

THE CATHOLIC  
*Spirit*

# Medically Assisted Suicide: Good or Bad?

## A Letter from Bishop Brennan

Should doctors and nurses help patients kill themselves? That question will be on the ballot on November 5 as Referendum 1. It states that, in West Virginia, medically assisted suicide along with direct euthanasia or mercy-killing will be prohibited. Palliative care, however – making dying persons comfortable and offering them counseling and other forms of support – will remain legal and available.

Why would seriously ill or handicapped people want to commit suicide? Some believe they are a

burden on their families; some want to leave financial resources to their relatives; some are in great pain; others feel abandoned, useless and depressed; and some dying persons want to leave this life on their own terms in an act of supreme personal autonomy. In the light of these reasons, why would medically assisted suicide not be right for them?

Consider this: we belong to one another. We come into the world through our parents, grow in our humanity through life-long interactions with

other people and are able to contribute to the good of others as they contribute to ours. Our lives are a gift that we did not earn but which we must cherish. Suicide, even if done for altruistic reasons, is a rejection of our place in the human community, because we choose to leave it before we have to.

The Catholic and Jewish traditions hold that the commandment, “Thou shall not kill,” applies not only to taking someone else’s life but also to taking  
**See “Letter” on Page 3**

## Father John Rice Announced as New Vicar General



**Father John Rice**

**WHEELING**—Bishop Mark E. Brennan has announced the appointment of Father John Rice as vicar general and moderator of the curia of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, effective Oct. 22, 2024.

After the bishop, the vicar general is the highest-ranking official in the diocese, having authority to exercise a degree of episcopal jurisdiction in the bishop’s name.

Bishop Brennan expressed his gratitude to Father Rice for accepting this appointment. “I have seen Father Rice’s effective leadership as chair of the  
**See “Rice” on Page 3**

## ‘Blessings and Bottles Headed Your Way North Carolina!’

**N**otre Dame High School in Clarksburg held a Baby Bottle Drive for victims of Hurricane Helene in North Carolina. Students and members of the school community collected diapers, bottles, and many other items for babies. From left are freshman Ashton Toler and Dakota Nutter; and 2003 Notre Dame alumnus Larry Cann, who facilitated the pick up, with another supporter of the collection.

“Blessings and bottles headed your way North Carolina!” NDHS officials posted on Facebook.

Many parishes and Catholic schools have been holding collections for hurricane victims.

Bishop Mark Brennan has approved a special collection to be held the weekend of Oct. 26-27, in all parishes and missions throughout the diocese to support recovery efforts for hurricane victims. See more in the ad on Page 3.

*Courtesy Photo*



### Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

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

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

## A message from the West Virginia Knights of Columbus State Council

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### The Catholic Spirit's Print Schedule for 2024

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

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

**Advent**

First Sunday of Advent, December 1

The Catholic Spirit publication date for this issue is **November 22**

**Christmas**


Feast Day, December 25

The Catholic Spirit publication date for this issue is **December 20**

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# Letter...

Cont'd from Page 1

one's own. Many of the reasons that lead people to choose the help of medical personnel to end their lives can be met by non-lethal means. Medicine can alleviate much pain. Visits from family members, friends, parishioners and synagogue members, assuring the dying person of their love, can dissipate feelings of isolation and abandonment. While it is generous to want to leave an inheritance to loved ones, it is more appropriate to use one's resources to provide for one's care during the final stage of life. The gift of love and, often, reconciliation, will matter more in the long term than money. As for personal autonomy, that is exercised more clearly by holding firmly to the value of one's life until it must be relinquished than by rushing into death's embrace.

Medically assisted suicide corrupts the medical profession. Those whose goal is to bring healing or at least comfort in a patient's last days become assistants in taking the lives of their patients. A fundamental principle of medicine is to do no harm. Medically assisted suicide turns that principle upside down. It has been done before. Nazi doctors experimented on Jewish and other prisoners without their consent. Doctors in the old Soviet Union drugged

sane persons sent to psychiatric hospitals for political reasons to make them mentally unstable. American doctors sterilized poor women, without informing them, so that they would not have any more children. Do we want our medical personnel to be corrupted and become the willing accomplices in the deaths of their patients?

