, see messages and events, and provides many other reflective programs.

The Ministry Fair was a great success! We were able to recruit several new people in almost all of our ministries. We will follow up with welcoming and training new volunteers for each ministry.



Left: Father Romeo Bacalso, pastor of St. Anthony Parish in Fairmont, is pictured at the parish's Ministry Fair March 14 and 15. Above: parishioners enjoy the Ministry Fair.

Courtesy photos



When in Rome

**By Rev. John Soplinski,
Director of Vocations**

By now many of you have seen the pictures on Facebook or Instagram of Bishop Brennan's and my trip to Rome to visit Michael Tupta (Charleston, Sacred Heart Co-Cathedral) and Joseph Derico (Weston, St. Patrick's), our seminarians. While the pictures certainly highlight the ancient beauty of Rome and the unique opportunity to sit in the presence of Pope Leo XIV, it is the health of our young men (spiritually, academically, humanly) for which we make this annual trip. They are, with your prayers and support, performing admirably.

They live at the Pontifical North American College (PNAC for short). It is a massive structure less than a fifteen-minute walk from St. Peter's Basilica. There are over 100 seminarians from across the United States currently residing there under the care of Msgr. Thomas Powers, the Rector of the College, and the formation staff. The seminarians live there, worship there, and take their meals together there. Their studies are at different Universities in the city of Rome. Joseph Derico studies at the Pontifical University of St. Thomas

Aquinas (Angelicum). Michael Tupta studies at the Pontifical University of the Holy Cross (Santa Croce). Both of our men are now advanced in the Italian Language, as is Bishop Brennan, a 1974 graduate of the PNAC.

Bishop Brennan, the two seminarians, and I were able to visit several different churches and offer the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass. The first was offered in the Clementine Chapel at St. Peter's Basilica, just below the main altar of the Basilica and on the other side of the wall of the tomb of St. Peter. Mass was also offered in the St. Benedict Chapel at the Basilica of St. Paul Outside the Walls, one of the four major Basilicas of Rome. Bishop Brennan was the celebrant of the Station Church Mass at Santa Maria del Anima. A Mass is offered each day at a different church in Rome at 7:00AM. Our seminarians are making this pilgrimage many of the days of Lent.

A highlight of the trip was attendance at the Wednesday General Audience with Pope Leo XIV in St. Peter's Square. We asked for four tickets and received only three. An inquiry led to a remarkable discovery. Bishop Brennan, dressed in his House Cassock, does not

need a ticket. By his office he is his own ticket. Bishop Brennan was able to sit with the other Bishops gathered from other parts of the world. We heard over the loudspeaker that a group from Fairmont State University was also in attendance, though in the crowd we did not get to link up together. Bishop Brennan and the other Bishops in attendance were invited at

the end of the Audience to greet Pope Leo XIV.

This is a small review of our trip—but an example of why we send seminarians to Rome to study. They are in the heart of the Church and can bring all the experiences Rome has to offer back to our Diocese for our benefit, as the priests who studied there previously have done.

Your prayers and sup-

port of all our seminarians are greatly appreciated—and needed. It is a singular blessing of the position of Vocations Director to visit all our men in formation for the priesthood. There will be future articles on our men studying in the United States at Mount St. Mary's Seminary, the Pontifical College Josephinum, and Pope St. John Paul II College Seminary.



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“Today we celebrate our patron saint, Saint Patrick. His words remind us who we are and who we are called to be,” officials at St. Patrick School in Weston posted to Facebook March 17. “Every time we wear our school shirt, we carry his prayer with us: ‘Christ with me, Christ before me, Christ behind me.’ May we walk today, and everyday, remembering that Jesus Christ is always with us, guiding our thoughts, our words, our actions, and our school! St. Patrick, pray for us.”

Pictured is a stained glass window of St. Patrick and St. Patrick School students celebrating his feast day.

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Holy Spirit Catholic Church

687 Maple Terrace, Monongah, WV
Mass at 5:00 pm, with Adoration until 10:00 pm

St. Peter the Apostle Church

1304 Mill Street, Farmington, WV
Mass at 5:30 pm with Adoration until midnight.



St. Patrick Catholic Church

204 Furbee Street, Mannington, WV
Mass at 8:00 pm with Adoration until midnight.

Immaculate Conception Church

406 Alta Vista Avenue, Fairmont, WV
Mass at 7:00 pm with Adoration until 10:00 pm.



Holy Thursday pilgrimage from altar to altar is a way for Catholics to spiritually accompany Christ as he enters his Passion. As Jesus asks of his apostles, in the Garden of Gethsemane, "Could you not spend one hour with me?"

