

THE CATHOLIC  
Spirit

## Martinsburg's St. Joseph High School Expanding

By Meg Partington

**MARTINSBURG**—St. Joseph High School and the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston are partnering to expand its campus footprint in Martinsburg. The expansion includes the diocese's purchase of a building near the school's current campus that would provide the high school's first stand-alone facility.

The diocese's total commitment of \$1.3 million will support the purchase of the building and help fund necessary upgrades. Saint Joseph School will contribute an additional \$400,000 toward renovations.

Together, these investments are expected to bring the total project cost to approximately \$1.7 million, with the goal of welcoming students into the new facility for the 2026–27 school year.

Using a gradual growth model, the high school currently consists of ninth-grade students and will grow to incorporate grade 10 next year and subsequent grades each year thereafter.

See "School" on Page 3



This building at 415 Wilson St. in Martinsburg will house St. Joseph High School.

Meg Partington Photo

## Northern and Southern Parishes Will Welcome Bishop Brennan for Holy Week and Easter

By Colleen Rowan

**WEST VIRGINIA**—Northern and Southern parishes of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston will welcome Bishop Mark Brennan for Holy Week and Easter celebrations. The bishop will celebrate Palm Sunday Masses at the Basilica of the

Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston on Saturday, March 28, at 5:30 p.m. and on Sunday, March 29, at 10:30 a.m.

The bishop returns to the basilica co-cathedral the next day to celebrate Chrism Mass at 4 p.m. Joining him as concelebrants

will be priests of the southern and central regions of the diocese. Bishop Brennan will then celebrate the Chrism Mass at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling March 31 at 4 p.m. with the priests of the northern region and Eastern Panhandle of the state

concelebrating.

During the Chrism Masses, the bishop consecrates the sacred Chrism and blesses the oils.

"For it is with the sacred Chrism consecrated by the bishop that the newly baptized are anointed and

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Meet the Catholic Filmmaker Behind a New Series on 'Women of the Bible', Page 9




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

## The Catholic Spirit'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](http://thecatholicspiritwv.org).

### 2026 Print Dates:

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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**Publisher:** Bishop Mark E. Brennan .....  
**Executive Editor:** Colleen Rowan, Ext. 347.....[crowan@dwc.org](mailto:crowan@dwc.org)  
**Advertising:** contact Colleen Rowan  
**Freelance Writers:** Martina Hart, John Sherwood  
**Member:** Catholic Press Association, West Virginia Press Association, National Press Photographers Association, Inc.

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



## 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.

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- The motto of Cursillo is make a friend, be a friend, and bring a friend to Christ.

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Meg Partington Photo

This is the interior of the building that will house St. Joseph High School in Martinsburg.

## School ...

**Cont'd from Page 1**

“Under the talented leadership of our local clergy, school staff and parishioners, Saint Joseph School has grown dramatically in recent years,” said Bishop Mark Brennan. “Opening St. Joseph High School this year and moving to its first campus in 2026 reflects our diocesan commitment to the area, confirms our continued partnership with local school and parish leadership, and highlights our appreciation for local families who seek a quality Catholic education for their children. Not only will this building provide our high school students the opportunity to grow and thrive in a Christ-like setting, it also allows our grade school and middle school to expand to serve Catholic and non-Catholic families in the region.”

Father Thomas Gallagher, pastor of St. Joseph Parish and School said, “From the time in which I arrived at St. Joseph Parish, many of the school parents asked me when we would be able to start a high school. To me, this feels like fulfillment of the many prayers of our school parents.”

The building, located at

415 Wilson St. in Martinsburg, was formerly the site of the WVU Medicine Crisis Support and Recovery Center. Officials said the building offers immediate functionality, as well as the capacity for renovation and growth to house students in grades nine through 12. In August 2025, the high school welcomed its first freshman class since the original one closed in 1970.

“This acquisition of this property that will become the permanent home for our high school is a definitive turning point for Catholic education in the Eastern Panhandle,” said Jennifer Hornyak, superintendent of Catholic schools for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. “It is a joy to witness such vibrant growth in the Eastern Panhandle and especially at St. Joseph, and we are profoundly grateful to Bishop Brennan for his providential support. He shares the vision of local leadership of having a Catholic high school in the Eastern Panhandle, and he has encouraged the school community to push forward to make this dream become a reality.

“By investing in this new home for our high school, the bishop is ensuring that our students have the specialized

environment they need to excel academically and grow into the leaders our Church and world so greatly need,” Hornyak added.

Saint Joseph School Principal Maria Byrd said moving

to a dedicated campus is just one of several projects being planned for the upstart high school.

“With continued support from our loyal families and generous benefactors, we hope to complete three phases of renovations/additions on this site to transform it into the ‘Home of the Crusaders,’ a special place where we seek to provide a high-quality education, demonstrate service to others and form disciples of Christ,” Byrd said.

