

THE CATHOLIC
Spirit

Pope Leo Begins Papacy Calling for 'United Church' in a Wounded World

By Justin McLellan, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — Launching his papacy with a call for reconciliation and communion, Pope Leo XIV formally began his ministry as the successor of St. Peter by calling for “a united church, a sign of unity and communion, which becomes a leaven for a reconciled world.”

“In this our time, we still see too much discord, too many wounds caused by hatred, violence, prejudice, the fear of difference and an economic paradigm that exploits the Earth’s resources and marginalizes the poorest,” the new pope said in his homily during his inauguration Mass May 18.

“For our part, we want to be a small leaven of unity, communion and fraternity within the world,” he told the estimated 150,000 people gathered in and around St. Peter’s Square. “We want to say to the world, with humility and joy: Look to Christ! Come closer to him! Welcome his word that enlightens and consoles! Listen to his offer of love and become his one family: ‘In the one Christ, we are one.’”

A version of the quote from St. Augustine is the pope’s episcopal motto and is featured on his coat of arms.

Ecumenical and interreligious guests and more than 100 government delegations joined the new pope for Mass in St. Peter’s Square. The United States was represented by Vice President JD Vance and Secretary of State Marco Rubio, accompanied by their spouses and senior White House aides.

Vance and the second lady, Usha Vance, visited Pope Francis’ tomb in the Basilica of St. Mary Major the evening before

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Pope Leo XIV smiles at the end of his inauguration Mass in St. Peter’s Square at the Vatican May 18.

CNS photo/Lola Gomez

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Diocesan Official Appointments

Bishop Mark Brennan has made public the following appointments:

Father Joseph Augustine, J.C.L., is appointed pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Bluefield and Sacred Heart Parish in Princeton with residence at the parish rectory in Bluefield, effective June 18, 2025.

Very Rev. Sebastian Devasya, V.E., is appointed pastor of St. Margaret Mary Parish in Parkersburg with residence at the parish rectory, effective June 18, 2025. He is also appointed as designated pastor of Parkersburg Catholic Elementary School in Parkersburg for a term of three years, effective June 18, 2025. This is in addition to his current position as Vicar for Clergy.

In consultation with Very Rev. Johnson Varakaparambil Joseph, C.S.T., provincial superior of the St. Thomas Province of the Little Flower Congregation in Kerala, India, **Father Binu Emmanuel, C.S.T.**, is appointed pastor of St. Luke the Evangelist Parish in Morgantown with chaplaincy responsibilities at the Federal Correctional Institution in Morgantown with residence at the parish rectory, effective June 18, 2025.

In consultation with Very Rev. Matthew Thekkemuriyil, M.C.B.S., provincial superior of the Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in Kerala, India, **Father Tijo George, M.C.B.S.**, is appointed pastor of Our Lady of Peace Parish in Wheeling with residence at the parish rectory, effective June 18, 2025.

In consultation with Very Rev. Matthew Thekkemuriyil, M.C.B.S., provincial superior of the Missionary Congregation of the Blessed Sacrament in Kerala, India, **Father Deepu Joseph, M.C.B.S.**, is appointed administrator of St. Ann Parish in Shinnston with continued residence at the parish rectory, effective June 18, 2025.

In consultation with Very Rev. Johnson Varakaparambil Joseph, C.S.T., provincial superior of the St. Thomas Province of the Little Flower Congregation in Kerala, India, **Father Shinu Lukose, C.S.T.**, is appointed administrator of St. Michael Parish in Vienna with residence at the parish rectory, effective June 18, 2025.

Father Gerald Muoka is appointed as designated pastor of Madonna High School in Weirton for a term of three years, effective June 18, 2025. This is in addition to his current assignments as administrator of St. Anthony Parish in Follansbee and chaplain of Hilltop Campus Ministry (West Liberty University and Bethany College).

In consultation with Very Rev. Adam Oleszczuk, S.V.D., provincial superior of the Society of the Divine Word Chicago Province, **Father Dominic Huynh Pham, S.V.D.**, is appointed administrator of St. Thomas Parish in Gassaway and Risen Lord Mission in Maysel with residence at the parish rectory, effective May 22, 2025.

Father Alex Paul is appointed parochial vicar of St. James the Greater Parish in Charles Town and St. Peter Chapel in Harpers Ferry with residence at the parish rectory, effective June 18, 2025.

With the responsibilities of St. Ann Parish in Shinnston being given to Father Deepu Joseph, M.C.B.S., in his recent appointment as administrator of St. Ann Parish, **Father B.K. Akila Rodrigo, T.O.R.**, will no longer be pastorally responsible for this parish. Father Rodrigo will remain as pastor of St. James the Apostle Parish in Clarksburg and Sacred Heart Mission in Salem. This change is effective as of June 18, 2025.

In consultation with Very Rev. Dr. Thomas Kalariparambil, provincial superior of the Missionaries of St. Francis de Sales, South-West India Province, **Father Abraham Schariah, M.S.F.S.**, is appointed as administrator of St. Patrick Parish in Mannington and St. Peter Parish in Farmington with residence at the parish rectory in Mannington, effective June 18, 2025.

Father Martin Smay is appointed pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Huntington and St. Stephen Parish in Ona with residence at the parish rectory in Huntington, effective June 18, 2025.

Father John Soplinski is appointed Vocations director for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, for a period of three years, effective June 18, 2025. This position is in addition to his assignments as vice rector of the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling and parochial vicar of St. Alphonsus Parish in Wheeling.

Father Joyson Puthussery Varghese is appointed administrator of St. Thomas Aquinas Parish in Thomas and Our Lady of Mercy Mission in Parsons with residence at the parish rectory, effective June 18, 2025.

In consultation with Very Rev. Roshan Wasantha Perera, T.O.R., minister provincial of the Franciscan Friars Third Order Regular (Province of Our Lady of Lanka, Sri Lanka), **Father Rusiri Wijewickrama, T.O.R.**, is appointed parochial vicar of St. Joseph Parish in Martinsburg with residence at the parish rectory, effective June 18, 2025.

To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children: The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. We also encourage utilizing www.reportbishopabuse.org to make a report about any bishop in the U.S. If you have reason to believe that a bishop has engaged in sexual misconduct or has interfered with an investigation into sexual misconduct, please contact civil authorities in the applicable jurisdiction and visit www.reportbishopabuse.org. **To Report to Civil Authorities: Contact your local law enforcement:** numbers will vary based on your location. If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911. To confidentially report any incidence of suspected child abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse, contact the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families' Child Protective Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 800.352.6513. You may report anonymously to this hotline if you prefer. **To Report to Diocesan Authorities:** The diocese encourages reporting to the appropriate civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. The diocese also encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities. To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, contact one of the following designees at 1.888.434.6237 or 304.233.0880: Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; or Sr. Martha Gomez, ext. 264. You may also call the Diocese's Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504 or 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:** call Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, at 304.559.6742. The Diocese partners with Navex Global to offer EthicsPoint to report other concerns such as suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, religious, or lay employee of the Diocese or any Catholic parish or school in WV. EthicsPoint can be accessed via www.dwc.org, 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. The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's Safe Environment Program consists of the following components for persons seeking employment or to volunteer, directly or indirectly, with children: background check; receipt of the Diocese's Policy Relating to Sexual Abuse of Children; sexual abuse awareness training for adults. Training may be completed online or via live workshop. For information, go to www.dwc.org, click "Diocese", then "Offices," then "Office of Safe Environment."

The Catholic Spirit's Print Schedule for 2025

There are 10 print editions in 2025. Below are the names of the issues and the publishing dates. Please note, the publishing dates may or may not be on feast days. Digital issues are published every Friday, delivered by e-mail to subscribers, and posted on thecatholicspiritwv.org.


2025 Print Issues and Dates: Month of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, June 13; Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 15; Triumph of the Cross, September 12; Month of the Rosary, October 3; Advent, November 21; Christmas, December 19



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Correction:

An announcement on Feb. 13, 2025, incorrectly stated that **Father Andrew Switzer** has been elected to a three-year term on the Diocesan Presbyteral Council, effective December 31, 2024. The correct announcement is that Father Switzer has been elected to a one-year term to fill a vacant position on the Diocesan Presbyteral Council, effective December 31, 2024, and ending December 31, 2025. This is in addition to his current assignment as pastor of St. Agnes Parish in Shepherdstown.



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Pope Leo's Motto, Coat of Arms Pay Homage to St. Augustine



Pope Leo XIV's devotion to St. Augustine, his life and ministry as a member of the Augustinian order and his focus on the unity of the church are reflected in his episcopal motto and coat of arms.

His episcopal motto is, "In illo uno unum," or literally "In the One, we are one."

Vatican News explained that the phrase is taken from St. Augustine's "Exposition on Psalm 127," where he explains that "although we Christians are many, in the one Christ we are one."

