

THE CATHOLIC

# Spirit

## Faithful Invited to Prepare and Reflect on Synod Process

By Joyce Bibey

As Pope Francis invited all the baptized around the world to journey together in a global listening process the Church has named, "Synod for a Synodal Church: Communion, Participation, and Mission;" Bishop Mark Brennan is eager to move forward at our local level.

In preparatory documents, Pope Francis has said, "the purpose of this Synod, is not to produce documents, but to plant dreams, draw forth prophecies and visions, allow hope to flourish, inspire trust, bind up wounds, weave together relationships, awaken a dawn of hope, learn from one another, and create a bright resourcefulness that will enlighten minds, warm hearts, give strength to our hands." Likewise, Bishop Brennan said as we begin the Synod process in the Diocese, we do so "with the hope that it will help us to be a better church, more faithful to the Lord, more fruitful to good works, and more committed to sharing our faith."

The process of training Parish Coordinators on how to conduct listening sessions is underway with many moving forward with their individual sessions around the diocese. Each parish or in smaller congregations a group of parish(s) and missions will schedule local meetings. Once notified of the dates, the Diocese will compile a listing of listening session on its website, [dwc.org](http://dwc.org). The documents from the local levels will be collected by May 1, 2022, with the diocesan level report finalized by June 30, 2022 (these dates have been updated with respect to the first phase deadline extension announced by the Synod of Bishops on Oct. 29, 2021). The report will reflect the spirit, attitude, and dreams of the faithful for the Church as presented during the parish listening sessions.

What can parishes, schools, and Catholic communities do now?

The faithful are encouraged to be alert to  
**See "Reflect" on Page 4**

## Bishop Brennan, Synod Leaders Want All Voices to be Heard



Martina Hart Photo

Diocesan Pastoral Council member Jim Copolo places a candle before the image of Mary, Mother of the Church, at the Mass opening the World Synod in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Oct. 17 at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston.

By Colleen Rowan

The past year has been a humbling experience for Jim Copolo. From being chosen by his fellow Catholics to serve on the Beckley Vicariate Council to his election to the Diocesan Pastoral Council, he has now been named a leader of synod listening sessions for his local faith communities of McDowell and Wyoming counties. This

proud member of Sacred Heart Mission in Powhatan knows the gravity of the latest role he has taken on and that the World Synod is paramount to the life of the church and its future. He along with Bishop Mark E. Brennan and other synod leaders want all voices to be heard in the process.

"It is important that we all participate in our own way whether it be a small mission

church as my own to the larger parishes and cathedrals of the Universal Church," Copolo said. "It is important that we journey together in the individual listening sessions while we invoke the guidance of the Holy Spirit."

Copolo and the many others designated as parish coordinators to lead listening sessions have or will undergo  
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Mary's Refuge Maternity Home Planned in Martinsburg, Page 7



# Retreat for Survivors of Abuse to be Held

Survivors of all forms of abuse across the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston are invited to attend a special retreat entitled, "The Way."

The Way is 3-day guided meditation and prayer program for men and women crafted around the Stations of the Cross. It is an opportunity for healing and prayer and for survivors to reflect on God's plan for their lives through prayer and sacraments. There will be opportunities for individual counseling and spiritual direction. Sponsored by the Archdiocese of Washington, the retreat is free of charge and will be held November 19-20, 2021, for men and February 18-20, 2022, for women. The location of the retreat is not being publicized to protect the privacy of survivors.

For more information on the retreat, visit <https://adw.org/the-way-retreat>. To learn more and to register, please contact Deborah McDonald at [mcdonaldadw.org](mailto:mcdonaldadw.org) or 301-853-4466.

# Vatican Extends Traditional All Souls' Day Indulgences

By Catholic News Service

**VATICAN CITY (CNS)** — With the COVID-19 pandemic still underway and with restrictions on gatherings still in place in some countries, the Vatican has again extended the period of time when people can earn a plenary indulgence for visiting a cemetery and praying for the souls of the faithful in purgatory.

Cardinal Mauro Piacenza, head of the Apostolic Penitentiary, a Vatican tribunal dealing with matters of conscience, said the indulgences traditionally obtained during the first week of November can be gained throughout the entire month of November, the Vatican announced Oct. 28.

The cardinal said he was acting in response to "pleas recently received from various sacred pastors of the church because of the state of the continuing pandemic."

Traditionally, the faithful could receive a full indulgence each day from Nov. 1 to Nov. 8 when they visited a cemetery to pray for the departed and fulfilled other conditions, and, in particular, when they went to a church or an oratory to pray Nov. 2, All Souls' Day.

Because of the pandemic and the popularity in many cultures of visiting cemeteries for All Souls' Day, some local governments and dioceses closed cemeteries in the first

week of November to prevent crowding. That led Cardinal Piacenza to issue a decree in 2020 extending the period for the indulgences. The decree for 2021 renewed those provisions.

Indulgences are granted when a Catholic visits a cemetery to pray for the dead, goes to confession, attends Mass and receives the Eucharist and prays for the intentions of the pope.

An indulgence is a remission of the temporal punishment one deserves for one's sins; people often will seek the indulgence on behalf of a loved one who has died or, especially in early November, for an unknown soul in purgatory.

The church teaches that prayer, particularly the Mass, and sacrifices may be offered on behalf of the souls in purgatory. The feast of All Souls differs from the Nov. 1 feast of All Saints precisely because it offers prayers for the eternal peace and heavenly rest of all those who died in a state of grace, but not totally purified.

The Catechism of the Catholic Church says, "All who die in God's grace and friendship, but still imperfectly purified, are indeed assured of their eternal salvation; but after death they undergo purification so as to achieve the holiness necessary to enter the joy of heaven."

## To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children

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

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

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

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

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

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

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**Executive Editor:** Colleen Rowan, Ext. 347 ..... [crowan@dwc.org](mailto:crowan@dwc.org)

**Advertising:** contact Colleen Rowan

**Freelance Writers:**

Martina Hart, John Sherwood,

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# Draft Statement Stresses Eucharist's Importance, Not a Need to Deny it

By Carol Zimmermann, Catholic News Service

**WASHINGTON (CNS)** — At their June assembly, when the U.S. bishops debated a proposal to draft a statement on the Eucharist, some of the bishops asked whether it would address denying Communion to Catholic politicians who support abortion.

The draft of the statement sent to the bishops in October seems to put this question to rest, at least for now.

The statement has not been made public by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in advance of the Nov. 15-18 assembly of bishops. It was obtained by The Pillar and published Nov. 3 by the Catholic website.

Titled "The Mystery of the Eucharist in the Life of the Church," the statement is at once both a reflection on the importance of the Eucharist in the life of the Catholic Church and a teaching document on what the church has taught over the centuries. The 26-page statement is heavily footnoted.

The statement, at least in this current draft, does essentially what Bishop Kevin Rhoades of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana, told bishops it would do.

In a recorded video this fall produced by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops to further explain the document and the planned upcoming revival on the Eucharist, Bishop Rhoades said the document will focus on how "the Eucharist is our greatest treasure as Catholics" and will look at different aspects of the Eucharist, particularly how it illustrates Christ's sacrifice and is the real presence of Jesus, not just a symbol.

The document, in its current form without amendments, does not specifically call out Catholic politicians who support abortion, including President Joe Biden, the second U.S. Catholic president, whose name came up during the June virtual meeting.

When the statement was first proposed to the body of bishops at their June assembly, some bishops said a strong rebuke of the president should be included in it because of Biden's recent actions protecting and expanding abortion access, while others warned that this would portray the bishops as a partisan force during a time of bitter political divisions across the country.

At the end of their June discussion, Bishop Rhoades, who is chair of the Committee on Doctrine, said the document would not focus on denying Communion to people but on the importance of the sacrament.

