

THE CATHOLIC

Spirit

A Pastoral Letter on Gender Transition from Bishop Brennan

May 10, 2024

One of the most contentious issues in American public life today is the debate over the possibility of transitioning from one sex or gender to another. Also referred to as transgender therapy, it can range from simply presenting oneself as the sex that does not correspond with one's body, changing one's name, clothing and pronouns, to undergoing long-term hormonal treatments or surgery to change character-

istic features of the biological body, including the removal of genitalia. As one doctor told me, it is not a new reality but one that has rather suddenly erupted in the public consciousness.

In recent years I have heard, both in person and on the radio, people speak about gender dysphoria, the technical term for distress over the conflict between one's bodily identity and one's perceived gender identity. The person who believes he or she is not the

gender the body indicates finds this experience profoundly disturbing and, quite rightly, seeks relief. It should be noted that, between 2017 and 2021, the number of dysphoria diagnoses nearly tripled in the United States (*British Medical Journal*, June 14, 2023).

In my approach to this subject, I will try to live up to my episcopal motto, "Living the Truth in Love." Persons who believe they have successfully transitioned from their biological

sex or gender deserve the same respect that persons comfortable in their biological gender enjoy. Whether we agree or disagree with their decision, they are, from our Christian perspective, made in the image and likeness of God. Jesus has commanded us: *love your neighbor as yourself* and, as the parable of the Good Samaritan shows, there are no exceptions to that commandment. We are challenged by our faith to love persons who experience

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Priesthood, Diaconate Ordinations Set for This Spring

By Colleen Rowan

WEST VIRGINIA—In the coming weeks, the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston will be blessed with two ordinations to Holy Orders. Deacon John Soplinski will be ordained to the priesthood on May 31 at 5 p.m. at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling. A week later, 20 men will be ordained permanent deacons on June 7 at 3 p.m. at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston.

This will be the first presbyteral ordination for the diocese in three years and one that the vocations director has been anticipating.

"I am so excited for Deacon John Soplinski to become Father John Soplinski. I've known John since his first year in seminary and have seen him grow into the servant and spiritual leader that he is today," said Father Brian Crenwelge, who is also pastor of St. John University Parish in Morgantown and director of Campus Ministry for West Virginia University in Morgantown. "He is a **See "Ordinations" on Page 4**

Victims of the Benwood Mine Disaster Remembered on 100th Anniversary



Colleen Rowan Photos

At left, faithful process to the memorial and graves of Benwood mine disaster victims at Wheeling's Mount Calvary Cemetery April 28, the 100th anniversary of the tragedy. Above, Bishop Mark Brennan places flowers at the memorial.

By Colleen Rowan

The Catholic communities of Benwood and Wheeling came together at Wheeling's Mount Calvary Cemetery on April 28 to remember those who were killed in the

third worst mine disaster in West Virginia 100 years ago. Gathering with Bishop Mark Brennan, they prayed for the 119 men and boys killed in the disaster at the Wheeling Steel Coal Mine in Benwood on

April 28, 1924.

"We pray for the souls of those who lost their lives in that disaster, many of whom are buried in this cemetery..." Bishop Brennan said **See "Remembered" on Page 6**



NATIONAL
Eucharistic Pilgrimage

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See all of the details and how to participate on Pages 8 & 9



Letter...

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gender dysphoria.

The love of which Jesus speaks is not a matter of feelings or physical attraction. It is a matter of the will being focused on doing good to the neighbor. That does not necessarily mean agreeing with the neighbor's opinion. Parents who love their children will sometimes not let them do what they want, because the parents know it would be against the children's welfare. If you speak a "hard truth" to a friend engaged in inappropriate behavior that you believe will hurt the friend and possibly others, you are acting in a loving manner. Much depends, of course, on how this love is expressed but my point is that you can still love a person with whom you disagree. The overriding concern must be to seek the neighbor's good.

Many clinicians, parents, public school educators and politicians, trying to help persons with gender dysphoria find relief, believe that medicine can offer a remedy: the administration of massive doses of hormones that change the bodily appearance of the person or surgery to remove or alter the person's genitalia. The American Medical Association, the American Nurses Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics and other

professional medical groups, have all endorsed what they call "gender-affirming care." Some states have passed laws ensuring protection for transgendered persons against discrimination in schools, workplaces and sports.

Yet, opposition to this medical and political consensus is growing. Some female athletes have complained that men who have declared themselves to be women are winning competitions that were designed for natural females. A young woman who participates in sports at West Virginia University told me: "Most men are bigger, stronger and faster than women. It's not fair that they compete against us." A number of states have banned various forms of transgender treatments and the participation in female sports by biological males. (Such a law regarding athletic competitions in West Virginia was recently declared unconstitutional by a federal court. The state plans to appeal the decision to the US Supreme Court.)

The strongest opposition has been provoked by proposed legislation in some states and current laws in others, that allow minors to access transgender therapies. Illinois allows a judge to decide that a minor who appears to be mature can opt for medical treatment against the parent's wishes. Meanwhile, some minors who have transitioned to the opposite sex revert

to their biological sex, although the research studies on "detransition" are scanty. Nonetheless, "there is reason to believe that the numbers of detransitions may increase. It is quite possible that the low reported rates of detransition and regret in previous populations will no longer apply to current populations" (*Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism*, October, 2022).

Many European countries have a longer experience with transgender therapies than the United States. Great Britain, France, Sweden, Finland and Denmark, usually considered "progressive" in social matters, have in recent years backed away from full endorsement of transition procedures, moving to less invasive treatments such as counseling and group therapy. The *Journal of the Danish Medical Association* (August, 2023), in an article by clinicians who assess youth for transitions, reported on the "inherent medical and ethical uncertainties of providing minors with profound, life-altering interventions in the context of very limited understanding of the epidemiological shift in the population presenting for care, the growing rates of detransition and the profound uncertainty about long-term outcomes." This has led Denmark to sharply curtail hormonal transition (now only 6% of requests are granted)

and end all transgender surgery on minors.

Without discussing the moral implications of transgender treatments, public health authorities in Finland, Sweden, the Netherlands and England "concluded that the risk-benefit ratio of youth gender transition ranges from unknown to unfavorable" (*Forbes Magazine*, June 6, 2023). The majority of transitioned persons, minors and adults, seem to be content with their achieved gender identity and exhibit less suicidal ideation and attempts (failed or successful) than before transition; but, as mentioned above, the rate of detransition seems to be increasing and "a dearth of high-quality studies that evaluate outcomes in suicide following gender-affirming treatment poses severe limitations on the extent of claims made during the informed consent process for gender-affirming treatment" (*Cureus*, March, 2023, at National Library of Medicine).

Dr. Paul McHugh, formerly the chief psychiatrist at the Johns Hopkins University Hospital in Baltimore, used to oversee transgender treatments but, after studying the long-term effects on persons who received those treatments, halted them and declared that "we have been trying to treat a psychological state with surgery." (Under pressure

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To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children: The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. We also encourage utilizing www.reportbishopabuse.org to make a report about any bishop in the U.S. If you have reason to believe that a bishop has engaged in sexual misconduct or has interfered with an investigation into sexual misconduct, please contact civil authorities in the applicable jurisdiction and visit www.reportbishopabuse.org. **To Report to Civil Authorities: Contact your local law enforcement:** numbers will vary based on your location. If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911. To confidentially report any incidence of suspected child abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse, contact the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families' Child Protective Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 800.352.6513. You may report anonymously to this hotline if you prefer. **To Report to Diocesan Authorities:** The diocese

encourages reporting to the appropriate civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. The diocese also encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities. To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, contact one of the following designees at 1.888.434.6237 or 304.233.0880: Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; or Very Rev. Dennis Schuelkens, Jr., V.E., ext. 270; or Sr. Martha Gomez, ext. 264. You may also call the Diocese's Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504. You may also call the Diocese's sexual abuse hotline at 833.230.5656. Additional methods of reporting are available at www.dwc.org, under "Accountability." Complaint forms are available online at www.dwc.org, click "Diocese" on the menu bar, then "Offices," then "Safe Environment", then "Download Files and Forms." The form is titled "Complaint Form for Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor." The form may be returned via U.S. mail to: Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Wheeling-

Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003. **To Report to the Diocese's Victim Assistance Coordinator:** please call Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, at 304.559.6742. In addition to the methods listed above for reporting sexual abuse, the Diocese also has partnered with Navex Global to offer the EthicsPoint platform to report other, additional concerns, such as suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, religious, or lay employee of the Diocese or any Catholic parish or school in West Virginia. The EthicsPoint platform can be accessed via www.dwc.org, under "Accountability", then "Report Misconduct" or by calling 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint is a third-party reporting system that reports to civil authorities where applicable and Diocesan authorities, and the identity of the person reporting is protected. Links and information: WV Department of Health and Human Resources: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. West Virginia State Police, Crimes Against Children Unit: 304-293-6400.

Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

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

The Catholic Spirit's Print Schedule for 2024

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

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

Ascension of the Lord

Feast Day, May 12

The Catholic Spirit publication date for this issue is May 10

Month of the Sacred Heart of Jesus

Month of June

The Catholic Spirit publication date for this issue is June 21

Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Feast Day, August 15

The Catholic Spirit publication date for this issue is August 2

Exaltation of the Holy Cross

Feast Day, September 14

The Catholic Spirit publication date for this issue is September 6

Our Lady of the Rosary

Memorial, October 7

The Catholic Spirit publication date for this issue is October 4

Advent


First Sunday of Advent, December 1

The Catholic Spirit publication date for this issue is November 29

Christmas

Feast Day, December 25


The Catholic Spirit publication date for this issue is December 20



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Letter...