His shield, now topped by a miter instead of the red galero hat on the shield of cardinals, is divided diagonally into two. The upper half features a blue background with a white lily or fleur-de-lis, symbolizing the Virgin Mary, but also his French heritage. The lower half of the shield displays an image common to the religious orders named after and inspired by St. Augustine: a closed book with a heart pierced by an arrow.

Vatican News said, "This is a direct reference to the conversion experience of St. Augustine himself, who described his personal encounter with God's word using the phrase: 'Vulnerasti cor meum verbo tuo' — 'You have pierced my heart with your Word.'"

Above: Pope Leo XIV's coat of arms with his episcopal motto is seen in an image published by the Vatican Secretariat of State May 10. (CNS photo/Vatican Media)



CNS photo/Vatican Media
Pope Leo XIV, left, receives the fisherman's ring, symbolizing his role as successor to St. Peter, from Filipino Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle during the pope's inauguration Mass in St. Peter's Square May 18.

Pope ...

Cont'd from Page 1
the Mass. "He was beloved by many Catholics around the world, and I hope you will join me in praying for the repose of his soul," he wrote in a post on X.

Among the Christian leaders present was Orthodox Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew of Constantinople, along with other delegations from the Orthodox churches, the Anglican Communion, the Lutheran World Federation, the World Methodist Council, the World Communion of Reformed Churches and various evangelical and Pentecostal communities. Representatives of the Jewish community as well as Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, Sikh, Zoroastrian and Jain traditions also were in attendance.

Before the Mass began, Pope Leo rode through the square in the popemobile for the first time since his election May 8, greeting the faithful as cheers of "Viva il papa!" ("Long live the pope!") poured out from the crowd. He then entered the basilica to pray at the tomb of St. Peter, accompanied by patriarchs of the Eastern Catholic churches.

Following the Gospel reading, three cardinals from the different orders within the College of Cardinals took part in the formal beginning of the Petrine ministry: Italian Cardinal Mario Zenari placed the woolen pallium on the pope's shoulders, symbolizing his role as shepherd of the universal church; Filipino Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle presented him with the fisherman's ring, evoking St. Peter's mission to draw people into Christ's net; and Congolese Cardinal Fridolin Ambongo offered a prayer invoking the strength of the Holy Spirit for the new pontificate.

Representing the universal church, 12 people — clergy, religious and laity from around



CNS photo/Vatican Media
Pope Leo XIV uses incense to venerate the tomb of St. Peter in St. Peter's Basilica before his inauguration Mass at the Vatican May 18.



CNS photo/Vatican Media
Pope Leo XIV greets the faithful as he enters St. Peter's Square on the popemobile before his inauguration Mass at the Vatican May 18.

the world — then came forward to offer their obedience to the new pope.

Reflecting on the Gospel reading from St. John — in which Jesus asks St. Peter three times to tend to his sheep — Pope Leo said in his homily that the ministry of Peter is rooted not in authority for its own sake, but in love that

serves and unites.

"Peter is thus entrusted with the task of 'loving more' and giving his life for the flock," he said. "The ministry of Peter is distinguished precisely by this self-sacrificing love, because the church of Rome presides in charity and its true authority is the charity of Christ."

The successor of St. Peter, he said, "must shepherd the flock without ever yielding to the temptation to be an autocrat, lording it over those entrusted to him." Instead, "he is called to serve the faith of his brothers and sisters, and to walk alongside them."

Pope Leo also recalled the **See "Pope" on Page 4**

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Homily of Pope Leo XIV during the Mass of Inauguration of the Petrine Ministry

(OSV News) — This is the full text in English of the homily given by Pope Leo XIV in St. Peter's Square during the Mass of Inauguration of the Petrine Ministry May 18, 2025. The homily was delivered originally in Italian.

Dear brother cardinals, brother bishops and priests, distinguished authorities and members of the diplomatic corps, brothers and sisters — I greet all of you with a heart full of gratitude at the beginning of the ministry that has been entrusted to me. St. Augustine wrote: "Lord, you have made us for yourself, and our heart is restless until it rests in you" (Confessions, I, 1,1).

In these days, we have experienced intense emotions. The death of Pope Francis filled our hearts with sadness. In those difficult hours, we felt like the crowds that the Gospel says were "like sheep without a shepherd" (Mt 9:36). Yet on Easter Sunday, we received his final blessing and, in the light of the resurrection, we experienced the days that followed in the certainty that the Lord never abandons his people, but gathers them when they are scattered and guards them "as a shepherd guards his flock" (Jer 31:10).

In this spirit of faith, the College of Cardinals met for the conclave. Coming from different backgrounds and experiences, we placed in God's hands our desire to elect the new Successor of Peter, the bishop of Rome, a shepherd capable of preserving the rich heritage of the Christian faith and, at the same time, looking to the future, in order to confront the questions, concerns and challenges of today's world. Accompanied by your prayers, we could feel the working of the Holy Spirit, who was able to bring us into harmony, like musical instruments, so that our heartstrings could vibrate in a single melody.

I was chosen, without any merit of my own, and now, with fear and trembling, I come to you as a brother, who desires to be the servant of your faith and your joy, walking with you on the path of God's love, for he wants us all to be united in one family. Love and unity: these are the two dimensions of the mission entrusted to Peter by Jesus.

We see this in today's Gospel, which takes us to the Sea of Galilee, where Jesus began the mission he received from the Father: to be a "fisher" of humanity in order to draw it up from the waters of evil and death. Walking along the shore, he had called Peter and the other first disciples to be, like him, "fishers of men." Now, after the resurrection, it is up to them to carry on this mission, to cast their nets again and



Photo by OSV News/Remo Casilli, Reuters
Pope Leo XIV, formerly Cardinal Robert Francis Prevost, pauses while celebrating his inaugural Mass at the Vatican on May 18. He is the first American pope in history.

again, to bring the hope of the Gospel into the "waters" of the world, to sail the seas of life so that all may experience God's embrace.

How can Peter carry out this task? The Gospel tells us that it is possible only because his own life was touched by the infinite and unconditional love of God, even in the hour of his failure and denial. For this reason, when Jesus addresses Peter, the Gospel uses the Greek verb *agapáo*, which refers to the love that God has for us, to the offering of himself without reserve and without calculation. Whereas the verb used in Peter's response describes the love of friendship that we have for one another.

Consequently, when Jesus asks Peter, "Simon, son of John, do you love me more than these?" (Jn 21:16), he is referring to the love of the Father. It is as if Jesus said to him, "Only if you have known and experienced this love of God, which never fails, will you be able to feed my lambs. Only in the love of God the Father will you be able to love your brothers and sisters with that same 'more,' that is, by offering your life for your brothers and sisters."

Peter is thus entrusted with the task of "loving more" and giving his life for the flock. The ministry of Peter is distinguished precisely by this self-sacrificing love, because the Church of Rome presides in charity and its true authority is the charity of Christ. It is never a question of capturing others by force, by religious propaganda or by means of power. Instead, it is always and only a question of loving as Jesus did.

The Apostle Peter himself tells us that Jesus "is the stone that was rejected by you, the builders, and has become the cornerstone" (Acts 4:11). Moreover, if

the rock is Christ, Peter must shepherd the flock without ever yielding to the temptation to be an autocrat, lording it over those entrusted to him (cf. 1 Pet 5:3). On the contrary, he is called to serve the faith of his brothers and sisters, and to walk alongside them, for all of us are "living stones" (1 Pet 2:5), called through our baptism to build God's house in fraternal communion, in the harmony of the Spirit, in the coexistence of diversity. In the words of St. Augustine: "The Church consists of all those who are in harmony with their brothers and sisters and who love their neighbor" (Serm. 359,9).

Brothers and sisters, I would like that our first great desire be for a united Church, a sign of unity and communion, which becomes a leaven for a reconciled world. In this our time, we still see too much discord, too many wounds caused by hatred, violence, prejudice, the fear of difference, and an economic paradigm that exploits the Earth's resources and marginalizes the poorest. For our part, we want to be a small leaven of unity, communion and fraternity within the world. We want to say to the world, with humility and joy: Look to Christ! Come closer to him! Welcome his word that enlightens and consoles! Listen to his offer of love and become his one family: in the one Christ, we are one. This is the path to follow together, among ourselves but also with our sister Christian churches, with those who follow other religious paths, with those who are searching for God, with all women and men of good will, in order to build a new world where peace reigns!

This is the missionary spirit that must animate us; not closing ourselves off in our small groups, nor feeling superior to the world. We are called to offer God's love to everyone, in order to achieve that unity which does not cancel out differences but values the personal history of each person and the social and religious culture of every people.

Brothers and sisters, this is the hour for love! The heart of the Gospel is the love of God that makes us brothers and sisters. With my predecessor Leo XIII, we can ask ourselves today: If this criterion "were to prevail in the world, would not every conflict cease and peace return?" (Rerum Novarum, 21).