He said the second half of the document will emphasize what Catholics should do with this deeper understanding and appreciation of the Eucharist, from more active participation at Mass to participating in devotions such as

adoration and renewing their commitment to serve others.

And that is how the drafted document looks. It explains the importance of Communion, calling it a gift, and uses references from Scripture, prayers of the church and Second Vatican Council documents to back this up. It also explains, citing words of the saints, how Communion is not just a symbol but the real presence of Christ.

This transformation of bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ, the document says, is "one of the central mysteries of the Catholic faith" which is a "doorway through which we, like the saints and mystics before us, may enter into a deeper perception" of God's presence.

The document also notes, almost halfway through, that the the Vatican II document "Lumen Gentium" (The Dogmatic Constitution of the Church) describes the Eucharist as "the source and summit of the Christian life."

It notes that as Catholics understand what the Eucharist means, they should more fully participate in Mass and also reach out to serve those in need, citing the Catechism of the Catholic Church, which says: "The Eucharist commits us to the poor."

Toward the end, it mentions how Catholics should show reverence in receiving the Eucharist and also recognize that there are some sins that "rupture the communion we share with God and the church."

It distinguishes between mortal and venial sins — noting that the latter are the "sins and everyday faults" that do not break the covenant with God. "One commits a mortal sin," the document says, "by freely, knowingly and willingly choosing to do something that involves grave matter and that is opposed to charity, opposed to love of God and neighbor."

"One should not celebrate Mass or receive holy Communion in the state of mortal sin without having sought the sacrament of reconciliation and received absolution," the document reminds Catholics.

Then, repeating what the bishops said in their 2006 document, "Happy Are Those Who Are Called to His Supper," this draft document points out that if a Catholic in his or her personal life has "knowingly and obstinately" rejected the doctrines of the church or its teaching on moral issues, that person should refrain from receiving Communion because it is "likely to cause scandal for others."

The document concludes with examples of saints who were transformed by their reception of the Eucharist and their deep understanding of what it means.

It urges those who have left the church to come back, saying: "We miss you and we love you." It also ties this re-

turn back to the Eucharist quoting St. Teresa of Kolkata, who said: "Once you understand the Eucharist, you can never leave the church. Not because the church won't let you but because your heart won't let you."

The discussion about what this document might say and how it could specifically call out Biden and other Catholic politicians has not just been a topic for the U.S. bishops and Catholics across the country, but it also has involved some conversation from the Vatican.

Prior to the bishops' initial discussion of this document, Cardinal Luis Ladaria, prefect of the Vatican's Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, urged the bishops in a letter to proceed with caution in developing a national policy "to address the situation of Catholics in public office who support legislation allowing abortion, euthanasia or other moral evils."

And since then, Pope Francis said on a Sept. 15 flight back from Bratislava, Slovakia, that he preferred not to comment directly on the issue of denying Communion in the United States, but he urged U.S. bishops to take a pastoral approach rather than wade into the political sphere.

And after the pope and Biden met at the Vatican Oct. 29, Biden was asked by reporters in Rome if abortion was one of the topics of their meeting and the president said: "We just talked about the fact he was happy that I was a good Catholic, and I should keep receiving Communion."

Catholic theologians who spoke to Catholic News Service this summer about the bishops' document sensed that it would be more about urging Catholics to come to a deeper understanding of this sacrament.

With a lot of emphasis being put on what seemed to be a litmus test about Catholics' worthiness to receive Communion, Susan Timoney, an associate professor of pastoral studies and a dean at The Catholic University of America, said Catholics should talk to their pastors about this.

She said they will likely come away with a sense that the bishops' efforts to encourage a deepening appreciation for the Eucharist is an attempt to say, "Look, it means something to be a disciple."

"You have a responsibility if you're going to call yourself a Catholic, and if you're going to present yourself for

**See "Eucharist" on Page 6**

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## Reflect ...

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their parish's routine means of communication, such as bulletins, websites, social media pages, and emails, which will announce specific details about their local synod process.

Additionally, to give the faithful ample time for prayerful discernment, the following Synod questions among the ten categories that will be presented in the local listening sessions is being provided. Bishop Brennan echoes the Holy Father's advice — in order to come into your local session prepared with open hearts, we must invite the Holy Spirit to guide all of us and our responses, so we are in sincere harmony to do what God calls us.

### 1.) Companions on the Journey:

- In our Church, who are those who we "walk" with on our faith journey?
- Who are those most active in our parish?
- Who are those who come to Mass quietly and leave quickly?
- What can we do to be a more welcoming community, especially to those who feel left out or are less involved in the life of our parish?

### 2.) Listening:

- How is God speaking to us through others we encounter?
- How are the laity listened to in the Church, especially women and young people?
- What helps or prevents us from listening to them?
- Are we able to provide opportunities to hear the voices of minorities, those experiencing poverty and excluded from society?
- What are some limitations in our ability to listen, especially to those who have different views than our own?
- How do we listen to the contributions of religious sisters and brothers?

### 3.) Speaking Out:

- What barriers do we face when speaking up courageously, candidly, and responsibly in our parish and in our community?
- What enables us to speak up when something is important to us?
- How should we relate to and make use of the media?
- Who speaks on behalf of the Christian community and how are they chosen?

### 4.) Celebration:

- Are we and other Catholics convinced that we truly receive Jesus himself in Holy Communion (the Eucharist) and not a mere symbol of him or just a piece of bread?
- How do prayer and liturgical celebrations actually inspire and guide our common life and mission to society?
- How do they inspire our decisions and our actions?
- How do we promote the active participation of all the faithful in the liturgy?
- How do we encourage parishioners to serve in a particular ministry?

### 5.) Sharing Responsibility for our Common Mission:

- Since we are all missionary disciples, how is every baptized person called to participate in the mission of the Church?
- What might be some reasons that keep someone from participating in the mission of the Church?
- How does the church community support its members who serve society in various ways (social and political involvement, scientific research, education, promoting social justice, protecting human rights, caring for the environment, etc.)?
- How does the Church help these members to live out their service to society in a missionary way?

### 6.) Dialogue in Church and Society:

- Do we make sure to include a diverse group of people in our church community when we have a dialogue?
- Where does this dialogue take place? How do we promote collaboration with neighboring dioceses, religious communities in the area, lay associations and movements, etc.?
- How are differences, conflicts and difficulties addressed?
- What particular issues in the Church and society do we need to pay more attention to?
- What relationship do we have with believers of other religions and with those who have no religious affiliation?
- How does the Church interact with and learn from politics, economics, culture, civil society, and people who live in poverty?

### 7.) Ecumenism:

- What relationships do we have with members of other Christian traditions and denominations?

- How can we come together with them to continue the mission of the Church?
- What successes have we achieved working with other Christians?
- What prevents us from coming together?

### 8.) Authority and Participation:

- How does a Bishop exercise authority in the Church?
- Who should he consult with?
- How does a pastor exercise authority in his parish?
- Who should he consult with?

### 9.) Discerning and Deciding:


- How do we promote participation in decision-making within hierarchical structures?
- Do our decision-making methods help us to listen to the whole People of God?
- What is the relationship between consultation and decision-making, and how do we put these into practice?
- What tools and procedures do we use to promote transparency and accountability?

### 10.) Forming Ourselves in Synodality:

- How do we create a Church community that promotes inclusion, listening to one another, participating in the mission, and engaging in dialogue?
- What type of formation do we need to offer our community to grow spiritually and ensure the participation of all the faithful?



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## Synod ...

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training to facilitate the discussions to ensure that all voices are heard. In order for this to happen, Copolo said the faithful must be careful not to make the listening sessions about their own personal gripe of topics they are unhappy with in the church. Instead, he said, focus on the synodality of the synod.