How does medically assisted suicide work in practice? In Oregon, the first US state to adopt medically assisted suicide (1997), the length of time of a physician-patient relationship for a potential suicide has declined from 18 weeks to 5 weeks. Referrals for psychiatric assessment of one's reasons for seeking help for a suicide are only 1% – for an irreversible action. A program once restricted to Oregon residents is now open to anyone, making Oregon a favored site for "suicide tourism." Insurance companies are denying requests for hospice care to the terminally ill but offering to pay for assisted suicide.

In Canada, a person 18 years or older may request a physician or a nurse practitioner to directly administer a drug or other substance to cause death. This is active euthanasia. Or the person can take the drug him or herself. The government officially states: "You do not need to have a fatal or terminal condition to be eligible for medical assistance in dying," only a serious condition which is irreversible and, in the person's view, intolerable. In March,

2027, medical assistance in dying will be available for those suffering from mental illnesses.

In some European countries, the death march has slipped farther down the slope: the Netherlands allows minors, even below 12 years of age, to be directly put to death with parental consent. Persons suffering from dementia may be euthanized if they said they would want it before they lost control of their reasoning. Belgium is even worse: a minor suffering from depression can be euthanized. Where does medically assisted suicide end? In more and more graves. Is this what we want in West Virginia?

Take the issue of medically assisted suicide seriously. What kind of state do you want West Virginia to be? It is instructive that about one third of those in Oregon who receive drugs to kill themselves never use it. Even those who initially think of taking their own lives find the will to live. That desire should be encouraged and supported. You can take a stand in November when you see Referendum 1 on your ballot. Consult your conscience and your faith and vote for Referendum 1.

Sincerely in Christ,

*Mark E. Brennan*

+Mark E. Brennan  
Bishop of Wheeling-Charleston

# Rice...

Cont'd from Page 1

Presbyteral Council and he is held in high regard by his brother priests," Bishop Brennan said. "I am confident that those leadership qualities will benefit not only those in our diocesan curia, but also the faithful throughout our diocese. Father John is an experienced priest who, like me, has a great zeal for Catholic education. I look forward to working with him in his new role."

"I am humbled and honored that Bishop Brennan has invited me to this new role," Father Rice said. "I look forward

ward to serving the bishop and the people of our diocese as we all seek to grow in faith and bring the gospel alive in this great state. Please keep me and our bishop in your prayers and know that you are in mine."

Born in Braddock, Pa., Father John Rice was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston on Jan. 5, 2003, by Bishop Bernard W. Schmitt. He served as associate pastor of St. Margaret Mary Parish in Parkersburg from 2003-2004 and St. Joseph the Worker Parish in Weirton from 2004-2005. Father Rice served at parishes in Morgantown, Montgomery and

Boomer until his most recent appointment at St. Francis Xavier in Parkersburg and St. Monica Parish in Lubeck, where he has served since 2013. He has also served as

chaplain and designated pastor of Parkersburg Catholic High School and the West Virginia Council of the Knights of Columbus as well as the Priests' Health and Retirement

Board. The appointment comes after the passing of Monsignor Joseph Peterson, who served as vicar general for the Diocese since April 2023.

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# We need all Catholic Christians to vote!!!

“As Americans, we have a great civic responsibility to vote in our upcoming elections. As Catholics, we are called to form our conscience based on the Gospel teachings before visiting the voting booth. In order to assist us in discernment, The United States Catholic Bishops have created a document, <https://www.usccb.org/offices/justice-and-peace/forming-consciences-faithful-citizenship> (read the document on Pages 5-10 of this issue of *The Catholic Spirit*) to remind us of Catholic social teachings on the issues of War, Abortion, Racism, Immoral Lifestyles, Immigration Conflict, Unemployment, Health Care, Homelessness, and the Environment. We encourage everyone to read the document and spend time in prayer and discernment of all candidates before exercising our right to vote on November 5<sup>th</sup>.”

This message is brought to you by  
the Justice and Peace sub-committee of the Diocesan Pastoral Council

# Introductory Note



*Let us look to the example of the Good Samaritan. Jesus' parable summons us to rediscover our vocation as citizens of our respective nations and of the entire world, builders of a new social bond. This summons is ever new, yet it is grounded in a fundamental law of our being: we are called to direct society to the pursuit of the common good and, with this purpose in mind, to persevere in consolidating its political and social order, its fabric of relations, its human goals.*

(Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no. 66)

As Catholics and Americans, we are blessed to be able to participate in our nation's political and public life. Our freedoms respect the dignity of individuals and their consciences and allow us to come together for the common good. Election seasons, therefore, should contain a sense of gratitude and hope. Our love for this country, our patriotism, properly impels us to vote.