With the light and the strength of the Holy Spirit, let us build a Church founded on God's love, a sign of unity, a missionary Church that opens its arms to the world, proclaims the Word, allows itself to be made "restless" by history, and becomes a leaven of harmony for humanity.

Together, as one people, as brothers and sisters, let us walk towards God and love one another.

Pope ...

Cont'd from Page 3

period of mourning following the death of Pope Francis, and he said that the conclave that followed the late pope's death was "a moment of grace."

"I was chosen, without any merit of my own, and now, with fear and trembling, I come to you as a brother, who desires to be the servant of your faith and your joy, walking with you on the path of God's love, for he

wants us all to be united in one family," he said.

"With the light and the strength of the Holy Spirit, let us build a church founded on God's love, a sign of unity, a missionary church that opens its arms to the world," he said, calling for a church that "proclaims the word, allows itself to be made 'restless' by history and becomes a leaven of harmony for humanity." (See Pope Leo XIV's full homily at the top of this page.)

At the end of Mass, the pope called for prayers for regions afflicted by war: Gaza, Myanmar and Ukraine, which "finally awaits negotiations for a just and lasting peace."

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was present for the Mass and had a private meeting with the pope later in the day, the Vatican press office said.

Immediately after the Mass, Pope Leo met with several government representatives including Vance and

Rubio, as well as Peruvian President Dina Boluarte. The pope had spent more than 20

years in Peru as a missionary priest and bishop and has Peruvian citizenship.



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Masses in Wheeling and Charleston Will Gather Faithful to Pray for Pope Leo XIV

By Colleen Rowan

WEST VIRGINIA — The Catholic faithful of West Virginia are invited to join in prayer for Pope Leo XIV as he begins his papacy. Mass will be celebrated simultaneously on June 10 at 6 p.m. at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling by Bishop Mark Brennan and at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston by Very Rev. Donald X. Higgs, Assoc. V.E., V.F., rector.

“All Catholic faithful are welcome to attend and join in prayer,” said Bernadette

McMasters Kime, PhD., D. Min., director of Worship and Sacraments for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston who is helping to plan the celebrations. The Masses will give the faithful an opportunity to gather as one in prayer for Pope Leo and his intentions.

“As Pope Leo begins his ministry to the universal church, we want to celebrate that unity, that universality and wish him well and pray to the Holy Spirit,” Kime said.

In a May 8 statement following the announcement that Chi-

cago-born former Cardinal Robert F. Prevost had been elected as the 267th pope and took the name Pope Leo XIV, Bishop Brennan invited the faithful to join him in prayer for the new pontiff.

“Habemus Papam! We thank God, who through the power of the Holy Spirit has guided the Cardinal electors to select Robert Cardinal Francis Prevost to be the Vicar for Christ on earth. As Pope Leo XIV prepares to begin his role as Pontiff, let us unite in prayer for him and his ministry. As Catholics in America, let us pray

especially for Pope Leo XIV, that the Holy Spirit continue to guide him as he begins his service to the Catholic Church throughout the world,” the bishop said in the statement.

At the June 10 Masses, the faithful in West Virginia will have the chance to do just that—come together and pray for Pope Leo.

“He has a big job of shepherding the world,” Kime said, “and it’s important for us all to be united in prayer.”

More information about the Masses will be released in the coming weeks.

Vienna Parishioners Have ‘Once in a Lifetime’ Experience being in St. Peter’s Square for Election of Pope Leo XIV

By Ed Borkowski (*Ed and Arlene Borkowski are members of St. Michael Parish in Vienna who were on a pilgrimage to Medjugorje and Rome for the Jubilee Year.*)

Arlene and I have been blessed to have had many “once in a lifetime” experiences. But aside from Marriage, Baptism and Confirmation, birth of children and grandchildren, being in St. Peter’s Square to see white smoke, witness the revealing of a new Pope and receiving a Papal blessing from Pope Leo XIV definitely tops the list.

We left home Sunday May 4 to arrive in Rome a day before the pilgrimage was to start. When we arrived Monday, we entered the Holy Door of St. Peter’s and attended 5 p.m. Mass behind the main altar. Tuesday morning, we were able to visit the other three Basilicas in Rome and complete the passing through the four Holy Doors. Since this was to be part of the pilgrimage, we were comfortable abandoning the Pilgrimage on Wednesday and Thursday.

Wednesday afternoon we walked 0.8 miles to the Vatican and arrived around 2 to begin waiting. When we arrived Wednesday, there was a small crowd, but it continued to build throughout the day. We didn’t feel the need to get close, as we expecting black smoke on the first vote. So we sat on the steps by the Bernini colonnade. We were able to watch on the outdoor screens as the Cardinals made their way into the Sistine Chapel. I was moved watching the Cardinals enter the Sistine Chapel while praying the litany of saints. We also watched each cardi-

nal place his hand on the bible and take the oath. It helped me to understand how solemn and spiritual this moment is, how much they were asking for the Holy Spirit and the Saints to guide them in their decision in choosing the next leader of the Catholic Church.

The screens stayed on while the Cardinals took their oath. Then at 5:45 p.m., we watched the doors of the Sistine Chapel close and the video feed was turned off. We waited.

At around 8:45 p.m., you couldn’t easily see the smokestack with the naked eye. The camera picture trained on the stack had to adjust for the increasing darkness. We decided to exit the square and walked down the street outside the Vatican to the first TV screen to wait for the black smoke, which eventually came at 9 p.m. Our 7 hours of waiting Wednesday were done.

Thursday morning we again advised our tour guide that we were going to the Vatican to wait. We arrived around 9:15 a.m. and settled into the area directly in front of St. Peter’s Basilica. The crowd grew during the morning, but when the black smoke appeared again around 11:50 a.m., there was a collective moan and a good portion of the crowd dispersed.

But we were committed to staying. Our pilgrimage was leaving Rome on Friday morning, so the afternoon votes would be our last chance. Security made us clear out of the area closest to the Basilica. So, we sat again on the steps near the Bernini columns where we had spent most of Wednesday.



Courtesy photo

Ed and Arlene Borkowski of St. Michael Parish in Vienna stand behind the main altar in St. Peter’s Basilica in Vatican City.

Close to 1 p.m. we decided to get in line and wait to get into the first barricaded area in front of the Basilica. We stood for 2 hours until they let us back in the area at 3 p.m. Once we got into the barricaded area, for the next 3 hours we sat or stood, waiting. The waiting was an experience itself. The crowd was orderly and patient. Flags from different counties were draped over the barricades. A group of Nuns were praying the Rosary in Italian. Occasionally, a group would shout “We want a Pope” – in Italian of course. I have never looked at a smokestack for that long in my life.

Around 5 p.m. all the screens switched to the view of the smokestack. Once in a while a seagull would appear near the stack. The crowd laughed and cheered when two seagulls, then a baby appeared around the stack. Around 2 minutes later, the white smoke appeared at 6:07 p.m.

Of course a loud cheer went up from the crowd. We began crying. The bells of St. Peter started ringing. The joy at seeing the smoke is one I will never forget. Something we dreamed we might see became a reality.

Shortly after the white smoke appeared, there were a few Swiss guards stationed throughout the square. Twenty three minutes after the smoke began to appear, a band marched out followed by more Swiss guards. You realized the participants were on standby since late Wednesday afternoon. Shortly before the Pope came out, the Cardinals filled the other four balconies overlooking the square.

Our text messages and pictures to friends were delayed in getting sent. And we didn’t understand the announcement made in Italian. But before the Pope came out, we received a text from a friend in the U.S. telling us the Pope is from America! We were thrilled that we would get to see the new Pope, but even more surprised that he is the first American Pope.

As Pope Leo XIV appeared on the balcony, another great cheer went up from the crowd. We were thrilled to receive the Papal blessing. The entire experience was amazing and something we will never forget.

Pope Leo Meets with U.S. Vice President Vance, Secretary of State Rubio

By Carol Glatz, Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) — The day after his inauguration Mass, Pope Leo XIV had a closed-door meeting with U.S. Vice President JD Vance at the Vatican.

The vice president also met May 19 with Archbishop Paul R. Gallagher, Vatican foreign minister, after meeting with the pope, a Vatican statement said. The Vatican press office released a communique outlining only what general themes were discussed during the “cordial talks held at the Secretariat of State.” The two parties expressed their satisfaction with the “good bilateral relations” between them, and “the collaboration between church and state was

discussed, as well as some matters of special relevance to ecclesial life and religious freedom.”

“Finally, there was an exchange of views on some current international issues, calling for respect for humanitarian law and international law in areas of conflict and for a negotiated solution between the parties involved,” the Vatican said.

According to the office of Vice President Vance, U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio was present for a portion of the closed-door meeting with the pope after Vance’s one-on-one.