"May our synod on synodality in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston be marked by our discernment of listening and reflection as we seek the appearance of the Holy Spirit," he said.

Copolo was one of six members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council invited to participate in the opening Mass of the synod in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston celebrated by Bishop Brennan Oct. 17 at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston. Each council member came forward and placed a candle before an image of Mary, Mother of the Church, as a symbolic gesture calling upon her for guidance and strength.

The other members of the Diocesan Pastoral Council who participated in the Mass were Gina Boggess of the Beckley Vicariate, Susan Bossie-Maddox of the Charleston Vicariate, Kim Endres of the Charleston Vicariate, Linda Nedeff of the Parkersburg Vicariate, Denis Wilson of the Wheeling Vicariate, and Delegate for Consecrated Life Sister Martha Gomez.

As the synod progresses, Copolo said is important to keep Pope Francis' emphasis on "communion, participation, and mission" at the forefront.

Bishop Brennan emphasized these three elements in his homily for the Mass opening the synod here in West Virginia. Pope Francis, the bishop said, understands the notion of putting aside selfish ambition. "He understands that our way of being in the church is not to promote ourselves. It's rather to work for the common good and to do so enlightened by the Holy Spirit," Bishop Brennan said. "Our unity is based on our faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and the sacrament of baptism which joins us, for the first time, to the Lord Jesus in his death and resurrection and all the good that comes to us from that and the mission that we received in our baptism to proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord of the world and the Savior of all people."

The bishop said that the term synodality is used by Pope Francis to describe this way of being as church. The word synod, the bishop said, really means an assembly, a gathering. In the ancient church, dioceses

in regions and sometimes the whole church would gather to talk about issues that had arisen, and they were called synods. The most recent great synod, the bishop noted, was the Second Vatican Council in the 1960s.

"The pope is saying we need to recognize that this is our mode of being as church," Bishop Brennan said, pointing to the three distinct elements that are related to one another in this process of synodality which the pope talks about. They are: Communion with God—seeking from the Lord Jesus, through the Holy Spirit poured out upon us, the will of God; seeking the guidance of God in considering the needs of the church.

"So that means we pray," the bishop said. "We invoke the Holy Spirit, we ask God to guide us." It also means listening to others and engaging in discussions respectfully, he said.

The second element is participation. "We try to involve everyone as much as possible in this gathering, in this discussion. Especially the people we might leave on the sidelines," the bishop said. "How about our youth groups? What is their experience of church? Or the young people at our colleges?"

The bishop also included clients of Catholic Charities and people of other Christian churches as well.

For the third element, Bishop Brennan said, all of this is geared toward helping Catholics to grasp more firmly the mission as followers of Jesus Christ.

"We are not a Catholic club," the bishop said. "We are a movement going through history proclaiming the carpenter from Nazareth, Jesus, as the one designated by the father to be the Savior of the world—to save you from sin and from death, the twin enemies we cannot overcome on our own. So, that's our mission. Proclaim him as the Lord and Savior of all people. To bring them to the Lord, and to bring the Lord to them."

In the synod process, Catholics of the diocese will strive to be illuminated by the Holy Spirit through their conversations with one another, the bishop said, committing to engage in the mission of bringing the gospel of Christ to others. This requires a change of mindset, he said, as Catholics in this country have become reticent in speaking about the faith to others. "We've got to get over that attitude," Bishop Brennan said. "We are meant to share our faith with others. This is what Jesus wants us all to do."

The faithful, he said, must figure out how to reach Catholics who have fallen away from the faith; to reach out to the hundreds of thousands of West Virginians not affiliated with



Martina Hart Photo

Bishop Mark E. Brennan greets the faithful following the Mass he celebrated at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston to open the World Synod in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Oct. 17.

any religion. "With guidance from the Holy Spirit we will figure that out," the bishop said.

"Our diocesan phase for the preparation of the great Synod of Bishops, which will be the fall of 2023, begins today," Bishop Brennan said. In almost every parish of the diocese, he said, facilitators have been designated and will be trained for the synodality process. "So, that they can guide discussions in their parishes so that no one dominates but that everyone's voice is heard," the bishop said. The diocese's Synod Committee took the questions for the process and helped prepare them. However, the bishop said, it basically comes down to "What is your experience of the church like? What's going on in your life as a member of this church?"

Once input from different groups at the diocesan level is compiled, a report will be sent to the bishops' conference in Washington. The bishops' conference then puts together its report to be sent to Rome to the commission that is preparing for the Synod of Bishops. What Pope Francis wants, Bishop Brennan said, is a

ground up approach, starting with the people and their experience of being Catholic.

"We want as much input from our people as possible," Bishop Brennan said. There is a suffering involved in the synodal process, he said, stressing that it is not about scoring points or showing off debating skills. Rather, the bishop said, it is about listening closely to what others are saying and trying to understand before one speaks. He encouraged all to speak respectfully to others and realize that one's idea may be not be where the spirit is leading the people to. It is a suffering that bears fruit, he said.

"We embark on this diocesan synod process with the hope that it will help us to be a better church," Bishop Brennan said, "more faithful to the Lord, more fruitful in good works, more committed to sharing our faith with others."

Listening sessions will be held in parishes across the state. Dates, times, and locations will be announced on the diocese's website at [dwc.org](http://dwc.org) and in The Catholic Spirit.

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# Marriage Conference Will Bring Opportunity to Grow in Holiness, Evangelization Director Says

By Colleen Rowan

“Where Spouses Discover God’s Plan for Their Family.” This is how organizers of the Together in Holiness Conference on marriage describe this upcoming event. It is a gathering, organizers say, that inspires spouses to grow together in holiness and empowers parents to form their children in the Catholic faith.

This tremendous opportunity is coming to the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston in just a few months. The conference will be held Feb. 12 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at St. John XXIII Pastoral Center in Charleston. Presented by the diocese and the St. John Paul II Foundation, the conference includes presentations, Mass, a blessing of marriages, and more.

“The church isn’t only in the business of creating marriages, it’s also here to support and strengthen those marriages as well,” said Daniel Maul, director of the diocese’s Office of Evangeliza-

tion & Catechesis. “The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston is trying to do this in part by sponsoring this conference, along with a small-group formational series for married couples, as well. The bishop will be there for Mass, and we’re bringing in local and national speakers who will educate, entertain, and inspire you, as you grow in holiness together. We hope you’ll join us for this special event, as we journey together as a diocese that seeks to establish, strengthen, and grow strong and holy marriages.”

The conference will begin with a Mass celebrated by Bishop Mark E. Brennan who is encouraging as many married and engaged couples as possible to attend.

“I will be with you on that day for Mass and conversation, as we learn how to make our homes and families a domestic church,” the bishop said. “Please join me as we gather to celebrate all that holy matrimony is and can be: a pillar of our faith and a strength

for our people.”

Among the keynote speakers at the conference will be Charlotte Sacco, program coordinator for the Together In Holiness Formation Series, who will present “The Household of God and Your Household: What Does it Mean to be a Domestic Church?” Damon Owens, founder and executive director of Joyful Ever After, is also scheduled to speak. The nonprofit ministry is dedicated to encouraging and educating couples to understand and live marriage and family life with joy through St. John Paul II’s Theology of the Body. Owens will present “Bless this Mess: The Ultimate Guide to Forging Holiness in the Midst of Family Chaos.”

Nick Chancey, director of the Marshall Catholic Newman Center in Huntington, will present “The Family: A Community of Contagious Love, Joy, Sacrifice, and Faith.”

The cost information is as follows: Early bird couples \$59 and

early bird individuals is \$35. Early bird pricing ends Jan. 10. Couples, \$69; individuals, \$40. Childcare is available for potty trained children ages 2-12 with a cost of \$5 per child. A box lunch is included for each adult registrant.