At 10, 'Amoris Laetitia' Still Shapes Landscape for Marriage, Family Ministries

By Kimberley Heatherington

(OSV News) — In the decade since Pope Francis issued a wide-ranging document on pastoral care for the family, the Catholic Church in the U.S. has leaned into ministries that address often hidden suffering, including infertility, child loss and domestic violence, according to an expert who assists the U.S. bishops on marriage and family ministry.

"There are also ministries that are shedding light on the beauty of caregiving (for) aged family members, and families that are welcoming their homes to children in foster care or by way of adoption," said Julia Dezelski, associate director of Marriage and Family Life for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Secretariat of Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth.

"'Amoris Laetitia' emphasized the need for the Church to meet families in every situation of need," Dezelski told OSV News. "These ministries are doing this."

Released in April 2016, "Amoris Laetitia" is a lengthy papal missive on married life and love, children, extended family, education and related challenges, with special attention to integrating wounded or marginalized families into the life of the Church.

Latin for "The Joy of Love," "Amoris Laetitia" is drawn, as is customary, from the opening phrase of the post-synodal apostolic exhortation, which runs more than 50,000 words. Pope Francis issued the document to synthesize and offer guidance on topics addressed in the back-to-back, worldwide synods of bishops on the family at the Vatican in 2014 and 2015.

"Amoris Laetitia" garnered an uneven reception. While Church leaders generally praised the exhortation's aim of improving pastoral care for families, it met swift and sharp criticism for some ambiguities that appeared difficult to reconcile with Church teaching, especially pertaining to divorced Catholics in new civil unions, without a prior declaration of nullity, and their reception of the Eucharist. Disagreement among theologians and Church leaders persists over these elements.

These lingering questions, however, have not dampened efforts to integrate

Pope Francis' wider reflections on pastoral accompaniment for families. Some U.S. dioceses issued local guidance on the implementation of "Amoris Laetitia," and the Diocese of San Diego used it to convene a local synod on families that led to a new diocesan department for family life.

Five years after the release of "Amoris Laetitia," the USCCB in 2021 approved "Called to the Joy of Love: National Pastoral Framework for Marriage and Family Life Ministry," which was designed to assist U.S. dioceses with the pastoral planning "Amoris Laetitia" envisioned.

"God's plan for marriage and family life corresponds to the deepest desires of men and women for lasting happiness and true joy," the USCCB document states in its introduction.

"Today, pastoral leaders face the challenge of addressing numerous marital and family situations that are more complex than in previous decades," it stated. "This framework attempts to present pastoral approaches to many of these situations with the hope that all people experience the Gospel of the family as a joy that fills hearts and lives."

"Called to the Joy of Love" identifies four pillars for ministry with families and "recommendations for nearly every area of pastoral care," Dezelski said.

Now, 10 years after "Amoris Laetitia" was issued, efforts continue to realize the document's vision, which relies on "meaningful structures in parishes that can meet the needs of families individually," she said.

"The spirituality of marriage and the family remains an area of great theological depth that has not yet been fully developed," she said. "However, there are signs that the family is becoming better understood and appreciated as a domestic church, and the unpacking of what this means for the family — in its fullest meaning — is still underway."

Other ministry experts say that "Amoris Laetitia" has not yet led to major programmatic changes in their fields, but may have opened minds to fresh approaches.

That appears to be the case for marriage preparation, according to Mary-

Rose Verret of Witness to Love, a "catechumenate model" of marriage formation which she co-founded with her husband, Ryan Verret. While "Witness to Love" preceded "Amoris Laetitia," its central elements track with the exhor-

tation's call for marriage preparation to be rooted in a parish community and include virtues-based formation with mentors chosen by the couple. The mentors, who meet certain objective

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A message from the West Virginia Knights of Columbus State Council

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Amoris Laetitia ...

Cont'd from Page 10
criteria, accompany the couple in their sacramental journey to the altar, help integrate them in parish life, and provide trusted support and friendship beyond the day they say "I do."

"I think the first few years after 'Amoris Laetitia' came out, there wasn't any change," Mary-Rose Verret said. "But we saw that people who were the decision-makers at the diocese or parish level were at least open to a conversation and open to the idea that doing the same thing we've always done that's not working, (and) maybe we need to revisit that."

In 2025, according to Ryan Verret, the Witness to Love platform saw a 50% increase in use. They and their volunteer mentors anticipate guiding 5,500 engaged couples in

2026.

"Amoris Laetitia" underscored "accompaniment," but "I don't think people really know what it means," Verret said. "It's not to walk just at someone's side, with no direction. It's not just to leave them either. And it's also not to walk behind and push them, or think you have a better understanding than they do of where they're going. Our ultimate goal is to be just one step ahead of them, and walking with them."