The two U.S. leaders were then joined by their spouses and the larger U.S. delegation for photos and an exchange of

gifts. One of the gifts from the U.S. delegation was a navy blue and orange jersey from the Chicago Bears football team with “Pope Leo XIV” written on the back. The new pope was born in Chicago.

The papal audience lasted 45 minutes, according to the vice president’s office.

Vance and Rubio were in Rome to represent the United States at Pope Leo’s inaugural Mass in St. Peter’s Square May 18. They were accompanied by their spouses and senior White House aides at the Mass, which drew more than 200,000 people. Vance and Rubio also met with Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who also was in Rome for the pope’s inaugural Mass.

In a post on X, Vance said,



CNS photo/Vatican Media

Usha Vance smiles as her husband, U.S. Vice President JD Vance, presents a gift to Pope Leo XIV in the library of the Apostolic Palace at the Vatican May 19.

“Our countries share the goal of ending unnecessary bloodshed in Ukraine, and we dis-

cussed updates on the ongoing negotiations for a cease-fire and lasting peace.”



Courtesy photo

Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Seminarian Michael J. Tupta (second from right), who attends the Pontifical North American College in Rome, is pictured in St. Peter’s Square in Vatican City with his seminarian brothers on May 8, the day Pope Leo XIV, Chicago-born former Cardinal Robert F. Prevost, was elected the 267th pope.

By Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Seminarian Michael J. Tupta, enrolled at the Pontifical North American College, Rome. Column courtesy of FaithInWV.

“Annuntio vobis gaudium magnum... Habemus papam!”

Have you ever experienced a moment in your life in which you most certainly knew that something particular was about to occur and yet you are still unable to believe it?

In the last few weeks here in Rome, I have been blessed to participate in some events that, on average, occur only every ten to sometimes twenty-plus years. Shortly after Pope Francis’ death on Easter Monday, I visited and

prayed next to Pope Francis’ mortal remains in St. Peter’s Basilica.

A few days later, I gathered with over 200,000 people, including almost every world leader, in St. Peter’s Square to attend his funeral Mass. This moment of liturgical prayer for his soul, thanking the Lord for the gift of his life and taking him to his final place of rest was a significant example of unification in our church and the entire world. Pope Francis desired to be buried at his favorite church, the Papal Basilica of St. Mary Major, making him the seventh pope to be buried there. Following this, nine days of mourning are prescribed after the death of the pope. This step is crucially important to how the Church

transitions from one successor of Peter to the selection of the next one by allowing time for the cardinal-electors to gather for prayer, fraternity and to discern how Jesus desires to guide his beloved Church as well as all of humanity through the leadership of the Bishop of Rome.

On the morning that the conclave began, I attended the “Santa Messa pro eligendo Romano Pontifice”, Holy Mass for the election of the Roman Pontiff, inside St. Peter’s Basilica. In this Holy Mass, the cardinals, pray the Holy Mass together one last time in public. Watching the cardinal-electors process up the center aisle was a beautiful opportunity to pray for the Holy Spirit to guide their discernment of who will be chosen to be the next Bishop of Rome and 267th successor of St. Peter. While the cardinals can technically select a man from outside of the group of cardinal-electors, it has not happened in 647 years. Therefore, I was fairly confident that the future Holy Father was in the group processing within arm-length of me. A short while later, the cardinal-electors solemnly processed into the Sistine chapel, swore a vow of secrecy, and were locked in with a key. This is where the name “conclave” comes from, meaning “with a key”.

I was in St. Peter’s Square for about ten hours in total over the next two days. I had time to pray the Psalms, pray the Holy Rosary, and have great conversations with my seminarian brothers and people from many other countries while we waited for the chimney smoke indicating if a new pope had been chosen or not yet. This was a privileged opportunity for tens of thousands to gather to pray for the cardinal-electors inside the Sistine chapel and unite at the church built over the tomb of St. Peter, to whom Jesus gave the keys to His Church here

on earth (Matthew 16:18).

Shortly after six o’clock in the evening after the fourth round of voting, white smoke began to pour out of the Sistine chapel chimney. We were all so excited and emotional that we once again had a spiritual father, in concomitance with the Holy Spirit. Over the next hour, the piazza and surrounding streets became even more packed with incredible crowds to hear the announcement as to who is the new Roman Pontiff to guide the “one, holy, catholic and apostolic Church” (Council of Nicea, 325 A.D.). This specific moment of the announcement is what I was unable to believe was actually happening. Hearing that Cardinal Prevost was chosen and knowing that he was born in the United States, my group of seminarian brothers from the Pontifical North American College did not chant “U-S-A”, but rather “Li-o-ne”, which is Leo in Latin. His American citizenship, while interesting, is rather insignificant to his core identity. Above everything, he is a son of the Lord Jesus by adoption through his baptism and a faithful servant of the Church. In the end, none of us are meant for this world. Rather, Jesus Christ is inviting us to a personal, life-giving relationship with Himself both in this life and ultimately in the life to come in heaven where Jesus will “wipe away every tear from their eyes and death shall be no more” (Revelation 21:4). Shortly thereafter, Pope Leo XIV came out on the loggia looking over St. Peter’s Square. Hearing his first address to the people of God and receiving his Urbi et Orbi blessing was a grace that I believe will remain with me in my continued seminary formation and priesthood in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

Praised be Jesus Christ, now and forever!

Clarksburg Catholic Schools Receive \$3.33 Million Gift from the Late Edward Gaughan

By Colleen Rowan

CLARKSBURG — Notre Dame High School and St. Mary Central School in Clarksburg stand with “a humble heart receiving a generous gift from a humble man, Edward J. Gaughan.” Loria Cavallo, principal of both schools, shared these words with the students and community members gathered at Notre Dame’s gymnasium on May 19 to honor Edward for his gift of \$3.33 million to the two schools. A member of Immaculate Conception Parish in Clarksburg, Edward passed away at the age of 96 on Oct. 18, 2024, and bequeathed the gift to the schools.

Bishop Mark Brennan and other diocesan officials and priests joined the schools’ community at the ceremony, which opened and closed with performances by Notre Dame’s choir. Father Casey Mahone, pastor of Immaculate Conception and designated pastor of the schools, welcomed all and began with a prayer.

Representing Edward’s many family members who were present was his niece Maria Whisner, who shared stories of her beloved uncle.

Edward grew up in Sistersville and served his country honorably in the United States Marine Corps, his obituary noted. He graduated from Sistersville High School in 1946 and then Marietta College with a degree in Petroleum Engineering. He had a long career as a geologist for Mobile Oil in Saudi Arabi, Libya, and Indonesia; and he loved traveling.

At the ceremony, Whisner said that in the last years of his life when family members would ask him to name his favorite place in the world, with a smile on his face, he would answer, “Sistersville, West Virginia.”

“My uncle was very successful at his job,” Whisner said. “He traveled the word. He understood the importance of education and family. He also understood, through his religion, his duty to serve others. Upon his death we learned that one of his final wishes was to serve St. Mary’s and Notre Dame by leaving a monetary gift.”

His legacy will be the positive impact he has left on the schools,



Photo by Stephen Santilli/courtesy of WVNews

Family members of the late Edward J. Gaughan present his \$3.33 million gift to Notre Dame High School and St. Mary Central School in Clarksburg. With the family are Loria Cavallo, principal of the schools (second from left); Bishop Mark Brennan (fifth from left); Father Casey Mahone, pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Clarksburg and designated pastor of the schools (sixth from left); and Jennifer Hornyak, superintendent of Catholic schools for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston (third from right).

she said.

Also speaking was Edward’s nephew Bill Gaughan, who said that in addition to honoring his uncle, the gathering was also about the students.

“We’re here because of you,” Bill said to them. “Because we all want you to be prosperous in your future... for you to continue your relationship with God throughout your whole lives.”

This, he said, was the reason for his uncle’s gift.

Members of Edward’s family then came forward to unveil the large check. Bill said the family knows that with the help of Father Mahone, the bishop, the faculty and the board the money will be put to good use and will be a blessing to the schools.

The family then announced the first project Edward’s gift will fund—a refurbished soccer field. Family members then unveiled an artist’s rendering of the project.

Jennifer Hornyak, superintendent of Catholic schools for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, was the next to speak saying the gathering was a great way to end the school year “in gratitude for an extraordinary act of true generosity that will profoundly impact the future of our students of Notre Dame and St. Mary’s.”


Edward’s gift also sends a powerful message of hope and belief, Hornyak said.

“It reminds our students and our faculty and our entire community that we are supported, that our mission has value, and that together we can achieve great


things,” she said. “... It strengthens the entire fabric of Catholic education in our community.”

At the end of the ceremony, Bishop Brennan came forward and spoke of Edward’s great generosity in his gift to the schools. The bishop then offered a blessing of Notre Dame, St. Mary’s, the soccer field, all of the projects the gift will fund, and all those gathered.

