



Diocese Announces \$1.2 Million Investment in Catholic School Families

WHEELING—Bishop Mark Brennan and the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston have announced a \$1.2 million investment in families enrolled in its 24 Catholic schools across the state.

This unprecedented investment will be given to families of currently enrolled students, as well as those who had to leave Catholic school in the last year due to the financial strains of the pandemic. These qualifying families, regardless of religious affiliation, will receive \$250 per child in grades PK-12 in the parochial school system to be used for tuition and fees during the 2021-2022 school year.

Officials at the Diocese said the grant is in addition to any tuition assistance for which families are eligible, including the Diocesan Tuition Assistance Program (TAP)

See “Investment” on Page 6

Bishops Address Concern over Johnson & Johnson Vaccine’s Abortion Link

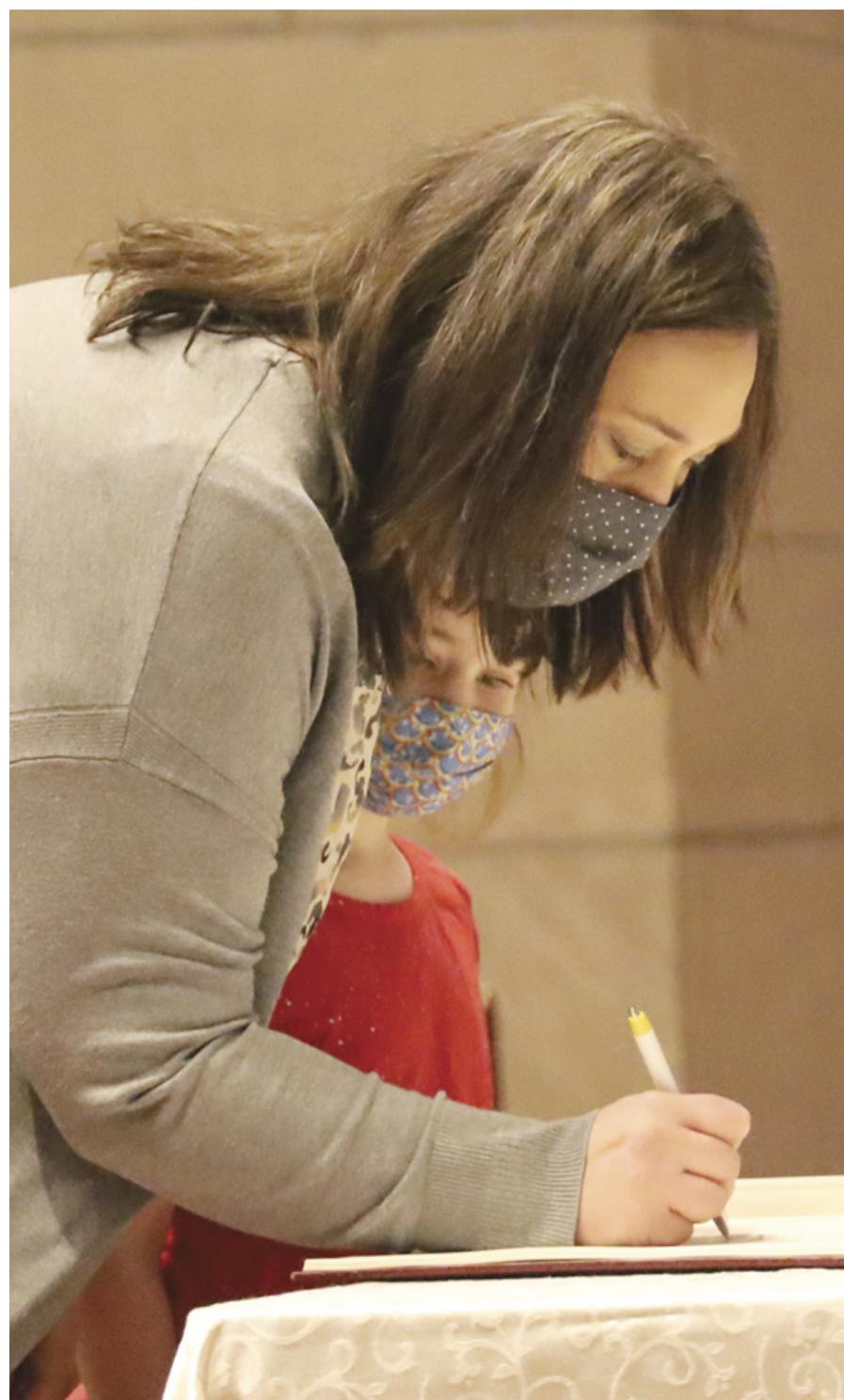
By Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS)—Use of the Johnson & Johnson COVID-19 vaccine, approved Feb. 27 by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, raises moral concerns because it was “was developed, tested and is produced with abortion-derived cell lines,” the chairmen of two U.S. bishops’ committees said March 2.

The bishops concluded, however, that “while we should continue to insist that

See “Vaccine” on Page 7

Rite of Election Celebrated across the Diocese



Six-year-old Emma Yoder looks on as her mother, Christina Yoder, signs the Book of the Elect during the Rite of Election at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling Feb. 28. The Yoders, of St. Paul Parish in Weirton, are becoming Catholic together as a family. Christina and her husband, Jeff Yoder who also signed the Book of the Elect at the cathedral that day, will receive the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist during the Easter Vigil at their parish. Their children, Emma, 3-year-old Layla, and 2-year-old Ryan will be baptized during the Easter Vigil. The Yoders are among the 38 catechumens from 24 parishes of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston this year. The catechumens gathered for the Rite of Election with Bishop Mark Brennan at three churches in three different regions of the diocese. The first was held at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston Feb. 21, the second at St. James the Greater Parish in Charles Town Feb. 27, and the final celebration at the cathedral Feb. 28. See Page 5 of this issue for complete coverage of the Rite of Election.

Colleen Rowan Photo

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A Letter from Bishop Brennan Concerning Two Bills before the United States Senate

March 3, 2021

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

I write you today, asking you to take action on two bills before the United States Senate: the American Rescue Plan (a.k.a. Covid-19 Relief Act) and the Equality Act. The action is to contact our two West Virginia Senators, Shelley Moore Capito and Joe Manchin, about the bills.

The Covid-19 Relief Act is being debated now in the Senate. It will likely come to a vote by Friday – only two days from now. It has some provisions that are morally acceptable and reasonable responses to the pandemic we are still living with: extending nutrition programs that help women and children, aid to struggling farmers, emergency rent assistance, an extension of unemployment benefits, coverage for the cost of Covid vaccines. It is less generous to religious schools than last year's CARES Act and less helpful to immigrants than I would like but, on balance, it has many good features.

The problem with the Covid Relief bill is that it allows funds to be used to pay for abortions. Along with having nothing to do with Covid relief, it omits the forty-year compromise, called the Hyde Amendment, that allowed federal funds for abortions only if the abortion was necessary to save the mother's life or the pregnancy was the result of incest or rape. That Amendment has saved many lives and is still supported by a majority of Americans.

Please ask Senators Capito and Manchin to seek to include the Hyde Amendment in the Covid Relief Plan.

The Equality Act, which has already passed the House of Representatives, prohibits discrimination against gay, lesbian and transgendered persons in some areas that make sense: lodging, serving on a jury, accommodations at work for pregnant women. But it would codify in federal law the category of "gender identification," meaning that a person who is biologically one sex can insist on being treated as of the other sex. It would be illegal under federal law to deny to a boy, who had declared himself a girl, the right to

compete in women's sports or to share a dorm and bathroom facilities with girls at a camp. "Gender identification" is untethered to reality. It is unscientific. If your body has two X chromosomes you are female; if it has an X chromosome and a Y chromosome you are male. This mistaken concept of "gender identification" runs through the whole bill.

In addition, the bill would allow abortion to come in by the back door, for the Equality Act forbids discrimination on "pregnancy-related conditions," language that can be used to seek an abortion. (The Centers for Disease Control considers an unwanted pregnancy to be a disease.)

So a doctor opposed to abortion could not legally refuse to perform one and a Catholic hospital would have to allow abortions, contrary to the personal and corporate conscience of each.

Finally, the Equality Act explicitly exempts itself from any appeal to its provisions by religious Americans on the basis of the Religious Freedom Restoration Act (1996). It directly contradicts the First Amendment guarantee of freedom of religion, making it illegal to follow the precepts of one's religion.

Please ask Senators Capito and Manchin to oppose the fatally-flawed Equality Act. It has so many holes it should just sink.

You may reach Senator Capito's office in Washington at 202-224-6472 or go to her website and, under "Contact," press "Share Your Opinion."

You may reach Senator Manchin's office in Washington at 202-224-3954 or go to his website and, under "Contact Joe," press "Email Joe."

You have a constitutional right to express your opinion to elected officials and a moral duty, in grave matters, to do so. I urge you to act quickly.

God be with you! May Christ's light shine more brightly in our country.

Sincerely in Christ,



+Mark E. Brennan

Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston

Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

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

To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children

To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children: The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. We also encourage utilizing www.reportbishopabuse.org to make a report about any bishop in the U.S. If you have reason to believe that a bishop has engaged in sexual misconduct or has interfered with an investigation into sexual misconduct, please contact civil authorities in the applicable jurisdiction and visit www.reportbishopabuse.org.

To Report to Civil Authorities: Contact your local law enforcement: numbers will vary based on your location. If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911. To confidentially report any incidence of suspected child abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse, contact the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families' Child Protective Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 800.352.6513. You may report anonymously to this hotline if you prefer.

To Report to Diocesan Authorities: The diocese encourages reporting to the appropriate civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. The diocese also encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities. To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, contact one of the following designees at 1.888.434.6237 or 304.233.0880: Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; or Very Rev. Dennis Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., ext. 270. You may also call the Diocese's Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504. You may also call the Diocese's sexual abuse hotline at 833.230.5656. Complaint forms are available online at www.dwc.org, click "Diocese" on the menu bar, then "Offices," then "Safe Environment", then "Download Files and Forms." The form is titled "Complaint Form for Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor." The form may be returned via U.S. mail to: Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003.

To Report to the Diocese's Victim Assistance Coordinator: please call Dr. Patricia Bailey at 304.242.6988.

In addition to the methods listed above for reporting sexual abuse, the Diocese also has partnered with Navex Global to offer the EthicsPoint platform to report other, additional concerns, such as suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, religious, or lay employee of the Diocese or any Catholic parish or school in West Virginia. The EthicsPoint platform can be accessed via www.dwc.org, under "Accountability", then "Report Misconduct" or by calling 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint is a third-party reporting system that reports to civil authorities where applicable and Diocesan authorities, and the identity of the person reporting is protected.

Links and information: WV Department of Health and Human Resources: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. West Virginia State Police, Crimes Against Children Unit: 304-293-6400.



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Gomez: U.S. Bishops' Working Group Set up Last November Completes Work

By Julie Asher, Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON (CNS) — A special working group of the U.S. bishops formed last November to deal with conflicts that could arise between the policies of President Joe Biden, a Catholic, and church teaching has completed its work, Los Angeles Archbishop José H. Gomez said in a March 1 memo to all the U.S. bishops.