The Verrets are the only North American married couple appointed to a consulting role with the Vatican's Dicastery for Laity, Family and Life. In 2022, that dicastery released "Catechumenal Pathways for Married Life: Pastoral Guidelines for Local Churches," a pastoral outline that drew from on preparing engaged couples for the sacrament of matrimony through continuous, lifelong formation that

begins even in childhood.

The guidelines drew from "Amoris Laetitia," and "we are now seeing the implementation of these guidelines across dioceses," confirmed Dezelski.

But leaders in ministries focused on divorced Catholics say they have yet to see the same attention given to their challenges.

"I think 'Amoris Laetitia' was opening the door. I think we have to still walk through the door," said Patty Breen McNeil, a Catholic who has spoken and written about going through divorce and the process for a declaration of nullity, commonly called an annulment.

Lisa Duffy, founder of Journey of Hope, a ministry that supports separated and divorced Catholics, noted that the Church prepares couples for marriage, not divorce, so there are naturally more questions about that area of pastoral accompaniment. However,

"In my estimation, 'Amoris Laetitia' simply added to those questions," especially around annulment timelines and admission to the Eucharist, she said.

"I've spoken with people who believe the annulment process across the board now only takes 30 days, and they're surprised when they hear that's not the case," she said. "Typically, they've heard other changes have been made, but length of time seems to be the one they're most interested in discussing."

Although pastoral ministry for divorced Catholics lacks the framework articulated for those leading marriage preparation, McNeil and Duffy said individual Catholics and parishes should be mindful of the existing need and work to meet it.

"What the Church can do to be more supportive — more pastoral — is to just recognize folks," McNeil said. "That there are divorced and annulled and civilly remarried people who are in our pews

every Sunday."

Pastoral inattention will increase the risk of parish and even drift from the Church into other Christian denominations, she warned.

"If you don't have a place where you can feel like you're seen, or you're noticed, or you're cared for — and you're going through one of the most difficult situations in your life — it's really easy to walk away from an institution," she said. "Or to go to the non-denominational church down the road, because, 'Hey, they've got divorce care on Thursday night, and then I have my kids, and they have free child care, and they're going to give us dinner, too.'"

Duffy agreed.

"I see a lot of Catholics distance themselves from those who are divorced instead of offering friendship and support," she said. "Just because you're a friend and a support to someone who's divorced, doesn't mean you condone divorce. It simply means you're showing Christian compassion for those who are suffering."

(Kimberley Heatherington is an OSV News correspondent. She writes from Virginia. OSV News staff contributed to this story.)



The Olive Branch is a program created to help individuals who are separated or divorced. It is designed to offer information and resources to aid in achieving personal and spiritual growth while navigating this complicated and painful process.

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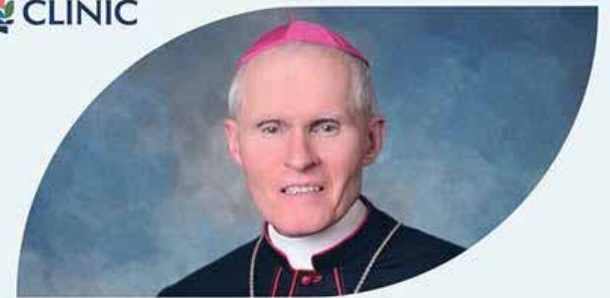
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- Katie Luckini**
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- Lou Volpe**
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Daily Living
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6:30 WTOV FOX 9	Wheeling-Steubenville
6:30 WOWK 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)
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Charleston

Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart—All are invited for presentations and reflections based on the FORMED program “Wilderness Within.” In this program, Sister Josephine Garrett invites us to explore the interior wilderness of our hearts to expand our love as we prepare for Easter.

Sessions began Feb. 15 and continue through April 1. We will have 3 sessions each week on the same material Sundays at noon in the Gathering Space, Tuesdays at 10 a.m. in the Cordis Center, and Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. in the Gathering Space. Please attend any sessions whenever you are available. Make this Lent your best ever as we prepare for Easter!

Morgantown

St. John University Parish Center—Join Father Brian Crenwelge for the the annual St. John's Lenten Series! Each Sunday during Lent, from 9:45-10:45 a.m., there will be refreshments, a brief witness from a fellow parishioner, and a teaching from one of our priests. The Holy Eucharist is our Source and our Summit, a profound place to meet Jesus and be drawn more deeply into His Heart, a balm for souls that are weary, and strength for souls that are weak. The Eucharist is at the heart of the stories of many saints who radically changed the world. Come and hear about how you can fall more in love with Christ through the Eucharist!