For this year only, because of the pandemic, the option of the “At-Home Conference Experience” is available for \$15. This includes livestream of the conference presentations and Mass with one additional week of an online access conference folder containing the conference schedule, speaker handouts, and more.

Scholarships are available for couples or individuals in need. Registration and more information is available online at <https://forlifeandfamily.org/events/th22-wcww/>

For more information, contact Maul by e-mail to [dmaul@dwc.org](mailto:dmaul@dwc.org) or Michelle McDonald, conference coordinator, by calling (832) 7790-1070 or by e-mail to [michelle@forlifeandfamily.org](mailto:michelle@forlifeandfamily.org).

## Cathedral to Hold Evening Prayer for the Dead

**WHEELING**—The church dedicates the entire month of November to remembering all her faithful children who have departed from this life but have not yet attained the joys of heaven. “As we prayerfully remember our departed loved ones and friends, we encourage you to join us at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling on Wednesday, Nov. 17 at 6 p.m. for Sung Evening Prayer for the Dead,” parish officials said.

## Confirmation Schedule

Bishop Mark E. Brennan, Celebrant

Sunday, November 7, 2021: Immaculate Conception Parish, Fairmont, 11:00 a.m.

Wednesday, November 10, 2021: Combined Confirmation: Holy Redeemer Parish, Spencer, St. Elizabeth of Hungary Mission, Elizabeth; at St. Elizabeth of Hungary Mission, 5:00 p.m.

Saturday, November 20, 2021: St. Francis Xavier Parish, Parkersburg, 5:00 p.m.

## Little Saints Go Marching in Morgantown

Students at St. Francis de Sales Central Catholic School in Morgantown dressed up as their favorite saints for school Mass on the Solemnity of All Saints, Nov. 1. Pictured from right to left are Charlee McBride and Alexandra Dumire, both dressed as St. Abigail; and Mallory Downey as St. Gertrude. All three girls are in Elizabeth Ferrari’s kindergarten class.

Courtesy Photo



## Eucharist ...

Cont'd from Page 3

Communion to be ready and to understand what that commitment entails,” she said.

Timothy O’Malley, director of education at the McGrath Institute for Church Life at the University of Notre Dame, said: “If you pay attention to what the bishops are saying to recent revisions and outlines,” on this document, you don’t see it “being sort of political.”

“This is the source and sum-

mit of our faith. It’s the source and summit of our commitment to the world and to each other,” he said about Communion, noting at the time that he thought that’s what the document would emphasize, that it would be a “re-invitation to cultivate a eucharistic imagination.”

O’Malley also said the document on the Eucharist and discussion around it should involve looking at the role Catholics have in the public square, noting that when Catholics receive the Eucharist, it means they “belong to

the body,” which means they “uphold all dimensions of solidarity.”

The bishops are expected to discuss the draft document during an executive session they have scheduled for the start of their November in-person meeting in Baltimore; usually they hold such a session at the end of their meeting. The public sessions of the meeting are Nov. 16 and 17. A preliminary presentation of the statement is expected to take place Nov. 16, with a debate and vote on it to take place Nov. 17.



# Mary's Refuge Maternity Home Planned in Martinsburg



Courtesy Photo

Mary's Refuge maternity home logo

By Meg H. Partington

A former convent in Martinsburg is being transformed into a safe space for pregnant women in crisis to work toward self-sufficiency.

Called Mary's Refuge, it will be at 111 E. Stephen St., a three-story house built in 1929 that contains nine bedrooms for the women. There are several other rooms on the first floor, including a chapel and kitchen, plus three rooms on the top floor for the house mother. The main level will include a conference room for house meetings, as well as staff and volunteer meetings/training sessions; a work center; a Montessori-based infant-care room; a living room; and an office for staff.

There also is a full basement with a laundry facility, though a washer and dryer will be installed on the first floor so the women don't have to descend the stairs. The communal bathroom contains several shower stalls.

A ministry of St. Joseph Parish in Martinsburg, it will be one of only 250 maternity homes in the United States, according to Kim Roche, executive director. The goal is to take in the first expectant mother in late spring or early summer of 2022.

The name pays homage to the mother of Jesus, and it defines the role the home will play in the lives of its inhabitants.

"What does a woman need? A woman needs a refuge," Roche said.

The program's motto is "embracing life, mother and child," and the goal is to stabilize the women so they can em-

"We will provide a warm, supportive environment to the abortion-vulnerable, to the pregnant girl who worries where she will go, how will she provide for a newborn, and how can she have a future that will sustain her and her child."

—Kim Roche, executive director of Mary's Refuge

bark on a path to success. It is built on the pillars of self-reliance, responsibility, independence and self-worth.

"We will always welcome a mother who is appropriate for the program she is applying for," Roche said. "Our focus will be on the first-time, young, pregnant mother with very few options. At times, we are the last and only resource for them.

"Catholic means 'universal,'" she added. "We will help any woman in need," including pregnant women who have children younger than 3 in their care.

By "appropriate," she means they must meet some basic criteria, including being at least 18 years old; clean and sober; able to clear a background check; and having no debilitating mental-health issues. They also must come there on their own accord, ready to work toward a positive and productive future.

"It is a freewill program," said Roche, whose work for more than two decades has been focused on vulnerable populations. "We are based on Catholic values and leading a healthier life. They must be motivated to make good choices and positive changes in their lives."

Those who stay at Mary's Refuge will be called "guests" and their chores are "covenants." They will cook for themselves in the communal kitchen, in which they will have their own space in one of the three refrigerators and in the pantry. Roche said the women can come and go for breakfast and lunch, but will be encouraged to eat together at dinnertime to build a sense of community.

They must clean up after themselves in every room they use and be home by the 9 p.m. curfew, unless their job re-



Courtesy Photo

Kim Roche, executive director of Mary's Refuge, stands in front of the former convent in Martinsburg which is being converted into Mary's Refuge maternity home.

quires them to return later.

In exchange, they get a place to call home, budgeting and parenting classes, help with education and employment, and connections to resources for rebuilding their lives. They also will have access to the St. Joseph's Angels boutique, which is run through the church and is about a block away.

Roche emphasized that Mary's Refuge is not a domestic-violence or homeless shelter.

"They are applying for a program. We are not (just) housing," she said. "Our responsibility is to provide you (with) the tools. If you work the program, the program works for you."

Before becoming guests, the women are interviewed and given a tour. If selected, they go through an extensive intake process and have a 30-day probationary period. They are expected to be engaged in providing an environment of acceptance to ensure a sense of community.

"They will absolutely show that respect," Roche said.

The plans for the building's transformation began to unfold 10 or 11 months ago, said Patrick Michel, a deacon candidate for the diocese. Father Thomas Gallagher, pastor of St. Joseph Parish, thought a maternity home would be a fitting way to use the empty

convent and asked Michel to take charge of the project in August.

"Patrick Michel deserves 98 percent of the credit," Roche said. "He has moved mountains."

He estimated the renovation will cost \$150,000 to \$200,000, adding that financial support has already been provided by members of St. Joseph Parish and St. James the Greater Parish in Charles Town, and that interest has been expressed from other Catholic parishes in the area.

"We want Catholic fingerprints all over this," Roche said. "We need the support of every Catholic parish, every Catholic entity in the state."

Mary's Refuge will only accept private donations, not any local, state or federal government funding, Roche said. Those leading the project are hoping to build a network in the community with social workers, medical personnel and pregnancy centers.

Many volunteers are needed to make the program run smoothly.

"Volunteers are the lifeblood of Mary's Refuge," Roche said.

The men and women brought in to help will follow a strict ethics code and go through rigorous, ongoing training, she said.