Catholic News Service obtained a copy of the memo issued by Archbishop Gomez, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, as a follow-up to a February memo he sent to the bishops explaining the working group's two recommendations given to him in its final report. The March 1 memo confirms the actions taken on them. The first of two recommendations made by the working group, he said, was to write a letter to Biden "conveying the USCCB's eagerness to work with him on issues where we will undoubtedly express strong support, while acknowledging a lack of support on other issues where we

cannot agree with anticipated policies." The second recommendation was to develop "a document addressed to all of the Catholic faithful on eucharistic coherence," the archbishop said.

Archbishop Gomez issued the Biden letter Jan. 20, which was Inauguration Day and Biden was sworn in as the nation's 46th president. "I look forward to working with President Biden and his administration, and the new Congress," the archbishop said. "As with every administration, there will be areas where we agree and work closely together and areas where we will have principled disagreement and strong opposition," he said. The archbishop said that the bishops hold deep concerns about "many threats to human life and dignity in our society," including euthanasia, the death penalty, immigration policy, racism, poverty, care for the environment, criminal justice reform, economic development and

See "Gomez" on Page 8

Attorneys Call Equality Act an Overreach, and They Say It May Backfire

By Tom Tracy, Catholic News Service

If it becomes law, the Equality Act, which has been described as a one of President Joe Biden's top legislative priorities, will be an overreaching use of federal power to shut down religious liberties and traditional views on gender, according to attorneys tracking the measure.

"It is so expansive," said Paul Jonna, a California-based special counsel with the Thomas More Society in Chicago. He has represented various California agencies or businesses that have come under fire for policies based on the traditional understanding of marriage and gender.

"The act is essentially an all-out assault on religious freedom; it is Congress imposing their views on gender, dismissing sexual differences and presenting gender as a social construct," Jonna told Catholic News Service in a Feb. 25 phone call.

"It is a threat to free speech, to careers, to churches and faith-based facilities to force them to host events that are opposed to their beliefs," he said.

Democratic lawmakers and advocates say the Equality Act would make significant progress toward legal protections for all Americans, including LGTBQ+ individuals, who advocates say do not have sufficient protections from discrimination, especially with regard to employment.

Critics say if the bill becomes law, it would portray time-honored religious beliefs as un-American and would go well beyond employment protections — and without reasonable religious exemption clauses.

Jonna, who also is president of the San Diego Chapter of Legatus, an organization of Catholic business

leaders, said the Equality Act would result in a tidal wave of religious liberty litigation and may well create even stronger pushback.

"It is definitely being used as a tool to advance an agenda of those who have a distorted view of human nature and who want that imposed on all of society—and it will backfire, creating way more problems than it solves and it will do great damage to women and completely destroy the concept of male and female in our culture and undermine the goals it seeks to advance," Jonna told CNS.

"We expect a lot of litigation; I am sure we will be involved in litigation around this and many other religious freedom law firms as well," he added. "Our only saving grace is that we have a conservative majority in the U.S. Supreme Court."

The House passed the bill, H.R. 5, in a 224-206 vote Feb. 25. It amends the Civil Rights Act of 1964 to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, public accommodations, public education, federal funding, the credit system and jury duty.

House Republicans planned to introduce a compromise measure Feb. 26 called the Fairness for All Act. The Washington Blade reported Feb. 24 that one difference from H.R. 5 is it would "clarify protections based on race, color and national origin."

Also, the compromise bill, unlike the Equality Act, does not say the 1993 Religious Freedom Restoration Act, or RFRA, cannot be used "as a defense in court against allegations of illegal anti-LGBTQ discrimination," the Blade said.

A Senate version of the Equality Act has yet to be introduced; it would need 60 votes for passage. If it were to

pass, differences between the Senate and House measures would have to be reconciled, and then sent to Biden to sign.

The St. Thomas More Society's Jonna said that until now, no federal law has exempted itself from RFRA—approved by Congress in a bipartisan vote and signed into law by President Bill Clinton to ensure religious freedom interests are protected. That the Equality Act would exempt other laws from RFRA is an indication of just how radical it really is, he said. "The scope of industries and organizations included (for protection) in this massive piece of legislation is a great threat to religious freedom. It puts at risk people of faith who will be excluded: Either compromise your beliefs or get out of the way," Jonna told CNS.

He has assisted in defending a Catholic Charities residential program in California for female victims of human trafficking when local officials tried to force the program to admit biologically male, transgender persons. "We worked out a resolution to that case, but a law like this would destroy the scientific definition of gender and a home like this would have to be open to males," Jonna said. Much of the criticism of the Equality Act has centered on its expected impact on the sporting world, where women would have to compete against biological males and vice versa.

The Equality Act has garnered criticism from both feminists and other faith leaders, including Orthodox Rabbi Yaakov Menkin, who co-wrote a Feb. 24 essay for Newsweek, calling the legislation flawed, hateful and unthinking extremism.

"Civil rights legislation is intentionally a blunt legal instrument,"

See "Act" on Page 8

Diocese to Begin Year of St. Joseph

By Colleen Rowan

WEST VIRGINIA—The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston will begin the Year of St. Joseph on March 19, the Solemnity of St. Joseph. Bishop Mark Brennan will celebrate a 6 p.m. Mass that evening at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling, which will be livestreamed at www.dwc.org. Other prayerful gatherings for the solemnity will be livestreamed as well.

"As we enter into the Holy Season of Lent, a time of increased prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, we also prepare to begin the Year of St. Joseph, announced by the Holy Father earlier this year," Bishop Mark Brennan said in a letter to the faithful Feb. 26. In announcing in his letter that the celebration would begin on the Solemnity of St. Joseph, the bishop said: "This special day in our Church's liturgical calendar honors Joseph, foster father of Christ and spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary."

Pope Francis proclaimed the Year of St. Joseph to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the declaration of the foster father of Jesus as Patron of the Universal Church. St. Joseph is also the patron of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, so this moment also brings a special opportunity to Catholics of West Virginia.

Prayerful opportunities begin at the cathedral on March 18 with Solomon vespers at 6 p.m. On March 19, the cathedral will have morning prayer at 9 a.m. Mass will be celebrated at 12:05 p.m. which will be followed by Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament until 5 p.m. Stations of the Cross will begin at 5:15 p.m., and Mass will be celebrated by Bishop Brennan at 6 p.m. All of these gatherings will be livestreamed at www.dwc.org.

In his letter to the faithful, Bishop Brennan also noted that the Solemnity of St. Joseph falls on a Friday this year, when the faithful would normally abstain from meat for Lent. However, Catholics have a dispensation from abstaining from meat that day because March 19 is a solemnity. The bishop encouraged the faithful, as is the custom of the St. Joseph Dinner, to double efforts to feed the poor, either by donations of food to local shelters, or volunteering to serve meals to the poor that day. Ending his letter, the bishop said: "Together let us give thanks to God for the life and example of St. Joseph, especially as we prepare to begin this special Year of St. Joseph in our Church."

See "St. Joseph" on Page 6

Bishop Brennan's Pastoral Letter for Lent

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

We enter the season of Lent with hope and determination: hope that God's grace may touch us and determination to engage seriously in the work of moral and spiritual renewal. We do this so that we may live our Christian faith with greater integrity and celebrate the Lord Jesus' death and resurrection with true joy. I believe that the rivers of grace, which never run dry, flow even more abundantly in this holy season. We should all bathe in that grace, for by it we may be cleansed of sin and refreshed in mind and spirit.

The terms used for Lent in different languages emphasize various aspects of this penitential season. *Quadragesima* in Latin points to the forty days Jesus fasted and battled against temptations in the desert; the Italian *Quaresima*, the Spanish *Cuaresma* and the French *Carême* follow the Latin. The Germans call it *Fastenzeit* or "Fasting Time," underlining the penitential aspect of the season. (In Malta the Catholics call Lent "Random," from the Moslem practice of fasting.) The English Lent refers to the gradual lengthening of daylight in the northern hemisphere as we embrace spring and leave winter behind. For most of us, overcoming sin and learning to love better are a gradual process, not accomplished overnight, so our English term suggests that.

St. Leo the Great wrote: "What the Christian should be doing at all times should be done now with greater care and devotion, so that the Lenten fast enjoined by the Apostles may be fulfilled not simply by abstinence from food but above all by the renunciation of sin." The great challenge in Lent is to address sin in our lives. On a personal level, I recommend a focused approach. As a laser beam is effective by concentrating its power narrowly, a focus on what I call an embedded sin can lead to its weakening or elimination.

An embedded sin is one that we just can't seem to get rid of or perhaps don't really want to renounce. It may be a constant habit of criticizing others, a refusal to reconcile with someone, a prejudice against people of another race, religion or national origin, a tendency to lie to get our way, a sin of impurity or other form of self-indulgence. We first must desire to be rid of it. We need an honest talk with ourselves: do we want to do God's will or not? Then we must admit that we have not been able by our own efforts to overcome that sin – in fact, as St. Paul would say, we are enslaved by it. We must implore God's help each day in our prayers.

The Sacrament of Penance has great value in this effort, for it not only forgives sin but, if received sincerely, it keeps us from hardening in sin. Some embedded sins, like wounds that require frequent applications of a salve and new bandages, need frequent confession, each confession and absolution weakening the hold of that sin on us. We may also benefit in confession or apart from it from the advice a priest may give us. Some priests (and others) have much experience and wisdom to offer a person who genuinely wants to overcome an embedded sin.

The traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving serve us well in overcoming personal sin. Prayer to an unbeliever seems to be a waste of time, but to us who believe in the living God, it is a daily lifeline that connects us with the One who created, redeemed and loves us. As a monk once said, "Pray as you can, not as you can't." Traditional prayers are valuable for their simplicity and depth. God will listen to our own words as well and, in some fashion – by an inspiration He gives us, by a Scripture passage we hear or read, by a remark made by a friend, by something that happens – God will respond to us. The important thing is to give Him the opportunity and that is what prayer does.

Fasting, whether from food or from a form of entertainment or from buying something we really don't need, is like a silent prayer that cries out to God, saying we recognize our need for Him above all else. We hunger more for His Word than for bread. Almsgiving helps, too, for Scripture says:

As water quenches a flaming fire, so alms atone for sins [Sirach 3:29]. Any kind of good work is a form of almsgiving: patiently listening to a distressed person, shoveling the snow off the steps and sidewalk of an elderly couple, calling up a friend who is sick to encourage her. Good works take us out of ourselves and strike a blow at the self-centeredness that is at the heart of all sin.

There is also a social dimension to sin that is found at more than one level. At a very personal level, I may indulge in bigotry against a group because of its race, religion, political affiliation or other identifying mark. Even if I never say or do anything overtly that could be called bigoted, my interior disdain for the group makes me unwilling to protest injustices toward its members or to do them any good. If the Samaritan in Jesus' parable, giving into Samaritan bigotry toward Jews (which they reciprocated) had passed by the Jew beaten by the robbers, his interior bigotry would have led to a sin of omission. He overcame bigotry and helped the wounded man. Conversion starts within. If we want to be fair and charitable to all, as our faith teaches us to be, then we must confront negative attitudes we may have toward others.