But increasingly, it seems, election seasons are a time of anxiety and spiritual trial. Political rhetoric is increasingly angry, seeking to motivate primarily through division and hatred. Fear can be an effective tool for raising money. The most heated arguments online often get the most clicks. Demonizing the other can win votes.

We propose once more the moral framework of *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* precisely as pastors, inspired by the Good Samaritan, with the hope of binding these wounds and healing these bitter divisions. This document is not based on personalities or partisanship, the latest news cycle, or what's trending on social media. Instead, it reflects the perennial role of the Church in public life in proclaiming timeless principles: the infinite worth and dignity of every human life, the common good, solidarity, and subsidiarity. Not sure what these mean? We invite you to read a copy of *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship* and learn more. [Click here to read.](#)

Allowing your conscience to be stretched and formed by these reflections can give you peace! They point to Jesus' challenge to show mercy to those in need, just as the Good Samaritan. As Pope Francis writes, "Here, all our distinctions, labels and masks fall away: it is the moment of truth. Will we bend down to touch and heal the wounds of others?" (*Fratelli Tutti*, no. 70). Let this be in our hearts when we talk about politics and make political choices.

Some might be tempted to say: yes, of course, we will be the ones who help by promoting good and opposing evil. But when confronted with so much good at risk and so much evil, it is a great challenge to avoid fear and anger. The threat of abortion remains our pre-eminent priority because it directly attacks our most vulnerable and voiceless brothers and sisters and destroys more than a million lives per year in our country alone. Other grave threats to the life and dignity of the human person include euthanasia, gun violence, terrorism, the death penalty, and human trafficking. There is also the redefinition of marriage and gender, threats to religious freedom at home and abroad, lack of justice for the poor, the suffering of migrants and refugees, wars and famines around the world, racism, the need for greater access to healthcare and education, care for our common home, and more. All threaten the dignity of the human person.

So precisely how we promote good and oppose evil is an essential part of answering the Lord's call, of being a disciple. As St. Paul reminds us:

*Never let evil talk pass your lips; say only the good things men need to hear, things that will really help them. Do nothing that will sadden the Holy Spirit with whom you were sealed against the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, all passion and anger, harsh words, slander, and malice of every kind. In place of these, be kind to one another, compassionate, and mutually forgiving, just as God has forgiven you in Christ (Eph. 4:29-32).*

Thus, Pope Francis exhorts us to "genuine dialogue and openness to others," by which we may "be frank and open about our beliefs, while continuing to discuss, to seek points of contact, and above all, to work and struggle together" (*Fratelli Tutti*, no. 203). This applies to the faithful both as voters and as candidates—we must consider not only candidates' positions on these issues, but their character and integrity as well.

How can we meet this challenge? Again, St. Paul gives us a way: Put on "the mind of Christ" (1 Cor. 2:16). Take time away from social media and spend time with Holy Scripture and the Blessed Sacrament. Turn off the TV and the podcast, and listen in silence. Volunteer at a soup kitchen, a homeless shelter, a crisis pregnancy center. Serve the poor, the needy, the outcast. Pray often, letting faith inform your political participation.

Participation in political life also requires judgments about concrete circumstances. While the bishops help form the laity in accordance with basic principles, they do not tell the laity to vote for particular candidates. On these often complex matters, it is the laity's responsibility to form their consciences and grow in the virtue of prudence to approach the many and varied issues of the day with the mind of Christ. Conscience is "a judgment of reason" by which one determines whether an action is right or wrong (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1778). It does not allow us to justify doing whatever we want, nor is it a mere "feeling." Conscience—properly formed according to God's revelation and the teaching of the Church—is a means by which one listens to God and discerns how to act in accordance with the truth.<sup>1</sup> The truth is something we receive, not something we make. We can only judge using the conscience we have, but our judgments do not make things true.

It is our responsibility to learn more of Catholic teaching and tradition, to participate in Church life, to learn from trustworthy sources about the issues facing our communities, and to do our best to make wise judgments about candidates and government actions.

We must also seek wisdom, as Holy Scripture instructs:

*Wisdom from above is first of all innocent. It is also peaceable, lenient, docile, rich in sympathy and the kindly deeds that are its fruits, impartial and sincere. The harvest of justice is sown in peace for those who cultivate peace (Jas. 3:17-18).*

The teachings of the Church, moreover, offer a vision of hope, where justice and mercy abound, because God is the infinite source of all goodness and love. With this wisdom and hope, we can find a way to bend down as the Good Samaritan did, through the fear and divisions, to touch and heal the wounds.