Parkersburg

St. Francis Xavier Church—The Sixth Annual Holy Hour for Life Novena with Eucharistic Adoration continuing on Wednesdays: Feb. 25, March 4, 11, 18, and 25, and April 1 at St. Francis Xavier Church, 6-7 p.m. Mass follows at 7 p.m.

This is an hour of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament for respect for the dignity of human life from conception to natural death, for repentance and healing for all those who have been wounded by abortion, and that those who govern may be guided by justice, truth, and love for the gift of life.

South Charleston

Blessed Sacrament Parish—To assist you in your Lenten journey, we are offering a Bible Study which will focus on the seven “I AM” sayings of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel of John. These proclamations of Jesus tell us a great deal about Him, especially His character and nature. The study will be on Wednesday evenings in Room 5 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. according to the schedule below: March 25, I AM the Way and the Truth and the Life; and April 1, I AM the True Vine.

Feel free to attend whichever classes fit into your schedule. You do not need to attend all the sessions to benefit from the study. The study will be facilitated by Terry Mathias.

Star City

St. Mary Parish—Journey with Christ through His Passion this Lent in a guided adult book study of “The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.” There will also be a viewing of the movie “The Passion of the Christ” during Holy Week. Began Feb. 19 and runs through March 26, 10:45-11:45 a.m. and 6-7 p.m. on Thursdays, Movie Viewing: March 31 at 5:30 p.m. Materials provided.

Weirton

Sacred Heart of Mary Church—WALKING WITH PURPOSE. Join the women of Sacred Heart of Mary, Weirton for Beholding Your King, and learn about God, King David, and many Old Testament prophets on Wednesday, March 28, at 10 a.m. or 6 p.m. Contact Sharon Duda at (304) 670-0710 or sharonjduda@gmail.com to let them know you will attend.

St. Joseph the Worker Parish—Lenten Mission with Deacon Harold Burke-Sivens, a.k.a. the Dynamic Deacon, March 22-24, 7-8 p.m. followed by confession, meet & greet, book sales, & refreshments.

Deacon Burke-Sivens is one of the most sought-after speakers in the Church today.



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Wheeling

Cathedral of St. Joseph—Sung Solemn Vespers, Sundays of Lent at 6 p.m. This short liturgy (usually lasting no more than 30 minutes) is part of the Liturgy of the Hours and consists of the singing of psalms and the Magnificat by the Cathedral Schola. Vespers is a beautiful way to give thanks to God at the end of the day and prayerfully observe the Season of Lent.

St. Vincent de Paul Parish—Each Thursday at 6 p.m. during the Lenten Season, St. Vincent de Paul Parish will be hosting the Lenten Study Series “Conversion and Renewal: A Lenten Journey with Christ” in the sanctuary.

Week 4: March 12, “Conversion and Renewal: The Journey of Lent” — repentance, confession, spiritual combat, and growth in holiness. Presented by Father Joseph Wiley, pastor Corpus Christi, Wheeling.

Week 5: March 19, “The Seven Last Words of Christ,” forgiveness, suffering, hope, trust, surrender — presented by Father John Soplinski, vocation director for the diocese, vice rector of the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling and parochial vicar of St. Alphonus Parish in Wheeling.

Week 6: March 26, “Walking with Jesus to Calvary: The Passion Narratives,” study the Passion in the Gospel of John, presented by Father Jeason Stephan, MCBS, pastor St. Vincent's.

(The graphic shown above is a CNS graphic/Nancy Wiechec)

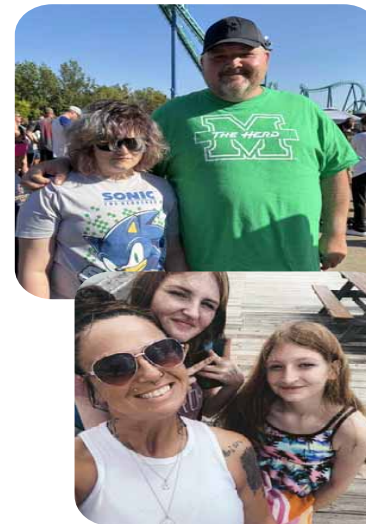


Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP): Building Stability and Connection

Across West Virginia, many families step forward to care for children when their parents are unable to do so. Grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings, and other relatives often become primary caregivers. Their commitment keeps families together, but the responsibility can bring new challenges and uncertainty.

Catholic Charities West Virginia’s Relatives as Parents Program (RAPP) supports these caregivers by connecting families with resources, encouragement, and community. After five years serving families in Wheeling, CCWVa expanded the program to Huntington in 2025, creating a welcoming space where families could build trust and support one another.