Cont'd from Page 2

from the Human Rights Campaign, an LGBTQ advocacy organization, and Maryland politicians, the Hospital resumed transgender surgery a few years ago.)

The Catholic understanding of gender transition is clear: "human life in all its dimensions, both physical and spiritual, is a gift from God. This gift is to be accepted with gratitude and placed at the service of the good. Desiring a personal self-determination, as gender theory prescribes, apart from this fundamental truth that human life is a gift, amounts to a concession to the age-old temptation to make oneself God, entering into competition with the true God of love revealed to us in the Gospel" [*Dignitas Infinita (On Human Dignity)*, 57, Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith, April 8, 2024].

Accepting one's gender or sex as a gift from God rather than as one's possession to change at will, affirms the real and necessary difference between the two sexes. That sexual difference is essential for the continuation of the human race. God teaches this to us directly: *God created man in His image, male and female He created them. God blessed them, saying "Be fertile and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it [Genesis 1:27-28].* The binary division of the human species into male and female is both a fact of nature and a truth of divine revelation. This does not absolutize cultural expressions of maleness and femaleness, which vary widely (e.g., in clothing and roles); but "gender expression" cannot ignore the biologically determined sexual difference upon which the human race depends. "Genital abnormalities that are already evident at birth or that develop later" may be resolved by medical treatment but do not constitute a change in gender [DI, 60].

In the light of these ethical and practical concerns about medical procedures to alter a person's body to make it appear more consistent to the person's "felt" gender, why do the promotion of transgender ideology and its practice continue in the United States? First, we must admit that we Americans exhibit a

heightened individualism, a relentless assertion of personal autonomy. "Because I want it, because I feel this way, I should be able to do it." This attitude underlies advocacy for abortion, assisted suicide and resistance to public health measures such as vaccinations. Even though sincerely held, this attitude is at the base of gender transition.

Second, as in other societies, there is in the United States an elite class of professionals – physicians, educators, public policy experts, media stars, career politicians and executives and board members of large corporations – upon whom we depend for necessary services. We respect them for their competence. But they are just as much subject to "group think" as are other groups in society.

This elite class is increasingly secular and either indifferent or openly hostile to religious belief and moral restraints on their opinions and activities. By and large they follow a materialist and utilitarian approach to issues and prefer technological solutions over which, in many cases, they exercise control. Supporting the transgender ideology not only exhibits their belief that the human body is simply material to be manipulated as one desires, but it allows them to congratulate themselves on being broad-minded and caring. Aided by major sectors of the media, they promote their view as the only correct one.

While we must resist the inordinate assertion of personal autonomy that the transgender ideology represents and the pressure of our elite class to support that ideology, we must ask ourselves: what alternative can we offer to those who suffer from gender dysphoria? A true remedy is needed, one that recognizes that this is a mental and emotional experience that hormonal therapies and surgeries will not cure, even if they postpone an inevitable clash with reality.

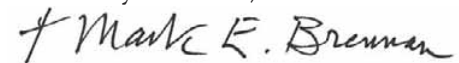
The inner peace that those with gender dysphoria desire can be achieved by much simpler, less invasive and less expensive means. Most of all, the person needs the loving support of family and friends while dealing with the conflict of body and feelings. When that intimate community sees how profoundly dis-

turbing the conflict between the relative's or friend's biological self and perceived self is, the family and friends can offer the solidarity and encouragement that will give the dysphoria-afflicted person courage and hope. In addition, trust in the God who *made them male and female* would also bring the person into harmony with God's will expressed in creation.

Counseling, prolonged for years, if needed, can provide great help if it seeks to get to the roots of the problem. What has caused the disjunction between the body and the person's mind and feelings? Even if this cannot be entirely clarified, good counseling will aim to help the counselee accept him or herself, including the indisputable evidence of one's biological gender. The counselor needs to understand that denying the bodily reality of the person and adhering to a perception of belonging to the opposite sex, is not healthy. It is living an illusion. The counselor's goal should be to help the person align his or her thinking and feeling with the reality of the body. Once that goal is achieved, the conflict between the body and the emotions should end and a genuine inner peace ensue.

Those suffering with gender dysphoria need our sympathy and respect. Their fundamental rights should never be denied them. We must stand with them and cooperate with them in building a more just and humane society. They need our love but a love that respects the truth, which is ultimately better for them and the community. The truth is that, for persons suffering with gender dysphoria, as for all of us, the body is an inseparable part of our being and it "speaks" to us, disclosing to us the sex to which we belong. The body as much as the soul is integral to the human person and deserves acceptance as it truly is. The harmony that should reign among body, mind, feelings and soul will be achieved when thinking and feeling do not nullify the body's speech but accept its testimony.

Sincerely in Christ,



+Mark E. Brennan
Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston

Diocesan Official Appointments

Bishop Mark Brennan has made public the following appointments:

Very Rev. J. Stephen Valleslonga, V.F., is appointed pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Berkeley Springs with residence at the parish rectory, effective June 19, 2024.

Msgr. Kevin M. Quirk, J.C.D., is appointed pastor of St. Charles Borromeo Parish in White Sulphur Springs, St. Catherine of Siena Parish in Ronceverte, St. Louis King of France Chapel in Lewisburg, Chapel of the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Williamsburg, and St. John Chapel in Sweet Springs, effective June 19, 2024, with residence at the parish rectory in White Sulphur Springs.

Father Penumaka Manikyalarao is appointed rector of the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling and pastor of St. Alphonsus Parish in Wheeling with residence at the Cathedral rectory, effective June 19, 2024.

Father John Rice is appointed vicar forane of the Parkersburg Vicariate for a period of three years, effective June 19, 2024.

Father Shaji J. Thomas is appointed pastor of Ascension Parish in

Hurricane with residence at the parish rectory, effective June 19, 2024.

Father Joseph Kutty K. Sebastian is appointed administrator of St. Boniface Parish in Camden, Good Shepherd Mission in Glenville with chaplaincy responsibilities at the Federal Correctional Institution, Gilmer, and Glenville State College with residence at the Mission rectory in Camden, effective June 19, 2024.

Father Phillip R. Szabo is appointed administrator of St. Agnes Parish in Charleston, with residence at the parish rectory and with chaplaincy responsibilities at the University of Charleston, effective June 19, 2024. In addition, he is appointed chaplain of Charleston Catholic High School, effective June 19, 2024.

Father Paul Vazhappilly is appointed administrator of St. Peter Claver Parish in Huntington and Sacred Heart Parish in Huntington with residence at the Sacred Heart Parish rectory, effective June 19, 2024.

Father Jose Manuel Escalante is appointed to develop ministry to Hispanic Catholics in the Petersburg and Moorefield areas and parochial vicar of Epiphany of Our Lord Parish in Moorefield, St. Mary Parish in Pe-

tersburg, and St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Parish in Franklin, with residence at the parish rectory in Moorefield, effective June 19, 2024.

Father J. Michael O. Lecias is appointed priest in residence with residence at Priest Field Pastoral Center in Kearneysville, effective June 19, 2024, until he is called to begin full-time military chaplaincy with the Archdiocese of the Military Services, USA.

Father Gary Naegele is appointed priest in residence at St. Mary Parish in Morgantown, and chaplain of J.W. Ruby Memorial Hospital in Morgantown and Mon Health Medical Center in Morgantown with residence at St. Mary Parish rectory, effective June 19, 2024.

In consultation with Very Rev. Paul Puthuva, VC, provincial superior of the Vincentian Congregation in Kerala, India, **Father Joseph Abraham, VC**, is appointed administrator of Mater Dolorosa Parish in Paden City, Holy Rosary Mission in Sistersville, St. Vincent de Paul Parish in New Martinsville, and St. Joseph Mission in Proctor with residence at the parish rectory in New Martinsville, effective June 19, 2024.

In consultation with Very Rev. Jaya Raj Battula, HGN, provincial superior of the St. John Paul II Province of the Heralds of Good News, **Father Kotaiah (Thomas) Dharelli, HGN**, is appointed administrator of St. Anthony Parish in Charleston, and Our Lady of the Hills Parish in Elkview with residence at the Parish rectory in Charleston, effective June 19, 2024.

After consultation with Very Rev. Johnson Varakaparambil Joseph, CST, provincial superior of the St. Thomas Province of the Little Flower Congregation in Kerala, India, **Father Shinu Lukose, CST**, is appointed parochial vicar of St. James Parish in Charles Town and St. Peter Chapel in Harpers Ferry with residence at the parish rectory, effective June 19, 2024.

In consultation with Very Rev. Jaya Raj Battula, HGN, provincial superior of the St. John Paul II Province of the Heralds of Good News, **Father Sateesh Narisetti, HGN, J.C.L.**, is appointed administrator of St. Matthew Parish in Ravenswood, and Sacred Heart Mission in Point Pleasant with residence at the parish rectory, effective June 19, 2024.

Ordinations...

Cont'd from Page 1

man of sincere faith. He will be able to be a generous instrument of God's mercy to those to whom he ministers. I cannot wait for him to share with me in the ministerial priesthood of Jesus Christ. As the famous Dominican, Jean-Baptiste Lacordaire, once wrote concerning the priesthood, 'My God, what a life; and it is yours, O Priest of Jesus Christ!'"

Deacon Soplinski said he is excited to begin his priesthood and to serve the faithful of the diocese who have supported him through his vocational journey.