Also at the ceremony were Msgr. Paul Hudock, who leads Hispanic ministry at Immaculate Conception and St. Mary Parish in Star City; and Very Rev. Walter Jagela, Assoc. V.F., pastor of All Saints Parish in Bridgeport.



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Shrine at Holy Redeemer Parish in Spencer Draws Catholic Faithful on Divine Mercy Sunday

On Divine Mercy Sunday, April 27, Catholic faithful in Spencer and the wider Parkersburg Vicariate gathered at the Shrine of the Divine Mercy of Jesus at Holy Redeemer Parish in Spencer to pray the Divine Mercy Chaplet and attend Mass at the parish church. Bishop Mark Brennan was the celebrant and is pictured above (center) with those who attended. Clergy who joined in the celebrations are standing with the bishop, from left: Father Shinto Mathew, pastor of St. John Parish in St. Marys, Christ Our Hope Mission in Harrisville, and St. Joseph Chapel in Pennsboro; Father Ramababu Dakkamadugula, HGN, administrator of Holy Redeemer and St. Elizabeth of Hungary Mission in Elizabeth; Bishop Brennan; Very Rev. John Rice, V.G., V.F., vicar general of the diocese and pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Parkersburg and St. Monica Mission in Lubeck and designated pastor of Parkersburg Catholic High School; and Father Kotaiah Dharelli, HGN, administrator of St. Anthony Parish in Charleston and Our Lady of the Hills Parish in Elkview. Standing in the back is Deacon John Butler, permanent deacon at St. Matthew Parish in Ravenswood and Sacred Heart Mission in Point Pleasant. *Courtesy photo*

Honoring our Blessed Mother in the Month of May

Adalyn Verespie crowns a statue of Our Lady at Sacred Heart Parish in Princeton May 11. Looking on is Very Rev. Sebastian Devasya, V.E., pastor of the parish. The Catholic Church dedicates the entire month of May to the Blessed Virgin Mary, mother of God and spiritual mother of all (Courtesy of Catholic News Agency, ACI Prensa Staff).

Courtesy photo



Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Confirmation Schedule, Spring 2025; Bishop Mark E. Brennan, Celebrant

- Wednesday, May 21:** St. Joseph the Worker, Weirton; 6:30 p.m.
- Thursday, May 22:** St. Thomas Aquinas, Thomas; 5:00 p.m.
- Sunday, May 25:** St. Paul, Weirton; 2:00 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 28:** St. Patrick, Weston; 5:30 p.m.
- Saturday, May 31:** Annunciation of Our Lord, Fort Ashby; 4:30 p.m.
- Sunday, June 1:** St. Luke the Evangelist, Cheat Lake; 2:00 p.m.
- Saturday, June 7:** St. Francis of Assisi, St. Albans; 5:00 p.m.
- Sunday, June 8:** St. Francis de Sales, Beckley; 11:00 a.m.
- Sunday, June 8:** Sacred Heart, Bluefield, 4:30 p.m.



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Deacon Moger to be Ordained to the Priesthood in Martinsburg May 30

By Colleen Rowan

MARTINSBURG — The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's faithful will come together at St. Joseph Church in Martinsburg on Friday, May 30, at 5 p.m. as Bishop Mark Brennan ordains Deacon Jourden Travis Moger to the priesthood.

Deacon Moger is married and was an ordained Baptist minister who converted to Catholicism six years ago. Bishop Brennan ordained him a transitional deacon on Dec. 21, 2024, on path to ordination to the priesthood, having been approved by the Vatican's Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith and personally dispensed from the promise of celibacy by the late Pope Francis.

"I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to become a priest," Deacon Moger said. "Many men—even those who feel called—are not able to answer that call. As a former Baptist minister, I'm a special case, definitely out of the ordinary. The late Pope Francis and Bishop Brennan have given me this wonderful opportunity. So many of the clergy and lay faithful of

the diocese have prayed for and encouraged me throughout this journey. Finally, I would never have made it to this point without the love and support of my family."

Deacon Moger along with his wife, Amelia Grace, and their son Mark entered the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil in 2018 at St. Francis de Sales Parish in Purcellville, Va. Having sensed early on a call to be of service to God's people and having exercised that call, he then pondered the possibility of—as a married, former Baptist minister—receiving Holy Orders in the Catholic Church as Catholic priests in the Latin Rite do not marry.

Deacon Moger has been undergoing training through Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Emmitsburg, Md., for the past year to form him in the Catholic understanding of ministry.

"I am excited to have Deacon Moger be ordained to the sacred priesthood for our diocese," said Father Brian Crenwelge, director of Vocations for the diocese. "I've gotten to know Deacon Moger over the past couple

years, and I know he is a man of great faith and sincerity. He'll be the consoling presence of Christ to those to whom he ministers as a priest."

Drawing upon the words of St. John Vianney, the patron saint of priests, "The priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus," Deacon Moger has been reflecting on the Sacred Heart of Jesus and how it relates to the priesthood.

"Two images come to mind," he said, "the Good Shepherd, who seeks and saves the lost sheep, and the High Priest, who offers reparation for sin in the Eucharist. Both remind me that the priesthood is not about power, but about mercy, service, and sacrificial love."

Deacon Moger's wife is a pediatric nurse. He said she has been his biggest supporter throughout his life's journey. She also teaches third grade CCD at their parish and recently finished a two-year master catechist formation program in the Diocese of Arlington, Va.

They were married July 28, 1990, in Livermore Falls,



Deacon Jourden Travis Moger

Maine. They have four children: Natalie Hynes (32), Nadine Klein (29), Madeline Cordle (27), and Mark Moger (25); and four grandchildren: Boaz Hynes (6), Ezra Hynes (5), Lydia Hynes (3), and Ada Klein (1).

Deacon Moger is originally from Ocala, Fla., and was ordained at Brassfield Baptist Church (Southern Baptist) in Creedmoor, N.C., in 1991. He received a master's in theology from Christendom College Graduate School of Theology in 2024; and a Ph.D. in history from the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB)

in 2011. He was a Fulbright Scholar, Johann Wolfgang Goethe Universität, Germany in 2005-2006; received his master of divinity from Southeastern Baptist Theological Seminary in 1993; and received a Bachelor of Arts from Dallas Baptist University (summa cum laude) in 1988.

Deacon Moger also has extensive military service. He has a 26-year military career as a U.S. Navy chaplain and retired from the U.S. Navy Reserve with the rank of captain in 2018. He served in combat in Iraq as chaplain for the 2nd Battalion, 23rd Marine Regiment (infantry) in 2003. In federal civil service from July 2017 to December 2023, he worked as a full-time historian for the U.S. Army Center of Military History and for the Naval History and Heritage Command, both in Washington, D.C.

The diocese's Vocations Office said seating will be set up in the parish's Msgr. Lackey Hall for crowd overflow and a reception will be held following the ordination at St. Joseph School's gymnasium.

Shirley Carter Excited about Possibilities in Her New Role as Diocese's Faith Formation Director

By Colleen Rowan

WHEELING — Shirley Carter is excited about the possibilities in her new role as director of Faith Formation for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. She has served as interim director since November.

"I am also humbled about being entrusted with a position that affords such an opportunity to help build the Kingdom of God in a diocese that has blessed me in so many ways," she said.

Carter brings to the position her 16 years of experience in campus ministry. In announcing that she had accepted the position, Very Rev. John Rice, V.G., V.F., noted that she previously served as campus minister at West Liberty University and Bethany College. She is currently an instructor for Dayton University's Virtual Learning Community for

Faith Formation.

That experience will help her in what Bishop Mark Brennan sees as one of the most important focuses of the church right now — evangelization.

Carter emphasized the message of Bishop Brennan's pastoral letter "Bringing People to Christ," in which he stresses that all are called to evangelize.

"The real importance lies in each of our responsibility to spread the Good News of Jesus Christ in a time that our world sorely needs to hear it," Carter said. "And since I have been taught, and truly believe, that our church has the fullness of the truth there is no better time to proclaim it."

When asked what she



Shirley Carter

most wants to accomplish in this role, she said she has a number of ideas and things she sees as important.

"But after being in ministry for many years, I have learned that my plans are not always the Lord's plans," she said. "So,

I am praying every day that he will work through me in whatever way is best for the people of the diocese. But the catechist in me knows that passing on the faith is essential, so I am hoping to focus on that with various populations (and) ages and in different settings."

She is looking forward to her work as director of Faith Formation, but it is bittersweet as she leaves campus ministry.

"It will be difficult leaving the young adult population to and with whom I have ministered. They keep a person young. But I am enjoying my time with wonderful people at the chancery and making new connections around the diocese."