Through monthly gatherings, caregivers and children participated in educational sessions and family activities. They learned about youth education, financial literacy, and community resources while building friendships with others who understand the realities of kinship care. Partnerships with organizations such as Children’s Home Society, the YMCA, and Legal Aid of West Virginia helped families access additional support.



RAPP also helped families navigate important legal steps. Service Specialist, Jessica Wormington, accompanied five families through family court processes. With sustained support and advocacy, all five families achieved finalized placement or parenting agreements, an important step toward long-term stability for both caregivers and children.

The program also created moments of joy and connection. Families made bird feeders, cared for plants, drew chalk art, visited a splash pad, and gathered for holiday celebrations. During a group trip to Kings Island, other RAPP families supported a child who became overwhelmed by the busy environment. With encouragement from the group, the family stayed and enjoyed the park together until closing.

Later, the caregivers shared, “The experience exceeded our expectations and felt like a breakthrough. He still talks about his day at Kings Island, and now we have more confidence participating in community activities because we feel supported rather than alone.” In just one year, RAPP in Huntington strengthened caregiver support networks, helped families achieve legal permanency, and created opportunities for children to experience belonging in their community.

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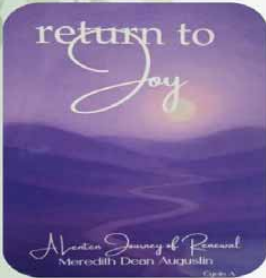
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A 10 años de su publicación, 'Amoris Laetitia' sigue influyendo en la visión respecto al matrimonio y los ministerios familiares

Por Kimberley Heatherington

(OSV News) — En la década desde que el Papa Francisco publicó un documento de amplio alcance sobre la pastoral familiar, la Iglesia Católica en los Estados Unidos se ha inclinado hacia ministerios que abordan el sufrimiento a menudo oculto, incluyendo la infertilidad, la pérdida de hijos y la violencia doméstica, según un experto que asiste a los obispos de Estados Unidos en el ministerio matrimonial y familiar.

"También hay ministerios que están subrayando la belleza del cuidado (para) los miembros mayores de la familia, y las familias que acogen en sus hogares a hijos en adopción temporal o permanente", dijo Julia Dezelski, subdirectora de Matrimonio y Vida Familiar en la Secretaría de Laicado, Matrimonio, Vida Familiar y Juventud de la Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos (USCCB, por sus siglas en inglés).

"Amoris Laetitia" hizo hincapié en la necesidad de que la Iglesia se encuentre con las familias en cada situación de necesidad", dijo Dezelski a OSV News. "Estos ministerios están haciendo esto".

Publicada en abril de 2016, "Amoris Laetitia" es una larga misiva papal sobre la vida y el amor conyugal, los hijos, la familia extendida, la educación y los desafíos relacionados, con especial atención a la integración de las familias heridas o marginadas a la vida de la Iglesia.

"Amoris laetitia", expresión en latín que significa "La alegría del amor", está extraída, como es habitual, de la frase inicial de la exhortación apostólica postsinodal, que consta de más de 50.000 palabras. El Papa Francisco emitió el documento para sintetizar y ofrecer orientación sobre los temas tratados en los sucesivos sínodos mundiales de obispos sobre la familia, en el Vaticano en 2014 y 2015.

"Amoris Laetitia" tuvo una aco-

gida irregular. Si bien los líderes de la Iglesia en general elogiaron el objetivo de la exhortación de mejorar la atención pastoral para las familias, recibió críticas rápidas y severas por algunas ambigüedades que parecían difíciles de reconciliar con la enseñanza de la Iglesia, especialmente en relación con los católicos divorciados en nuevas uniones civiles, sin una declaración previa de nulidad, y su recepción de la Eucaristía. El desacuerdo entre los teólogos y los líderes de la Iglesia persiste sobre estos elementos.

Sin embargo, estas preguntas persistentes no han disminuido los esfuerzos por integrar las reflexiones más amplias del Papa Francisco sobre el acompañamiento pastoral para las familias. Algunas diócesis estadounidenses emitieron directrices locales sobre la implementación de "Amoris Laetitia", y la Diócesis de San Diego las utilizó para convocar un sínodo local sobre familias que condujo a un nuevo departamento diocesano para la vida familiar.

En 2021, cinco años después del lanzamiento de "Amoris Laetitia", la USCCB aprobó "Llamados a la Alegría del Amor: Marco Pastoral Nacional para el Ministerio de Matrimonio y Vida Familiar", que fue diseñado para ayudar a las diócesis de EE.UU. con la planificación pastoral prevista en "Amoris Laetitia".

"El plan de Dios para el matrimonio y la vida familiar corresponde a los deseos más profundos de hombres y mujeres para la felicidad duradera y la alegría verdadera", dice el documento de la USCCB en su introducción.