"They have been so generous the past six years; their prayers helped in a large measure for this day to be possible," he said.

What does he hope for in priesthood? "To follow the example of Bishop Brennan and the many priests that have mentored me—to serve God and His people without counting the cost," he said.

Soplinski's home parish is Sacred Heart of Mary in Weirton. He attended Sacred Heart of Mary Grade School and Madonna High School in Weirton, as well as St. Vincent College in Latrobe, Pa., where he received a Bachelor of Science in public policy analysis. He

is the son of Gary E. Soplinski and the late Mary Patricia Soplinski. His step-mother is Susan Soplinski. He previously worked for the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources from 1997-2001, and then Pittsburgh Public Schools from 2001-2017. He has attended Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Md., since 2018.

His first assignment in priesthood will be announced following his ordination.

Deacons

The ordination of the 20 men to the diaconate next month will be the first permanent deacons ordained for the diocese since 2016. Deacons are ordained to ministry and service where they assist the bishop and his priests in the celebration of the divine ministries, distribute holy Communion, assist and bless marriages, proclaim the Gospel and preach the good news, preside at funerals and, most especially, dedicate themselves to the ministry of charity.

There are two types of deacons in the Catholic Church: the transitional deacon, who will go on to ordination to priesthood; and the permanent deacon, who is ordained for perpetual ministry in the diaconate.

The 20 candidates to be

ordained as permanent deacons in West Virginia next month come from all corners of the state. Five of them are members of St. James the Greater Parish in Charles Town: Stephen Al-lard, Bill Klug, Tom McFarland, Patrick Michel, and Bryce Timberlake. Another candidate from the Eastern Panhandle is David Torlone of St. Leo Parish in Inwood.

Blessed Sacrament Parish in South Charleston has two candidates: Tony O'Leary and Tommy Ross. Additional candidates from the south are Rick Allen of St. Francis de Sales Parish in Beckley, EJ Brucal of Sacred Heart Parish in Williamson, Michael Brumley of Holy Trinity Parish in Nitro, Michael Kawash of the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston, and Ronald Piaskowski of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Huntington.

Candidates from central West Virginia are John Butler of St. Matthew Parish in Ravenswood, Victor Cwynar of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Parkersburg, James McCullough of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Stonewood, and Aaron Talbott of St. Brendan Parish in Elkins.

Candidates from the Northern Panhandle are Dr. John Basile of St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Weirton, Robert Krall of St. Michael

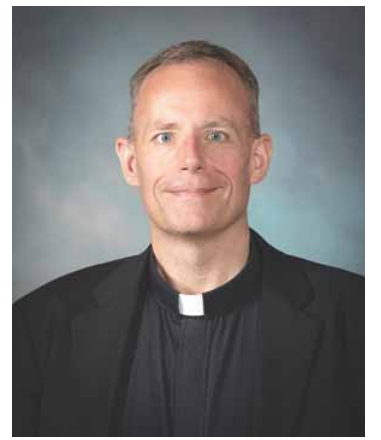
Parish in Wheeling, Jacob Manning of the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling, and Jason Miller of St. Paul Parish in Weirton.

"I wouldn't trade the last four years of formation for the world," said candidate Michael Kawash. "If I was told that I wouldn't be ordained at this point, I wouldn't have a single regret over spending the last four years in formation—everything I've learned, the friends I've made, the growth in spirituality, all of it has made for a most valuable life experience."

"I am looking forward to serving God's people as a deacon," he continued. "I have learned as part of our formation that the diaconate is actually the model of the Church, which is to serve. So I am very much looking forward to ministering to the faithful in this way and modeling the service of Christ to all whom I encounter."

Deacon John Yaquinta, coordinator of the diocese's Permanent Diaconate Formation Program, said that when he was ordained in 2016 he never imagined that God would one day call him to be a companion to the 20 men on their journey to ordination.

"Each one of these men has been called to lay down his life in humble service, and that is exactly what they will do as they lay pros-



Deacon John Soplinski

trate on the floor of the Co-Cathedral on June 7," said Deacon Yaquinta, who is also permanent deacon at Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish in Stonewood. "They have let go of hobbies, interests, and even relationships in order to have more time for study, prayer, and formation. They have stepped out of their comfort zones and embraced new forms of service in their parishes. I am very grateful to Bishop Mark Brennan and Father Dennis Schuelkens for entrusting me with their formation. And I look forward to many years of service with each one of them in the College of Permanent Deacons in this Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston."

Their formation was through St. Meinrad School of Theology in Indiana.

Once ordained, the diocese's new deacons will receive their assignments.



Courtesy Photo

In June 2023, Bishop Mark Brennan installed 20 deacon candidates as acolytes at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston. In the front row, from left, are John Butler, Michael Brumley, EJ Brucal, John Basile, Rick Allen, James McCullough, Tom McFarland, Patrick Michel, Jason Miller, and Tony O'Leary. In the second row, from left, are Jacob Manning, Rob Krall, Bill Klug, Michael Kawash, Victor Cwynar, David Torlone, Ron Piaskowski, Tommy Ross, Bryce Timberlake, and Aaron Talbott. With the candidates, in the back row from left, are Deacon Harry Evans; Very Rev. Don Higgs, V.F.; Deacon Brian Crim; Bishop Brennan; Deacon John Yaquinta, and Father Rayappa Kurakula. In the fourth row, from left, are Deacon Dennis Nesser, Deacon John Soplinski, and Deacon Vince Olenick.

More Than \$368,000 Raised for West Virginia's Catholic Schools

By Joyce Bibey

WEST VIRGINIA —Thank you to each of our One Mission One Day to Make a Difference donors!

We applaud our school advancement directors and principals for their fun and creative online fundraising antics on May 7 that generated a lot of buzz and more than \$368,000 by the end of the day.

"One Mission One Day to Make a Difference isn't only about raising money, it's about bringing our school families, alumni, supporters and friends together and highlighting the excellence in our Catholic schools while we have some fun and make a real difference," said Assistant Director of Stewardship and Development Heidi Sforza.

Each school can choose how they will utilize their funding. This year we saw a wide variety of projects including building enhancements, playground equipment, staff bonuses, curriculum enhancements, and even a new school bus.

"One of my favorite things about One Mission One Day is seeing all of the pictures and videos of students and faculty across the state, things like students dancing during donation drop offs, and student council members participating in pie contests, or the various art projects being auctioned off," Sforza said.

The online giving day is run

by our individual school advancement directors and principals with the help of the diocesan stewardship and development and communications offices.

The idea was initially organized by the Northern Panhandle Catholic schools in 2019, after a regional community event — the Ohio Valley Amazing Raise/Giving Tuesday — event was canceled. In May of 2020 the first diocesan wide One Mission One Day Event was held and raised \$245,000. Since then, students, principals, pastors, and alumni have had fun getting involved with various contests, sharing pictures and videos, and donating to their favorite Catholic schools.

This year St. Vincent de Paul Parish School in Wheeling raised the most money during the event with more than \$50,700, followed by St. Mary's Grade School in Clarksburg with \$44,585 and Central Catholic High School in Wheeling with \$40,958.

St. Paul Parish School in Weirton had the most donors (458) for the fifth year in a row and the most Peer Fundraisers. They will receive an additional \$1,000 from the West Virginia Catholic Foundation and St. Vincent's will receive \$500 for raising the most money.

Since launching the statewide giving day 5 years ago, we've raised more than \$2 million for Catholic schools across the state.

Tim Tebow Speaks at West Virginians for Life Rose Dinner



AJ Emery Photo

Tim Tebow speaks at 26th Annual Rose Dinner, hosted by West Virginians for Life May 7 in Morgantown.

MORGANTOWN—Nearly 650 people attend the 26th Annual Rose Dinner at the Morgantown Marriott Waterfront, hosted by West Virginians for Life (WVFL) May 7. The group was also celebrating its 50th anniversary.

Keynote speaker Tim Tebow shared that his mother gave him a chance at life despite experiencing a difficult pregnancy and being told to abort him. His message was to help those who cannot help themselves and that God loves every single person.

"We get to go bring the hope to hurting people all over the world," Tebow said. The hope, he continued, is the good news of the Gospel... "that God loves every single one of us — every mom, every boy, every girl, every unborn, every special needs, every elderly, every single person because when

Jesus went to the cross, it counted for them. But the question is, will we love them enough to remember that when Jesus died, it counted for them, too?"

The dinner was combined with an update on WVFL's educational efforts, which are threefold. First, the group wants to educate on the dangers of assisted suicide and euthanasia because there will be an amendment to the State Constitution on the West Virginia November ballot in this regard.

Second, an anti-abortion pill campaign is in the works called "Don't Swallow the Lie!" Women and girls will be informed that after taking the first dose of the abortion pill (Mifeprex or RU-486) that they can possibly reverse the effects of that pill if quick action is taken.

And third, across the street from the former abortion clinic in Charleston, a pro-life memorial park is being planned to honor and remember the thousands of little boys and girls that have been killed in that facility. Abortions ceased there once the Unborn Child Protection Act went into effect in 2022.

WVFL President Dr. Wanda Franz gave an overview presentation with a video on the organization over the years and built a case for the much needed three-pronged educational campaign for which monies were raised. Franz said, "It was a great opportunity to share some of our accomplishments with our guests. These included the 14 pro-life bills we have passed over the years, our social media educational programs, and the memorial for the children aborted at the Women's Health Center."