“It is necessary for the future of the high school to have its own building,” she said. “It tells our parents and the community at large that we and the diocese are committed to providing a high school Catholic education in the Eastern Panhandle and are here to stay.”

Byrd said the new high school building will also allow its other grade levels to

expand.

“Moving our high school program to its new location allows us to regroup our middle school program (grades six to eight) in our historical Queen Street building, and since our recent pre-K expansion, this opens up four more classrooms for our elementary school program,” she said.

The new high school building offers convenient highway access for students’ families and to nearby colleges and universities, with whom St. Joseph High School plans potential partnerships. The school and local churches are raising funds to purchase two buses to serve students traveling from regional Catholic parishes and to transport students for extracurricular activities and school liturgies.

(Meg Partington is administrative assistant at St. Joseph School in Martinsburg.)

## WOMEN’S DAY OF RECOLLECTION

### MERCY AND TRUST- ENCOUNTERING OUR LORD IN DIVINE MERCY

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Day Ends at 3:00 PM

St. Joseph Catholic Church  
Martinsburg, WV

**\$15-CDA Member \$20- Nonmember. Lunch is included. Tickets will be available starting the weekend of March 14th. Please call the St. Joseph Parish Office (304)267-4893 by Friday, April 10th.**

**Space is Limited**

*Sponsored by Catholic Daughters of the Americas Court 392 and the DWC Office of Faith Formation.*

## Bishop ...

Cont'd from Page 1

those to be confirmed are signed. It is with the Oil of Catechumens that catechumens are prepared and disposed for Baptism. Finally, it is with the Oil of the Sick that those who are ill are comforted in their infirmity," The Order of Blessing the Oil of Catechumens and of the Sick and of Consecrating the Chrism (OBO), no. 1.

Deacons of the diocese will also participate in these celebrations.

Bishop Brennan will begin the Easter Triduum at St. Vincent de Paul Church in New Martinsville celebrating the Mass of the Lord's Supper, Holy Thursday (April 2) at 6 p.m.

For the Passion of the Lord, Good Friday (April 3), the bishop will gather with Weirton faithful at St. Joseph the Worker Church in Weirton at 7 p.m.

The bishop returns to Wheeling for celebrations at the cathedral, where he will bring 12 people into full communion with the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil on Saturday, April 4, at 8:30 p.m. He will celebrate Easter Sunday Mass, April 5, at 10:30 a.m. The Sunday celebration will be televised live on WVNS/FOX - Beckley/Bluefield, WOWK/CBS - Charleston/Huntington, WBOY/ABC - Clarksburg/Fairmont/Morgantown, and WTRF/ABC - Wheeling/Northern Panhandle. The Mass as well as the cathedral's celebrations of Holy Thursday Mass at 6 p.m. and Good Friday at 3 p.m. will be livestreamed at [www.dwc.org/Mass](http://www.dwc.org/Mass). See more information in the ad at right.

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**PASSION OF THE LORD**  
Good Friday | April 3  
3:00 p.m. - Live Stream

**EASTER MASS**  
Sunday | April 5  
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WBOY/ABC - Clarksburg/Fairmont/Morgantown  
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*Mass at 7:00 pm with Adoration until 10:00 pm*