May God bless you as you consider and pray over these challenging decisions. May God bless our nation with true wisdom, peace, and mutual forgiveness, that we may decide together, through our democratic processes, to uphold the dignity of life and the common good.

This bulletin insert along with five others was approved by the body of U.S. bishops in November 2023. Find this and more complementary resources at [www.faithfulcitizenship.org](http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org).

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<sup>1</sup> *Gaudium et Spes (The Church in the Modern World)*, no. 16. See also, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1785.

## The Role of the Church in American Political Life



*The Church is the body of Christ, who reigns as king over all Creation. Everything, including political life, belongs to Jesus Christ, and so participation in political life belongs to the mission of the Church. Our mandate is to 'go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation' (Mk 16:15). . . . Here, 'the creation' refers to every aspect of human life. . . . 'Nothing human can be alien to it.'*

Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium*, no. 181, quoting *Aparecida Document*, no. 380

Our national tradition of religious freedom permits and encourages all people of faith to bring the insights of their religious traditions to bear on political matters. As Pope Francis affirmed during his visit to the U.S., “Religious liberty, by its nature, transcends places of worship and the private sphere of individuals and families.... Religion itself, the religious dimension, is not a subculture; it is part of the culture of every people and every nation.”<sup>1</sup>

“If society is to have a future, it must respect the truth of our human dignity and submit to that truth. . . . A society is noble and decent not least for its support of the pursuit of truth and its adherence to the most basic of truths” (*Fratelli Tutti*, no. 207). The truths that guide public life can be known by natural reason. The sanctity of human life, the equal dignity of all individuals, the obligation to protect the vulnerable, the nature and purposes of sex, marriage, and family—these are not exclusively “religious” truths, but truths that all people of goodwill can come to know without the aid of revelation. Our Catholic faith sheds light on these truths, and so we have a duty to bring that light to our nation.

“The truth is something we receive, not something we make. We can only judge using the conscience we have, but our judgments do not make things true.”

### Many Parts, All One Body

The bishops and their pastoral collaborators each have distinct roles in the Church’s mission. The bishops have the responsibility to govern the society of the Church, hand on doctrine and tradition, and administer the sacraments. The laity are called to bring the gospel to bear on the world. While many laity are involved in roles of leadership and service within the Church, it remains primarily the role of the laity to advocate for justice, to serve in public office, and to inform daily life with the gospel. “The direct duty to work for a just ordering of society is proper to the lay faithful” (*Deus Caritas Est*, no. 29).

Participation in political life requires judgments about concrete circumstances. While bishops together with their coworkers help form the laity in accordance with basic principles, they do not tell the laity to vote for particular candidates. On these often complex matters, it is the laity’s responsibility to form their consciences and grow in the virtue of prudence to approach the many and varied issues of the day with the mind of Christ.



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## Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship

Conscience is “a judgment of reason” by which one determines whether an action is right or wrong (see *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1778). It does not allow us to justify doing whatever we want, nor is it a mere “feeling.” Conscience—properly formed according to God’s revelation and the teaching of the Church—is a means by which one listens to God and discerns how to act in accordance with the truth.<sup>2</sup> The truth is something we receive, not something we make. We can only judge using the conscience we have, but our judgments do not make things true.

It is our responsibility to learn more of Catholic teaching and tradition, to participate in Church life, to learn from trustworthy sources about the issues facing our communities, and to do our best to make wise judgments about candidates and government actions. These decisions should take into account a candidate’s commitments, character, integrity, and ability to influence a given issue. Thus equipped, and further impelled by our sense of patriotism, we exercise our right and duty to vote and otherwise to participate actively in public life.<sup>3</sup> By forming our consciences for faithful citizenship, we can better pursue the common good and thus obey the command of our Lord to love our neighbors.

This bulletin insert along with five others was approved by the body of U.S. bishops in November 2023.

Find this and more complementary resources at [www.faithfulcitizenship.org](http://www.faithfulcitizenship.org).

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<sup>1</sup> Pope Francis, Meeting for Religious Liberty with Hispanic Community and Other Immigrants, September 26, 2015.

<sup>2</sup> *Gaudium et Spes (The Church in the Modern World)*, no. 16. See also, *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1785.

<sup>3</sup> *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, nos. 2239-40.