Carter has a bachelor's degree from West Liberty and a Master of Applied Theology from Wheeling Jesuit University. In his announcement, Father Rice said she has

been involved in various forms of ministry throughout her life including director of parish youth ministry and director of spiritual formation at a local elementary school followed by seven years as the director of Retreats and Leadership programs at Wheeling Jesuit University.

Carter is the mother of four grown daughters and 12 grandchildren. She is a member of Our Lady of Peace Parish in Wheeling.



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Ten Wheeling Central Students Enter the Catholic Church at School Mass

WHEELING — At the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling on April 24, 10 Central Catholic High School students entered the Catholic Church receiving the sacraments of Baptism, first Holy Communion, and Confirmation.

This was a school Mass with CCHS administration, faculty, students, and families present. The Mass was celebrated by Father Joseph Wiley, chaplain for Central who led the students—Emma Blum, Juliana Bradford, Adam Connors, Stryker Jaquay, Sydney Kobasko, Aidan McKenna, Maddox Ochap, JaeCea Poyser, Lola Rubio, and Mason Smith—through OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults). Deacon Jacob Man-

ning, permanent deacon at the cathedral and St. Alphonus Parish in Wheeling, served as deacon for the Mass. The students' journey through OCIA was coordinated by Central's campus minister, Kristy Riedel.

"We are thrilled to have shared this journey with them and look forward to watching them grow in their Catholic faith!" CCHS officials posted on social media.

At right: The 10 Central Catholic High School students who entered the Catholic Church are pictured with their sponsors at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling April 24.

Courtesy photo



At 87, Judy Brose Becomes Catholic at St. Stephen Parish, Ona

ONA—St. Stephen Parish in Ona welcomed its newest member, 87-year-old Judy Brose, who completed OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) and came into full communion with the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil, April 19.

"As Judy celebrates 87 years of life, her remarkable journey is a testament to her unwavering faith," parish officials said.

As a child, her father's leadership as a deacon in the Baptist church instilled in her a deep love for scripture. Judy and her husband's active involvement in Rockwood Baptist Church in Ironton, Ohio was a beautiful expression of their devotion.

After her beloved husband passed away, Judy's love and resili-

ence led her to a new chapter in her life with her daughter and son-in-law, Bil & Amy Neal in Milton.

As Bil and Amy embraced their Catholic faith at St. Stephen's, Judy found herself captivated by the rituals and traditions of the Roman Catholic Church, which resonated deeply from a young age.

With determination and the unwavering support of her loved ones, Judy attended Sunday Mass, and in doing so, discovered an unshakeable sense of peace and belonging.

"In this sacred space, Judy finally found her spiritual 'home!'" parish officials said. "And we are so grateful that she is here! Welcome home, Judy!"



Courtesy photo

At the Easter Vigil, April 19, at St. Stephen Parish in Ona, Judy Brose, 87, receives first Holy Communion from Father Upendra Rayapudi, parochial vicar of the parish and Our Lady of Fatima Parish in Huntington.

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U.S. Bishops Encourage Young People to Lead the Way as ‘Catalysts of Hope’ in Care for Our Common Home

By **Kate Scanlon, OSV News**

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — In a letter to mark the 10th anniversary of the late Pope Francis’ encyclical “Laudato Si’,” U.S. bishops have urged young people to “lead the way” on the climate crisis.

Published on May 24, 2015, the late Pope Francis’ landmark environmental encyclical “Laudato Si’, on Care for Our Common Home” urged steps to counteract “the throwaway culture which affects the entire planet.”

In a joint, public letter to young people May 21, Archbishop Borys Gudziak of Ukrainian Catholic Archeparchy of Philadelphia, chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development, and Bishop A. Elias Zaidan of Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon, chair of the USCCB’s Committee on International Justice and Peace, thanked young people for their witness and called for “a renewed commitment to care for our common home, which sustains all life.”

“(T)he sacred gift of creation is under threat,” the bishops wrote. “Climate change and environmental degradation entrap many people in poverty, often in communities already excluded by society. Climate change, biodiversity loss, and industrial pollution threaten the livelihoods and food security of farming, fishing, and forest-dependent communities in the United States and around the world. Illegal and often unregulated mining, as well as other exploitative extractive activities, threaten Indigenous Peoples’ survival and sacred places. Toxic waste results in high asthma and cancer rates in low-income communities living near sources of contamination. Extreme weather threatens the health, education, safety, and future of children born today more than in previous generations.”

They said, “When we fail to steward the gifts of our Creator carefully, we also manifest our blindness to the ways we are all interconnected and interdependent.”

The bishops asked, “So, what can we do?” “We must be steadfast in our hope in God and in one another,” they said. “God’s plan for our salvation and our world involves the participation of all. We need to build a culture of encounter.”

The bishops also pointed to comments made by the new Pope Leo XIV when he introduced himself to the world: “We are all in the hands of God. Therefore, without fear, united hand in hand with God and among ourselves, we move forward. We are disciples of Christ.”

“Young people can lead the way as catalysts
See “Hope” on Page 12

U.S. Bishops Release Updated Pastoral Letter on Pornography Amid Rise in Sexual Exploitation

By **Gina Christian, OSV News**

(OSV News) — The U.S. bishops recently released an updated version of their 2015 pastoral letter on the dangers of pornography, a document they said is “still needed today” amid increased social acceptance of — and addiction to — such material.

“Create in Me a Pure Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography,” prepared by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life, and Youth, is now available for download from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ website. It was approved by the full body of bishops at their fall plenary assembly in November 2015.

The document — with a title, slightly modified for its 10th anniversary, evoking Psalm 51 — has a new preface with numerous action steps for parents, clergy, educators, and lay and civil leaders.

However, the bishops offer an unchanged message that denounces pornography as “gravely wrong,” and “a mortal sin if it is committed with full knowledge and deliberate consent.”

Another constant stressed by the bishops: “The Lord’s mercy and forgiveness are abundant.”

“God’s grace and concrete help are always available,” the bishops wrote. “Healing is always possible.”

They noted that many turn to pornography — defined in the Catechism of the Catholic Church as “removing real or simulated sexual acts from the intimacy of the partners, in order to display them deliberately to third parties” — due to “deep personal wounds,” such as loneliness and isolation.

Pornography itself is based on a “distorted view of the human person and sexuality,” said the bishops, and offends against chastity by perverting the conjugal act, which is reserved for spouses and ordered to the good of marriage and children.

Despite proponents’ claims to the contrary, pornography

“harms countless men, women, children, marriages, and families,” with its prevalence creating a “structure of sin” that exploits and degrades human dignity, the bishops said.

“There are many victims of pornography. Every person portrayed in it is beloved by God our Father and is someone’s daughter or son,” they wrote. “Their dignity is abused as they are used for others’ pleasure and profit.”

The bishops also underscored pornography’s “connections to sex trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation.”

Women and girls made up 61% of those trafficked in 2022, with most enslaved for sexual exploitation, and the number of child victims — in particular girls — is surging, according to the 2024 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, published by the United Nations’ Office on Drugs and Crimes.

The internet and artificial intelligence have accelerated the creation and distribution of pornography, the bishops observed.

Research has also shown that pornography, usually combined with masturbation — which church teaching holds is “an intrinsically and gravely disordered action” (CCC 2352) — directly impacts the brain’s reward system, with effects similar to those from drugs or alcohol.

A 2022 study in the Journal of Psychosexual Health has stressed a “paradigm shift” in the understanding of behavioral addictions, including compulsive pornography use, noting that “any source or experience capable of stimulating an individual has addictive potential.”

The bishops clarified that “the moral culpability of an addicted person may be lessened depending on the circumstances,” but stressed that “the situation is particularly grave.”

“Addictions are very hard to overcome, and help is needed to regain one’s freedom,” they wrote. “We invite the many good men and women who suffer from addiction to pornography to trust in the Lord’s mercy and seek appropriate help, support, and resources.”

At the same time, the bishops noted that despite pornography’s devastating consequences, more Americans have normalized such material.

The bishops cited a 2022 Gallup poll noting that 41% of Americans deemed pornography morally acceptable, a 34% increase over 2015. In 2016, the Barna Group found that only 32% of teens and young adults ages 13-24 said viewing pornography was wrong.

The industry as a whole is projected to grow by some \$30 billion over the five-year period 2024-2029, having been accelerated in part by the COVID-19

See “Letter” on Page 12



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Trump Names Three U.S. Bishops, Priest to Religious Liberty Commission Advisory Board

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — Three U.S. Catholic bishops and a parish priest were among religious leaders President Donald Trump appointed to an advisory board of his recently established Religious Liberty Commission.

Archbishop Salvatore J. Cordileone of San Francisco; Bishop Thomas J. Paprocki of Springfield, Illinois; and Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades of Fort-Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, will support the commission's work. Joining them is Father Thomas Ferguson, pastor of Good Shepherd Catholic Church in Alexandria, Va.