At another level, the social dimension of sin is evident in the corrupting of public morals. Many are calling today for peace and an end to divisions in our country but social peace is not possible as long as our people cannot agree on the most basic moral values. Sinful behavior in private is bad enough, but laws and publicly approved and applauded behavior that are morally wrong are worse, because they corrupt the impressionable, especially the young.

Aborting unborn babies is barbaric, the strong overpowering the weak, even when the mother's situation is very difficult. Gay persons deserve respect and fair treatment, but sexual relations between members of the same sex cannot fulfill the fundamental purpose of our sexuality – to produce offspring – and are therefore inappropriate, as are heterosexuals' intimate relations if they deliberately frustrate their procreative dimension. Harsh rhetoric and cruel actions directed at immigrants demean their humanity and reveal a national selfishness that conveniently forgets how much immigrants have contributed to this country. Allowing large corporations to trample on the poor in rural parts of our country, like Appalachia, making their profit while giving little or nothing back to those areas, is unjust and immoral.

We Catholics are equipped to challenge these and other manifestations of social corruption. As St. Paul said in another context: *there have to be factions among you in order that those who are approved among you may become known* [I Corinthians 11:19].

Our strength is in our Catholic anthropology, which starts from the principle that every human being is endowed by God with a genuine human nature that is both personal and social. That principle leads us to favor treating fairly members of different races, religions, sexual orientations and national origins. It leads us to promote the good of marriage and the family and to defend parents' right to educate their children as they judge best. It leads us to oppose ideologies and acts which harm human beings and their communities: abortion, racist activities and discriminatory practices held over from the past, domestic violence and the death penalty, among others. The same principle keeps us from embracing harmful departures from a correct view of human nature, such as measuring human beings essentially in economic terms or thinking that we can choose our sex in defiance of our body or insisting that equality of opportunity must, regardless of effort and circumstances, always result in equality of outcomes. If we can hold to the basic principle of a God-given human nature that unfolds in community, we have a way to thread our way through the clashing viewpoints on these issues and to promote a sane understanding that

See "Lent" on Page 5



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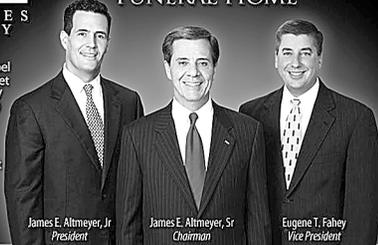
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VIRTUAL GALA



Catechumens Joyfully Gather with Bishop for Rite of Election

By Martina Hart

Catechumens and their godparents from parishes across the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston came together for the Rite of Election celebrated by Bishop Mark Brennan. Depending on the geographic location of their home parish, they gathered at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston on Feb. 21, at St. James the Greater Parish in Charles Town on Feb. 27, and at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling on Feb. 28.

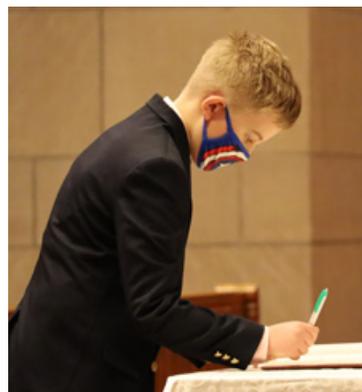
"It's a great pleasure to be here with all of you, to formalize what you've already been preparing for, your desire to become Catholics through baptism at the Easter Vigil," Bishop Brennan said at the basilica. "You enter as catechumens, you leave as the elect, those who have been elected or chosen for the sacraments of baptism, confirmation, and Eucharist."

He assured them that they were not alone on their journey.

"There also is a number of people baptized in other Christian churches who have been led by God's spirit to seek membership in the Catholic Church, and there are some people who are baptized Catholic, who for one reason or another never finished their preparation for the sacraments of confirmation and First Holy Communion," the bishop said.

All those, who are considered candidates, celebrated the Call to Continuing Conversion in their respective parishes, a ceremony which is usually combined with the Rite of Election but due to limited seating capacities during the COVID-19 pandemic was held separately this year. Bishop Brennan added that the same celebrations were held not only in the state of West Virginia, but all over the United States and all over the world.

"There are hundreds of thousands, perhaps a million or more, people around the world, doing exactly what you have done here," he said. Bishop Brennan explained to the catechumens



Colleen Rowan Photo
Landon McCabe, 9, of St. Michael Parish in Wheeling signs the Book of the Elect at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling.



Martina Hart Photo
Godparents applaud catechumens at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston.

—those to be instructed or formed—the effects of the sacraments of initiation, baptism, confirmation, and the Eucharist.

"These sacraments are effective signs of God's work in you, redeeming you. They accomplish what they signify. They really do give you a spiritual rebirth. They really do give you an intensification of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. They really do give you the true body, blood, soul and divinity of Jesus Christ, our Lord," he said. "And that enables you to follow Jesus Christ as a member of his church along with the rest of us, to follow him with confidence."

Bishop Brennan referred to the Gospel reading of Jesus being tempted in the desert and how he relied on God's word to reject these temptations. Likewise, he said, the knowledge of the Scriptures and of the oral tradition of the Church are a great help to the faithful in rejecting temptations.



Colleen Rowan Photo
Bishop Brennan declares catechumens as members of the elect at the cathedral.



John Sherwood Photo
A catechumen signs the Book of the Elect at St. James the Greater Parish in Charles Town.

"Persevere in your good intention," he encouraged them. "We want you to be part of us. We want you to know the Lord and to rejoice in that knowledge."

The catechumens were called by name and presented to the bishop. Their godparents affirmed that they were sufficiently prepared by listening and responding to God's word. All others present, representing the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, pledged to support them in faith, prayer, and example. The catechumens then confirmed their wish to enter fully into the life of the Church by signing the Book of the Elect which was then signed by Bishop Brennan. The Rite of Election concluded with the bishop's prayer over the elect and the final blessing.

Lent ...

Cont'd from Page 4

leads to true human flourishing.

So, what can we do about social sins? Again, the traditional Lenten practices of prayer, fasting and almsgiving come to our aid. Do you believe in the efficacy of prayer? Read Luke 18:1-8, where a persistent widow obtains her rights from an unjust judge. Jesus comments: *Will not God then secure the rights of his chosen ones who call out to him day and night? Will he be slow to answer them? I tell you, he will see to it that justice is done for them speedily.* Make it a habit this Lent to pray that our people may awaken to the signs of moral decay in our society. Fasting for this purpose is also effective, a prayer of the body telling God we mean what we say in our vocal prayer. St. Leo the Great said, "What we save by fasting we give to feed the poor," so fasting leads to actions that help others.

Which brings me to almsgiving. How can that help in dealing with social sin? First, we can support groups that serve those ignored by the elites that control our society. We have a number of pregnancy centers in the state that help families to have and take care of their children. They need volunteers and money! Catholic Charities West Virginia has stepped up heroically during this pandemic to help those left aside by our economy. CCWV needs volunteers, too, especially as many have had to stay home because of age or illness.

A second form of almsgiving is advocacy. We can take individual action by contacting those who represent us in local, state and federal government. The more of us who contact them about issues that are affecting the moral welfare of our country, the more they will take notice. We can also join with others who advocate for social justice issues. West Virginians for Life advocates for the unborn and their parents, the Catholic Committee of Appalachia addresses issues of poverty and cultural and environmental degradation in our region, Catholic Education Partners advocates for fair treatment by government of our young people in Catholic schools. Other groups are also working to put our nation on a better course. Common efforts often bear more fruit than individual ones, so consider supporting or joining such a group. In various ways we can make a difference in overcoming the corrupting of public morals in our land.

Finally, nourish your faith by religious practices typical of Lent: daily Mass, the Stations of the Cross, the Rosary or the Liturgy of the Hours (prayed with others, if possible), Bible study and especially the beautiful liturgies of Holy Week. Consult your parish or go online for other resources. Keep in mind that some West Virginians, never baptized or baptized in other Christian churches or baptized Catholic but never raised in the faith, are completing their preparations for the sacraments of Christian initiation in Lent. In the early Church, the baptized would join the elect (that is, the catechumens "elected" for full initiation at Easter) in their fasting and prayers as a sign of solidarity with them. What you do this Lent is not for you alone. Pray for the elect and the candidates for full communion with our Catholic Church in support of their holy intentions.

As I close this letter, I remind you that Jesus Christ died and rose from the dead to make us a new creation. St. Paul wrote: *From now on we regard no one according to the flesh . . . So, whoever is in Christ is a new creation: the old things have passed away; behold new things have come* [II Corinthians 5:16-17]. Lent is a privileged time to slough off our corrupt old self and put on Christ, the truly new man in history. For some, this will be their last Lent. Others will have more, but why wait to do what's right? Forty days of fasting, prayer and good works, striving to eradicate embedded sins and counteract social sins, will make this a good Lent for us. As St. Junipero Serra, the Franciscan Apostle of California said, "¡Siempre para adelante, nunca atrás!" (Always go forward, never go back!). May that be our spirit this Lent.

Faithfully yours in Christ,

Mark E. Brennan

+Mark E. Brennan
Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston

A Letter from Bishop Brennan for the Solemnity of St. Joseph

Greetings in Christ,

As we enter into the Holy Season of Lent, a time of increased prayer, fasting, and almsgiving, we also prepare to begin the Year of St. Joseph, announced by the Holy Father earlier this year.

In the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, we will begin the Year of St. Joseph, patron of the universal Church and of our Diocese, on March 19, the Solemnity of St. Joseph. This special day in our Church's liturgical calendar honors Joseph, foster father of Christ and spouse of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

While it always occurs during Lent, this important Solemnity falls on a Friday this year, when we would normally abstain from meat. Canon Law tells us; however, "Abstinence from eating meat or some other food according to the precepts of the conference of bishops is to be observed on every Friday of the year unless a Friday occurs on a day listed as a solemnity" (Canon 1251).

Given the dispensation according to Canon Law, I encourage our faithful to safely celebrate the Solemnity of St. Joseph with family, perhaps creating your own St. Joseph Table Dinner, which may include meats. This Italian tradition, dating back to the Middle Ages, gives thanks to St. Joseph for his intercession for us to our Heavenly Father. I also encourage you, as is the custom of the St. Joseph Dinner, to double efforts to feed the poor, either by donations of food to local shelters, or volunteering to serve meals to the poor that day.

Together let us give thanks to God for the life and example of St. Joseph, especially as we prepare to begin this special Year of St. Joseph in our Church.

Entrusting you to the care of St. Joseph, Head of the Holy Family,
I remain,

Mark E. Brennan

Bishop Mark Brennan
Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston



FAMILY GRANT FACT SHEET

Most Rev. Mark Brennan and the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's
\$1.2 million investment in Catholic school families.

WHAT IS THE GRANT AMOUNT?

Each eligible family will receive \$250 per student/child in grades PK-12 in the parochial school system to be used for tuition and fees during the 2021-2022 school year.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

All Catholic school families of currently enrolled students in the 2020-2021 school year and their siblings; as well as those who had to leave Catholic schools in the last year. This grant is for all eligible families regardless of religious affiliation.

WHAT IF I DON'T QUALIFY FOR TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS IN PLACE?

This grant is for all eligible families regardless of need.

DO I STILL GET THE GRANT(S) FOR MY CHILD(S) IF I RECEIVE TAP?