West Virginians for Life, the state affiliate of the National Right to Life Committee, is the state's largest pro-life group with 25 local chapters. West Virginians for Life works through education, legislation, and political action to protect those threatened by abortion, infanticide, and euthanasia.

Morgantown's Large Eucharistic Procession is a 'True Testament to Our Faith in West Virginia of the Holy Eucharist,' Pastor Says

Join the Procession on Sunday, June 2, for the Solemnity of Corpus Christi

St. John University Parish will be hosting its second annual Morgantown Eucharistic Procession on Sunday, June 2, for the Solemnity of Corpus Christi, the Most Holy Body and Blood of our Lord. The procession will begin at the close of the parish's 11 a.m. Mass and travel up University Boulevard to St. Mary Catholic Church in Star City (2.6 miles).

"Any Eucharistic Procession is a public witness to our Catholic faith and to our faith in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist," said Father Brian Crenwelge, pastor of St. John's and director of Campus Ministry for West Virginia University. "The church

has stressed since the 13th century the importance of processions in honor of our Lord. However, a procession this long is a true testament to our faith in West Virginia of the Holy Eucharist," he said. "Last year, we had over 100 people join us for the procession. I'd like to get 200 this year. The bigger the procession, the more people driving by will wonder, 'What is this about?' Last year, I had people e-mail me afterward saying how moving it was to witness the procession in Morgantown as they were driving by.

"As we processed by, one man pulled over, got out of his car, and got down on his knees, and waited for the Eucharist to be processed by him," Father Crenwelge said. "It was a beautiful testament to faith. Processions grow faith."

It takes work to organize a proces-

sion this big, he said, but the Lord always pours out his graces upon all who participate.

"It's all about the Eucharist!" he said. "We invite anyone and everyone to join us! We will have the Knights of Columbus with us. Any other parish organization is more than welcome to join us. This is not just a parish event, but truly a community event."

Christian Davis, a WVU student and one of the diocese's upcoming new seminarians, was master of ceremonies for the procession last year.

"I thought it was very inspiring seeing an entire Catholic community joined together with the common goal of being witnesses of our Faith," Davis said.

"It is a special opportunity here on earth to process with our Eucharistic King," said WVU student Andrew

Dean. "It is a beautiful foreshadowing to me of the glorious processions in paradise at the end of days as we celebrate the eternal reign of Christ. To show this to the world now, in Morgantown of all places, is to give hope and give everyone who sees us a chance to turn their hearts to Christ."

During the procession, there will be a midway stopping point with a roadside altar and participants will pause to get water. People can rest for a few minutes before continuing onward. When the procession arrives at St. Mary's, Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament will be held. Afterward, there will be a reception sponsored by the Knights of Columbus.

"We want to do this every year and have it become a staple of the year. Please come out and join us!" Father Crenwelge said.



Colleen Rowan Photo
The memorial to the victims of the 1924 Benwood mine disaster stands at Mount Calvary Cemetery in Wheeling. Behind the memorial are the graves of the victims.



Colleen Rowan Photo
Faithful fill the Bishop's Chapel at Mount Calvary Cemetery in Wheeling April 28 for the prayer service remembering the 119 victims of the Benwood mine disaster on the 100th anniversary of the tragedy.

Remembered...

Cont'd from Page 1

at the prayer service which began in the Bishop's Chapel at the cemetery. Some of the victims are buried in Greenwood Cemetery just across National Road from Mount Calvary and elsewhere. "We also pray for the comfort and healing of their families," Bishop Brennan said.

The majority of the victims of the disaster were Catholic immigrants and parishioners at St. John Parish in Benwood and St. Ladislaus Parish in South Wheeling. Thirty-nine of the victims were Polish and another 30 were Italian. Fifteen were from Greece and others were immigrants from Austria, Scotland, Croatia, Hungary, Russia, Serbia, England, Lithuania, Ukraine, and Wales.

According to "Archiving Wheeling," miners in 1924 were free to take anyone into the mine with them in order to load more coal... Teenaged sons, smaller children, and newly immigrated brothers often accompanied the miners. This is the reason children were among the victims.

The May 6, 1924, edition of the Wheeling Intelligencer reported: "One mother reportedly collapsed upon seeing her son lowered into the ground crying, 'My boy! My boy!' in Polish."

Many of those present at the prayer service at Mount Calvary 100 years later were descendants of these



Colleen Rowan Photo
At Mount Calvary Cemetery in Wheeling, two Benwood-Wheeling area faithful read the headstone of a victim of the 1924 Benwood mine disaster following a prayer service on the 100th anniversary of the tragedy.

victims, including Joey Tellitocci who spoke about the history of the disaster. He is a lifelong parishioner of St. John's in Benwood and began researching the disaster 13 years ago with the desire to make sure names of the victims were correct. He is the great grandson of mine disaster victim Istvan Vargo, a Hungarian immigrant. His great grandmother was first married to mine disaster victim Pasquale Fana of Bellarie, Ohio. She then remarried to Tellitocci's great grandfather.

Tellitocci thanked all involved in the service, those present, and especially Bishop Brennan; Chad Carter,

chancellor of the diocese; Deacon Doug Breiding, director of Mount Calvary; and Becky Breiding, secretary. He thanked them "for having this memorial service to pay tribute to the coal miners killed 100 years ago today."

Tellitocci has given public talks about the disaster and served as co-chair of the Benwood Mine Disaster Memorial Committee, which raised funds for a permanent memorial in Benwood which was dedicated in 2014. He told those gathered at the Bishop's Chapel for the prayer service for the mine disaster victims, "I want to ensure they are never forgotten."

The prayer service continued with a procession from the Bishop's Chapel to the Benwood Mine Disaster memorial, which states: "In memory of the 119 victims of the Benwood Mine Disaster April 23, 1924 and in hopes for the safety of all laboring men and women under St. Joseph's watchful care."

Behind the memorial are the many graves of the victims which were marked that day with small, orange flags so that attendees of the service could find each one.

Bishop Brennan placed flowers before the memorial and then incensed it as those gathered prayed with him.



Colleen Rowan Photo
Joey Tellitocci, a member of St. John Parish in Benwood, speaks at the prayer service. He is the great grandson of mine disaster victim Istvan Vargo, a Hungarian immigrant.

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‘Let God Lead Your Choices and Direction,’ Commencement Speaker Tells Wheeling University’s Class of 2024

Commencement Speaker Jennifer Hornyak, Superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, Awarded Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters

WHEELING — Jennifer Hornyak, superintendent of Catholic schools for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, told the Wheeling University Class of 2024 to “let God lead your choices and direction.”

During Wheeling University’s 66th Commencement exercises May 4, Dr. Dianna M. Vargo, Ed.D., chief operations officer of the institution, presented degrees to undergraduate, graduate and doctoral students. Additionally, Hornyak, the commencement speaker, was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters by her alma mater.

A member of the university’s class of 2000, Hornyak said, “My biggest advice to all of you is to be open to all opportunities that come your way ... every opportunity could serve as a path to something you never would have dreamed could ever happen in your life. Trust in God that your life journey is purposefully designed and meant to be. God will place opportunities right in front of you – many of those opportunities will be unexpected. Pray about those opportunities ... let God lead your choices and direction.”

Hornyak said the graduates have spent the past four years making many memories.

She added, “As you move forward, never forget the memories, and most of all the support system that has brought you to this moment. Cherish the friendships you have made, the professors, instructors and coaches who have all guided you ... the families who have cheered you on every step of the way. In line with the mission of this great university ... please leave here today remembering how important it is to share this gift of a Catholic college education with others, to give back to your communities, to mentor those who come after you, and to always strive for excellence

in everything you do.”

Hornyak ended, “We are all rooting for you, and excited to see what great things you will accomplish throughout your lifetimes – the impact you will make in the world. May God bless you as you begin your next chapter of your life. Trust in the unfolding of the plan and embrace all of the ups and downs, twists and turns that will come your way.”

In her welcome, Vargo told the graduates, Wheeling University provided them with opportunity – an opportunity to learn, to grow, to lead, and to serve others.

“Today marks the continuance – not the end – of this opportunity for our graduates. Graduates, you have worked hard for your degree at this great university. Now, you will live up, to the spirit of your education and use your degree for all that is good. Your timing is perfect. The world needs you now. Go strong with confidence, and determination, from this day forward. Be, our proud example, of Wheeling University,” Vargo said.

Class Valedictorian Natalie Stoner of Bellaire, Ohio, offered a special thank you to the faculty “who have enlightened and shaped our educational experience. You have equipped us to take our knowledge and change the world.”

She reminded her fellow graduates that the university’s mission educates students to be men and women for life, leadership and service – a mission that Stoner now lives daily, specifically leadership. “As a future teacher ... I hope to take the leadership skills that Wheeling has taught me and implement them in my future,” she said. “A good leader fosters a collaborative culture, and wherever necessary, leads by example ... Being a leader is challenging and it takes guts, but a leader is something I have learned at Wheeling University.” Stoner said whatever the



Courtesy Photo

At Wheeling University’s 66th Commencement Exercises May 4 are, from left, Dr. Dianna Vargo, chief operations officer; Father Frederick D’Souza, chaplain; Jennifer Hornyak, superintendent of Catholic schools for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston and commencement speaker; Natalie Stoner, valedictorian; and David Hendrickson, chair of the university’s board of trustees.

future holds for her fellow classmates – careers in teaching, healthcare, the business world or restoring justice – they can take the skills and experiences they have encountered at the university to stand out as leaders now and in the future.