The focus now is on fixing the  
**See "Refuge" on Page 8**



# The Hands That Hold the Paten of Life, Peace

*Priesthood May be Sacrificial Life, but It Is One of Great Joy with Jesus*

**By Father Brian Crenwelge, pastor of St. John University Parish in Morgantown and director of Vocations for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston**

Being a priest, these days is difficult.

Now, you might have been a little shocked at what you just read. Here, the vocation director of the Diocese, is acknowledging the struggles of the priesthood? Where could he be going with this? Well, it might not be what you're thinking.

Each day I arise, and I really have no idea what the Lord is going to ask of me. Sure, I might have a planned schedule, but that does not mean that the Lord is going to respect that schedule. In fact, He normally doesn't. He normally takes a look at the events planned for that day and probably laughs to the Blessed Mother about my plans. He then mixes the plans up and sends new ones my way. Nonetheless, the one plan He does not mess with is the daily offering of the Holy Sacrifice—the Mass. He respects that. He desires that for His priests. That is, after all—or I guess, should be—the one constant in a priest's day.

The day's events come. Meetings with students, meetings with parishioners, Confessions, perhaps Adoration, and a hospital call too if the Lord is feeling extra generous. Yet, the thirty or so minutes of the day where time stops is the Mass. Whatever stresses a priest might be going through can either be put on hold (which I don't actually recommend), or can be given to our Lord on the paten alongside the host. In other words, the Mass is the opportunity for the priest to offer himself to our Lord with the Eucharist—to be not only a priest but a victim as well in the



Joyce Bibey Photo  
**Father Brian Crenwelge celebrates Mass.**

Sacrifice. To be Christ.

That daily, life offering on the paten during Mass is what motivates me to keep going when I'm tired or discouraged. I give my cares over to our Lord. Perhaps I'm thinking about a tough

pastoral situation I'm dealing with. Perhaps I'm praying that the counsel I gave in the Sacrament of Confession was useful. Perhaps I'm stressed over the parish finances. That paten sure can hold a lot. Once I reach the Eucharistic Prayer, however, it is all transformed—my works, my prayers, my sufferings are all united with Christ and He offers them to our Heavenly Father. I can then rest assured that even though I am a sinful human being, the Lord will take care of what is lacking in myself and my actions. It's as if He is saying, "It's okay, Father. I've got this. Now keep going."

Having been nourished by the Eucharist, I then continue on my day, knowing that there but by the grace of God go I. And I am encouraged.

So is the priesthood difficult? Yes, it is. It requires a lot of a man. Actually, it requires his whole self. The same goes with being a mother or father. Yet no matter the difficulty that arises, Christ takes that difficulty and offers it to His Heavenly Father in each Mass. He picks up our Cross and carries it for us, with us.

The priesthood is a life that I wish more young men would consider. Perhaps they only see the tiredness of their priests. I wish they could see what was on the priest's paten each day, though. If they could see the priest's cares and worries, transformed and offered to our Heavenly Father, I think we'd have a lot more priests in our Diocese. Why? Because they'd then see what St. John Vianney saw—"The priesthood is the love of the heart of Jesus."

## Vocation Awareness Week is Nov. 7-13

National Vocation Awareness Week is an annual celebration of the U.S. Catholic Church dedicated to promoting vocations to the priesthood, diaconate and consecrated life through prayer and education, and calling the faithful to pray for and support those who are considering such a vocation.

Resources for dioceses to utilize during National Vocation Awareness Week, including homily aids in both English and Spanish, recommended reading and discernment tips, prayers of the faithful in both English and Spanish, as well as bulletin-ready quotes are all available online at: <https://bit.ly/3jCqTcS>.

## Refuge ...

Cont'd from Page 7

electrical system, roof and plumbing. Once those are addressed, attention will turn to refurbishing the rooms. Roche said each bedroom will contain a twin bed frame and mattress with plastic cover; a desk and chair; a rocking chair or other chair conducive to nursing; nightstand with a table lamp; floor lamp; portable crib; and small changing table.

"It has everything she needs to feel safe and comfortable," said Roche, who was the program director at a women's shelter in Pittsburgh.

Each room will be named after a saint who embodied pro-life principles, including John Paul the Great; Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa); Gianna Beretta Molla; Brigid of Ireland; Josephine Bakhita; Padre Pio; and Gerard Majella.

While the facility is based on Catholic teachings, particularly the sanctity of human life, Roche said those involved in Mary's Refuge won't evangelize or proselytize, but rather will exhibit serving hearts and act as role models. She added that the women who stay there do not need to be Catholic, but rather encouraged to strengthen their personal faith systems.

The amount of time a woman stays at the facility depends on her ability to provide dependable income and stable housing, and care for

herself and her child in the long term.

"The length of their stay is determined by the guest's own actions and behaviors, and meeting their own individual goals," Roche said.

"We will provide a warm, supportive environment to the abortion-vulnerable, to the pregnant girl who worries where she will go, how will she provide for a newborn, and how can she have a future that will sustain her and her child," she said.

While serving as the executive director at a maternity home in Maryland for three and a half years, Roche welcomed 38 babies into the fold. She looks forward to the time when Mary's Refuge—now quiet and empty—emanates joy, and laughter rings through the rooms.

"There are many homeless mothers in need of this project," Michel said. "We also believe that if you are going to be pro-life, mothers that choose life should have this refuge if they have no other place to go."

For more information about Mary's Refuge, e-mail Roche at [kimroche.marysrefuge@gmail.com](mailto:kimroche.marysrefuge@gmail.com).

To donate funds, supplies or construction material, contact Michel at (304) 267-4893 or by e-mail to [pmichel@stjosephwv.org](mailto:pmichel@stjosephwv.org). Checks, made out to St. Joseph Catholic Church (with Mary's Refuge written in the memo line), may be mailed to the church at 336 S. Queen St., Martinsburg, WV 25401.

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## God Is Calling Each of Us!

### *Make a Commitment to Pray for Increased Vocations*

**By Sister Martha Gomez, Delegate for Consecrated Life in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston:**

As we approach "Vocation Awareness Week" it is important to explore and meditate on what it means to be a sister, a brother, or a consecrated virgin currently in West Virginia.

We, as religious along with the rest of humanity, have been challenged to find meaning and ways to survive in this ever-changing, contemporary life. We are not only dealing with diminishing numbers in our membership and the lack of vocations but also with the effects this pandemic has had on the world.

The present situation compels us to follow in the footsteps of those who have gone before us. The strong faith and courageous men and women who made sacrifices in their ministries for the sake of those whom they served. We must take on valor and continue to move on through changing, challenging future knowing that we will not be led astray by the One who continues to guide us and is the source of our strength.

As I have the privilege of getting to know the sisters, brothers, and consecrated virgins serving in the diocese, I have no doubt that each of them is a beacon of light helping others in exploring and making decisions in their lives.

We are conscious of the uncertainty of our future, but whatever we must face we will do it with dignity and with faith that God is in control. We are his companions on the journey, and at the end we will say "We only did what we're asked to do."

As you have been reading not only in the Catholic Spirit, but also in the social media how involved the sisters, brothers and consecrated virgins are throughout the State. We are involved in many ministries within the diocese. I often hear comments of those who are in the front line of how challenging, but at the same time how rewarding is the work they do for the people of West Virginia.

We have St. Joseph Retreat Center in Wheeling, WV under the direction and guidance of the Sisters of St. Joseph and Miss Anna Marie Troiani. The (WVIS) West Virginia Institute of Spirituality in Charleston, WV directed by Sister Carole Riley and her Team. We serve the poor and the needy by directing or participating in health organizations, soup kitchens, Catholic Charities WV., parishes, as well as the many volunteers in a variety of works that are needed in the church.