This grant is in addition to any tuition assistance for which families are eligible, including the Diocesan Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) for Catholic families; and funds granted at the local parish and school level.

HOW WILL I RECEIVE THIS GRANT?

Once the school declares a family eligible the school will notify the diocese. The funds will be dispersed from the diocese on behalf of the family directly to the school. This will occur in the spring of 2022. Therefore, the \$250 per student will be applied to the tuition and fees of the eligible family. If the family has two students in a parochial grade school and two in a Catholic high school in the diocese, the family will receive \$500 for tuition/fees at the grade school, as well as \$500 for tuition and fees at the high school.

WHAT IF I PAY MY TUITION IN FULL PRIOR TO THE START OF SCHOOL?

The \$250 grant for each student will be deducted from your full tuition amount due at time of full payment. Check with your school for full payment due date.

WHAT IF I HAVE A SENIOR IN HIGH SCHOOL, NO OTHER SIBLING IN THE SYSTEM, AND I PAY MY TUITION IN FULL PRIOR TO THE START OF THE SCHOOL YEAR?

The \$250 grant for your senior student will be deducted from your full tuition amount due at the time of full payment. Check with your school for full payment due date.

St. Joseph ...

Cont'd from Page 3

See Bishop Brennan's full letter on the Solemnity of St. Joseph at the top of this page.

The diocese is preparing resources for parishes, catechists, and schools for the special year. Bernadette McMasters Kime, director of the Office of Worship and Sacraments, said there will be two guide books: the Parish Resource Guide and the Catholic Educational Guide. They will contain prayers, resources, activities, lesson plans, and liturgical resources.

Investment ...

Cont'd from Page 1

for Catholic families; and funds granted at the local parish and school level.

"We have seen a number of families," Bishop Brennan said, "who were forced to leave our schools for financial reasons or because their parents lost employment because of the pandemic. We want to welcome them back, as well as say thank you to those families who sacrificed much to provide a Catholic education to their children during these trying times."

The financial ramifications of the pandemic have strained budgets across the board, Superintendent Mary Ann Deschaine, Ed.S., said. The grant not only acknowledges the faithful commitment of families and their value of Catholic education, but also offers them an incentive to remain in our schools.

"The past 12 months have been both unpredictable and challenging on our families, schools, parishes, and communities," Deschaine said. "While we have all had to make sac-

rifices, we have also defined priorities. Needless to say, ours was the academic, social, emotional, physical, spiritual, and mental well-being of our students."

The Catholic schools in West Virginia went above and beyond with safety protocols based on the guidelines of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Centers for Disease Control, along with state and local health departments, to maintain a five day a week plan. When remote learning was mandated by the state the daily plan did not waiver. Principals continued to have high expectations of their faculty; and in turn teachers did not settle for bare minimum work or ease grading to a pass-fail curriculum, she said. "Throughout this historic moment, we remain forward thinking and loyal to providing our students with exceptional academics in a Christ-centered environment while nurturing responsibility, accountability, and empathy," she said.

For more information about the grant and to register for the 2021-2022 school year contact your local Catholic school. For a listing go to wvcatholicsschools.org. Also see the Family Grant Fact Sheet at the top of this page.

Celebrate Catholic Sisters Week March 8-14

By Joyce Bibey

Their selfless devotion to Christ and the mission of the church are immeasurable. This week is the perfect time to show our Catholic sisters across West Virginia our appreciation.

Catholic Sisters Week is one week of the year, when we are asked to recognize the religious sisters who have influenced our lives with their love, compassion, service, and example. From March 8-14, let us honor the Catholic religious sisters in our communities through prayer and acts of gratitude.

In the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston we have 18 religious

communities of sisters, located in each of the six vicariates of the diocese – Beckley, Charleston, Parkersburg, Martinsburg, Clarksburg, and Wheeling.

“The work these strong women do in West Virginia is impressive,” said Sister Martha Gomez, R.G.S, director of consecrated life in the diocese. “Much of what they do is unseen, but so important to our communities. I am so proud to be one of them.”

She said as we take this time to salute them, we need to keep them close in prayer.

“These women have truly been on the front lines of this ter-

rible crisis this year, helping in ways we cannot imagine, to keep people going,” she said.

Whether in our prisons, parishes, or neighborhood centers our religious sisters are working hard to keep the people – Catholics and non-Catholics – alive and well physically, mentally, and spiritually.

“God made each one of them special,” Sister Gomez said. “I pray they are encouraged to keep doing God’s work. The world needs our good sisters! They touch so many aspects of life from the unborn to the elderly they bring hope through their love of God.”

Many of them left their home-

lands to serve in the Mountain State, including Sister Gomez, who was born and raised in Mexico.

It is a joy to work with our international sisters, Ian McAra said. McAra serves as the advancement director at both Notre Dame High School and St. Mary’s Grade School. He has a significant bond with Sister Bertha Mashu and Sister Maria Rukwishuro of the Sisters of Child Jesus congregation, serving the Clarksburg community at Immaculate Conception Parish.

“I became a U.S. citizen at the same ceremony as both of them in 2017,” McAra said. The sisters

See “Sisters” on Page 10

Vaccine ...

Cont’d from Page 1

pharmaceutical companies stop using abortion-derived cell lines, given the world-wide suffering that this pandemic is causing, we affirm again that being vaccinated can be an act of charity that serves the common good.”

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Doctrine, and Archbishop Joseph F. Naumann of Kansas City, Kansas, chairman of the USCCB’s Committee on Pro-Life Activities, made the comments in a joint statement.

In December, the prelates addressed concerns over what then were the newly approved BioNTech and Moderna vaccines because “an abortion-derived cell line was used

for testing them,” but “not used in their production.”

However, the Johnson & Johnson Janssen one-shot COVID-19 vaccine raises “additional moral concerns” because it was “developed, tested and is produced with abortion-derived cell lines,” Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann said.

In their December statement, the bishops noted that cell lines used were derived from fetuses aborted in the 1970s.

In their March 2 statement, the bishops quoted the Vatican’s Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, which judged that “when ethically irreproachable COVID-19 vaccines are not available ... it is morally acceptable to receive COVID-19 vaccines that have used cell lines from aborted fetuses in their research and production process.”

“However, if one can choose among equally safe and effective COVID-19 vaccines,” the bishops added, “the vaccine with the least connection to abortion-derived cell lines should be chosen. Therefore, if one has the ability to choose a vaccine, Pfizer or Moderna’s vaccines should be chosen over Johnson & Johnson’s.”

Doses of this newest vaccine — now the third approved for use in the United States, were being shipped to distribution points around the country March 2.

On March 1, a number of dioceses, including the New Orleans Archdiocese, Diocese of Baton Rouge, Louisiana, and the Diocese of Burlington, Vermont, issued their own statements warning about the moral concern over the Johnson & Johnson vaccine.

Bishop Rhoades and Archbishop Naumann reiterated in their latest statement what they stated in December: that getting a COVID-19 vaccine is an important act for the common good amid this pandemic.

The Vatican COVID-19 Commission and the Pontifical Academy for Life have said, “We believe that all clinically recommended vaccinations can be used with a clear conscience and that the use of such vaccines does not signify some sort of cooperation with voluntary abortion.”

The USCCB Pro-Life Secretariat has prepared an informational resource titled “Answers to Key Ethical Questions About COVID-19 Vaccines” and posted it online at USCCB.org.

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Men’s Priestly Discernment Retreat March 20

St. John XXIII Pastoral Center
Charleston, WV

For college-age young men and older

Presented by the Vocation Office, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

Do you desire a life of sacrifice and faithful service to God and His People? Do you desire to give yourself completely to God in a life of consecration and commitment to building up the kingdom of God here in West Virginia? Perhaps the Lord is calling you to be a Priest of Jesus Christ in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston! The annual diocesan Men’s Priestly Discernment Retreat will be held on Saturday, March 20 at the Pope St. John XXIII Pastoral Center (100 Hodges Rd, Charleston, WV 25314) from 10AM – 5PM. This event is open to men 18 years and older who are simply open to reflecting on God’s will for them in their lives. The day will consist of Holy Mass, prayer, reflections on the priesthood, and the opportunity for the Sacrament of Confession.

For any men interested in attending, email Father Brian Crenwelge at bcrenwelge@dwc.org.

Gomez ...

Cont'd from Page 3

international peace.

He also expressed hope the incoming administration "will work with the church and others of goodwill" to "address the complicated cultural and economic factors that are driving abortion and discouraging families."

For the U.S. bishops, the "continued injustice of abortion" remains the "preeminent priority," Archbishop Gomez said, but "'preeminent' does not mean 'only.' We have deep concerns about many threats to human life and dignity in our society."

As for developing a document on

"eucharistic coherence," as Archbishop Gomez called it, he said this recommendation has been "forwarded to the Committee on Doctrine in the hope that it will strengthen an understanding and deepen a common faith in the gift that has been given to us in the Sacrament of the Altar."

The reference to "eucharistic coherence" may reflect a growing concern among the bishops regarding Catholic understanding and practice regarding the sacrament.

While there has been fierce debate in some circles, including among bishops, over the reception of the Eucharist when one is not in accord with church teachings, there also is a deep

concern about polling that suggests a confusion or lack of understanding about the Real Presence in Catholic belief and practice.

Archbishop Gomez announced the establishment of this special working group at the end of the public portion of the U.S. bishops' fall general assembly Nov. 16-17, which was held completely online because of the pandemic. He named Archbishop Allen H. Vigneron of Detroit, USCCB vice president, to head up the group to address issues surrounding the election of a Catholic president and policies that may come about that would be in conflict with Catholic teaching and the bishops' priorities. Other members were the chairmen of USCCB committees focused on various policy areas.

"We are facing a unique moment in the history of our country" with the election of Biden, only the second Catholic to become president, Archbishop Gomez said in announcing the group. "This presents certain opportunities but also certain challenges."

Biden has indicated his faith commitments "will lead to certain policies that we favor," Archbishop Gomez said, such as immigration, aid to refugees and the poor, racial justice and climate change, but he supports Roe v. Wade and has said he favors repeal of the Hyde Amendment.

Hyde, reenacted every year for 45 years, outlaws federal tax dollars from directly funding abortion except in cases of rape, incest or when the life of the woman would be endangered.

Act ...

Cont'd from Page 3

historically designed to redress ongoing racism against descendants of former slaves," Rabbi Menkin wrote.

"The Equality Act thus deems a religiously motivated refusal to participate in a same-sex marriage to be no different than a KKK member's refusal to cater a multiethnic couple's nuptials," he said. "Traditional religious practices, according to the Equality Act, are as unacceptable as was Jim Crow."

In favor of the Equality Act is Sister Simone Campbell, a Sister of Social Service, who is the outgoing executive director of the Catholic social justice lobby Network. She welcomed Biden's support for the Equality Act, saying that as a Catholic, the president recognizes that a tenet of the faith is that all are welcome. "And if all are welcome, all need to be protected. I think the bedrock position of our faith is to welcome and secure safety and the ability to flourish for all," Sister Campbell said in a Feb. 24 statement. "President Biden comes with a very deep sense of what our faith calls us to, and that is to ensure that everyone can flourish, even if we disagree with them."