Bishop Rhoades is chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Com-

mittee on Religious Liberty, which issues an annual report on the state of religious freedom in the U.S. He also serves on the bishops' ad hoc Committee against Racism and Committee on Doctrine, and previously served as that latter committee's chairman.

Bishop Paprocki is chairman of the USCCB's Canonical Affairs Committee and Church Governance, and initiated the "Fortnight for Freedom," the U.S. bishops' annual June 21-July 4 campaign on defending religious liberty first launched in 2012. Archbishop Cordileone sits on, and previously led, the USCCB's Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth.

Father Ferguson is the author of "Catholic and American: The Political Theology of John Courtney Murray," published by Sheed & Ward in 1993. A Jesuit, Father Murray was a key 20th-century thinker on religious liberty and whose ideas influenced the Second Vatican Council's 1965 Declaration on Religious Liberty, "Dignitatis humanae."

The four Catholic leaders join seven other U.S. religious leaders on the commission's Advisory Board of Religious Leaders.

The commission's 13 members, announced May 1, include Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York and Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minne-

sota. Bishop Barron is a member of and Cardinal Dolan is a consultant to the USCCB's Committee for Religious Liberty.

"Religious liberty is a critical issue in our time that needs to be defended and addressed," Archbishop Cordileone said in a May 15 statement about the appointment published by the Archdiocese of San Francisco. "I am happy to join my brother bishops in providing a Catholic voice on this important topic at a national level."

On May 16 the Trump administration also announced the commission's six legal advisers, including Gerard Bradley, a professor emeritus of law at the University of Notre Dame, and Francis Beckwith, a Catholic who teaches philosophy and politics at Baylor University in Texas. The administration also named nine lay leader advisers.

In its May 1 announcement about the commis-

sion, the White House said it will advise its Faith Office and the Domestic Policy Council, and is tasked with producing "a comprehensive report on the foundations of religious liberty in America, strategies to increase awareness of and celebrate America's peaceful religious pluralism, current threats to religious liberty, and strategies to preserve and enhance protections for future generations," and that some of its areas of focus include school choice and conscience protections.

The U.S. bishops' 2025 report "The State of Religious Liberty in the United States," published Jan. 16, highlighted the targeting of faith-based immigration services, elevated levels of antisemitic incidents, in vitro fertilization coverage mandates, the "scaling back of gender ideology in law," and promoting parental choice in education as areas of concern for the bishops' conference.

Hope ...

Cont'd from Page 11

of hope," on protecting creation, they said. "You have the capacity to organize and create change that will endure for generations to come."

By their witness, the bishops said, "youth and young adults serve as a vital bridge."

"Do not doubt that you have the power to inspire and lead efforts to effect change locally and globally," the bishops said. "We are with you, standing in the tension between God's vision for his beloved creation and our current reality."

The letter can be read here: <https://www.usccb.org/resources/letter-young-people-10th-anniversary-laudato-si>

Letter ...

Cont'd from Page 11

pandemic.

The bishops proposed a number of specific ways to counter pornography and replace its use with a life-affirming understanding of human sexuality.

They encouraged parents to strengthen their own faith formation, "especially in the realm of family and sexuality," and to impart that formation to their children through regular, age-appropriate discussions of chastity and sexuality, "instead of waiting to have one difficult 'talk' with them."

Bishops also advised parents to model temperance and discretion in the use of digital media, teaching their children to do the same and to cultivate healthy relationships.

The pastoral letter instructed clergy to proclaim the transformative power of the Gospel "as it relates to technology, sexuality, and community," while providing faithful with pastoral support and practical resources — among them, informational materials warning about the dangers of pornography, as well as mental health resources.

The bishops urged educators to ban "all use of mobile devices during school hours, or at least prohibit their use for non-emergency purposes in the classroom," and to teach the importance of chastity, using resources such as age-adapted versions of the Theology of the Body curriculum, which is based on St. John Paul II's articulation of church teaching on marriage and family life.

Civil leaders and authorities "should prevent the production and distribution of pornographic materials," the bishops declared, directing legislators to "address the scourge of pornography and the lack of meaningful safeguards against it."

Given the rise of artificial intelligence and other technologies that have facilitated pornography, the bishops put forth several specific recommendations, such as:

- Age verification requirements on pornographic websites.

- Support for parents seeking to protect their children online.

- Safeguards on social media platforms to prevent abuse by predators and erosion of parental rights.

The bishops also vigorously stressed the need for accountability regarding those who, either in secular society or the church, "allow minors and other vulnerable people to be sexually exploited."

"It is cooperation with profound evil to allow abusers and their accomplices to evade justice and continue in influential roles to preserve reputations," wrote the bishops. "The words of our Lord hold just as true for those who shelter abusers as they do for those who get youths addicted to pornography: 'Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him to have a great millstone hung around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea.' (Mt 18:6)"

The bishops concluded the updated pastoral letter with a message of hope.

"We assure all who are struggling with the sin of pornography and striving to cultivate chastity that you are not alone in your struggle," they said. "Jesus is with you, and the Church offers you love and support. Trust in and be led by the Holy Spirit."

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

"Create in Me a Pure Heart: A Pastoral Response to Pornography," prepared by the USCCB's Committee on Laity, Marriage, Family Life and Youth, is now available for download from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' website at: www.usccb.org/resources/Create-in-Me-a-Pure-Heart-Statement-on-Pornography-2025_0.pdf. A print version of the letter is also available from Ascension at: ascensionpress.com/products/create-in-me-a-pure-heart-a-pastoral-response-to-pornography.



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Catholic Charities Honors Recovery Point Charleston – Women’s Facility with 2025 Charity In Action Award

CHARLESTON — Catholic Charities West Virginia (CCWVa) has announced Recovery Point Charleston – Women’s Facility as the 2025 Charity in Action Award Honoree. A luncheon was held on May 16 at St. John XXIII Pastoral Center in Charleston to present the Charity In Action Award.

“Our Charity in Action Award honors charitable persons and groups for their devotion to the service of others,” said Joe Sparksman, CCWVa Western Regional director.

Recovery Point West Virginia provides long-term residential recovery programs based on the social model of recovery, along with drop-in coaching and transitional housing at The Point Café and The Point Apartments. Following the 12-Step model of Alcoholics Anonymous, these programs support lasting sobriety. Additionally, Recovery Point West Virginia offers free, board-recognized Peer Recovery credential training for those seeking certification. Committed to fostering hope and recovery, the organization continues to

strengthen support networks across West Virginia.

“Recovery Point West Virginia exemplifies the true spirit of service and dedication, offering hope and tangible pathways to healing for individuals in need. Their commitment to long-term recovery, peer support, and community empowerment is inspiring. It is an honor to present them with the Charity In Action Award, recognizing their unwavering efforts to transform lives and strengthen our communities across West Virginia,” said Sparksman.

Funds raised through the event support CCWVa’s programs and services in Western West Virginia.

To learn more about Catholic Charities, visit www.ccwva.org.

Carrie Cunningham, program director of Recovery Point Charleston - Women’s Facility, receives the Charity In Action Award from Mark Phillips, president & CEO of Catholic Charities West Virginia.

Courtesy photo



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El Papa León comienza su pontificado pidiendo una 'Iglesia unida' en un mundo herido

Por Justin McLellan, Catholic News Service

CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS) — Iniciando su pontificado con un llamado a la reconciliación y a la comunión, el Papa León XIV inauguró formalmente su ministerio como sucesor de San Pedro pidiendo "una Iglesia unida, signo de unidad y comunión, que se convierta en fermento para un mundo reconciliado".

"En nuestro tiempo, vemos aún demasiada discordia, demasiadas heridas causadas por el odio, la violencia, los prejuicios, el miedo a lo diferente, por un paradigma económico que explota los recursos de la tierra y margina a los más pobres", dijo el nuevo Papa en la homilía de su Misa de inauguración, el 18 de mayo.

"Y nosotros queremos ser, dentro de esta masa, una pequeña levadura de unidad, de comunión y de fraternidad", continuó el Santo Padre dirigiéndose a las 150.000 personas congregadas para la Misa inaugural en la Plaza de San Pedro y sus alrededores. "Nosotros queremos decirle al mundo, con humildad y alegría: ¡miren a Cristo! ¡Acérquense a Él! ¡Acojan su Palabra que ilumina y consuela! Escuchen su propuesta de amor para formar su única familia: 'en el único Cristo somos uno'".

Una versión de esta cita de San Agustín es el lema episcopal del Papa y figura en su escudo de armas.



CNS/Vatican Media

El Papa León XIV saluda con un "thumbs up" a los fieles en la Plaza de San Pedro mientras viaja en el papamóvil antes de su Misa de inauguración en el Vaticano el 18 de mayo.