### **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

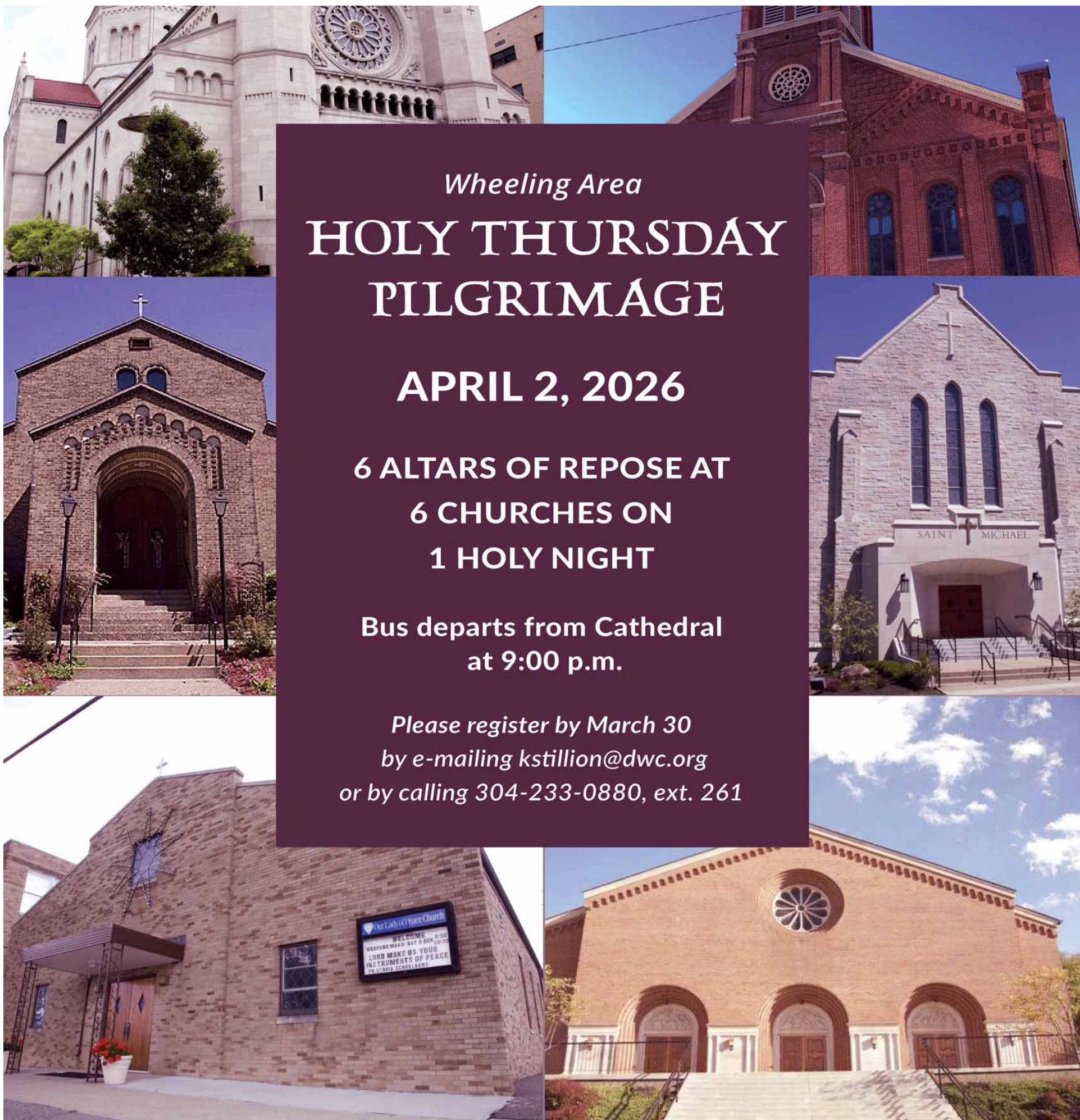
*Mass at 7:00 pm with Adoration until 10:00 pm.*



**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,**

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# ‘Venerable’ Boys Town Founder Father Flanagan ‘a Model of Charity,’ Says Omaha Archbishop

*At right: Father Edward Flanagan, the Irish-born priest who founded Boys Town in Nebraska, talks with a group of young men in this 1942 photo. Pope Leo XIV declared Father Flanagan venerable in recognition of his heroic virtue March 23. (OSV News photo/courtesy Boys Town)*

**By Gina Christian**

**(OSV News)** — Nebraska’s Catholic archbishop expressed his joy at the Vatican’s March 23 announcement that Boys Town founder and youth advocate Father Edward Flanagan has been declared “Venerable.”

“Father Flanagan made such an impression on the hearts of people, Catholic and non-Catholic, that people still speak of him with pride and a sense of reverence, even,” Archbishop Michael G. McGovern of Omaha, Nebraska, told OSV News March 23.

Venerable Edward Flanagan, who was commonly known as just “Father Flanagan,” was born in Ireland in 1886 and emigrated to the U.S. in 1904. He was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Omaha in 1912 and opened what would ultimately become Boys Town in 1917. Father Flanagan’s initiative sought to provide impoverished, homeless and challenged youth with a stable, loving environment in which they could flourish.

In the process, Father Flanagan — who died in 1948 — became a visionary social reformer, countering the trend of merely punishing antisocial behavior and instead seeking to understand the unmet human needs that triggered it.



His work was dramatized in the popular 1938 film “Boys Town,” starring Spencer Tracy and Mickey Rooney, with the movie raising international awareness of his initiative. Today, the Boys Town network has expanded to include a range of child and family services, crisis services, a research hospital and outpatient behavioral care.

Archbishop McGovern summed up Father Flanagan’s legacy as that of “such a good priest,” one who experienced a call to work with disadvantaged youth while “very courageously” facing opposition and persisting in “taking several boys in and, eventually, creating Boys Town.

“It was a great act of charity,” Archbishop McGovern said.

The archbishop said he is not aware of miracles attributed to Father Flanagan’s intercession before God currently under review, but does know that people are asking for Father Flanagan’s help in different situations in life.

During a recent visit to Boys Town for Mass, Archbishop McGovern spoke about the need for a miracle for the cause to progress to beatifica-

tion, the final step before canonization.