The chairmen of five U.S. bishops' committees said Feb. 23 the Catholic Church upholds the human dignity of all and supports "nondiscrimination principles to ensure that everyone's rights are protected." However, they said, the Equality Act as written will "discriminate against people of faith" by adversely affecting charities and their beneficiaries, conscience rights, women's sports and "sex-specific facilities"; will provide for taxpayer funding of abortion; and will limit freedom of speech.

Matt Sharp, a senior counsel with the Alliance Defending Freedom, which has defended three Connecticut-based high school female athletes who objected to biological males being allowed to compete alongside them, said his agency's focus will especially turn toward the U.S. Senate, "being sure that senators are aware of the harms that the Equality Act will cause," he told CNS by phone Feb. 25.

"We see realistic threats it presents to religion and religious schools and colleges," Sharp said. "If they receive federal funding, those schools will be told they have to change their belief on mar-

riage and sexuality if those students are to receive funds — and those schools will have their existence threatened by the equality act."

Sharp was active in defending the Downtown Hope Center, a women's homeless shelter in Anchorage, Alaska, when they were told they had to accept transgender women who are biological males into their overnight program. For almost a year, the Anchorage Civil Rights Commission officials threatened to take away the safe haven, leaving homeless women without that resource. The Hope Center filed a lawsuit so it could continue to serve its vulnerable female population, including victims of sex trafficking. The Equality Act also would heavily impact religious liberty as it relates to employment.

"What does it mean for those institutions that hold a distinction between the sexes and now you must hire someone who believes something contrary to those beliefs and someone who lives contrary to those beliefs? That fundamentally undermines the religious mission and purpose of these organizations," Sharp said.

He also cited the example of the medical community, where doctors and others could be forced to perform "gender reassignment" surgery on youth questioning their gender identity. "We would see doctors being told they might have to do some of those procedures which they feel might be harmful and violate their ethical beliefs," Sharp said.

"It is part of the transgender battle: the power of the government to compel people to violate their beliefs religion and ethics," he added. "This is giving the federal government a lot of power to come after people and force them to compel individuals to violate their beliefs on the nature of male and female and that is a government we should be very worried about."

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St. Francis Student Sends a Message from His Heart to a Fayette County Veteran

By Colleen Rowan

BECKLEY—For Valentine’s Day, students at St. Francis de Sales School in Beckley created cards for veterans at the local VA Medical Center thanking them for their service and reminding them that they are not forgotten.

One of the students saw this as a unique opportunity that he may never have again.

“When I saw that I had the opportunity to talk to a veteran through a card I didn’t want it to be something just as a thank you note or just some simple brushed away answer,” St. Francis de Sales eighth-grader Ram Asaithambi told a WOAY-TV reporter in an interview. “I really wanted it to be heartfelt because this may be one of the only times I get to talk to them. And I wanted it to be from the heart, from myself, and thank them for what true sacrifices they made to protect me, someone they don’t even know.”

And write from his heart he did. Asaithambi told the veteran who would receive his card that service to one’s country is one of the most honorable and venerable things a person can do. Veterans have defended everyone and their beliefs, and that is real bravery and courage, he wrote.

“To put your life on the line so I can be safe, learn, and be happy... to put your life on the line for someone you don’t know, that’s the true American patriot,” Asaithambi wrote.

“I may never meet you,” Asaithambi wrote to the veteran. “I may never serve on the lines of battle, but if I ever got the chance to tell you one thing, it’s this: I’m proud of you. I promise you that you will be remembered, your



Courtesy Photo Vietnam Veteran Robert Castle, a Fayette County native and long-term care resident of the Beckley VA Medical Center who served in the Marine Corps, holds the card created by St. Francis de Sales eighth-grader Ram Asaithambi.

service will echo through history, and this nation’s children will work to preserve and care for our nation with the same bravery and courage you have shown. Thank you.”

Mary Grace Peck, principal of St. Francis de Sales School, said that it always pleases her when students take the time to create a card with personal art and a carefully crafted message of gratitude to those that have served the country in the military. Educators, she said, strive to connect classroom experiences to the real world and those who have “lived” those events.

“Ram’s message was so very genuine and heartfelt,” Peck said. He demonstrated that he truly understands the “real” service of veterans, she said, pointing to another part



Courtesy Photo Eighth-grader Ram Asaithambi of St. Francis de Sales School in Beckley, right, is interviewed by a reporter from WOAY-TV about the very special Valentine’s Day card he created for a veteran at the Beckley VA Medical Center.

of his letter to the veteran in which he wrote of their “fighting for the beliefs of one’s neighbor, standing for the rights of all our fellow brethren, and defending the hopes and dreams of a nation.”

Peck noted that Asaithambi said in his letter that service to one’s neighbor is God’s plan for all and that it was “the most kind, brave, and loving duty ever.”

“That’s the most crucial part of his message,” she said, “and that’s the part that reaches in and touches the soul. When you read that part of his message—to this person that he has never met, yet one that he wants to thank—you realize that Ram really gets the sacrifice that our vet-

erans have made. That’s huge! That’s rewarding! This card project helped our students look beyond themselves and reflect on the struggles that others have endured and sacrifices they made to give us the gift of living in a free country. That freedom continues to be the hope for tomorrow as well.”

The school’s Advancement & Development Director Debra Lanna said that when she read Asaithambi’s card, it took her breath away.

“I couldn’t get over an eighth-grader being able to so eloquently present the beautiful idea of honor and peace in just a little valentine. But he did,” Lanna said. “This student is an amazing kiddo. His heart is full of love

and compassion and his head is filled with knowledge beyond his years. I look for this student to truly change this world.”

Asaithambi’s card along with all of the cards students created for Beckley-area veterans were delivered to them for Valentine’s Day.

Vietnam Veteran Robert Castle, a Fayette County native and long-term care resident of the Beckley VA Medical Center who served in the Marine Corps, received Asaithambi’s card. Officials of the center said that Castle was excited to receive the valentine and was touched by the personal and heartfelt message from Asaithambi, and that it brought a tear to his eye.

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Sisters ...

Cont'd from Page 7

are native of Zimbabwe. McAra is native of Derby, England.

"They are great assets to Immaculate Conception Church," he said. "It's an honor to be part of the same parish in which they do so much, and it made the citizenship ceremony extra special to be there with them."

So, what can we do to honor the religious sisters significant to us? Sister Gomez said, "they don't expect anything. A simple, hello is good, and praying for their continued ministry is the best we can all do."

As we acknowledge your local congregations and sisters with acts of kindness; let us also pray:

Oh, loving and merciful God,

May the lives of our religious sisters inspire others to join them in membership and mission.

Bless all women religious, that they might be faithful in their call to make our world a better place with their gifts and talents you have given them.

Show grace for all who are discerning a call to vowed religious life, and all those who support women religious and their good works so that their lives and ministries continue to be a source of hope to all of your creation.

Also bless all those served by women religious, whose lives are more hopeful, more peaceful, and more loving, because of the work of the religious sisters in their lives. Amen

For more information about the religious serving in your area contact the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's Office of Consecrated Life at (304) 233-0880, ext. 264, or email Karen Muenze at kmuenze@dwc.org.



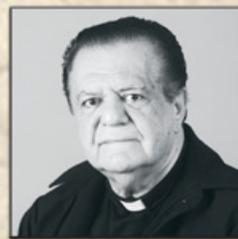
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 who serve the People of God
 in West Virginia.



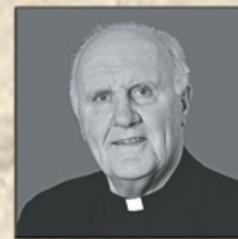
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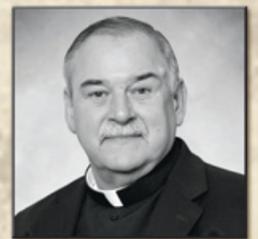
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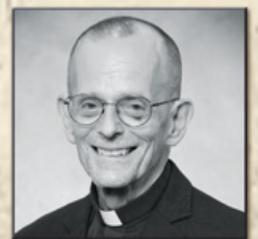
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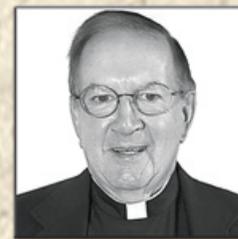
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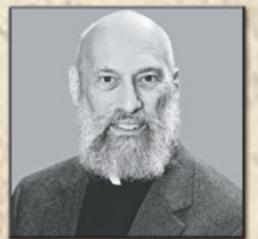
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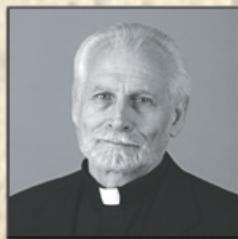
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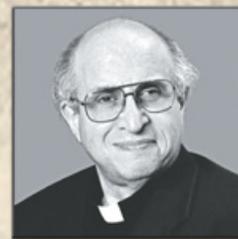
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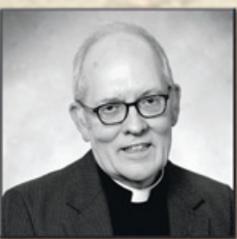
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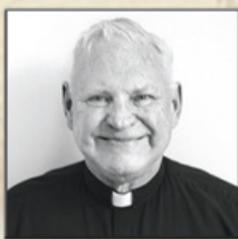
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Mazzie Sets Tempo for Music Ministry for 50 Years

By Joyce Bibey

If the parishes in Harrison County had a heartbeat Jimmy Mazzie definitely provides its rhythm and has enjoyed doing so for the last 50 years.

The Clarksburg gentleman has been playing the piano and organ at Masses since he was 13 years old.

It all started when he was a youngster and primary student at the former St. James Grade School.

"I wanted to take lessons so badly, but I had to wait a few years until I turned 9," he said. While in his heart he was ready the age was a prerequisite set by Marie Byrnes, who according to Mazzie, was the crème de la crème of piano and organ teachers. Plus, his feet could not touch the floor let alone the piano pedals.

"She was our organist at our parish (St. James the Apostle)," he said. "She was so involved with the music and everything that went on there, it's like she lived at the church. I wanted to be like that and couldn't wait to start playing in church."

When it was finally his turn to slide across the piano bench for lessons he was elated.

"I still have my piano book from her," he said. "It's full of sacred songs – Holy, Holy, Holy; The Church's One Foundation; and Holy God We Praise Thy Name. Those songs became my songs. When I turned 13, she had enough confidence in me I began to play at Mass and those were the songs I played and oh, did I play them."

He has been a lifelong parishioner at St. James the Apostle in Clarksburg. He is currently the liturgical music director at St. Ann Parish in Shinnston; funeral Mass music director for Immaculate Conception in Bridgeport; and fills in as organist not only for St. James, but also the protestant churches in the area, when he is needed for weddings, funerals or other special events. He also steps up as needed at St. Augustine in Grafton, the parish his wife Anna "Annie" (Veltri) Mazzie grew up in and where the couple was married.

He said God must know how happy he is making music for the church. He enabled him to retire at the age of 50 in 2008.

"I often say God didn't pick perfect people to be His apostles, he picked people who had a bit of talent, whether good or bad you can work that bad to good," he said. "I'm not perfect but I'm working to be good."

If you ask the parishioners, they will tell you his charisma is contagious, his energy seems unstoppable, his compassion is genuine; and his love of God and the church is exemplary.