David Hendrickson, J.D., chair of the Wheeling University Board of Trustees, told the class that their time at the university has given them the tools necessary to continue to grow, learn and overcome the many life challenges that lie ahead.

He called on the graduates to “do three things for me as you continue on life’s path.”

Hendrickson said, “Today, tonight, tomorrow thank

those that helped you obtain your degree. Education doesn’t come easy or cheaply.” He said sacrifices were made by others for each graduate to have the opportunity to attend Wheeling University.

“Second, make it a goal to help someone each day ... no matter how big or small, you will find in doing so, the blessings you give will be repaid many, many times over,” Hendrickson said. “Last, but certainly not least – give back (to Wheeling University).” Giving back to Wheeling University, the board chair noted, can be “acting as a tutor, teaching a class or just giving advice to those (students) who follow.”

The university honored Dr. Kristine Grubler, associate pro-

fessor of Physical Therapy, with the Father Edward Gannon, SJ, Outstanding Teaching Award. Each year, Wheeling University gives two medals during commencement to those graduates who have distinguished themselves both in service and in academics. The Mary Woomer Medal and Archbishop John J. Swint medals, are given to the woman and man in the class who most exemplifies the ideals of Wheeling University. Keala McCurry was the recipient of the Woomer Medal, while Sverri Finsson was given the Swint Medal.

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NATIONAL Eucharistic Pilgrimage

Be Part of this Historic Event!
*The pilgrimage comes to the Northern
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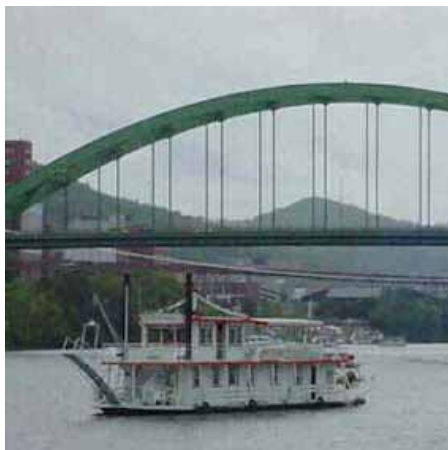
FROM THE EAST

St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Route



Welcome perpetual pilgrims to the Mountain State!

Gather with them for Masses, Eucharistic Adoration, Eucharistic Processions, praise and worship, and special programs as they share their experiences. Watch the Eucharistic Procession on the Ohio River led by Bishop Mark Brennan and Bishop Paul J. Bradley and receive a blessing. Pilgrimage events are open to all! Full schedule is on the right.



Participating Northern Panhandle Parishes

Weirton:

St. Joseph the Worker
Sacred Heart of Mary
St. Paul's

Wheeling:

Cathedral of St. Joseph
St. Alphonsus



Pilgrimage Events

Thursday, June 20, National Eucharistic Pilgrimage Kickoff in Weirton

St. Joseph the Worker Church: Meet the perpetual pilgrims and gather for Mass, Adoration, and praise and worship—8-9 a.m.

Eucharistic Procession from St. Joseph the Worker to Sacred Heart of Mary Church with Adoration and Benediction to follow—begins at 9:30 a.m.

Sharing Session & Reflection by Perpetual Pilgrims at Sacred Heart of Mary—11 a.m.-noon

Eucharistic Adoration with praise and worship at St. Paul Church—7-8 p.m.

Friday, June 21

Morning Mass with the perpetual pilgrims at Sacred Heart of Mary—8:30-9 a.m.

Breakfast with Perpetual Pilgrims at Sacred Heart of Mary—9:30-10:30 a.m.

Sunday, June 23

"Put Out into the Deep" on the Ohio River!"

Bishop Mark Brennan and Bishop Paul Bradley, apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Steubenville, will board a sternwheeler and lead a Eucharistic Procession down the Ohio River. Boatercade with the two bishops leaves the Steubenville Marina at noon and will stop at four sites on both sides of the river where faithful can receive a blessing. Blessing sites: Steubenville Marina, Wellsburg Wharf, Wellsburg-Brilliant Bridge, Mazeroski Park (Ohio), Pike Island Lock and Dam, and Heritage Port in Wheeling. Final destination is Bellaire Marina in Bellaire, Ohio.

Arrival of National Eucharistic Pilgrimage in Wheeling—7:30-8:30 p.m. Cathedral of St. Joseph. Bishop Brennan and the faithful of Wheeling will welcome the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage at the cathedral.

All-Night Eucharistic Prayer Vigil—8:30 p.m. (June 23) -8 a.m. (June 24) at the cathedral.

Monday, June 24

Mass at the cathedral celebrated by Bishop Brennan—8:30-9:30 a.m.

Solemn Eucharistic Procession through the streets of Wheeling from the cathedral to St. Alphonsus Church—9:30-10 a.m.

For more information, visit:

www.eucharisticpilgrimage.org/st-elizabeth-ann-seton-route

Northern Panhandle Catholics Can Welcome Our Lord and Pilgrims of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage

By Colleen Rowan

NORTHERN PANHANDLE — Ten perpetual pilgrims accompanying the Most Blessed Sacrament in the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage's St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Route leave New Haven, Conn., this weekend. After traversing 13 dioceses in the Eastern Seaboard, they will arrive with Our Lord in the Northern Panhandle of West Virginia on June 20.

"We're blessed to have the pilgrims coming here," said Bernadette McMasters Kime, PhD., D.Min., director of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's Office of Worship and Sacraments. She encourages Catholics of the area to help welcome them and participate in this historic time for the diocese.

The perpetual pilgrims include two priests, a brother, seminarians, as well as four women and four men. "Young people who have committed to this pilgrimage," Kime said.

They are embarking on the eastern arm of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, which has three other routes with pilgrims processing through other parts of the U.S. on their way to the National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis later this summer.

The perpetual pilgrims will be welcomed to West Virginia by the parish community of St. Joseph the Worker in Weirton. Mass will be celebrated at the church at 8 a.m. June 20. Weirton-area and all Catholics are invited to the Mass. Following the celebration, the faithful will then join a Eucharistic Procession from St. Joseph to Sacred Heart of Mary Church a mile down the road with exposition of the Most Blessed Sacrament and benediction. The parish will host a meal and a program in the cafeteria with sharing and reflection by pilgrims on their faith experiences and what the Eucharistic pilgrimage means to them. Perpetual pilgrims will then head to St. Paul Parish in downtown Weirton for Eucharistic Adoration at 7 p.m.

They will be crossing the Ohio River to bring the pilgrimage to the Diocese of Steubenville, Ohio, as well, visiting Franciscan University and other locations.

The Wheeling-Charleston and Steubenville dioceses have been partnering in plans and events, Kime said, especially for the Eucharistic Procession down the Ohio River on June 23, called "Put Out into the Deep."

This will be a historic event for both dioceses as Bishop Mark Brennan and Bishop Paul J. Bradley, apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Steubenville, board a sternwheeler that day and lead the Eucharistic Procession down the river. "Boater-cade," as it is being called, with the two bishops leaves the Steubenville Marina at noon and will stop at four sites on both sides of the river where faithful can receive a

blessing. The National Eucharistic Pilgrimage website lists West Virginia blessing sites at the Steubenville Marina, the Wellsburg Wharf, the Wellsburg-Brilliant Bridge, and Heritage Port in Wheeling; and Ohio blessing sites at the Steubenville Marina, the Wellsburg-Brilliant Bridge, Mazeroski Park, and Pike Island Lock and Dam.

Located a few streets from the Wellsburg Wharf blessing site is St. John the Evangelist Parish. The pastor, Father Justin Golna, J.C.L., said the Eucharistic Procession on the river offers the Catholic faithful a great opportunity.

"During this Eucharistic Revival, there is no greater witness to our Lord's Real Presence than in the devotion we show to Him in the Eucharist," Father Golna said. "We are excited to be able to publicly witness to our faith when our Lord in the Most Blessed Sacrament will come to us on the water so that we can share the great joy of God's continued presence and action in our lives and in our very own community."

Groups from parishes and Catholic schools of the Northern Panhandle and beyond, families, parish youth groups, groups of friends can gather at blessing sites to be part of this prayerful event—and most importantly to publicly show our belief in the Real Presence and to receive a blessing.

A map of the blessing sites is shown on this page.

The perpetual pilgrims will be joining the bishops on the sternwheeler, so seeing West Virginia Catholics on the river banks will be a powerful site for them to see and another profound welcome to the Mountain State, Kime said. To her knowledge, the procession on the river is the only part of the pilgrimage where our Lord is transported by boat, "and that's something unique for people to be part of."

Boater-cade's final destination is the Bellaire Marina in Bellaire, Ohio, but the Eucharistic procession continues from the marina to St. John Church in Bellaire where a prayer service and reception will be held. Catholics on both sides of the river are invited to attend. Registration is required, and can be accomplished at <https://events.blackthorn.io/en/DnDCa1K7/g/seton/seton-route-diocese-of-wheeling-charleston-4a2PDnqpSl/overview>.