Invitados ecuménicos e interreligiosos y más de 100 delegaciones gubernamentales se unieron al nuevo Papa en la Misa celebrada en la Plaza de San Pedro. Estados Unidos estuvo representado por el vicepresidente JD Vance y el Secretario de Estado Marco Rubio, acompañados por sus cónyuges y altos funcionarios de la Casa Blanca. Vance y la segunda dama, Usha Vance, visitaron la tumba del Papa Francisco en la Basílica de Santa María la Mayor la tarde antes de la Misa inaugural. "Era muy querido por muchos católicos de todo el mundo, y espero que se me unan en la oración por el

descanso de su alma", escribió en un post en X.

Entre los líderes cristianos presentes se encontraba el Patriarca Ecuménico Ortodoxo Bartolomé de Constantinopla, junto con otras delegaciones de las iglesias ortodoxas, la Comunión Anglicana, la Federación Luterana Mundial, el Consejo Metodista Mundial, la Comunión Mundial de Iglesias Reformadas y varias comunidades evangélicas y pentecostales. También asistieron representantes de la comunidad judía y de las tradiciones musulmana, hindú, budista, sij, zoroástrica y jainista.

Antes de comenzar la Misa inaugural, el Papa León recorrió la plaza en papamóvil por primera vez desde su elección el 8 de mayo, saludando a los fieles mientras la multitud gritaba "¡Viva el Papa!". A continuación, entró en la basílica para rezar ante la tumba de San Pedro, acompañado por los patriarcas de las Iglesias Católicas Orientales.

Tras la lectura del Evangelio, tres cardenales de las distintas órdenes del Colegio Cardenalicio participaron en el inicio formal del ministerio Petriano: El cardenal italiano Mario Zenari colocó el palio de lana sobre los hombros del Papa, simbolizando su papel de pastor de la Iglesia universal; el cardenal filipino Luis Antonio Tagle le entregó el anillo del pescador, evocando la misión de San Pedro de atraer a la

gente a la red de Cristo; y el cardenal congoleño Fridolin Ambongo ofreció una oración invocando la fuerza del Espíritu Santo para el nuevo pontificado.

En representación de la Iglesia universal, 12 personas — clérigos, religiosos y laicos de todo el mundo — se acercaron a ofrecer su fidelidad y obediencia al nuevo Papa.

Reflexionando sobre la lectura del Evangelio de San Juan, en la que Jesús pide tres veces a San Pedro que cuide de sus ovejas, el Papa León dijo en su homilía que el ministerio de Pedro no se basa en la autoridad en sí misma, sino en el amor que sirve y une.

"A Pedro, pues, se le confía la tarea de 'amar aún más' y de dar su vida por el rebaño", dijo. "El ministerio de Pedro está marcado precisamente por este amor oblativo, porque la Iglesia de Roma preside en la caridad y su verdadera autoridad es la caridad de Cristo".

El sucesor de San Pedro, dijo, "debe apacentar el rebaño sin ceder nunca a la tentación de ser un líder solitario o un jefe que está por encima de los demás, haciéndose dueño de las personas que le han sido confiadas". En cambio, "a él se le pide servir a la fe de sus hermanos, caminando junto con ellos".

El Papa León también recordó el período de luto tras la muerte del Papa Francisco, y dijo que el cónclave que siguió a la muerte del difunto Papa

fue un momento de gracia.

"Fui elegido sin tener ningún mérito y, con temor y trepidación, vengo a ustedes como un hermano que quiere hacerse siervo de su fe y de su alegría, caminando con ustedes por el camino del amor de Dios, que nos quiere a todos unidos en una única familia", dijo.

"Con la luz y la fuerza del Espíritu Santo, construyamos una Iglesia fundada en el amor de Dios y signo de unidad, una Iglesia misionera, que abre los brazos al mundo", dijo, pidiendo que seamos una Iglesia que "anuncia la Palabra, que se deja cuestionar por la historia, y que se convierte en fermento de concordia para la humanidad".

Al final de la Misa, el Papa pidió oraciones por las regiones afligidas por la guerra: Gaza, Myanmar y Ucrania, que "finalmente espera negociaciones para una paz justa y duradera".

El Presidente ucraniano, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, asistió a la Misa e iba a mantener un encuentro privado con el Papa más tarde, según informó la oficina de prensa del Vaticano. Inmediatamente después de la Misa, el Papa Leo se reunió con varios representantes del gobierno, entre ellos Vance y Rubio, así como con la Presidenta peruana, Dina Boluarte. El Papa pasó más de 20 años en Perú como sacerdote misionero y obispo, y tiene nacionalidad peruana.

Para denunciar presuntos casos de abuso sexual de menores:

La diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston te exhorta a denunciar cualquier delito ante las autoridades civiles. Para realizar una denuncia en contra de cualquier obispo en todos los Estados Unidos, favor de reportarlo en la página web www.repostbishopabuse.org. Y si, además, existen motivos para creer que un obispo ha cometido alguna conducta sexual inapropiada favor de comunicarse con las autoridades civiles de la jurisdicción correspondiente y también puede realizar un reporte en la página web antes mencionada.

Para informar a las autoridades civiles: comuníquese con la policía local; los números varían según su ubicación.

Si considera que alguien está en peligro inmediato, favor de llamar al 911.

Para informar de forma confidencial sobre cualquier sospecha de abuso o negligencia infantil, incluido el abuso sexual, favor de comunicarse con la Oficina de Servicios de Protección Infantil de Niños y Familias de West Virginia, llamando a la línea directa de abuso infantil al 1-800.352.6513.

Para informar a las autoridades diocesanas: La diócesis exhorta a informar primeramente a las autoridades civiles correspondientes, cuando la denuncia incluye un delito, y también alienta a informar a las autoridades eclesásticas correspondientes. Para reportar casos sospechosos de abuso sexual de menores por parte del personal de la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston, comuníquese directamente con la diócesis a los teléfonos 1.888.434.6237 o 304.233.0880 para hablar con cualquiera de las siguientes personas asignadas: Sr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Sr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; y si desea hablar en español con Sor Martha Gómez, ext. 264. También puede llamar a la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro de la diócesis al 304.230.1504 o a la línea directa de abuso sexual

de la diócesis al 833.230.5656.

Los formularios de quejas están disponibles en línea en la página web www.dwc.org, favor de hacer clic en "Diócesis" en la barra de menú, luego en "Oficinas", en "Ambiente seguro" y en "Descargar archivos y formularios". El formulario se titula "Formulario de queja para denuncias de abuso sexual de menores". El formulario se puede enviar por correo en Estados Unidos a: Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003.

Para informar al Coordinador de Asistencia a Víctimas de la Diócesis: Favor de llamar a Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, al 304.559.6742. Además de las vías mencionadas anteriormente para denunciar el abuso sexual, la diócesis se ha asociado con la compañía Navex Global que ofrece la plataforma EthicsPoint para informar cualquier inquietud adicional, como sospecha de mala conducta financiera, profesional y personal de un sacerdote, diacono, religioso, o empleado laico de la diócesis o cualquier parroquia o escuela católica en West Virginia. Puede acceder a la plataforma EthicsPoint a través de la página web www.dwc.org, en "Rendición de cuentas", luego "Informar mala conducta" o llamando al 844.723.8381.

EthicsPoint es una herramienta de denuncia confidencial y anónima, ellos se encargarán de transmitir su denuncia directamente a las autoridades civiles y a las autoridades diocesanas correspondientes, y lo más importante al denunciar a través de ellos, la identidad de la persona que denuncia está protegida.

Enlaces e información:

Departamento de Salud y Recursos Humanos de WV: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. Policía Estatal de Virginia Occidental, Unidad de crímenes contra a menores: 304-293-6400.

Thousands of Prayers of Hope, Healing, Compassion, and Mercy Woven into Artwork

By Joyce Bibey

Prayers — thousands of prayers of hope, healing, compassion, and mercy! That is what this gorgeous piece of woven art represents!

Bethany artist Kevin Clancy unveiled his masterpiece for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston and all those who participated in the April 7, 2024, LOUdfence Mass and Ceremony by tying prayer ribbons to the iron fence and railing around the Wheeling cathedral.

Clancy secured the piece that holds literally thousands of feet of ribbon with 288 hand turned diamond head screws.

The piece mimics the Cathedral of St. Joseph's rose window.

A Mass of blessing will be scheduled soon with Bishop Mark Brennan as celebrant.

Then the masterpiece will travel across the diocese to our parishes for the faithful to see in person, reflect on its meaning, and continue the prayers it breathtakingly represents.

LOUdfence is an international organization to support faithful Christians who have been abused, as well as the faithful who care and pray for healing, hope, and change.

A LOUdfence is a way to bring a hushed and taboo topic into a healthy conversation and act of solidarity as a step forward together.

Our West Virginia event was the first outside of Europe where the organization began.

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Joyce Bibey photo

The woven artwork is pictured at the chancery in Wheeling.

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