"Hoy en día, los líderes pastorales enfrentan el desafío de abordar numerosas situaciones matrimoniales y familiares que son más complejas que en décadas anteriores", afirmó el documento publicado en inglés y español. "Este marco intenta presentar enfoques pastorales a muchas de



Foto de CNS/L'Osservatore Romano

El Papa Francisco saluda a parejas de recién casados ??durante su audiencia general en la Plaza de San Pedro, en el Vaticano, en esta foto de archivo del 30 de septiembre de 2015. En 2016, el difunto papa --quien falleció en 2025-- publicó un importante documento, "Amoris Laetitia", centrado en el amor en la familia.

estas situaciones con la esperanza de que todas las personas experimenten que el Evangelio de la familia es alegría que "llena el corazón y la vida entera".

El documento "Llamados a la alegría del amor" identifica cuatro pilares para el ministerio con las familias y "recomendaciones para casi todas las áreas de cuidado pastoral", dijo Dezelski.

Ahora, 10 años después de que se publicara "Amoris Laetitia", los esfuerzos continúan para hacer realidad la visión del documento, que se basa en "estructuras significativas en las parroquias que pueden satisfacer las necesidades de las familias individualmente", dijo.

"La espiritualidad del matrimonio y la familia sigue siendo un área de gran profundidad teológica que aún no se ha desarrollado plenamente", dijo. "Sin embargo, hay señales de que la familia está siendo cada vez

más comprendida y apreciada como una iglesia doméstica, y el 'desempaquetamiento' de lo que esto significa para la familia—en su significado más pleno—todavía está en marcha".

Otros expertos ministeriales dicen que "Amoris Laetitia" todavía no ha llevado a cambios programáticos importantes en sus campos, pero puede haber abierto las mentes a nuevos enfoques.

Ese parece ser el caso de la preparación para el matrimonio, según Mary-Rose Verret de "Witness to Love" ("Testimonio del amor"), un modelo de catecumenado de formación matrimonial que ella co-fundó con su esposo, Ryan Verret. Si bien "Testimonio del amor" precedió a "Amoris laetitia", sus elementos centrales se alinean con el llamado de la exhortación a que la preparación

**Ver "Amoris Laetitia"
en la página 18**

Amoris Laetitia ...

para el matrimonio esté arraigada en una comunidad parroquial e incluya una formación basada en las virtudes con mentores elegidos por la pareja. Los mentores, que cumplen con ciertos criterios objetivos, acompañan a la pareja en su viaje sacramental al altar, ayudan a integrarlos en la vida parroquial y brindan apoyo confiable y amistad más allá del día en que dicen "sí".

"Creo que en los primeros años después de que 'Amoris Laetitia' saliera, no hubo ningún cambio", dijo Mary-Rose Verret. "Pero vimos que la gente que tomaba las decisiones a nivel de la diócesis o la parroquia estaba al menos abierta a una conversación y a la idea de que hacer lo mismo que siempre hemos hecho no está funcionando, y tal vez necesitamos revisar eso".

En 2025, según Ryan Verret, la plataforma "Witness to Love" vio un aumento del 50% en el uso. Ellos y sus mentores voluntarios esperan guiar a 5.500 parejas comprometidas en 2026.

"Amoris Laetitia" subrayó el "acompañamiento", pero "no creo que la gente realmente sepa lo que significa", dijo Verret. "No se trata sólo de caminar al lado de alguien, sin dirección. Tampoco es simplemente dejarlos. Y tampoco es para ir detrás de ellos y empujarlos, o pensar que tienes una mejor comprensión que ellos en cuanto a dónde van. Nuestro objetivo final es estar un paso por delante de ellos y caminar con ellos".

Los Verret son la única pareja de casados norteamericanos nombrados para un papel de consultoría con el Dicasterio del Vaticano para los Laicos, la Familia y la Vida. En 2022, ese dicasterio publicó "Itinerarios catecumenales para la vida matrimonial: Orientaciones pastorales para las iglesias particulares", un esquema pastoral que se basaba en preparar a las parejas comprometidas para el sacramento del matrimonio a través de una formación continua y permanente que comienza incluso en la infancia.

Las directrices se inspiraron en "Amoris Laetitia" y "ahora estamos viendo la implementación de estas directrices en todas las diócesis", confirmó Dezelski.

Pero los líderes de ministerios centrados en los católicos divorciados dicen que todavía no han visto la misma atención a sus desafíos.

"Creo que 'Amoris Laetitia' estaba abriendo la puerta. Creo que todavía tenemos que entrar por la puerta", dijo Patty Breen McNeil, una católica que ha hablado y escrito sobre pasar por el divorcio y el proceso de declaración de nulidad, comúnmente llamado anulación.