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# Dignity of the Human Person



In their statement on *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the Catholic bishops of the United States identify the four main principles of the Church's social teaching and apply them to some concrete issues. This is not to tell the faithful for whom or against whom to vote, but instead to help them form their consciences in accordance with God's truth as they approach this often-challenging decision. The four main principles are the Dignity of the Human Person, the Common Good, Solidarity, and Subsidiarity. They are all inter-related. This bulletin focuses on the **Dignity of the Human Person**, and the other three principles are covered in three other bulletins in this series.

Because each human person is created in the image and likeness of God, each one of us possesses innate and inviolable human dignity. This dignity is present in each person from the moment of their conception and throughout their lives. As Pope Francis has emphasized, human dignity is central to building a society in which we are "brothers and sisters all."<sup>1</sup>

**"The dignity of the human person is the foundation for a moral vision of society."**

*Every human being has the right to live with dignity and to develop integrally; this fundamental right cannot be denied by any country. People have this right even if they are unproductive, or were born with or developed limitations. This does not detract from their great dignity as human persons, a dignity based not on circumstances but on the intrinsic worth of their being. Unless this basic principle is upheld, there will be no future either for fraternity or for the survival of humanity.*<sup>2</sup>

Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no. 107

The dignity of the human person is the foundation for a moral vision of society. As we seek to imitate the Good Samaritan and become neighbor to all, we must work to protect the dignity of all, especially those who are most vulnerable.

As we engage in the public square with a well-formed conscience:

- We work to protect the most vulnerable—children in the womb who are in danger of abortion—while also standing in radical solidarity with mothers.<sup>3</sup> Building on their bond of flesh and kinship, and on the network of family, neighbor, and community relationships in which they are situated, the Church actively assists mothers and their children to have a brighter future.

- We continue to protect the dignity of our sister or brother who is elderly, disabled, or ill by strongly rejecting euthanasia and assisted suicide. These practices are symptoms of a "throw-away culture," in which children of God of inestimable worth are cast aside as worthless.<sup>4</sup>

- Likewise, we must recognize the inherent dignity of the migrant and refugee. In our country now, that means comprehensive immigra-

tion reform that offers a path to citizenship, treats immigrant workers fairly, prevents the separation of families, maintains the integrity of our borders, respects the rule of law, and addresses the factors that compel people to leave their own countries.

- We support the dignity of the person, created male or female; therefore, we oppose a gender ideology that fails to recognize the difference and reciprocity between man and woman.<sup>5</sup>

- Racism attacks the dignity of the human person by denying that we are all equally made in the image of God, so we must overcome racism in our hearts as well as in our systems and institutions.<sup>6</sup>

- We continue to seek reform of the criminal justice system and to end the use of the death penalty. We support common sense measures to reduce gun violence.<sup>7</sup>

- Finally, we seek to prevent and remedy any aspects of an "economy of exclusion,"<sup>8</sup> which "does not hesitate to exploit, discard, and even kill human beings,"<sup>9</sup> and to work instead toward an "economy of communion" rooted in ethical concern.<sup>10</sup>

"Social friendship and universal fraternity" Pope Francis writes, "necessarily call for an acknowledgement of the worth of every human person, always and everywhere."<sup>11</sup> Through our political participation, our accompaniment of those in need, and the witness of our daily lives, may we support the worth of every person, created in God's image.

This bulletin insert along with five others was approved by the body of U.S. bishops in November 2023.

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1 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti (On Fraternity and Social Friendship)*, no. 8.

2 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no. 107. See also: Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate (Charity in Truth)*, no. 45.

3 USCCB, "Letter and Policy Recommendations Supporting Women and Children," October 26, 2022.

4 St. John Paul II, *Evangelium Vitae (The Gospel of Life)*, nos. 8, 15, 18, 23, 94. See also: Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* nos. 18-21.

5 Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love)*, no. 56.

6 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love*, 3-8.

7 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, nos. 263-270. See also: *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, no. 84.

8 Pope Francis, *Evangelii Gaudium (Joy of the Gospel)*, no. 53.

9 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no. 22.

10 Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, nos. 45-47.

11 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no. 106.

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In their statement on *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the Catholic bishops of the United States identify the four main principles of the Church's social teaching and apply them to some concrete issues. This is not to tell the faithful for whom or against whom to vote, but instead to help them form their consciences in accordance with God's truth as they approach this often-challenging decision. The four main principles are the Dignity of the Human Person, the Common Good, Solidarity, and Subsidiarity. They are all inter-related. This bulletin focuses on **the Common Good**, and the other three principles are covered in three other bulletins in this series.