In response, an individual from one of the families caring for the youths said, “Bishop, come to graduation at Boys Town this spring, and you’ll see many miracles.”

“He’s right,” Archbishop McGovern told OSV News. “The work they do is outstanding, with the troubled youth, with the difficult stories and needs, so that work continues.”

In an official statement issued March 23, the archbishop said the timing of Father Flanagan’s advancement toward possible sainthood — a cause begun in 2012 — was “fitting,” as it coincided with the 100th anniversary of Catholic Charities’ founding in the archdiocese.

“We continue to pray that he will one day be beatified and ultimately declared a saint. In the meantime, may we work to affirm the dignity of every person created in God’s image by serving the poor, the abandoned and the vulnerable, especially at-risk youth,” said Archbishop McGovern. “May Venerable Father Edward Flanagan’s example inspire us to live the Lord’s command: ‘Love one another, as I have loved you.’”

# Chávez Allegations Show Need for Church to Hold Prominent Catholics to Account, Say Abuse Survivors

By **Gina Christian**

**(OSV News)** — Newly revealed sexual abuse and assault allegations against the late civil rights leader César Chávez reignite a call for the Church to “honor our stories,” a Latino clergy sex abuse survivor, who as a teenager met Chávez several times, told OSV News.

Chávez, who died in 1993 at age 66, left an imprint on Catholic social justice efforts in the U.S. — speaking openly about his faith, partnering with the nation’s Catholic bishops to support farmworkers, and even being floated by some Catholics as a possible saint.

But with recent disclosures that Chávez sexually abused several women and girls amid that work, several survivors and advocates have said the Church must hold accountable prominent Catholic leaders — even if they are not directly employed or overseen by Church officials.

The recent reports about Chávez have been “profoundly triggering and painful for me,” said Vince Pérez, a survivor of clerical abuse experienced at a California seminary.

A New York Times investigation published March 18 “uncovered extensive evidence” that during his decades of lobbying for farmworker and Latino American rights, Chávez had sexually abused two teen girls, raped his closest colleague, Dolores Huerta, who co-founded the United Farm Workers Association, fathered at least four extramarital children, and sexually harassed several other

women.

Reckoning with disclosures about the national figure’s alleged sexual violence evokes a swirl of memories and emotions for survivors, especially for those of Latino heritage, Pérez and others told OSV News.

As a minor seminarian, Pérez briefly served Chávez, who recuperated at St. Anthony’s Seminary in Santa Barbara, California, following a 25-day fast in 1968 to atone for violence committed by some union members.

“As one of the infirmarians, I brought some of his meals to him and would occasionally chat with him after classes,” Pérez, who did not allege any abuse by Chávez, recalled in a statement emailed to OSV News.

“At the time, he represented for me a powerful example of nonviolent struggle and spiritual commitment, especially in the wake of his public fast and the attention it drew from Church leaders and the broader public,” he said.

But, said Pérez, “learning that a figure I once admired, and briefly served in a caregiving role during his convalescence, is now credibly accused of rape and of grooming and exploiting girls and young women has brought to the surface memories of my own abuse at St. Anthony’s.”

Deborah Rodriguez, a fellow survivor of clergy sexual abuse, told OSV News that although she was “not surprised” that a leader like Chávez “might have something in the past,” she’s still grappling with feelings of hurt, disappoint-



OSV News photo/Cheney Orr, Reuters

People work to pull down a bust of the late United Farm Workers union co-founder César Chávez at a Denver park named for him March 19 following newly reported allegations the activist sexually abused several women and girls, including Dolores Huerta, now 95, who co-founded the UFW with Chávez.

ment and anger.

Rodriguez — a pediatrician in Tacoma, Washington, who focuses on trauma-informed care, while drawing on her Catholic faith to support fellow survivors through an array of ministries — told OSV News she believes that, in cases of abuse by a prominent Catholic figure with a publicly expressed faith, the Church needs to first “acknowledge that this has happened,” particularly “in communities such as my

own, where we have a predominantly Spanish-speaking community.”

In addition, said Rodriguez, pastoral leaders should proactively offer resources to survivors, showing that “if you need to reach out, the Church is a safe place for this.”

“That’s my ministry,” said Rodriguez, who founded the survivors advocacy organization Somos Supervivientes (We Are Survivors). “How can we make the Church a safe place for

survivors who are out there, who come to church, who are going to be affected by this story?”

The Catholic Church’s response to the Chávez allegations will have a far-reaching impact, especially amid ongoing efforts to reckon with its own history of clerical abuse, said Sara Larson, executive director of the independent, Milwaukee-based Catholic nonprofit Awake, which

**See “Survivors”  
on Page 9**

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## Survivors ...

Cont'd from Page 8

provides survivor support and advocacy.