Lisa Duffy, fundadora de "Journey of Hope", un ministerio que apoya a los católicos separados y divorciados, señaló que la Iglesia prepara a las parejas para el matrimonio, no para el divorcio, por lo que naturalmente hay más preguntas sobre esa área del acompañamiento pastoral. Sin embargo, "en mi opinión, 'Amoris Laetitia' simplemente se sumó a esas preguntas", especialmente en lo que respecta a los plazos de anulación y la admisión a la Eucaristía, dijo.

"He hablado con personas que creen que el proceso de anulación en general ahora solo dura 30 días, y se sorprenden cuando oyen que no es así", dijo. "Por lo general, han oído que se han hecho otros cambios, pero el período de tiempo parece ser el que más les interesa discutir".

Aunque el ministerio pastoral para los católicos divorciados carece del marco articulado para quienes dirigen la preparación matrimonial, McNeil y Duffy dijeron que los católicos individuales y las parroquias deben ser conscientes de la necesidad existente y trabajar para satisfacerla.

"Lo que la Iglesia puede hacer para ser más solidaria --más pastoral-- es simplemente reconocer a la gente", dijo McNeil. "Que hay personas divorciadas, con anulación y casadas civilmente de nuevo que están en nuestras bancas parroquiales cada domingo".

La falta de atención pastoral aumentará el riesgo de la parroquia e incluso derivará de la Iglesia hacia otras denominaciones cristianas, advirtió.

"Si no tienes un lugar donde puedas sentir que te ven, que te notan o que te cuidan --y estás pasando por una de las situaciones más difíciles en tu vida-- es muy fácil alejarte de una institución", dijo. "O ir a la iglesia sin denominación religiosa específica en la otra calle, porque 'Oye, tienen atención a divorciados el jueves por la noche, además llevo a mis hijos ya que ofrecen cuidado infantil gratis y también nos van a dar cena'".

Duffy está de acuerdo.

"Veo que muchos católicos se distancian de los divorciados en lugar de ofrecer amistad y apoyo", dijo. "Solo porque eres un amigo y un apoyo para alguien que está divorciado, no significa que apruebes el divorcio. Simplemente significa que estás mostrando compasión cristiana por los que sufren".

(Kimberley Heatherington es corresponsal de OSV News.)

Para denunciar presuntos casos de abuso sexual de menores:

La diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston te exhorta a denunciar cualquier delito ante las autoridades civiles. Para realizar una denuncia en contra de cualquier obispo en todos los Estados Unidos, favor de reportarlo en la página web www.repostbishopabuse.org. Y si, además, existen motivos para creer que un obispo ha cometido alguna conducta sexual inapropiada favor de comunicarse con las autoridades civiles de la jurisdicción correspondiente y también puede realizar un reporte en la página web antes mencionada. **Para informar a las autoridades civiles:** comuníquese con la policía local; los números varían según su ubicación. Si considera que alguien está en peligro inmediato, favor de llamar al 911. Para informar de forma confidencial sobre cualquier sospecha de abuso o negligencia infantil, incluido el abuso sexual, favor de comunicarse con la Oficina de Servicios de Protección Infantil de Niños y Familias de West Virginia, llamando a la línea directa de abuso infantil al 1-800.352.6513. **Para informar a las autoridades diocesanas:** La diócesis exhorta a informar primeramente a las autoridades civiles correspondientes, cuando la denuncia incluye un delito, y también alienta a informar a las autoridades eclesiales correspondientes. Para reportar casos sospechosos de abuso sexual de menores por parte del personal de la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston, comuníquese directamente con la diócesis a los teléfonos 1.888.434.6237 o 304.233.0880 para hablar con cualquiera de las siguientes personas asignadas: Sr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Sr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; y si desea hablar en español con Sor Martha Gómez, ext. 264. También puede llamar a la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro de la diócesis al 304.230.1504 o a la línea