"I've known Jimmy for years," said Immaculate Conception Choir member Victor Folio. "He is definitely a people person who has a smile and kind word for everyone."

Father Chris Turner, associate pastor of St. Ann's and St. James parishes, said it is Mazzie that strengthens others.

"He possesses an incredible ability to draw out the best in those he works with," he said. "Jimmy takes time and is present. He is a present to people, which is how Christ taught us."

"Jimmy was my divine connection to singing the Lord's praises," Sharon Sears of St. Ann's Choir said.



Courtesy Photo
Clarksburg's Jimmy Mazzie at 9 years old, the year he began taking piano lessons that lead to 50 years as a parish liturgical music minister.

St. James parishioner Colleen Driscoll said Mazzie's reverence for the Eucharist, coupled with his talents that encourages the assembly to participate wholeheartedly at the Mass is an energy our parishes need more of today. Driscoll's daughter, Brooke Driscoll, was inspired by Mazzie to cantor at a Mass and baptism when she was just 8 years old. She became a lector and altar server and now at 19 plays the piano and organ at church. Through the years he has encouraged all of Driscoll's children. Her daughter, Ashley, plays cello; son, Kevin, has played both the guitar and drums at Mass; and youngest son, Brian, was also involved in the music program and played viola.

"Not only is he an amazing musician and music director, but Jimmy is also a caring, compassionate, and selfless individual who has used his many talents to help out his community," Brooke Driscoll said.

This June is the official golden anniversary of his debut as a liturgical musician, but he has always had a heart of gold, Nancy Hall of St. Ann's Choir said.

"Jimmy has a very friendly yet persistently persuasive manner of getting you to step up out of your comfort zone without exerting pressure," she added. "His encouragement gave me enough confidence to become a cantor."

Thanks to Mazzie's initiative St. Ann's received a grant which enabled the parish to purchase instruments for the children to play at any time in the choir. The parish is eager for the day COVID-19 restrictions end so they can be used again.

"Jimmy has loved making music with God's people in praise and honor of God for so many faith filled years," said Donna Kinsey, of St. Francis de Sales Parish in Morgantown, who works with him as part of the Clarksburg Vicariate liturgical musicians.

"God is a big part of my life," he said. "I just enjoy being around people and helping people. When I see a talent in someone, I want to encourage them, because God wants us to share our gifts and talents."

Mazzie considers himself blessed, because he gets to do what he loves.

"When I'm at church or playing at home I can't describe to anyone how I really feel. It has to be the Holy Spirit taking over, because I get in a zone. I feel so peaceful."

Making his ministry even more special is his



Courtesy Photo
Clarksburg resident Jimmy Mazzie doing what he loves, serving God and the church in his music ministry.

wife's support and occasional accompaniment.

"I love when she sings with me," he said, adding from the first time they spoke on the phone, "her voice is so sweet, kind, and mellow. I could listen to her forever."

The tempo Mazzie likes to keep in his life is definitely upbeat. His music ministry, while certainly impressive, is only a fraction of what strengthens his faith and outlook. Serving as a Eucharistic minister, taking Holy Communion to nearly 20 shut-ins; eagerly being a prayer warrior for family, friends, and even folks he doesn't even know personally; encouraging former students and families he taught "back in the day" at one of his baton twirling studios in Harrison, Randolph, Taylor, and Ritchie counties); reminiscing with his best friend and best man at his wedding, Tim LeFevre, on life's priorities; or volunteering for groups including the WV Italian Heritage Festivals are the things he cherishes and make him a better person, he said.

"Fifty years! That is a long time to be such a blessing," Father Akila Rodrigo, pastor of St. Ann and St. James the Apostle parishes, said. "We are so happy we have him as our blessing."

#FaithInWV

Do you know an exceptional Catholic in West Virginia, someone or a group who are shining examples of #FaithInWV? Email Joyce Bibey your feature idea to jbibey@dwc.org. Visit FaithInWV.org and every issue of The Catholic Spirit to read more inspiring stories.

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Charity is In Action in West Virginia

By John Catone, Chief Advancement Officer, Catholic Charities West Virginia

Our friends at the Diocese of La Crosse say that the theological virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, along with sanctifying grace, are infused in our souls at Baptism. These virtues form the foundation of Christian life, and they bestow on us the capacity to live in a relationship with the Holy Trinity. We love our neighbor; we show charity because of our love for Christ.

In daily life, we act as God's children. A prominent pronouncement of our being God's children is how we serve our fellow human beings in our daily lives.

It has been said that the greatest of these virtues is "charity," expressed as love for people and life in meaningful daily service to one another in the pursuit and challenge of life.

In the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, Charity in Action is alive and well! And, Mountain Staters, as well as the Mountain State, are better off as a result!

Catholic Charities West Virginia (CCWVa) celebrates Charity in Action! It affirms, lauds and applauds the outstanding expressions of service to humankind in our state with its "Charity in Action" Award.

"It is with much appreciation and gratitude Catholic Charities celebrates our Charity In Action honorees. God calls us to be brave and to share His love unconditionally with all who cross our paths," said Beth Zarate, President & CEO of CCWVa. "Our honorees embrace their Gospel call to serve."

Catholic Charities West Virginia is grateful to have so many cherished collaborators and supporters in service with us. Together, in spirit and mission of charity, we have changed lives for the better.

The Charity in Action Award honors individuals or groups who share their gifts through charitable works. Awardees are lay people, religious, and groups, such as a school or civic group or congregation.

One awardee is James Richard Lee Ash, of Huntington. Dick is a retired engineer, and he shares his time and talent with others at the Catholic Charities Center for Community Learning and Advancement by helping others increase their literacy, numeracy, and higher-level academic skills.

Another awardee is Riesbeck's Food Markets. Since its founding in 1925 by Margaret Schumacher Riesbeck, Riesbeck's Food Markets has worked to serve its customers and communities with cour-

tesy, helpfulness, and dignity and respect.

Today, almost 100 years later, Riesbeck's strives each day to honor these core values at its 13 store locations in Ohio and West Virginia. As stewards of these core values, based upon service to others, Riesbeck's works to include the less fortunate living in our communities through charitable donations and service to nonprofit organizations.

Margaret O'Neal of Charleston is President and CPO of the United Way of Central West Virginia. Margaret is also one of our awardees. She works every day with partners across her region to reduce poverty and provide hope.

"Margaret has given back tremendously to our community and always has a positive attitude and smile on her face. I saw her in action during United Way's Christmas Bureau bring Christmas to under privileged children to brighten up their holiday," said Chris Signorelli, president, Security America.

Her charity in action has been demonstrated over and over. Margaret passionately serves the most vulnerable populations in the Mountain State.

Sister Mary Pellicane Celebrates 75 Years of Religious Life

On March 25, Sister Mary Pellicane, r. c., will celebrate 75 years as a member of the Congregation of Our Lady of the Retreat in the Cenacle. Her ministries have been international (New Zealand, Italy, France) as well as in the U.S., in areas of spiritual direction, retreat ministry and catechetics. She currently serves as executive consultant for the West Virginia Institute for Spirituality in Charleston.



Sister Mary Pellicane, r. c.

Citing a key moment in her religious life, Sister Mary shares: "The apparent peace or joy that I sense or see as retreats come near a close. This peace and joy reflect my own initial experience of the Cenacle and I lift up my heart in gratitude."

A photo collage celebrating Sister Mary and her years in ministry is posted at the West Virginia Institute for Spirituality website: wvis.org.



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Catholic Charities West Virginia honors these awardees. But, more profoundly, these people and these entities honor humankind, and they do so in an unselfish manner. They truly demonstrate the importance of charity in their daily pursuits, which reinforces their love of Christ.

Charity in Action Award Honorees

2020 Charity in Action Award Honorees (Charleston): Elizabeth Hoffman, James Hoffman, Margaret O'Neal, Danny Vance

2020 Charity in Action Award Honorees (Wheeling): Linda Ferns, Ned Sawyers, Riesbeck's Food Markets, St. Michael Parish and School

2019 Charity in Action Award Honorees (Charleston): Dick Ash, Sandy Koncir, Donna Smith

2019 Charity in Action Award Honorees (Wheeling):

Lisa Werner, The Congregation of St. Joseph, Wheeling Central Catholic High School

2018 Charity in Action Award Honorees (Charleston): Msgr. Dean Borgmeyer, V.F.; Matthew Bowles, Rich Stonestreet; Catholic Daughters of America, Court St. Ann #1666; Church of the Ascension, Hurricane; Roane County Long-Term Recovery Committee

To learn more about Catholic Charities West Virginia, visit www.CatholicCharitiesWV.org.

The Mission of Catholic Charities West Virginia: Guided by God's love, Catholic Charities collaborates with community partners, parishes and families to provide caring and compassionate services to people in need and work toward lasting and meaningful change.

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Eighth-Grader Becomes Catholic Surrounded by Family and Classmates at St. Joseph School in Martinsburg

By Meg H. Partington

MARTINSBURG—Inspired by his grandmother and guided by one of his schoolteachers, Nathaniel Fusiarski received the Sacraments of Christian Initiation in front of classmates and family on Feb. 10.

The eighth-grader at St. Joseph School in Martinsburg was baptized, received the Eucharist for the first time and was confirmed during a Mass celebrated by Father Thomas Gallagher, pastor of St. Joseph Parish in Martinsburg. Nathaniel was accompanied on the stage in the school gymnasium by his godparents, Brandi Farmer and Ryan Cascio—who also teach middle school at the school—as the baptismal water was poured over his head. His grandmother, Linda Brawner, had her right hand on his right shoulder as he was confirmed, sealing him with the Holy Spirit and allowing him to witness, spread and defend the faith with conviction.

Brawner and Nathaniel’s mother, Reinie Fusiarski, stood by his side as Father Gallagher bestowed upon him the Sacrament of First Communion.

“I felt ready. It was exciting,” said Nathaniel, 14, of Charles Town, also the son of Matt Fusiarski.

The celebration marked the culmination of a year’s worth of studying, asking questions and memorization for the young man who committed to joining the Catholic Church after attending his first National March for Life in late January 2020 in Washington, D.C. The peaceful rally held annually brings together tens of thousands of pro-lifers in the nation’s capital on the anniversary of the Supreme Court’s 1973 Roe v. Wade ruling, which made abortion legal in all 50 states.

Cascio arranged for the middle-schoolers at St. Joseph School to attend the event, where they saw a massive gathering of people who share their belief in the sanctity of human life.

“I’m of the philosophy that the things that help you grow in your faith are experiences,” in addition to

prayer and studying Scripture, he said. “Being pro-life is such a foundation of our faith,” Cascio said, explaining that “all human lives have value, from the moment they’re conceived until they die.”

“It was a really fun experience,” Nathaniel said of the march, where he heard several noteworthy priests and nuns speak, as well as those who survived abortions. “Most of my beliefs were aligned with the Catholic Church already,” he said, including being pro-life, but the experience was pivotal in him deciding to take part in the Rite of Christian Initiation for Teens (RCIT).

Cascio taught Nathaniel—and one of his classmates for a while—once a week after school from the Catechism, emphasizing focal points he thought were pertinent to their understanding of Catholicism.

“He was a really good religion teacher and he answered my questions,” Nathaniel said, adding that Cascio clearly explained Scripture and Catholic doctrine.