“While Chávez was not an official representative of the Catholic Church, he was a prominent figure who spoke publicly about his Catholicism and was deeply respected by many in the Church,” Larson told OSV News. “The way that the Church responds to revelations like those about Chávez speaks not only to the survivors of that particular perpetrator, but to all who have been betrayed by someone they should have been able to trust.”

Pérez said that “it is vital that the Church and community leaders do not respond to these revelations about Chávez with minimization, deflection or quiet attempts at damage control.”

Chávez’s civil rights accomplishments “cannot erase or excuse the violations” alleged by survivors, or act as a “shield against accountability,” he said.

He added, “I believe that true solidarity with the farmworker movement and with all who seek justice demands that we listen to these women, take their testimony with full seriousness and name what happened as abuse.”

Reassessing Chávez’s legacy in light of the allegations requires “transparent processes” that allow organizations, including churches and Catholic organizations and institutions that have previously honored Chávez, “to accompany survivors, and to ensure that their public commemorations do not erase the voices of those he harmed,” said Pérez.

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

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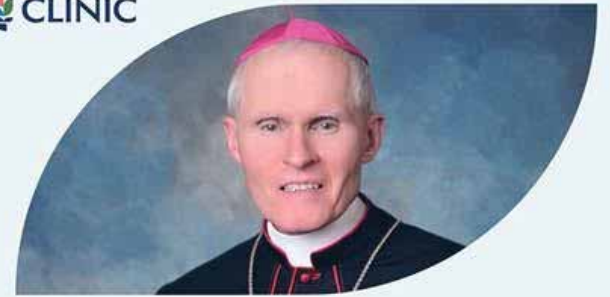
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# Who is My Neighbor?

## A discussion on Catholic Social Teaching & Immigration

**April 8, 2026 | 6:30 – 8:00pm**

St. Mary Peace Hall Parish Center  
3346 University Ave. | Morgantown, WV



“Our Church looks at the person, not his or her legal status, and, following Christ’s teaching and example, reaches out to help the immigrant.”

— Bishop Mark E. Brennan —

Join us for a synodal style listening session concerning the most recent teachings of the Catholic Church concerning the Immigration and current reality of refugees, asylum seekers, migrants, and immigrants in our West Virginia communities.

### FEATURING

**Bishop Mark Brennan**  
Bishop of the Diocese of Wheeling Charleston

**Msgr. Paul Hudock**  
Hispanic Minister, St. Mary Parish

**Father Freddy D’Souza**  
Associate Pastor of St. John University Parish

**Liz Finklea**  
WVU HomeStart Closet for International Students

**Katie Luckini**  
Latino Services of Morgantown

**Lou Volpe**  
Moderator

*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](http://www.mydailyliving.com) and YouTube

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# Meet the Catholic Filmmaker Behind a New Series on 'Women of the Bible'

By **Katie Yoder**

**(OSV News)** — When veteran writer and producer René Echevarria began working on a new show featuring women of the Bible, he knew the project was an answer to prayer.

“‘God, use me,’ that was my prayer,” Echevarria, executive producer of “The Faithful: Women of the Bible,” said. “If it pleases you, use me to tell your story.”

Echevarria, a Catholic best known for his work on “Star Trek,” spoke with OSV News about “The Faithful” ahead of its premiere on FOX March 22.

The drama series promises to bring the Bible to life through the eyes of five Old Testament matriarchs: Sarah (Minnie Driver) and her servant Hagar (Natacha Karam), Sarah’s great-niece Rebekah (Alexa Davalos), and Rebekah’s nieces, sisters Leah (Millie Brady) and Rachel (Blu Hunt). The show presents these interconnected women as people who are both courageous and imperfect as they navigate love, marriage, motherhood, temptation and faith.

The three-part series airs weekly on FOX beginning March 22 and concludes on Easter April 5. The show, which was filmed in Rome and Matera, Italy, will also be available for streaming on Hulu the day after airing.

In addition to Echevarria, Carol Mendelsohn (“CSI: Crime Scene Investigation”) and Julie Weitz (“Game of Silence”) serve as executive producers.

## — An exercise in faith —

Echevarria, who also penned the pilot and serves as showrunner, brings a wealth of experience to



OSV News photo/Fox  
Minnie Driver stars as Sarah in a scene from the series "The Faithful: Women of the Bible" series which premiered on FOX March 22.

“The Faithful,” from his work on “Star Trek” to collaborations with James Cameron (“Dark Angel”), Steven Spielberg (“Terra Nova”) and Guillermo del Toro (“Carnival Row”). He became involved with “The Faithful” after deciding a few years ago that he wanted his next project to be faith based.

“When I made the decision to try to do ... something God-honoring, I turned down some opportunities,” Echevarria told OSV News. “Hollywood is fickle and can be kind of tough, so it was a faith exercise for me.”