The Common Good is "the sum total of social conditions which allow people, either as groups or as individuals, to reach their fulfillment more fully and more easily."<sup>1</sup> Human dignity is respected and the common good is fostered only if human rights are protected and basic responsibilities are met. Every human being has a right to life, a right to religious freedom, and a right to have access to those things required for human decency.

Corresponding to these rights are duties and responsibilities—to ourselves, to our families, to the larger society, and to the earth.<sup>2</sup> In short, we should seek "to build that kind of society where it is easier for people to be good."<sup>3</sup>

In the midst of a "throwaway world" in which some members of the human family "can be readily sacrificed for the sake of others considered worthy of a carefree existence," Pope Francis urges us to build a "culture of encounter" in which those most in need receive our greatest concern and attention. We must "place at the center of all political, social and economic activity the human person, who enjoys the highest dignity, and respect for the common good."<sup>4</sup>

As we seek to imitate the Good Samaritan, who was neighbor to all, we pursue the Common Good in order that every individual and all people can flourish.<sup>5</sup>

"In short, we should seek 'to build that kind of society where it is easier for people to be good.'"

- Marriage and the family are the central institutions of social life – the primary school of virtue, where we first experience common rather than merely individual goods – and so these institutions should be supported and strengthened.

- Likewise, as one human family dwelling in our common home, we must hear "both the cry of the earth and the cry of the poor" and respond to climate change with actions to better protect creation for our brothers and sisters now and in generations to come.<sup>6</sup>

- Accepting the entire world as a gift from the Father, and as our common home includes accepting our bodies as God's gift, whereas thinking that we enjoy absolute power over our own bodies turns, often subtly, into thinking that we enjoy absolute power over creation.<sup>7</sup>

- We recognize and protect the right to religious liberty, our first and most cherished freedom. The protection of conscience and religious liberty is an indispensable element of the common good – a fundamental human right that knows no geographical boundaries.<sup>8</sup>

- While the common good embraces all, those who are weak, vulnerable, and most in need deserve special concern, which the Church describes as the *preferential option for the poor*.<sup>9</sup> Laws and policies must prioritize those who struggle to make ends meet and must preserve the social safety net and promote decent jobs, affordable housing, and childcare.

Pope Benedict XVI writes in *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth): "To desire the common good and strive towards it is a requirement of justice and charity." We must be attentive to the common good "juridically, civilly, politically and culturally" in the life of society. "The more we strive to secure a common good corresponding to the real needs of our neighbors," he writes, "the more effectively we love them."<sup>10</sup>

This bulletin insert along with five others was approved by the body of U.S. bishops in November 2023.

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1 *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1906, citing *Gaudium et Spes (The Church in the Modern World)*, no. 26.

2 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, nos. 49, 51.

3 Peter Maurin, as quoted by Dorothy Day. See *All the Way to Heaven: The Selected Letters of Dorothy Day* (New York: Random House, 2010), 457.

4 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti (On Fraternity and Social Friendship)*, nos. 18 and 232.

5 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti (On Fraternity and Social Friendship)*, no. 66.

6 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si' (On Care for Our Common Home)*, no. 49. See also: Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate (Charity in Truth)*, nos. 48-52, and Pope Francis, *Laudate Deum*, nos. 58 and 60.

7 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si' (On Care for Our Common Home)*, no. 155.

8 St. Pope Paul VI, *Dignitatis Humanae (Declaration on Religious Freedom)*, no. 6; *Catechism of the Catholic Church*, no. 1907, citing *Gaudium et Spes (The Church in the Modern World)*, no. 26.

9 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, no 53.

10 Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 7.

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## “In imitation of the Good Samaritan, we seek to be neighbor to all.”