When COVID-19 forced the cessation of in-person instruction in March 2020, Cascio met with his charges online. Near the end of 2020, he was sometimes distracted by the arrival of a new baby and forgot to log on, but Nathaniel would remind him of their sessions.

That dedication impressed and humbled Cascio, as well as Nathaniel’s family members. “It was a special moment because he is so young and put so much thought and process into it,” Brawner said. “It’s so awesome and tells me what an awesome person he’s going to be. I’m so proud of him.”

Brawner was delighted that her grandson wanted her to be his sponsor for Confirmation.

“The fact that he chose me, that meant the world to me,” she said.

She took a circuitous route to Catholicism, having attended Pentecostal and Southern Baptist churches with her grandmothers as a child. Twenty years ago, Brawner



Photo by Meg H. Partington

Nathaniel Fusiarski is about to be baptized by Father Thomas Gallagher as godparents Brandi Farmer and Ryan Cascio stand with him on Feb. 10 at St. Joseph School in Martinsburg.

accompanied her best friend to Mass at St. James the Greater in Charles Town, then eventually decided to participate in the Rite of Christian Initiation of Adults (RCIA). Joining her in the program that led to her conversion to Catholicism in 2001 was her daughter Reinie.

“I fell in love with the Church after a few Masses,” Reinie said.

“I went there to help a friend find the Lord and I ended up staying,” Brawner added.

Nathaniel said his grandmother’s devotion to God and her faithful attendance with him and his mother at St. James inspired him to want to follow in her footsteps.

That means a lot to Reinie, who works with her mother, stepfather and sister at Brawner & Associates, a real estate company in Charles Town.

“I was so proud of him,” Reinie said. “A child at this age to commit his life to God is amazing.”

Father Gallagher applauded Nathaniel for taking the steps necessary to live his relationship with Jesus Christ in a public way by receiving the Sacraments of Initiation.

While it is not unheard of that a teen receives all three Sacraments at once, “It doesn’t happen every day. It is a special event, a special thing to witness,” Father Gallagher said.

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Carta pastoral del obispo Brennan para la Cuaresma

Queridos hermanos y hermanas en Cristo,

Entramos en la temporada de Cuaresma con esperanza y determinación: esperanza de que la gracia de Dios nos toque y determinación de participar seriamente en la obra de renovación moral y espiritual. Hacemos esto para que podamos vivir nuestra fe cristiana con mayor integridad y celebrar la muerte y resurrección del Señor Jesús con verdadero gozo. Creo que los ríos de gracia, que nunca se secan, fluyen aún más abundantemente en esta temporada santa. Todos debemos bañarnos en esa gracia, porque mediante ella podemos ser limpiados de pecado y renovados en mente y espíritu.

Los términos usados para la Cuaresma en diferentes idiomas enfatizan varios aspectos de este tiempo penitencial. *Quadragesima* en latín apunta a los cuarenta días que Jesús ayunó y luchó contra las tentaciones en el desierto; la italiana *Quaresima*, la española *Cuaresma* y la francesa *Carême* siguen al latín. Los alemanes lo llaman *Fastenzeit* o "tiempo de ayuno", subrayando el aspecto penitencial de la temporada. (En Malta, los católicos llaman Cuaresma "Randam", de la práctica musulmana del ayuno). La Cuaresma inglesa se refiere al alargamiento gradual de la luz del día en el hemisferio norte a medida que abrazamos la primavera y dejamos atrás el invierno. Para la mayoría de nosotros, superar el pecado y aprender a amar mejor es un proceso gradual, que no se logra de la noche a la mañana, por lo que nuestro término en inglés sugiere eso.

San León Magno escribió: "Lo que el cristiano debe estar haciendo en todo momento, debe hacerlo ahora con mayor cuidado y devoción, para que el ayuno cuaresmal ordenado por los Apóstoles se cumpla no simplemente con la abstinencia de alimentos, sino sobre todo con la renuncia al pecado". El gran desafío de la Cuaresma es abordar el pecado en nuestras vidas. A nivel personal, recordando un enfoque centrado. Como un rayo láser es efectivo al concentrar su poder de manera estrecha, un enfoque en lo que llamo un pecado incrustado puede conducir a su debilitamiento o eliminación.

Un pecado incrustado es uno del que parece que no podemos deshacernos o que tal vez no queremos renunciar. Puede ser un hábito constante de criticar a los demás, un rechazo a reconciliarse con alguien, un prejuicio contra personas de otra raza, religión u origen nacional, una tendencia a mentir para salirse con la nuestra, un pecado de impureza u otra forma de autocomplacencia. . Primero debemos desear deshacernos de él. Necesitamos una conversación honesta con nosotros mismos: ¿queremos hacer la voluntad de Dios o no? Entonces debemos admitir que no hemos podido por nuestros propios esfuerzos vencer ese pecado; de hecho, como diría San Pablo, estamos esclavizados por él. Debemos implorar la ayuda de Dios todos los días en nuestras oraciones.

El sacramento de la penitencia tiene un gran valor en este esfuerzo, porque no solo perdona el pecado sino que, si se recibe con sinceridad, evita que nos endurezcamos en el pecado. Algunos pecados incrustados, como las heridas que requieren la aplicación frecuente de un ungüento y nuevos vendajes, necesitan una confesión frecuente, y cada confesión y absolución debilitan el control de ese pecado sobre nosotros. También podemos beneficiarnos de la confesión o, aparte de ella, de los consejos que nos pueda dar un sacerdote. Algunos sacerdotes (y otros) tienen mucha experiencia y sabiduría para ofrecer a una persona que realmente quiere superar un pecado arraigado.

Las prácticas tradicionales de la Cuaresma de oración, ayuno y limosna nos sirven para vencer el pecado personal. Orar a un incrédulo parece una pérdida de tiempo, pero para nosotros que creemos en el Dios vivo, es un salvavidas diario que nos conecta con Aquel que nos creó, redimió y ama. Como dijo una vez un monje: "Ora como puedas, no como no puedas". Las oraciones tradicionales son valiosas por su sencillez y profundidad. Dios también escuchará nuestras propias palabras y, de alguna manera - por una inspiración que Él nos da, por un pasaje de las Escrituras que escuchamos o leemos, por un comentario hecho por un amigo, por algo que suceda - Dios nos responderá.

Lo importante es darle la oportunidad y eso es lo que hace la oración.

El ayuno, ya sea de la comida o de una forma de entretenimiento o comprando algo que realmente no necesitamos, es como una oración silenciosa que clama a Dios, diciendo que reconocemos nuestra necesidad de Él por encima de todo. Tenemos más hambre de Su Palabra que de pan. La limosna también ayuda, porque la Escritura dice: *Como el agua apaga el fuego, así la limosna expía los pecados* [Sirach 3:29]. Cualquier buen trabajo es una forma de limosna: escuchar pacientemente a una persona angustiada, quitar la nieve de los escalones y la acera de una pareja de ancianos, llamar a un amigo enfermo para animarla. Las buenas obras nos sacan de nosotros mismos y golpean el egocentrismo que está en el corazón de todo pecado.

También hay una dimensión social del pecado que se encuentra en más de un nivel. A un nivel muy personal, puedo permitirme el fanatismo contra un grupo debido a su raza, religión, afiliación política u otra marca de identificación. Incluso si nunca digo o hago abiertamente nada que pueda ser llamado intolerante, mi desdén interior por el grupo me hace poco dispuesto a protestar por las injusticias hacia sus miembros o hacerles ningún bien. Si el samaritano en la parábola de Jesús, cediendo al fanatismo samaritano hacia los judíos (que ellos correspondían) hubiera pasado por el judío golpeado por los ladrones, su fanatismo interior habría llevado a un pecado de omisión. Venció la intolerancia y ayudó al herido. La conversión comienza dentro. Si queremos ser justos y caritativos con todos, como nuestra fe nos enseña a ser, entonces debemos enfrentar las actitudes negativas que podamos tener hacia los demás.

En otro nivel, la dimensión social del pecado es evidente en la corrupción de la moral pública. Muchos piden hoy la paz y el fin de las divisiones en nuestro país, pero la paz social no es posible mientras nuestro pueblo no pueda ponerse de acuerdo sobre los valores morales más básicos. El comportamiento pecaminoso en privado es bastante malo, pero las leyes y el comportamiento moralmente incorrecto aprobado y aplaudido públicamente son peores, porque corrompen a los impresionables, especialmente a los jóvenes.

Abortar a los bebés no nacidos es una barbarie, el fuerte domina al débil, incluso cuando la situación de la madre es muy difícil. Las personas homosexuales merecen respeto y trato justo, pero las relaciones sexuales entre miembros del mismo sexo no pueden cumplir el propósito fundamental de nuestra sexualidad - producir descendencia - y, por lo tanto, son inapropiadas, al igual que las relaciones íntimas de los heterosexuales si deliberadamente frustran su dimensión procreadora. La retórica dura y las acciones crueles dirigidas a los inmigrantes degradan su humanidad y revelan un egoísmo nacional que olvida convenientemente cuánto han contribuido los inmigrantes a este país. Permitir que las grandes corporaciones pisoteen a los pobres en las zonas rurales de nuestro país, como Appalachia, obteniendo ganancias mientras devuelven poco o nada a esas zonas, es injusto e inmoral.

Los católicos estamos equipados para desafiar estas y otras manifestaciones de corrupción social. Como dijo San Pablo en otro contexto: *tiene que haber facciones entre ustedes para que aquellos que son aprobados entre ustedes sean conocidos* [I Corintios 11:19].

Nuestra fuerza está en nuestra antropología católica, que parte del principio de que todo ser humano está dotado por Dios de una auténtica naturaleza humana, tanto personal como social. Ese principio nos lleva a favorecer el trato justo a los miembros de diferentes razas, religiones, orientaciones sexuales y orígenes nacionales. Nos lleva a promover el bien del matrimonio y la familia y a defender el derecho de los padres a educar a sus hijos como mejor les parezca. Nos lleva a oponernos a ideologías y actos que lesionan al ser humano y sus comunidades: aborto, actividades racistas y prácticas discriminatorias retenidas del pasado, violencia doméstica y pena de muerte, entre otros. El mismo principio nos impide abrazar

Consulte "Carta" en la página 15

Carta...

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desviaciones dañinas de una visión correcta de la naturaleza humana, como medir a los seres humanos esencialmente en términos económicos o pensar que podemos elegir nuestro sexo desafiando nuestro cuerpo o insistir en que la igualdad de oportunidades debe, independientemente del esfuerzo, y circunstancias, siempre resultan en igualdad de resultados. Si podemos aferrarnos al principio básico de una naturaleza humana dada por Dios que se desarrolla en comunidad, tenemos una manera de abrirnos paso a través de los puntos de vista enfrentados sobre estos temas y promover una comprensión sana que lleve al verdadero florecimiento humano.