A couple of years passed before Echevarria’s agent connected Echevarria and Mendelsohn, another executive producer, after Mendelsohn expressed a desire to work on a project about the women of the Bible. Echevarria said he jumped at the opportunity.

## — A show tied to the Bible —

To create this series, Echevarria said the filmmakers drew from the Bible and consulted with Christian and Jewish experts. They decided that if they were going to dramatize a scene in the Bible, they would stick to what the Bible says happened, he said. Sometimes that meant including verbatim dialogue.

“Even when we’re reading between the lines and creatively imagining how to connect the dots, we were always careful to create a space where whatever happened, you could still imagine, ‘Oh, OK, that happened,’” he said.

The filmmakers also wanted to introduce these biblical matriarchs as real people. Echevarria remembered following a particu-

lar piece of advice from Mendelsohn.

“As I went off to write the first draft, she said, ‘René, write them like they don’t know they’re Bible characters,’” he said. “That became a thing. We said to the other writers and even to the actors, to play this like you don’t know you’re a Bible character.”

“I hope it feels relatable and human,” he added. “That was our ambition.”

Along the way, the filmmakers sought the input of two consultants: Rabbi Wendy Zierler, a professor at Hebrew Union College in New York City, and Christian theologian Russell Moore. Echevarria called it gratifying when both consultants signed off on some of the filmmakers’ larger choices.

“In a sermon, you can say, ‘Well, some scholars say this, and some scholars say that,’” he said. “We had to make choices.”

## — A Catholic background —

As a Catholic, Echevarria said that Catholics have room to grow when it comes to reading the Bible. He attended a Catholic high school and, like his children, a Catholic grade school.

“I went to St. Jude’s in St. Petersburg, Florida,” he said, “and my kids went to St. Jude’s in Westlake Village, California.”

He shared that his youngest is in the process of getting the sacrament of confirmation. Today, his children currently attend a non-denominational Christian high school since there is no local Catholic high school.

**See “Series” on Page 12**

## Series ...

### Cont'd from Page 11

"I have to take my hat off to them for Bible study," Echevarria said of the school. "It's been fascinating for me to see that and appreciate that."

### — A personal impact on faith —

While the show filmed in Rome, Echevarria embraced his Catholic faith and remembered attending Mass in ancient churches in that city.

"One of the blessings of the Church is that it's still Mass," he said of attending Mass in a different language. "Even though you can't understand it, you know what's being said — and you can participate wherever you are in the world."

### — A special message from 'Women in the Bible' —

As the show prepares to premiere, Echevarria hoped viewers took away a larger message of God's goodness.

"These are flawed women, and they make mistakes — at times they're quite noble and heroic, at times they stumble," he said. "But God makes good



OSV News photo/Fox  
René Echevarria is the producer of "The Faithful: Women of the Bible" series which premiered on FOX March 22.

of all of it."

He pointed to Sarah, the wife of Abraham, and her relationship with her slave, Hagar, as an example. The show's first episode tells the story found in Genesis of how Sarah, who struggles with infertility, gives Hagar to Abraham, so that Hagar might bear him a child. Hagar becomes pregnant with Ishmael.

"Sarah kind of loses faith that God's going to keep his promise of a child to her, so she takes the matters into her own hands, and Ishmael is brought into the world," Echevarria said. "And yet (God) made good of that."



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"God blessed him as well," he added. "God always makes good of even our faithlessness and our mistakes."

(Katie Yoder is an OSV News correspondent. She writes from Maryland.)  
The trailer can be

viewed by clicking here:  
[https://youtu.be/4OP84FPNnK0?si=nfk\\_0W7k-PR4LxN](https://youtu.be/4OP84FPNnK0?si=nfk_0W7k-PR4LxN)

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The Johnsons had always worked hard to provide for their family. Reaching out for help was not an easy decision, but they knew they needed support. They turned to Catholic Charities West Virginia, hoping for a solution before the deadline on the notice arrived.

Through our emergency assistance program, Catholic Charities was able to help cover their overdue electric bill. The relief was immediate. The lights stayed on. The heat continued to run. Their children could go about their routines without disruption, and their home remained safe and warm during the coldest months of the year.

That assistance did more than pay a bill. It eased the pressure that had been building for weeks. With the immediate crisis resolved, the Johnson family could focus on adjusting their budget and working toward steadier ground. Instead of falling further behind, they were given the chance to regroup and move forward.

This timely support was made possible through the generous financial partnership of United Way of the Upper Ohio Valley. Because of United Way's investment in our community, Catholic Charities West Virginia can respond quickly when families face urgent needs. A reduced paycheck or unexpected expense can quickly snowball. Having help available at the right moment keeps a difficult season from becoming something far worse.