The procession with the Most Blessed Sacrament will continue in a motorcade from Bellaire to the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling. The Cathedral parish is hoping that parishioners and Catholics of neighboring parishes will be there when our Lord arrives with perpetual pilgrims at 7:30 p.m. The cathedral will then host an All-Night Eucharistic Prayer Vigil beginning at 8:30 p.m. The next morning, June 24, Bishop Brennan will cele-

2024 National Eucharistic Sternwheeler and Boater-cade Procession with the Bishops Sunday, June 23

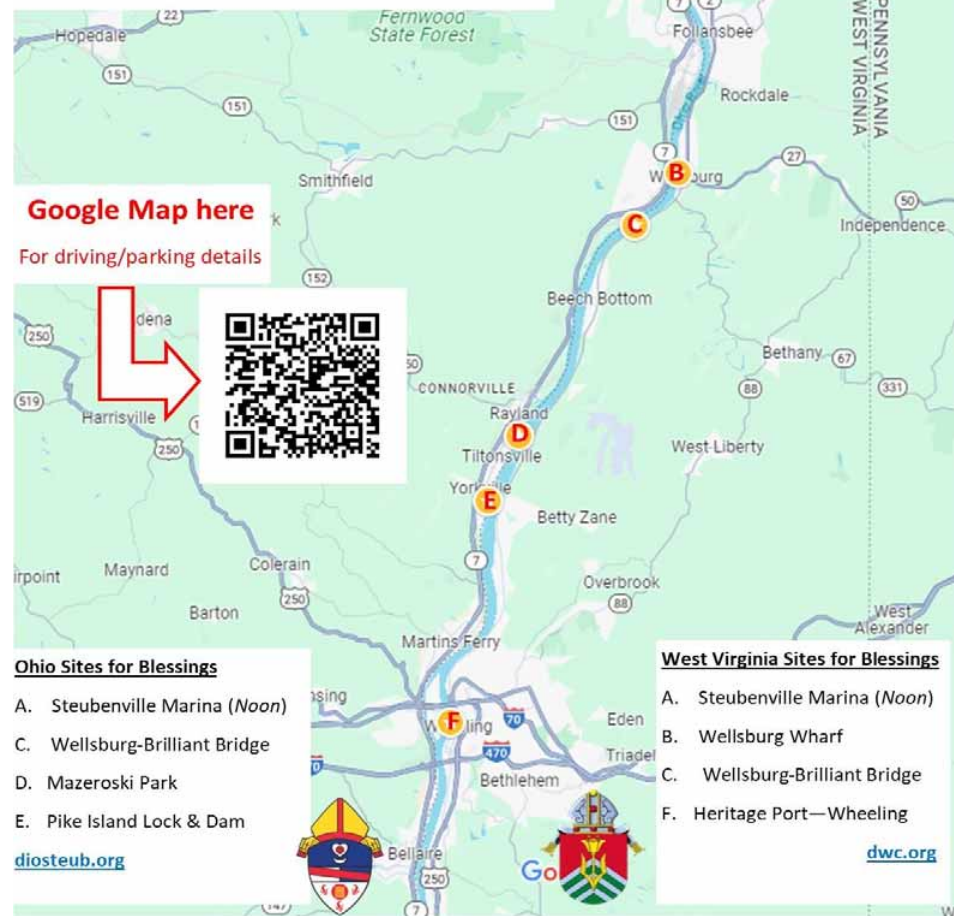


Image Courtesy of the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage

brate Mass at the cathedral at 8:30 a.m. Immediately following the celebration, the bishop will lead a Eucharistic Procession at 9:30 a.m. from the cathedral through downtown Wheeling to St. Alphonsus Church. A breakfast will follow benediction.

Host families in Weirton and Wheeling will be opening their homes to the perpetual pilgrims during their stay in the area. Priests and the brother will be staying at local parish rectories. After their stop in the di-

oceses of Wheeling-Charleston and Steubenville, the perpetual pilgrims take the National Eucharistic Procession to Columbus, Ohio.

For a list of complete events in Weirton and Wheeling, see the ad on Page 8. Registration is not required for any West Virginia events. For more on the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, visit www.eucharisticpilgrimage.org. For more on the National Eucharistic Revival and Congress, visit dwc.org/year-of-the-eucharist/.

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Diocese's Catholic School Students Honored with Aquinas and St. Sebastian Medals

Aquinas Medal Recipients

The Aquinas Medal, the highest honor a student can receive from the diocese, was awarded to 24 students (one from each of the diocese's Catholic schools). It is presented to students who exemplify the ideals of Catholic education—faithful discipleship; excellence in learning; leadership; and service to school, parish, and community.



Juliana Arnold,
St. Mary Central School,
Clarksburg



Ashlyn Combs,
St. Michael Parish School,
Wheeling



Mari Ekvovich,
St. Paul School,
Weirton



Jaxson K. Guenther,
St. Joseph School,
Martinsburg



Aidan Thomas Gump,
Fairmont Catholic Grade School



Dawson Huggins,
Corpus Christi School,
Wheeling



James Jordan,
St. Patrick School,
Weston



Manohar Karnam,
Parkersburg Catholic Elementary School



Sophia Kurko,
Our Lady of Peace School,
Wheeling



Sebastian Lasko,
Parkersburg Catholic High School



Sagrada Lopez,
St. Francis of Assisi School,
St. Albans



Jamie Loudermilk,
St. Vincent de Paul Parish School,
Wheeling



Jacqueline Mascio,
St. Francis de Sales Central Catholic School,
Morgantown



Cortlyndt Maupin,
St. Francis de Sales School,
Beckley



Kamryn McDowell,
St. Joseph Central Catholic High School,
Huntington



Emilie McNeil,
Charleston Catholic High School



Reagan Alexa Minigh,
St. Joseph Catholic School,
Huntington



Brian Ngo,
Notre Dame High School,
Clarksburg



Cameron R. Noble,
Madonna High School,
Weirton



Kennedy O'Neal,
SS. Peter & Paul Catholic School,
Oak Hill



Pasqualina Rose Pulice,
St. Joseph the Worker Grade School,
Weirton



Thomas A. Ryncarz,
Central Catholic High School,
Wheeling



Phillip M. Wade,
Sacred Heart Grade School,
Charleston



Michelle Yemba,
Our Lady of Fatima Parish School,
Huntington

St. Sebastian Medal Recipients

The St. Sebastian Medal was presented to 13 high-achieving student athletes from the diocese's Catholic high schools. It is presented to athletes who exhibit sportsmanship, teamwork and academic excellence and who show respect for their schools, classmates, teammates, opponents, parish, and community.



Isaac Schmitt

Central Catholic High School,
Wheeling



Kathryn Tiu



Samuel Delgra

Charleston Catholic High School



Avery Persinger



Olivia Persinger



Jonah McKay

Madonna High School, Weirton



Mia Pietranton



Nathan Brunny

Parkersburg Catholic High School



Mary Tokodi-Ruth



Andrew Vilseck

St. Joseph Central Catholic High School,
Huntington



Lillith Comeau



Cole D. Goldizen

Notre Dame High School,
Clarksburg



Stormee Frymier

Sharing God's Mercy and Love

By Joyce Bibey

His tiny parish on 'Catholic Hill' in Braxton County, and his even smaller mission church in rural Clay County are proof that even if you are small in number with Christ fully alive in your heart YOU ARE MIGHTY.

Father Thien Duc Nguyen, S.V.D. (Society of the Divine Word), said his communities are "rich in kindness and love."

Both St. Thomas Parish, Gassaway, and Risen Lord Mission, Maysel, are tucked away in scenic rural areas of central West Virginia. On a "good" Sunday, St. Thomas Parish's pews are filled with 60 people; and at the mission church, 20.

While other parishes two, three, and four or more times that size are struggling to breathe life into their social ministries and community outreach projects, Father Thien's faithful are putting all their trust in God.

Both the parish and mission run food pantries feeding hundreds each month, and both are part of a backpack program that provides weekend snacks and staples for children in the local elementary schools.

The mission church sits in what is considered a food desert with nothing more than a convenient store in a reasonable distance for families. Needless to say, the foot traffic to the food pantry there is heavy, but what is also packed is the prayer box on the property. After every distribution day, Father Thien and his volunteers empty the box and add the heartfelt notes to the prayers of the faithful.

The kindness and love of the faithful in these two communities doesn't stop there.

Last month, on Divine Mercy Sunday, the Catholic families of Gassaway officially began another significant ministry – Walking with Moms in Need.

Walking with Moms in Need is a nationwide, parish-based initiative to increase support for pregnant and parenting mothers in need. Everyone who is prolife and part of a Catholic parish should know where to refer a pregnant woman in need. Walking with Moms in Need is an opportunity for Catholic parish families to "walk in the shoes" of local pregnant and parenting women in need, accompanying them in friendship and helping to connect moms with local resources.