directa de abuso sexual de la diócesis al 833.230.5656. Los formularios de quejas están disponibles en línea en la página web www.dwc.org, favor de hacer clic en "Diócesis" en la barra de menú, luego en "Oficinas", en "Ambiente seguro" y en "Descargar archivos y formularios". El formulario se titula "Formulario de queja para denuncias de abuso sexual de menores". El formulario se puede enviar por correo en Estados Unidos a: Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003. **Para informar al Coordinador de Asistencia a Víctimas de la Diócesis:** Favor de llamar a Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, al 304.559.6742. Además de las vías mencionadas anteriormente para denunciar el abuso sexual, la diócesis se ha asociado con la compañía Navex Global que ofrece la plataforma EthicsPoint para informar cualquier inquietud adicional, como sospecha de mala conducta financiera, profesional y personal de un sacerdote, diacono, religioso, o empleado laico de la diócesis o cualquier parroquia o escuela católica en West Virginia. Puede acceder a la plataforma EthicsPoint a través de la página web www.dwc.org, en "Rendición de cuentas", luego "Informar mala conducta" o llamando al 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint es una herramienta de denuncia confidencial y anónima, ellos se encargarán de transmitir su denuncia directamente a las autoridades civiles y a las autoridades diocesanas correspondientes, y lo más importante al denunciar a través de ellos, la identidad de la persona que denuncia está protegida. **Enlaces e información:** Departamento de Salud y Recursos Humanos de WV: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. Policía Estatal de Virginia Occidental, Unidad de crímenes contra a menores: 304-293-6400.

Confirmation Schedule

Bishop Mark E. Brennan, Celebrant

- Saturday, April 11: St. Agnes, Charleston, 5 p.m.
- Sunday, April 12: Our Lady of the Hills, Elkview, 8:30 a.m.
- Monday, April 13: Our Lady of Peace, Wheeling, 6 p.m.
- Tuesday, April 14: St. John University, Morgantown, 5:15 p.m.
- Saturday, April 18: St. James, Charles Town, 5 p.m.
- Sunday, April 19: Assumption, Keyser, 4 p.m.
- Wednesday, April 22: St. Francis de Sales, Morgantown, 6 p.m.
- Thursday, April 23: Corpus Christi, Wheeling, 6 p.m.
- Saturday, April 25: Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Stonewood, 5 p.m.
- Sunday, April 26: St. Brendan, Elkins, 11 a.m.
- Friday, May 1: St. Francis de Sales, Beckley; 6:30 p.m.
- Saturday, May 2: SS Peter & Paul, Oak Hill, 5:30 p.m.
- Sunday, May 3: St. Catherine of Siena, Ronceverte, 11 a.m.
- Saturday, May 9: Immaculate Conception, Clarksburg, 4:30 p.m.
- Sunday, May 10: St. Joseph the Worker, Weirton, 7 p.m.
- Monday, May 11: St. Michael, Wheeling, 5:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 13: Immaculate Conception, Fairmont, 6 p.m.
- Saturday, May 16: St. Vincent de Paul, Wheeling, 5 p.m.
- Sunday, May 17: St. Jude, Glen Dale, 9 a.m.
- Friday, May 22: Epiphany of the Lord, Moorefield, 6 p.m.
- Saturday, May 23: St. Leo, Inwood, 5 p.m.
- Sunday, May 24: St. Bernadette, Hedgesville, 11 a.m.
- Sunday, May 24: St. Joseph, Martinsburg, 4 p.m.
- Saturday, June 6: Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Charleston, 5:30 p.m.
- Sunday, June 14: St. Matthew / Sacred Heart Mission, Point Pleasant, 11:15 a.m.
- Saturday, June 20: St. Sebastian, Kingwood, 6 p.m.

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CURSILLO INFORMATIONAL SESSION

Where: Bless Sacrament Parish, So. Charleston



If you are unable to attend in person, let us know, and you can join via Zoom.
For the Zoom link, please email:
Cursillo@dwc.org or you can leave a message at the following phone number – it is checked frequently – 304-233-0880, Ext. 480.



March 28, 2026 – 10:00 am – 11:15 am
305 E. St., Charleston, WV 25314



DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON
CURSILLO MINISTRY
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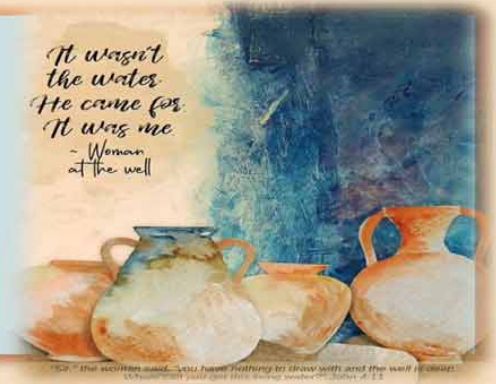
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A Retreat for Women Who Have Been Sexually Abused
 Begins online April 1, 2026 and culminates in an in-person retreat
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At The West Virginia Institute for Spirituality, Charleston, WV

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To request an application or more information, please email us at soulconnection366@gmail.com or visit WVIS.org

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Cost to retreatants is \$200

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Retreat Leaders

Liz Deal, Spiritual Director, West Virginia Institute for Spirituality, Charleston, WV.

Cindy Neely, Spiritual Director, WVIS and St. Thomas More/ Newman, Chapel Hill, NC

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