For the Johnson family, that single act of support changed the direction of their winter. What began as fear and uncertainty became a turning point. With their basic needs secured, they were able to move ahead with renewed stability and confidence. Their story is a simple but powerful reminder that when neighbors care for one another, lives are strengthened and hope is restored.



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# Wheeling Serra Club and Team Sledd Donate Diapers to Help Families in Need

**WHEELING** — The Wheeling Serra Club and Team Sledd recently presented \$6,920 to the Gabriel Project to help struggling families with babies and toddlers. For the past 17 years, Serra and Team Sledd have raised funds to support the Gabriel Project, which assists pregnant women and needy families with children under 2 years old.

The Gabriel Project provides practical help to pregnant women in need and to families with infants and children. Serra Club's Diaper Drive helps about 150 women each month.

Team Sledd, the convenience store distribution leader, has once again matched the Serrans' contribution. Rob Sincavich, president of Team Sledd, and his wife, Dianne, also provide the Gabriel Project with substantial year-round support for items families need.

The relationship between the Gabriel Project, Team Sledd, and the Wheeling Serra Club has become a continuing blessing for Ohio Valley families, said Gabriel Project board member Rev. Jake Steele. Rev. Steele is the pastor of Forrest Burdette United Methodist Church in Hurricane.

From Left: Serra Club president Jay Prager presents a check to Rev. Jake Steele. Also pictured are Team Sledd's Rob and Dianne Sincavich, and Gabriel Project volunteer Jenny Matz.

Courtesy photo



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# 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.



## Confirmation at St. Margaret Mary Parish, Parkersburg

Bishop Mark Brennan and clergy are pictured with the young people he confirmed at St. Margaret Mary Church in Parkersburg Feb. 21. *Courtesy Photo*



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## Las acusaciones contra Chávez ponen de manifiesto la necesidad de que la Iglesia exija rendición de cuentas a los católicos prominentes, afirman sobrevivientes de abusos

**Por Gina Christian, OSV News**

Las acusaciones de abuso y agresión sexual recientemente reveladas contra el fallecido líder de los derechos civiles César Chávez reavivaron el llamamiento para que la Iglesia "honre nuestras historias", según declaró a OSV News un sobreviviente latino de abusos sexuales por parte del clero, quien en su adolescencia se reunió con Chávez en varias ocasiones.

Chávez, quien falleció en 1993 a los 66 años, dejó una huella en los esfuerzos católicos por la justicia social en los Estados Unidos: hablaba abiertamente de su fe, se asoció con los obispos católicos del país para apoyar a los trabajadores agrícolas e incluso algunos católicos lo propusieron como posible santo.

Pero tras las recientes revelaciones de que Chávez abusó sexualmente de varias mujeres y niñas en el marco de esa labor, varios sobrevivientes y defensores de los mismos han afirmado que la Iglesia debe exigir responsabilidades a los líderes católicos destacados, incluso si no son empleados directamente ni están supervisados por funcionarios de la Iglesia.

Los recientes informes sobre Chávez han sido "profundamente perturbadores y dolorosos para mí", afirmó Vince Pérez, un sobreviviente de abusos por parte del clero que sufrió en un seminario de California.

Una investigación del New York Times publicada el 18 de marzo reveló "numerosas pruebas" de que, durante sus décadas de defensa de los derechos de los trabajadores agrícolas y los latinoamericanos, Chávez había abusado sexualmente de dos adolescentes, violado a su colega más cercana, Dolores Huerta, cofundadora de United Farm Workers (la

Unión de Campesinos), tenido al menos cuatro hijos fuera del matrimonio y acosado sexualmente a varias otras mujeres.

Hacer balance de las revelaciones sobre la presunta violencia sexual de esta figura nacional evoca un torbellino de recuerdos y emociones para los sobrevivientes, especialmente para aquellos de ascendencia latina, dijeron Pérez y otros en declaraciones a OSV News.

Cuando era seminarista menor, Pérez sirvió brevemente a Chávez, quien se recuperaba en el seminario de St. Anthony en Santa Bárbara, California, tras un ayuno de 25 días en 1968 para expiar la violencia cometida por algunos miembros del sindicato.

"Como uno de los enfermeros, le llevaba algunas de sus comidas y, de vez en cuando, charlaba con él después de las clases", recordó Pérez, quien no denunció ningún abuso por parte de Chávez, en una declaración, en inglés, enviada por correo electrónico a OSV News.

"En aquel momento, él representaba para mí un poderoso ejemplo de lucha no violenta y compromiso espiritual, sobre todo tras su ayuno público y la atención que este suscitó entre los líderes de la Iglesia y el público en general", afirmó.