Bishop Mark Brennan has repeatedly said, "our church is both pro-child and pro-woman. As the prolife movement long ago realized, seeking only to limit or eliminate abortions is not enough. We must also provide sup-

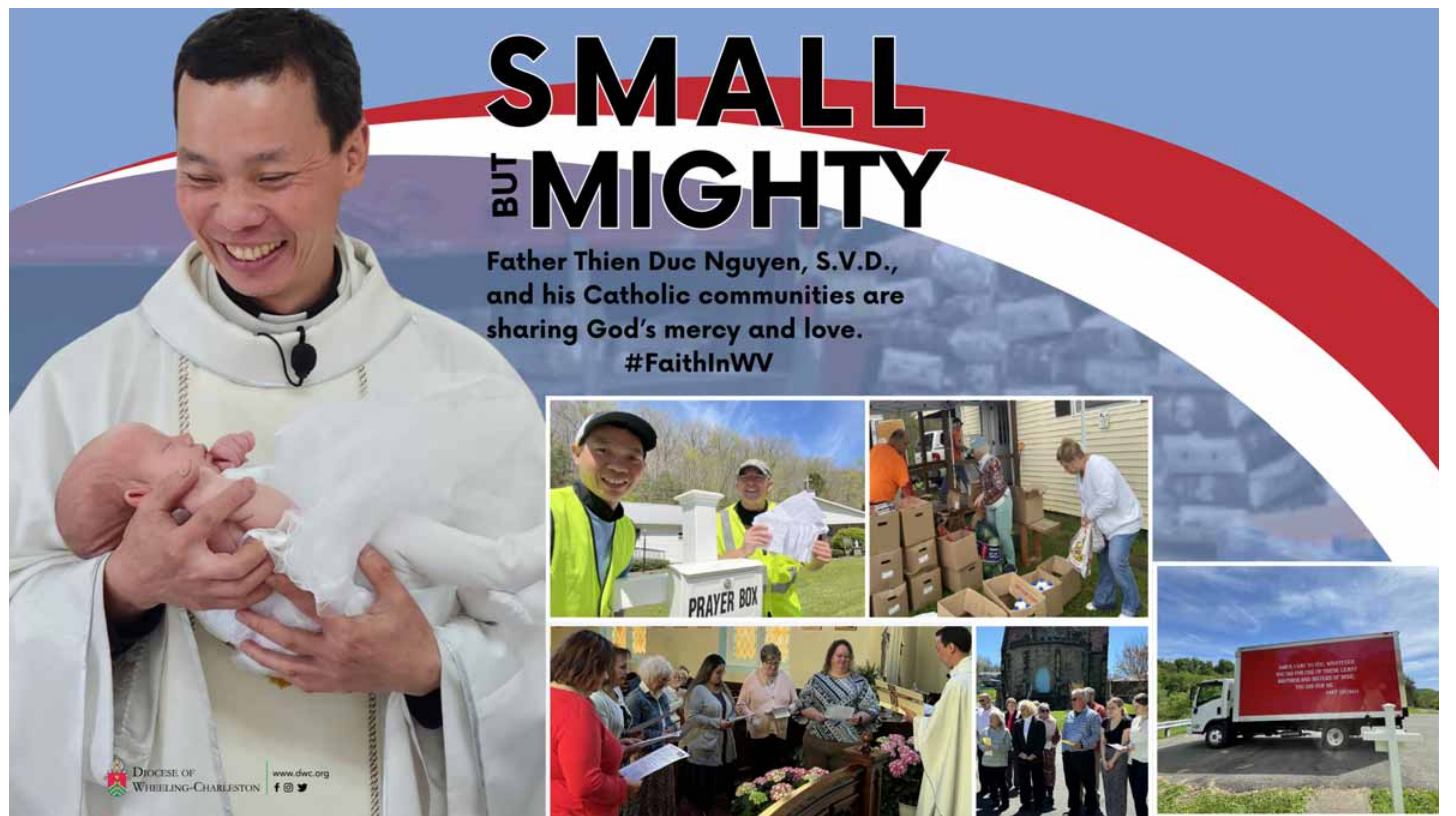


Photo Illustration by Joyce Bibey/Courtesy Photos

port to mothers before and after they give birth and to their families."

Father Thien wholeheartedly believes Walking with Moms in Need is one way we can put our words into action.

So, after Mass on April 7, just like after every Sunday Mass, the congregation at St. Thomas Parish prayed the Chaplet of Divine Mercy. Then he brought six parishioners before the altar, blessed them, and installed them as officers of this new ministry, reminding all that Divine Mercy is a call for us to show "God's mercy — God's love to other."

"We are called to be the Divine Mercy's disciples — the devotion for Divine Mercy Sunday is not something to be celebrated just once a year, nor is it simply a chaplet or modified rosary of prayers sung or recited," he said. "Divine Mercy is meant to fill our lives and flow through us into the lives of others."

After the blessing there was even more to celebrate. Father Thien and parishioners gathered for a baptism and a baby shower to benefit two young mothers. Mothers that have benefited from the pantries and will now have the extended love and support from the Walking with Moms in Need.

Oh wait! That's not all! Those who lingered that busy Sunday also attended Father's blessing of the new baby pantry stocked with baby diapers and supplies that was opening the next day.

"We have been helping many

moms with utilities, diapers..." Father Thien said. "We never turn anyone away," adding, Walking with Moms in Need is just a natural next step.

The new program for the Braxton County parish will also be helping grandparents. Father said that as many as 80% of grandparents in the county are taking care of their grandchildren.

"At Risen Lord Church we have been helping 106 students from Clay Elementary School weekly during the school year, and around 250-300 families who come to the food pantry every month," he noted. "At St. Thomas, we have been helping 23 students at Burnsville Elementary School weekly during school year, and around 100-120 families who come for food at food pantry every month."

Ordained eight years ago on May 28, Father Thien has learned it just takes one person to make a difference, just like St. Teresa of Calcutta taught don't sell yourself short – "If you can't feed a hundred people then feed just one." That slogan is printed on the side of the pantries' box truck.

"The word mission means 'to be sent'," Father said. "Jesus's mission on

earth was to bring the Good News of salvation, and today the Church Universal continues that work. We, as the church, are part of that mission. We form one people—bishops, priests, religious, and laity. We are bound together in communion of faith; called to a commitment of love with Jesus as our center and the Holy Spirit as our source of life and power. We are called to be Divine Mercy Disciples."

Father Thien shared a quote from Pope Francis:

"Rivers do not drink their own water; trees do not eat their own fruit; the sun does not shine on itself; and flowers do not spread their fragrance for themselves.

"Living for others is a rule of nature. We are all born to help each other. No matter how difficult it is...life is good when you are happy; but much better when others are happy because of you."

To donate to St. Thomas and Risen Lord's social ministries, please make checks payable to: Saint Thomas Food Pantry or Risen Lord Food Pantry and mail to: Saint Thomas Catholic Church, 624 Kanawha St., Gassaway, WV 26624.

#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.

What better time to start

Walking with
Moms in Need
than the month of May?



Click here for a free video on getting started

To start this ministry in your parish, contact:

Kathleen Barton, Director of Social Ministry for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston (304) 233-0880, Ext. 289; kbarton@dwc.org

Congregation of St. Joseph Announces Earth Festival Plans

WHEELING—The Congregation of St. Joseph invites everyone to its annual Earth Festival: Healing, Health, Hope, to be held this year from 1-5 p.m. Sunday, May 19, at Mount St. Joseph. The lively event will feature line and group dances, demonstrations on caring for the planet, and opportunities to interact with the goats of Godaway Farm and the alpacas of Trinity Farms.

The joyful experience celebrates

Pope Francis' Encyclical "Laudato Si: On Care of Our Common Home," which promotes care for the poor and love of creation. There is no cost to participate, but there will be some vendors offering food and other items.

Children can enjoy the Fun Raiser, Wheeling's urban mobile playground and learn how to compost. Everyone can participate in yoga, experience educational and informational opportunities for

personal and spiritual growth, learn new ways to reduce the carbon footprint, and view exhibits of earth-friendly products.

Browse local products for sale from Grow Ohio Valley, Beeholding Acres and more, and enjoy a hot dog from Midge's Kitchen hot dog cart. Meet the students from the Wheeling Central Catholic High School Glory Garden Outreach, and Laughlin Memorial Chapel Girl Scout Troop's Plant the

Moon project and hear about Project Hope from Dr. Bill Mercer, MD.

The sisters host this event to celebrate and lift up the healing, health, and hope that is being promoted by many groups in our community across a broad spectrum of health-related issues.

Mount St. Joseph, the home of the Congregation of St. Joseph, is at 137 Mount St. Joseph Road, Wheeling. For information call (304) 907-0171.

Good Shepherd Nursing Home Plans Employment Open House

WHEELING—Good Shepherd Nursing Home will hold open job interviews at an Employment Open House from noon – 6 p.m. Tuesday, May 21. The Wheeling nursing home is interviewing for full-time and part-time registered nurses, certified nursing assistants, activity aides, cook and dietary aides.

Human Resources Director Kelly Rayl said Good Shepherd offers a competitive benefit package that includes Tuition Reimbursement for those pursuing a nursing degree. It also offer a competitive salary with consideration of experience, along with shift differential and short pay.

Licensed nurses will receive a sign-on bonus of \$15,000 for full-time employment, and Certified Nursing Assistants (CNA) a sign-on bonus

of \$10,000 for full-time employment. "Our employees will tell you that this is a wonderful place to work," she said. "Staff take good care of our residents, but also take care of one another."

Good Shepherd offers Certified Nursing Assistant classes at no cost to the employee. Individuals interested in pursuing this certification are hired as a unit assistant and are paid throughout the entire class.

The May 21st open house will give candidates a chance to meet the Good Shepherd staff, tour the warm and welcoming workplace, and interview for open positions right on the spot.

For information, contact Rayl at krayl@welyhome.org, or call (304) 242-1093. The interviews will take place at Good Shepherd, 159 Edgington Lane, Wheeling.

Good Shepherd Nursing Home is part of a continuum of senior living options offered by the non-profit Welty Corporation to deliver the features that discerning seniors need and want. In addition to Good Shepherd, the Welty Corporation operates the assisted living program at Welty Home and independent living at the Clara & Bertha Welty Apartments, Braddock Apartments and Welty TownHomes. For information call (304) 242-1093 or visit www.welyhome.org.

Sacred Heart, Powhatan, Says Farewell to Members Who Brought St. Vincent de Paul Society to Wyoming County

POWHATAN — Sacred Heart Mission in Powhatan held a going away luncheon April 15 for Arnie and Kathy Simonse, who worked in the area for more than 30 years serving the poor and others in need.