We seek policies that “welcome, protect, promote, and integrate” migrants and refugees who arrive at our borders, and which aid development in countries of origin.<sup>9</sup>

Racism is an obstacle to solidarity, and we strive to root it out not only by examining our hearts individually, but also by looking critically at our policies and institutions.<sup>10</sup>

In a culture that overemphasizes the accumulation of wealth, we must not forget our “obligation to ensure that every person lives with dignity and has sufficient opportunities for his or her integral development.”<sup>11</sup>

As we seek to foster solidarity in hearts and policies, let us pray with Pope Francis in *Fratelli Tutti*:

*Lord, Father of our human family . . . Move us to create healthier societies and a more dignified world, a world without hunger, poverty, violence and war. Amen.*<sup>12</sup>

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Solidarity is “a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to . . . the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all.”<sup>1</sup> We are one human family, whatever our national, racial, ethnic, economic, and ideological differences. The person is social in nature; we develop and flourish within a community. As baptized members of the community of the Church, we are part of one body in Christ and we are also part of one global human family.<sup>2</sup>

In *Fratelli Tutti* (On Fraternity and Social Friendship) Pope Francis places solidarity at the center of what it means to cultivate social friendship as one family:

*Solidarity means much more than engaging in sporadic acts of generosity. It means thinking and acting in terms of community. It means that the lives of all are prior to the appropriation of goods by a few. It also means combatting the structural causes of poverty, inequality, the lack of work, land, and housing, the denial of social and labor rights.*<sup>3</sup>

Thus, solidarity affects not only the goals we pursue in public life, but also the way we pursue them—ever mindful that we are all brothers and sisters, all children of God.

### “Solidarity requires that in our prayer and in our political engagement, those who are weak, vulnerable, and most in need receive preferential concern.”

Solidarity requires that in our prayer and in our political engagement, those who are weak, vulnerable, and most in need receive preferential concern.

In imitation of the Good Samaritan, we seek to be neighbor to all. We are called to practice “radical solidarity” by accompanying pregnant women to choose life and by offering support to new mothers and their children.<sup>5</sup> As neighbors to all, we also advocate for families affected by poverty, unemployment, or illness, individuals struggling with mental illness or addiction, the elderly and those with disabilities, and all whose livelihoods and homes are endangered by climate change.<sup>6</sup>

In countries ravaged by war, such as Ukraine, West Africa, and the Middle East, we must “touch the wounded flesh of the victims” and support efforts for relief and peace,<sup>7</sup> while also working collaboratively to reduce and eliminate nuclear weapons.<sup>8</sup>

1 *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 193, quoting St. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis* (On Social Concerns), no. 38. (See Mt 10:40-42, 20:25; Mk 10:42-45; Lk 22:25-27.)

2 Benedict XVI, *Deus Caritas Est* (God is Love), no. 25b. See also: USCCB, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, nos. 52-54.

3 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti* (On Fraternity and Social Friendship), no. 116, quoting *Address to Participants in the Meeting of Popular Movements* (October 28, 2014).

4 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no. 80.

5 USCCB Chairmen, “Letter and Policy Recommendations Supporting Women and Children,” October 26, 2022.

6 Pope Francis, *Laudato Si’* (On Care for Our Common Home), nos. 25, 48-49. See also: Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate* (Charity in Truth), nos. 48-52, and Pope Francis, *Laudate Deum*, no. 31.

7 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no. 261.

8 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no. 262. See also: St. John Paul II, *Sollicitudo Rei Socialis*, nos. 23-24.

9 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, nos. 129 and 132. See also: Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate*, no. 62.

10 United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, *Open Wide Our Hearts: The Enduring Call to Love*, a Pastoral Letter Against Racism, 2018. See also: *Fratelli Tutti*, nos. 20, 41, and 97.

11 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no. 118.

12 Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti*, no. 287.

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## Subsidiarity



In their statement on *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, the Catholic bishops of the United States identify the four main principles of the Church's social teaching and apply them to some concrete issues. This is not to tell the faithful for whom or against whom to vote, but instead to help them form their consciences in accordance with God's truth as they approach this often-challenging decision. The four main principles are the Dignity of the Human Person, the Common Good, Solidarity, and Subsidiarity. They are all inter-related. This bulletin focuses on **Subsidiarity**, and the other three principles are covered in three other bulletins in this series.

The principle of Subsidiarity reminds us that larger institutions in society (such as the state or federal government) should not overwhelm or interfere with smaller or local institutions (such as the family, local schools, or the Church community). Yet larger institutions have essential responsibilities when local institutions cannot adequately protect human dignity, meet human needs, or advance the common good.<sup>1</sup> Subsidiarity reflects the essential freedom and innate human dignity of each person while also recognizing the role higher authorities, such as government, can play to ensure that all people are able to thrive.