Pero, dijo Pérez, "enterarme que una figura a la que alguna vez admiré, y a quien atendí brevemente durante su convalecencia, ahora sea acusada de manera creíble de violación, de captación y explotación de niñas y mujeres jóvenes, ha sacado a la superficie recuerdos de mi propio abuso en (el seminario de) St. Anthony's".

Deborah Rodríguez, otra sobreviviente de abuso sexual por parte del clero, dijo a OSV News que, aunque "no le sor-

prendió" que un líder como Chávez "pudiera tener algo en el pasado", todavía está lidiando con sentimientos de dolor, decepción y enojo.

Rodríguez --una pediatra de Tacoma, Washington, que se especializa en atención informada sobre el trauma, al tiempo que recurre a su fe católica para apoyar a otros sobrevivientes a través de una variedad de ministerios-- dijo a OSV News que cree que, en casos de abuso por parte de una figura católica prominente que ha expresado públicamente su fe, la Iglesia debe primero "reconocer que esto ha sucedido", particularmente "en comunidades como la mía, donde tenemos una comunidad predominantemente hispanohablante".

Además, dijo Rodríguez, los líderes pastorales deberían ofrecer de manera proactiva recursos a los sobrevivientes, demostrando que "si necesitas buscar ayuda, la Iglesia es un lugar seguro para ello".

"Ese es mi ministerio", dijo Rodríguez, quien fundó la organización de defensa de los sobrevivientes Somos Supervivientes (We Are Survivors). "¿Cómo podemos hacer de la Iglesia un lugar seguro para los sobrevivientes que están ahí fuera, que vienen a la iglesia, que se verán afectados por esta historia?"

La respuesta de la Iglesia Católica a las acusaciones contra Chávez tendrá un impacto de gran alcance, especialmente en medio de los esfuerzos en curso para hacer frente a su propia historia de abusos por parte del clero, dijo Sara Larson, directora ejecutiva de Awake, una organización católica independiente sin fines de lucro con sede en Milwaukee, que brinda apoyo y defensa a los sobrevivientes.

"Aunque Chávez no era un representante oficial de la Iglesia Católica, era una figura prominente que hablaba públicamente de su catolicismo y era profundamente respetado por muchos en la Iglesia", declaró Larson a OSV News. "La forma en que la Iglesia responde a revelaciones como las de Chávez no solo se dirige a los sobrevivientes de ese agresor en particular, sino a todos los que han sido traicionados por alguien en quien deberían haber podido confiar".

Pérez afirmó que "es fundamental que la Iglesia y los líderes comunitarios no respondan a estas revelaciones sobre Chávez minimizando los hechos, desviando la atención o intentando silenciosamente controlar los daños".

Los logros de Chávez en materia de derechos civiles "no pueden borrar ni excusar las violaciones" denunciadas por los sobrevivientes, ni servir como "escudo contra la rendición de cuentas", dijo.

Añadió: "Creo que la verdadera solidaridad con el movimiento de trabajadores agrícolas y con todos los que buscan justicia exige que escuchemos a estas mujeres, tomemos su testimonio con toda seriedad y llamemos a lo que ocurrió por su nombre: abuso".

Reevaluar el legado de Chávez a la luz de las acusaciones requiere "procesos transparentes" que permitan a las organizaciones, incluidas las iglesias y las organizaciones e instituciones católicas que anteriormente han honrado a Chávez, "acompañar a los sobrevivientes y garantizar que sus conmemoraciones públicas no borren las voces de aquellas a quienes él hizo daño", dijo Pérez.

(Gina Christian es reportera multimedia 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](http://www.repostbishopabuse.org). Y si, además, existen motivos para creer que un obispo ha cometido alguna conducta sexual inapropiada favor de comunicarse con las autoridades civiles de la jurisdicción correspondiente y también puede realizar un reporte en la página web antes mencionada.

**Para informar a las autoridades civiles:** comuníquese con la policía local; los números varían según su ubicación. Si considera que alguien está en peligro inmediato, favor de llamar al 911. Para informar de forma confidencial sobre cualquier sospecha de abuso o negligencia infantil, incluido el abuso sexual, favor de comunicarse con la Oficina de Servicios de Protección Infantil de Niños y Familias de West Virginia, llamando a la línea directa de abuso infantil al 1-800.352.6513.

**Para informar a las autoridades diocesanas:** La diócesis exhorta a informar primeramente a las autoridades civiles correspondientes, cuando la denuncia incluye un delito, y también alienta a informar a las autoridades eclesiásticas correspondientes. Para reportar casos sospechosos de abuso sexual de menores por parte del personal de la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston, comuníquese directamente con la diócesis a los teléfonos 1.888.434.6237 o 304.233.0880 para hablar con cualquiera de las siguientes personas asignadas: Sr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Sr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; y si desea hablar en español con Sor Martha Gómez, ext. 264. También puede llamar a la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro de la dióce-

sis 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](http://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](http://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.

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