The presence of the religious in our diocese is very well appreciated first by our Bishop Mark Brennan and the people of the Diocese. We thank them for their continuous ministry to the people of West Virginia.

I invite you to take time and talk to a Priest, Sister, Brother, or Consecrated Virgin and ask them to share their stories of their vocation. Pray for us!



Joyce Bibey Photo

Sister Martha Gomez

## A Letter from Father Phillip Szabo

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,  
A very big thank you to everyone who has supported me over the years with your prayers, friendship, cards, good food, and many other gifts! I would not be enjoying my life as a priest if it were not for you. It certainly takes a community to raise a priest, and I have been blessed with many communities that have helped me see this journey through to completion!

Now that I am a priest, I can truly say that I understand why so many priests have told me in the past that they love their job. The short five months that I have spent as a priest so far have been the best five months of my life!

First of all, celebrating the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass is truly out of this world! Rather than an activity limited to time and space, the Mass is our temporal participation in that one Heavenly celebration wherein Jesus eternally offers Himself to the Father. Therefore, when I say the words of consecration as a validly ordained priest, Jesus Christ becomes present in my hands, under the appearances of bread and wine. Then, at the moment of Holy Communion, myself and all of the faithful who are in attendance at the Mass are able to share in the very same grace that Jesus earned for us on the Cross over two-thousand years ago. Words cannot describe the joy and honor of literally giving people what, or rather, whom they need most: Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ!

Another great joy for me that comes in as a close second after celebrating Mass is the Sacrament of Penance. In the Confessional, I am able to offer people a truly safe place where they can discuss their greatest struggles and receive the forgiveness that their hearts are yearning for. It is frequently the case that people will share things with me that they are not comfortable sharing with anyone else in any other context because they know that it is only a Catholic priest in the context of Confession who can promise them true forgiveness and absolute secrecy. Through this Sacrament, I have already seen hundreds of people find freedom from their heavy burdens of shame and regret, some of which they had been carrying for a long time. As a



Courtesy Photo

Father Phillip Szabo celebrates his first Mass at Sacred Heart Parish in Bluefield in May.

spiritual father, nothing leaves me feeling better than to witness a person who enters the confessional trembling with fear and shame, but then leaves crying tears of joy and feeling as light as a feather!

Of course, this joy that I have been experiencing would not be true Christian joy except if it was intermingled with great tests of self-sacrifice, and this is the last thing that I would like to mention here. A big part of why I have been able to discover this new joy is because I have been getting a little better at accepting God's invitation to a life of self-sacrifice. All men are called to be fathers, either biological or spiritual, and this call demands that they lay down their life for their spouse and children. My daily work as a spiritual father demands that I often surrender my own needs and desires in order to attend to those of the Church and of the faithful who are entrusted to me. Whether it is as simple as taking an unexpected hospital call or hearing a last-minute confession, or as complex as canceling my weekend plans in order to cover for a priest who has fallen ill, I have found that joy is not found in comfort, but rather in the process of becoming comfortable with being uncomfortable! God is always calling us to greater heights of holiness, and He will not stop until we reach the end of our journey here on Earth, so neither should we!

May God bless you all!  
Father Szabo

## Vocation Series to be Held at St. Michael Parish in Wheeling

**WHEELING**—St. Michael Parish in Wheeling invites all to "Celebrating Vocation: Through, With, and in Christ" Nov. 8-11. Each evening event in the series will be held at 6:15 p.m. in the church.

The first night, Nov. 8, will focus on marriage. On Nov. 9, the series offers a look at the diaconate and consecrated

life. On Nov. 10, religious life will be explored. The series will culminate on Nov. 11 with a discussion on the priesthood.

The parish is presenting the series in celebration of National Vocation Awareness Week, Nov. 7-13.

For more information, call the parish at (304) 242-1560.



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# Compassion and Faith Lead Marshall County Teen to Establish Confraternity to Protect Children

By Joyce Bibey

Never underestimate the power of prayer.

That is exactly the underlying lesson Adam Marquart learned from his parents Greg and Lisa Marquart, and was echoed by his Catholic school teachers and several significant priests in his life. It is the lesson that motivated Marquart's idea for the Confraternity of St. Nicholas – a movement to seek the saint's intercession to protect all children morally, physically, and spiritually from sexual abuse, human trafficking, and other harmful circumstances.

Marquart, a member of Our Lady of Peace Parish, in the Marshall County section of Wheeling, grew up with his sister Natalie in a loving home.

"We always had dinner as a family, and my parents would always ask me questions about my day and how school was," he said. "(My parents) gave me a solid foundation of faith, reason, and compassion for others. In this ever-changing world, having this foundation has been crucial to the progression of my studies, friendships, and relationship with God. I love my family, for my family is where I first learned how to love."

It was when he was a high school student at Wheeling Park, when Marquart became keenly aware of child abuse.

"I became so concerned," he said. "I emerged myself into becoming more aware of the issues and out of that came this growing need to do something. What I learned about was so far from my own reality, but it is the reality of so many – horrible realities that our world has accepted and tolerated. It's unbelievable. What on earth could I do? We've become numb to it as a society."

"Saint Maximilian Kolbe said, 'The most deadly poison of our times is indifference.' Our lack of concern is sickening," Marquart said. "I



Courtesy Photo

Adam Marquart poses with his family Lisa, Natalie, and Greg Marquart at the New River Gorge Bridge.

knew in my heart I needed to do something, but what? I do a pretty good job at being pro-life, but I hadn't considered this pro-life, yet it is. I wasn't doing enough. We are not doing enough. Then I thought who better to turn to than St. Nicholas."

Marquart became consumed with his good intention, which led him to the idea of a prayer group specifically dedicated to praying for children. With the help of Father Brian Crenwelge of St. John University Parish, where Marquart attends as a student at West Virginia University, he was able to design the Confraternity of St. Nicholas. Soon after he met with Bishop Mark Brennan at the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's Chancery to propose the program.

"Bishop Brennan shared a time as a pastor, when he encountered a young woman who had been abused, and after sharing the story, he said something I'll never forget: 'Everyday our world shows more and more that it needs a Savior,'" Marquart said. "(Bishop Brennan) went on to say that child abuse and associated issues are ultimately a spiritual problem which requires a spiritual solution."

A few weeks later Bishop Brennan approved the confraternity. In a letter the bishop sent to pastors and the faithful he said, "As Bishop St. Nicholas defended Christ's divinity against those who denied it, we implore his prayers to defend children and young people from all attacks on their moral and spiritual well-being. Joining the Confraternity of St. Nicholas is a providential way to participate in the prayers offered to this saint for that purpose."

Since it was established less than a month ago there are already more than 90 members. While the majority are from the diocese in West Virginia, there are also members from the dioceses of Steubenville, Youngstown, and Pittsburgh, St. Mary's Seminary, and Eastern Catholic churches in the tri-state.

Bishop Brennan was not only impressed with the confraternity, but also the resolve of Marquart who is still a teenager.

If you are lucky enough to spend time with Marquart you will most likely walk away with the sense that he is mature beyond his years – an old soul some may say.

"God gifted me with so many wonderful people in my life and all have entertained my strong curiosity about my faith and my urge to



Courtesy Photo

Adam Marquart with an icon of St. Nicholas, the patron of children and the saint he has dedicated the confraternity for protecting children from harm and abuse.

learn more," he said.

In grade school at Our Lady of Peace, Marquart said it was Father Dennis Schuelkens, "who patiently would answer all of my spiritual questions and natural doubts in a thoughtful and substantial way."

He considers Father Martin Smay his spiritual director.

"Father Smay introduced me to the writings of St. Alphonsus Liguori, who has motivated me to intensify my spiritual life. When you read some of his sermons about getting to heaven you realize it isn't easy to get there. We all can do a better job to save our soul and the souls of others."