Entonces, ¿qué podemos hacer con los pecados sociales? Una vez más, las prácticas tradicionales de la Cuaresma de oración, ayuno y limosna vienen en nuestra ayuda. ¿Crees en la eficacia de la oración? Lea Lucas 18: 1-8, donde una viuda persistente obtiene sus derechos de un juez injusto. Jesús comenta: *¿No asegurará Dios los derechos de sus escogidos que lo llaman día y noche? ¿Tardará en responderles? Les digo que él se encargará de que se les haga justicia rápidamente.* En esta Cuaresma, conviértase en un hábito de orar para que nuestra gente pueda despertar a los signos de la decadencia moral en nuestra sociedad. El ayuno para este propósito también es efectivo, una oración del cuerpo que le dice a Dios que queremos decir lo que decimos en nuestra oración vocal. San León el Grande dijo: "Lo que salvamos con el ayuno, lo damos para alimentar a los pobres", por lo que el ayuno conduce a acciones que ayudan a otros.

Lo que me lleva a la limosna. ¿Cómo puede eso ayudar a lidiar con el pecado social? Primero, podemos apoyar a grupos que sirven a aquellos ignorados por las élites que controlan nuestra sociedad. Tenemos varios centros de embarazo en el estado que ayudan a las familias a tener y cuidar a sus hijos. ¡Necesitan voluntarios y dinero! Catholic Charities West Virginia ha dado un paso adelante heroicamente durante esta pandemia para ayudar a los que nuestra economía ha dejado de lado. CCWV también necesita voluntarios, especialmente porque muchos han tenido que quedarse en casa debido a su edad o enfermedad.

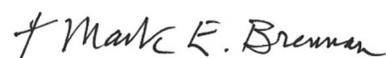
Una segunda forma de limosna es la promoción. Podemos tomar medidas individuales poniéndonos en contacto con quienes nos representan en el gobierno local, estatal y federal. Cuantos más los contactemos con ellos sobre temas que están afectando el bienestar moral de nuestro país, más se darán cuenta. También podemos unirnos a otros que abogan por cuestiones de justicia social. West Virginians for Life aboga por los no nacidos

y sus padres, el Comité Católico de Appalachia aborda los problemas de pobreza y degradación cultural y ambiental en nuestra región, Catholic Education Partners aboga por un trato justo por parte del gobierno de nuestros jóvenes en las escuelas católicas. Otros grupos también están trabajando para poner a nuestra nación en un mejor rumbo. Los esfuerzos comunes a menudo dan más frutos que los individuales, así que considere apoyar o unirse a ese grupo. De varias maneras podemos marcar la diferencia para superar la corrupción de la moral pública en nuestra tierra.

Finalmente, alimenta tu fe con prácticas religiosas propias de la Cuaresma: Misa diaria, Vía Crucis, Rosario o Liturgia de las Horas (rezada con otros, si es posible), estudio de la Biblia y especialmente las bellas liturgias de Semana Santa. Consulte con su parroquia o busque otros recursos en línea. Tenga en cuenta que algunos habitantes de Virginia Occidental, que nunca se bautizaron o bautizaron en otras iglesias cristianas o católicos bautizados pero nunca se criaron en la fe, están completando sus preparativos para los sacramentos de iniciación cristiana en Cuaresma. En la Iglesia primitiva, los bautizados se unían a los elegidos (es decir, los catecúmenos "elegidos" para la iniciación completa en Pascua) en sus ayunos y oraciones como signo de solidaridad con ellos. Lo que haces esta Cuaresma no es solo para ti. Ore por los elegidos y los candidatos a la plena comunión con nuestra Iglesia Católica en apoyo de sus santas intenciones.

Al cerrar esta carta, les recuerdo que Jesucristo murió y resucitó de entre los muertos para hacernos una nueva creación. San Pablo escribió: *De ahora en adelante no consideraremos a nadie según la carne. . . Por tanto, el que está en Cristo es una nueva creación: las cosas viejas pasaron; he aquí, han venido cosas nuevas* [II Corintios 5: 16-17]. La Cuaresma es un tiempo privilegiado para deshacernos de nuestro viejo yo corrupto y revestirnos de Cristo, el hombre verdaderamente nuevo en la historia. Para algunos, esta será su última Cuaresma. Otros tendrán más, pero ¿por qué esperar para hacer lo correcto? Cuarenta días de ayuno, oración y buenas obras, esforzándonos por erradicar los pecados incrustados y contrarrestar los pecados sociales, harán de esta una buena Cuaresma para nosotros. Como dijo San Junípero Serra, el apóstol franciscano de California, "¡Siempre para adelante, nunca atrás!" Que ese sea nuestro espíritu en esta Cuaresma.

Fielmente tuyo en Cristo,



+ Mark E. Brennan
Obispo de Wheeling-Charleston

Para denunciar presuntos casos de abuso sexual de niños: La Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston alienta a informar ante las autoridades civiles ante todo si se ha cometido un delito. También alentamos a utilizar www.reportbishopabuse.org para hacer un informe sobre cualquier obispo en los EE. UU. Si tiene motivos para creer que un obispo ha cometido una conducta sexual inapropiada, comuníquese con las autoridades civiles de la jurisdicción correspondiente y visite www.reportbishopabuse.org.

Para informar a las autoridades civiles: comuníquese con la policía local; los números variarán según su ubicación. Si cree que alguien está en peligro inmediato, llame al 911. Para informar confidencialmente cualquier incidencia de sospecha de abuso o negligencia infantil, incluido el abuso sexual, comuníquese con la Oficina de Servicios de Protección Infantil de Niños y Familias de West Virginia llamando a la línea directa de abuso infantil al 800.352.6513. Puede informar anonimamente a esta línea directa si lo prefiere.

Para informar a las autoridades diocesanas: La diócesis alienta a informar a las autoridades civiles apropiadas, ante todo, si se ha cometido un delito. La diócesis también alienta a informar a las autoridades eclesiales apropiadas. Para reportar casos sospechosos de abuso sexual de niños por parte del personal de la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston a la Diócesis, comuníquese con uno de los siguientes designados al 1.888.434.6237 o 304.233.0880: Sr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Sr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; o Muy Reverendo Dennis Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., ext. 270. También puede llamar a la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro

de la Diócesis al 304.230.1504. También puede llamar a la línea directa de abuso sexual de la Diócesis al 833.230.5656. Los formularios de queja están disponibles en línea en www.dwc.org, haga clic en "Diócesis" en la barra de menú, luego en "Oficinas", luego en "Ambiente seguro", luego "Descargar archivos y formularios". El formulario se titula "Formulario de queja para denuncias de abuso sexual de menores". El formulario se puede devolver por correo de EE. UU. A: Office of Safe Environment, Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003.

Para informar al Coordinador de Asistencia a Víctimas de la Diócesis: llame a la Dra. Patricia Bailey al 304.242.6988.

Además de los métodos enumerados anteriormente para denunciar el abuso sexual, la Diócesis también se ha asociado con Navex Global para ofrecer la plataforma EthicsPoint para informar otras inquietudes adicionales, como sospecha de mala conducta financiera, profesional y personal de un sacerdote, diácono, religioso, o empleado laico de la Diócesis o cualquier parroquia o escuela católica en West Virginia. Se puede acceder a la plataforma EthicsPoint a través de www.dwc.org, en "Rendición de cuentas", luego "Informar mala conducta" o llamando al 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint es un sistema de informes de terceros que informa a las autoridades civiles cuando corresponda y a las autoridades diocesanas, y la identidad de la persona que informa esta protegida.

Enlaces e información: Departamento de Salud y Recursos Humanos de WV: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. Policía Estatal de Virginia Occidental, Unidad de Crímenes contra Niños: 304-293-6400.

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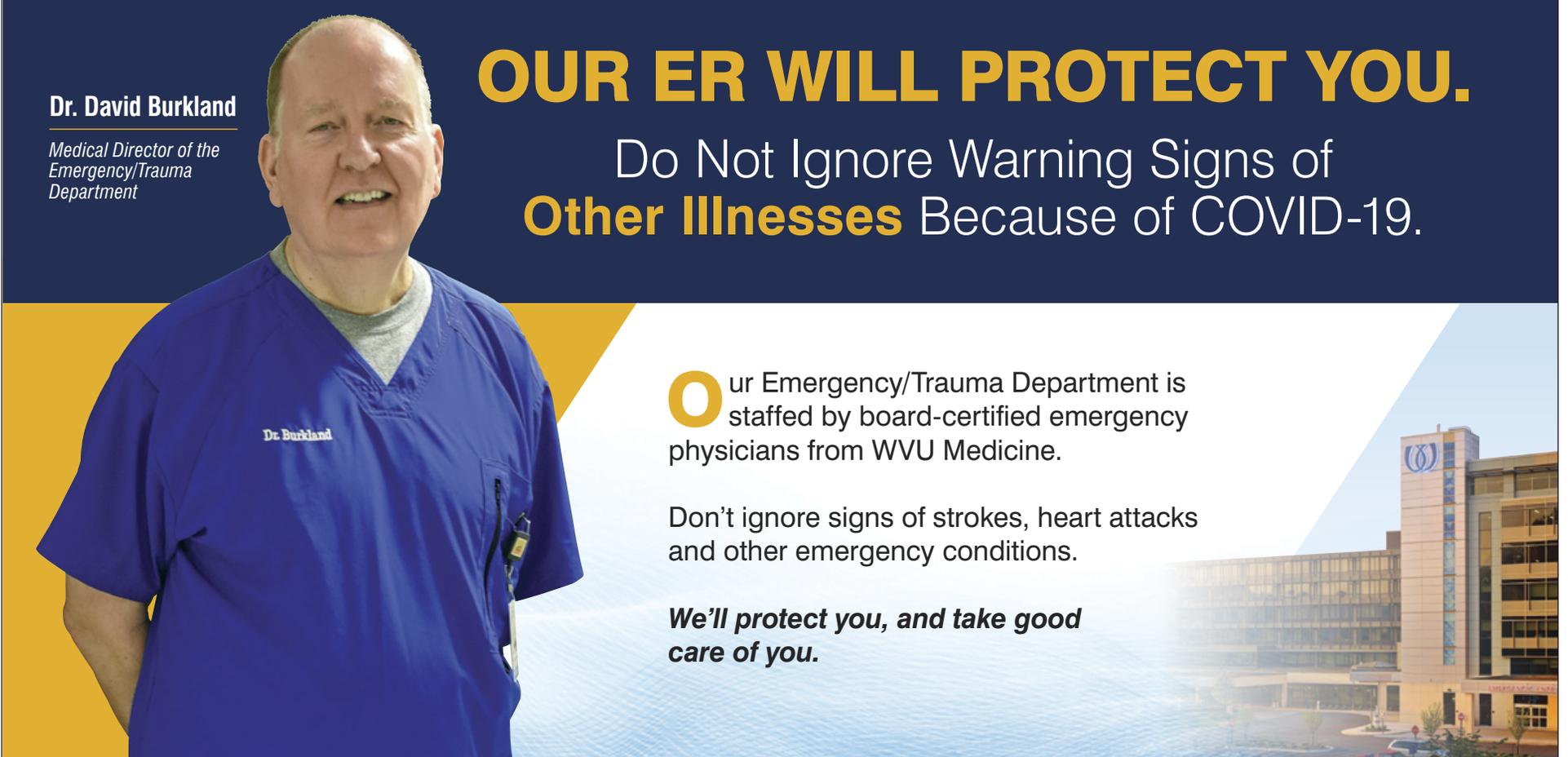
Dr. David Burkland
*Medical Director of the
Emergency/Trauma
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