They came to West Virginia at the invitation of the late Father Jerome McKenna in Preston County. Shortly after, they brought the St. Vincent de Paul Society to Mullens in Wyoming County, working in the area and with Pineville and area parishes. They established a pantry and storehouse.

Kathy has played the organ and Arnie has served as lector at Sacred Heart since 2019. They became fully immersed in the parish community. Arnie also served on the board of Catholic Charities West Virginia. Kathy is a music teacher and taught for the Wyoming County schools without a salary.

"This was that true spirit of selfless giving they exhibited while serving the poor and needy while also ministering to the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston," parish members said.



Courtesy Photo
Arnie and Kathy Simonse are pictured at a farewell party at Sacred Heart Mission in Powhatan.



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Obituaries

Father Clyde Albert Bonar, age 86, of Winter Park, Fla., passed away on Sunday, April 14, 2024. He is preceded in death by his parents, Ernest Clyde Bonar and Alice Manning, and sister, Ella Jane Bonar Watson. He is survived by his son, Bonnarith Ross Bonar, grandchildren, Chase B. Ros and Hunter Elizabeth Saavedra, and great grandchildren, Ezekiel Emerson Saavedra and Luca Alexander Ros.



George Washington University (Washington, D.C.), St. Meinrad Seminary (Ind.), and Duquesne University (Pa.).

After his ordination, Father Bonar served as parochial vicar of Prince of Peace Catholic Church, Ormond Beach, Fla. He served as administrator of Sacred Heart Parish in Rainelle, and in residence, St. Lawrence O'Toole, Pittsburgh. In 1989 he returned to the Diocese of Orlando to serve. In 1993, he served as director of the Institute of Formative Spirituality, Duquesne University and returned to the Diocese of Orlando in 1994 for one year. Throughout his priesthood, Father Bonar led spiritual retreats through Cursillo, Engaged Encounter, Alpha Weekend, and Kairos. Father Bonar was the editor of the Journal of Spiritual Formation, 1993-1994, and published a book, "Amen. I Say to You: Sunday Homilies for Cycles A, B, and C and Homilies for Holy Days of Obligation," (Xlibris, 2007). He has authored numerous published articles during the years 1987-2012.

He was awarded the diocesan Mary, Mother of God Medal as part of the Diocese of Orlando 50th jubilee celebrations in 2018. He retired from ministry in 2003, but continued to assist at local parishes.

Mass of Christian Burial was April 25 at Saints Peter and Paul Catholic Church in Winter Park, Fla. Graveside committal was April 25, at the San Pedro Cemetery (Priests of Our Lord Garden), Winter Park.

He was born Nov. 17, 1937, in Wellsburg. As a child, Father Bonar attended McKinleyville Elementary School and Wellsburg High School. He received his BA in Psychology from Marshall College in 1959.

Father Bonar served in the U.S. Navy from 1959-1980. His assignments included serving at sea on aircraft carriers; as a Naval Attaché in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, and as an instructor at Defense Intelligence School. After twenty years, he retired from the U.S. Navy in June 1980, with the rank of Commander. He adopted a child from Cambodia, Bonnarith Ross Bonar. He entered St. Meinrad Seminary after his retirement from the U.S. Navy. He said, "After high school, the thought of becoming a priest was always in the back of my mind."

From 1968-1990, he obtained multiple Masters and Doctorate degrees in Divinity, Business Administration, Comparative Government, American Government, and Formative Spirituality from Rollins College (Fla.), Temple University (Pa.),

Sister Judith Ann Teufel

(84), died peacefully at Mount St. Joseph on April 19 in the presence of loving staff and sisters. Sister Judy was the daughter of the late Lawrence and Madelyn Werner Teufel. She is survived by her brother, Larry (Jo Ellen) Teufel, a nephew Billy Teufel and a great niece, Briella. Judy was a life-long member of St. Michael Parish in Wheeling, where she attended the parish grade school. Upon graduation from St. Joseph Academy in Wheeling, she entered the Congregation of St. Joseph on September 7, 1957. She received a Bachelor of Science Degree in Education from St. John's College in Cleveland, Ohio; a Master of Arts Degree in Elementary Education from West Virginia University; and did Post Graduate coursework at both WVU and Marshall University.



tion; the recipient of the Gregory Loebach Award in 2005 for Support of Education, and was nominated for the National Catholic Educational Association's Distinguished Principals Award.

After she retired, she was asked by the Congregation's Leadership Team to become the Director of the Generous Promises Grant Fund, which was created by funds from four of the founding congregations that had funds set aside to be distributed in a grant-making process. Sister Judy nurtured many non-vowed women and men in her work with the CSJ Associates movement. She found joy in deepening relationships and helping others to be part of the Congregation's mission of loving unity. Sister Judy loved cats, gardening and travel. She was very adventurous and made many trips with friends and family (occasionally traveling alone) to beautiful destinations. She said: "I was drawn to religious life first by spending time in the chapel of the Carmelites, who were right across from my home, and then to this congregation because of the example of the Sisters of St. Joseph who were my high school teachers. My life has been filled with wonderful, meaningful relationships and experiences all along the way that have gifted me, amazed me, challenged me, and guided me. The great affair, the love affair with life, has been to live life as variously as possible."

The funeral Mass was celebrated April 23 in the Mount St. Joseph chapel in Wheeling. Interment followed in the Sisters of St. Joseph section at Mount Calvary Cemetery in Wheeling. Memorial contributions may be made to the Congregation of St. Joseph, at 137 Mount St. Joseph Road, Wheeling, WV, 26003.

Sister Judy's ministry for 48 years was in education. The first 11 years of her career were spent teaching elementary school at: St. Anne's School, Bristol, Virginia; St. Peter's School, Fairmont; St. Vincent de Paul School, Cathedral Grade School, and Corpus Christi School, all in Wheeling.

The next 37 years were spent as principal of St. Agnes School in Charleston. She also taught during the first 20 years. During her very successful tenure, Sister Judy secured accreditation as well as funding for expansion of a new wing that housed a library, computer lab, gymnasium, and a child development program for younger children. During her time as principal, Sister Judy also served part-time on the Congregation's leadership team for ten years. She was the recipient of the Bishop's Cross Award in 2002 for her dedication and service to Catholic educa-

En Español

Sin la esperanza cristiana, una vida virtuosa parece inútil, dice el Papa

CUERNAVACA, México (OSV News) —La Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano ha cuestionado las acusaciones de conducta impropia del obispo emérito de Chilpancingo-Chilapa, Salvador Rangel Mendoza, en medio de versiones contradictorias sobre su desaparición y posterior reaparición en una cama de hospital.

"Esta situación ha tomado un giro de instrumentación política que está lejos de buscar la verdad y la justicia", dijo el obispo de Cuernavaca Ramón Castro Castro, el secretario general de la Conferencia Episcopal de México, en un video del 5 de mayo.

"En estos tiempos de noticias falsas y polarización, lamentamos profundamente que se hagan conjeturas a la ligera sobre la aparición de Monseñor Salvador Rangel, ya que lejos de aclarar (las cosas), confunden a la gente de buena voluntad y dañan a quien por este momento está impedido para compartir su experiencia", dijo el obispo Castro.

El obispo Rangel, conocido en México por su labor como mediador en treguas con los jefes de los cárteles de la droga, desapareció el

29 de abril y reapareció dos días después en un hospital público de la ciudad de Cuernavaca, a 80 kilómetros al sur de Ciudad de México. Las circunstancias de su desaparición han causado controversia, ya que el fiscal del estado de Morelos y los políticos locales — que según los analistas y la prensa están enfrentados entre sí — han ofrecido versiones contradictorias.

La controversia en torno al obispo Rangel se produce cuando México se prepara para las elecciones del 2 de junio, en las que el partido gobernante, Morena, ha hecho campaña con la propuesta de que México se ha vuelto menos violento bajo su administración y ha reprimido las voces que se oponen a esa narrativa.

El obispo Rangel ha denunciado la ineficacia de la política de seguridad del gobierno y ha afirmado que los políticos de Guerrero — y de otros lugares — a menudo están en connivencia con los cárteles de la droga. "Al menos ahorita en Guerrero ya casi están arregladas todas las elecciones en mi zona", el obispo dijo a OSV News el 1 de abril, refiriéndose a que los cárteles de la droga han elegido a sus candidatos.

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

Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Confirmation Schedule; Bishop Brennan, Celebrant

Saturday, May 11: St. John the Evangelist, Wellsburg; 11:00 a.m.

Saturday, May 11: St. Vincent de Paul, Wheeling; 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 12: Immaculate Conception, New Cumberland; 8:30 a.m.

Monday, May 13: St. Michael, Wheeling; 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, May 19: St. Agnes, Charleston; 10:30 a.m.

Wednesday, May 22: Immaculate Conception, Clarksburg; 6:00 p.m.

Saturday, May 25: St. James, Charles Town; 10:00 a.m.

Saturday, May 25: St. Vincent de Paul, Berkeley Springs; 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, May 26: St. Joseph, Martinsburg; 4:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 1: St. Francis Xavier, Moundsville; 4:00 p.m.

Saturday, June 8: Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Charleston; 5:30 p.m.

Sunday, June 9: Sacred Heart, Princeton; 11:00 a.m.

Saturday, June 15: St. Francis de Sales, Beckley; 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, June 16: St. John the Evangelist, Summersville; 9:00 a.m.

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Sunday Mornings

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

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