He said he has an affirmation go-to prayer he learned from Father Jason Charron of the Ukrainian Catholic Church in Wheeling that keeps him grounded in times of anxiety or concern. It is the Jesus Prayer or the prayer of the heart, "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me a sinner."

See "Faith" on Page 15



Courtesy Photo

Adam Marquart, when he was an eighth grader, poses with Father Dennis Schuelkens for a photo during an event at Our Lady of Peace School in Wheeling.

#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](mailto:jbibey@dwc.org). Visit [FaithInWV.org](http://FaithInWV.org) and every issue of The Catholic Spirit to read more inspiring stories.





# SNAP: A Lifeline for Many West Virginians



Courtesy Photo

Mary Kelly, a SNAP Outreach specialist, helps a client fill out a SNAP application. SNAP is a lifeline for many.

Food insecurity is a concern for one in seven West Virginians. That's more than 256,000 adults and children.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a federally-funded safety net that catches our brothers and sisters. SNAP offers support until people can get back on their feet.

Unfortunately, some people don't realize they qualify for SNAP. Others may be too proud to apply. We feel strongly about making sure people can eat, which is why Catholic Charities West Virginia (CCWVa) operates our SNAP Outreach Program.

CCWVa is a proud recipient of grant funding from Catholic Charities USA and the Walmart Foundation, as well as the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources, as part of a nationwide effort to

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address hunger. Sandra is just one person we've encountered through this program.

We first met Sandra at a food pantry where she was trying not to be noticed. Once we got to know her, she confessed she never dreamed of needing help feeding her family.

As a nursing assistant, her income of \$29,000 is not enough to feed her whole household. Sandra has a 16-year-old daughter and is caring for her ailing mother. And, like many grandparents in West Virginia, Sandra began raising her granddaughters (ages 6 and 8) when her daughter was overcome by substance use disorder.

We knew SNAP could ease Sandra's stress significantly. She finally agreed. Three weeks after applying, Sandra and her mother were both approved!

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*A Special Six-Part Series on the Diocesan Pastoral Council*

# Britt, Buck, Wilson Serve as Northern Panhandle Diocesan Pastoral Council Representatives

By Joyce Bibey

**WHEELING**—Having an honest and open forum of dialogue to strengthen and unify the Church in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston is the shared goal for the Wheeling Vicariate representatives for the reestablished Diocesan Pastoral Council.

Kevin Britt, of Moundsville; Jerod Buck, of Warwood; and Denis Wilson, of Wheeling are proud to serve Bishop Mark Brennan and their fellow faithful not only as an authentic and reflective voice, but also motivators to get others to be active and involved at the local level.

Britt lives by the adage his grandmother preached, "Talk is cheap; it is good deeds that get you to heaven!"

Britt is a member of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Marshall County where he serves on parish council and the finance committee. Additionally, he is a volunteer and Board member for Feeding Body and Soul, a community kitchen ministry in Moundsville that serves 1,000 meals a week.

"By all objective measures, I have been abundantly blessed," Britt said, quoting Luke 12:48, "The gospel calls us to service. It is that simple—'To whom much is given, much is expected.'"

Retired now, he made a 40-year career around his compassion for others as a hospital administrator. He will serve the DPC for three years and directly serve on the Pastoral Concerns Committee.

"My bride and I have lived in seven different cities, states, parishes, and dioceses over the past 40 years," he said. "I've attempted to be as active as possible in each one of those parishes."

He grew up in a strong Catholic family and attended St. Albert the Great in Kettering, Ohio, but notes the comparison of Catholic statistics from 50 years ago until now is a distressing and drastic contrast.

"I have great confidence in Bishop Brennan and share his great sense of urgency that we need to focus our energies on getting baptized Catholics back to active practice of their faith," he said. "For me, this

struggle is personal. I grew up in a family of 13 children. All 13 of us went to Catholic grade school and Catholic high school. Several of us attended Catholic colleges or universities. Collectively, the 13 of us produced 39 grandchildren. Sadly, I can count on one hand the number of those in my family that are still active in their faith. Unfortunately, my family is but a microcosm of the American experience. Specifically, in 1970, seven out of 10 baptized Catholics actively practiced their faith by attending Mass and receiving the sacraments. Fast forward 50 years to 2020, and research confirms that only two of 10 baptized Catholics are still active. And I am sad to report that those 2020 numbers are pre-COVID. Realistically, there may be as few as 10% of baptized Catholics that are still practicing following the pandemic."

Hope is not lost, according to Britt. The foundations of our faith our ancestors gave us and fought for need revived and it is up the Church family to do so, he said.

"As Catholics, we have been given the greatest gift imaginable: a clear path to eternal salvation and unspeakable joy, and yet 90% of those who have received this gift through baptism have turned their back on it? This is a tragedy," he exclaimed. "So, it is imperative that we focus aggressively on evangelization, catechesis and outreach. We need to target both fallen away adults as well as young Catholics. Let's be clear that this effort must be led by the laity. Our priests and deacons are already taxed and stretched beyond reason. Please know I am not blind to the reality that this is an up-hill battle, but I am simply not willing to give up the crusade. Catholicism is worth fighting for! We ride at dawn..."

Britt's focus is to encourage younger generation Catholics to be involved like fellow vicariate and DPC rep, Jerod Buck of Northern Ohio County.

Buck, who is 20 years old, is a one-year member of the DPC and serves on the Lay Life and Ministry Committee.

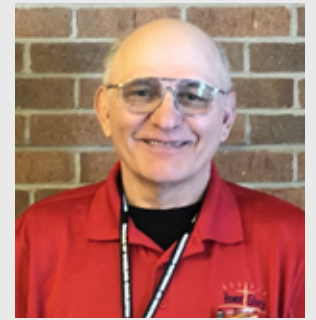
"I and all the young faithful members of the Church are poised to play a very crucial role in the future of our dio-



Kevin Britt



Jerod Buck



Denis Wilson

cese, and the Church as a whole," Buck said. "There are not very many young people that take their faith seriously, which casts a much greater burden for the young who do take their faith seriously to bear because we will inherit the Church. When we inherit the Church, we also inherit the problems of the Church; Bishop Brennan seems to recognize this reality because he started the DPC which gives the opportunity for us laypeople to voice our problems to the higher-ups in the Church."

Buck has been a lifelong member of Corpus Christi Parish, where he served as an altar server for weekday and weekend Masses. He is now a lector and greeter at Mass and helps prepare the church and sanctuary for holy days and seasons.

"What I receive from this involvement in the Mass is the potential to help my fellow brothers and sisters participate more fully in the Mass," he said.

That same thinking is how he is approaching his role on the DPC and beyond—accepting the responsibility to encourage the faithful to cling to its Catechism and truths of the Church that Jesus Christ established through the apostles; and further working to dispel weak philosophies and override the memory of misguided faith leaders that have hurt our

parishes and schools.

Serving to strengthen parish and parish school life has been a passion for fellow DPC member Denis Wilson of St. Michael Parish in Wheeling. Wilson's seat on the DPC is for two years.

"I accepted this role on the DPC out of a love for our Church and in hopes to bring help and healing to our Wheeling-Charleston Diocese," Wilson said. "I pray that the DPC becomes a powerful voice for the laity to feel that they have 'Skin in the game.' The church is not a Democracy; this is true. But even Jesus asked Peter, 'Who do you say that I am?' He also asked others for their ideas and help."

Wilson is on the Justice and Peace Committee for the group.

"Our world and diocese need more of both (justice and peace)," Wilson said. "Many in our diocese do not feel justice was completely served under the Bransfield rule. I think that the diocese under the leadership of Bishop Mark Brennan is moving in a positive direction. I know he wasn't here at the time, but many, including myself were. We failed as an institution to defend God's people."

Wilson like many others want to "speed up" the healing of our diocese, and he sincerely prays that Bishop Brennan will not tire to do everything in

his power to do so, because people still feel justice has not been served to the former bishop.

Two lines in scripture Wilson relies on for guidance are Micah 6:8 (He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God) and Joshua 24:15 (As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord).

He chooses to live and act out those teachings.

"We are all called to be part of the kingdom of God here on earth," he said. "We are the Eucharist, not just recipients of the Eucharist. In Mark's Gospel Chapter 16:15, we are told to 'Go into the world and preach the Good News to all creation.' However, I do better working rather than preaching in my little part of the kingdom. I receive grace and hopefully humility knowing my God, I pray, is pleased with my effort."

Wilson is currently a lector, chair of St. Michael's Building and Grounds Committee, and facilitator of a Saturday morning bible study. Previously he served as president of the school board, member of Parish Council and Finance committees, chair of the parish festival's physical arrangements committee, and lay director of Christ Renew His Parish.

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# Papa, cardenal Parolin piden acción de la cumbre COP26

**Por Junno Arocho Esteves, Catholic News Service**

Cuando comenzó la Conferencia de la ONU sobre el Cambio Climático, el papa Francisco instó a los líderes mundiales a tomar medidas para parar los efectos adversos del cambio climático.

Al dirigirse a los peregrinos reunidos en la Plaza de San Pedro el 31 de octubre para su discurso del Ángelus, el papa instó a los cristianos a orar "para que se escuche el clamor de la Tierra y el clamor de los pobres".

Cuando los líderes mundiales se junten en Glasgow, Escocia, para la conferencia, también conocida como COP26, también dijo que esperaba que pudieran "brindar respuestas eficaces, ofreciendo esperanzas concretas a las generaciones futuras".

El papa se reunió con varios líderes mundiales que estaban en Roma para la cumbre del G-20 antes de la conferencia en Glasgow del 31 de octubre hasta el 12 de noviembre. Entre los líderes con los cuales se reunió: el presidente de Estados Unidos, Joe Biden, el presidente de Corea del Sur, Moon Jae-in, y el presidente de India, Narendra Modi.

El cardenal Pietro Parolin, secretario de Estado del Vaticano, encabezó la delegación de la Santa Sede a la cumbre COP26.

En una entrevista el 30 de octubre con Vatican News, el cardenal Parolin dijo que la necesidad de abordar el cambio climático es un "desafío cultural para promover el bien común y un cambio de per-

spectiva que colocará la dignidad humana en el centro de cada acción".

La pandemia de COVID-19 ha mostrado la necesidad de un "cambio de dirección" para abordar la crisis climática mediante el fortalecimiento de "la alianza entre los seres humanos y el medio ambiente natural, con especial preocupación por los pueblos más vulnerables", dijo.

Si bien los datos recientes sobre los esfuerzos de la comunidad internacional para combatir el cam-

bio climático indican una falta de "voluntad política clara", dijo, un cambio de rumbo serio debe involucrar a todos, especialmente a los jóvenes.

"En las palabras del llamamiento firmado por los líderes religiosos: 'Hemos heredado un jardín: no debemos dejar un desierto a nuestros hijos'", dijo el cardenal, citando a representantes que se reunieron con el papa en el Vaticano a principios de octubre pidiendo acción.

"La COP26 representa una oca-

sión importante para afirmar concretamente cómo pretendemos lograr precisamente eso", dijo.

"Es la esperanza de la Santa Sede que la COP26 reafirme la centralidad del multilateralismo y de la acción, también con respecto a los llamados actores no estatales", dijo el cardenal. "Dado el lento progreso logrado hasta ahora, la conferencia de Glasgow resultará bastante importante, ya que medirá y motivará la voluntad colectiva y el nivel de ambición de los estados individuales".

## Gran Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe se Celebrará en Martinsburg

La parroquia de San José en Martinsburg invita a todos a su Gran Fiesta a la Virgen de Guadalupe el 12 de Diciembre del 2021.

El 12 de Diciembre nos reuniremos en "Lackey Hall" de la Iglesia de San José a cantarle "Las Mañanitas a la Virgen, comenzando a las 5:00 de la mañana seguido a las 6:00 con la Misa en su honor.

Después de la Misa nos trasladamos en procesión hacia la Escuela San José y se seguirá celebrando en el salón de la cafetería con platos mexicanos, bailes y mucho más.

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

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

cina 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](http://www.dwc.org), haga clic en "Diócesis" en la barra de menú, luego en "Oficinas", luego en "Ambiente seguro", luego "Descargar archivos y formularios". El formulario se titula "Formulario de queja para denuncias de abuso sexual de menores". El formulario se puede devolver por correo de EE. UU. A: Office of Safe Environment, Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003.

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

Además de los métodos enumerados anteriormente para denunciar el abuso sexual, la Diócesis también se ha asociado con Navex Global para ofrecer la plataforma EthicsPoint para informar otras inquietudes adicionales, como sospecha de mala conducta financiera, profesional y personal de un sacerdote, diácono, religioso, o empleado laico de la Diócesis o cualquier parroquia o escuela católica en West Virginia. Se puede acceder a la plataforma EthicsPoint a través de [www.dwc.org](http://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.



# Pope, Cardinal Parolin Call for Concrete Action at COP26 Summit

**By Catholic News Service**

**VATICAN CITY (CNS)** — As the U.N. Climate Change Conference began, Pope Francis urged world leaders to take action in stemming the adverse effects of climate change.

Addressing pilgrims gathered in St. Peter's Square Oct. 31 for his Sunday Angelus address, the pope called on Christians to pray "so that the cry of the Earth and the cry of the poor might be heard."

As world leaders gathered in Glasgow, Scotland, for the conference, also known as COP26, he also said he hoped it "might provide efficacious responses, offering concrete hope to future generations."

The pope met with several world leaders who were in Rome for the G-20 summit before attending the Oct.

31-Nov. 12 conference in Glasgow. Among those he met were U.S. President Joe Biden, South Korean President Moon Jae-in and Indian President Narendra Modi. Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Vatican secretary of state, was leading the Holy See delegation to the COP26 summit.

In an interview Oct. 30 with Vatican News, Cardinal Parolin said the need to address climate change is a "cultural challenge to promote the common good and a change of outlook that will set human dignity at the center of every action."

While recent data regarding the efforts of the international community to combat climate change indicate a lack of "clear political will," he said, a serious change of direction must involve everyone, especially young people.

## Faith ...

**Cont'd from Page 11**

"I'm certain there won't be a point in my life I won't need His mercy," he said.

Marquart said we all need to be committed to prayer and learning about our faith, and when we do, we can be part of a spiritual solution to the issues around us.

"For me I know that whatever is going on, whatever problem I have or problem the people I care about are burdened with, I know I can rest in Christ, and He will take care of it," the sophomore finance major said. "The world and society try to tell us or sell us that they have the answers, but God is truly the answer."

Resources to stay focused on Christ and grow in faith are all round, Marquart said, "many are in the palm of your hand" through apps, podcasts, and blogs. A favorite app of his is CatenaBible, it connects scripture verses with commentaries from saints. A podcast/blog he likes is Pints with Aquinas, which invites Catholic influencers (religious, authors, priests, etc.) to talk about various topics in the Church.

Whether your Catholic mindset is traditional or contemporary or something in between our Church is so large it is our own fault if we cannot enrich our spirit, he said. "We need to learn more. We need to pray more so we don't become

insensitive to the evils in society."

To learn more about the Confraternity and become a member visit the Confraternity's website: <https://dwc.org/evangelization-and-catechesis/confraternity-of-st-nicholas>.

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