Respecting this principle promotes the flourishing of each individual person and the realization of the common good. As Pope Francis has explained, the principle of Subsidiarity "allows everyone to assume his or her own role in the healing and destiny of society."<sup>2</sup> By participating in public life locally, each person and the voluntary associations of civil society to which they belong can be "leaven," bringing "enrichment" to neighbors, to communities, and to society as a whole.<sup>3</sup>

**"Respecting this principle promotes the flourishing of each individual person and the realization of the common good."**

As we assist the faithful to take up the call to be "leaven" in society, we seek policies that allow individuals and communities to flourish.

- As the bishops teach in *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, "Family—based on marriage between a man and a woman—is the first and most fundamental unit of society: a sanctuary for the creation and nurturing of children. It should be defended and strengthened, not redefined, undermined, or further distorted."<sup>4</sup>

- It is important to uphold parents' rights and responsibilities to care for their children, including the right to direct their children's education in accordance with their convictions, with support rather than interference from the state.<sup>5</sup> These include the rights of parents to send their child to the school of their choice, and to protect their child from "gender ideology" at school.

- Moreover, laws, programs, and initiatives should strengthen the social safety net and improve family stability. For example, parents should receive support through work, training, assistance with child-care, health-care, housing and transportation.<sup>6</sup> The Earned Income Tax Credit and child tax credits continue to be important vehicles to help low-income families out of poverty.

- The Church's special concern for the poor requires the pursuit of social and economic policies which foster jobs with decent working

conditions and just wages, and which support the rights of workers, including the ability to organize and bargain collectively without reprisal.<sup>7</sup>

As we pursue the principle of Subsidiarity in our public policies, we pray for all families and for those in poverty, and we support their efforts to exercise their rights and responsibilities in society.

**"As we assist the faithful to take up the call to be "leaven" in society, we seek policies that allow individuals and communities to flourish."**

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<sup>1</sup> USCCB, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, nos. 47-48. See also: *Centesimus Annus (The Hundredth Year)*, no. 48; *Dignitatis Humanae (Declaration on Religious Freedom)*, nos. 4-6, and *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, no. 185.

<sup>2</sup> Pope Francis, General Audience, "Catechesis 'Healing the World': 8. Subsidiarity and the Virtue of Hope," Sept. 23, 2020. See also: Pope Benedict XVI, *Caritas in Veritate (Charity in Truth)*, no. 57.

<sup>3</sup> Pope Francis, *Fratelli Tutti (On Fraternity and Social Friendship)*, no. 142.

<sup>4</sup> USCCB, *Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship*, no. 46.

<sup>5</sup> Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia (The Joy of Love)*, no. 84.

<sup>6</sup> See Pope Francis, *Amoris Laetitia*, nos. 25, 44, on the need for family support through dignified employment, education, health-care and housing.

<sup>7</sup> St. John Paul II, *Centesimus Annus*, nos. 7-8, 35. See also: *Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church*, nos. 301-309.



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- Develop ways to foster and strengthen you resiliency
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# Mission is Common Goal of Synod and Ecumenism, Pope Says

By **Cindy Wooden,**  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS)

— Halfway through the Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis and synod participants prayed that God would “remove the divisions between Christians” so that they could proclaim the Gospel together.

The pope presided over a candlelight vigil Oct. 11, the anniversary of the opening of the Second Vatican Council in 1962, and texts from council documents introduced the prayers of praise and the prayers of petition.

The synod participants at the prayer service included the 16 “fraternal delegates” representing Orthodox, Anglican and Protestant churches, as well as the Rome-based representatives of the Anglican, Methodist and Reformed churches to the Holy See and other Christian ministers and faithful in the city.

Pope Francis did not read the meditation he prepared for the service, although it was distributed and published on the Vatican website.

Halfway through the Synod of Bishops, Pope Francis wrote, participants wanted to “express our shame at the scandal of division among Christians, the scandal of our failure to bear common witness to the Lord Jesus.”

“This synod is an opportunity to do better, to overcome the walls that still exist between us,” the pope wrote.

The vigil took place in the Square of the Roman Protomartyrs, just south of St. Peter’s Basilica, which is the site where St. Peter and other Christians were martyred in the first century under the Emperor Nero.

The setting, the pope wrote, should “remind us that today, too, in many parts of the world, Chris-



Led by children, Pope Francis arrives for an ecumenical prayer service with participants in the Synod of Bishops Oct. 11 in the Square of the Roman Protomartyrs at the Vatican. The square, just south of St. Peter’s Basilica, is the site where St. Peter and other Christians were martyred in the first century under the Emperor Nero.

CNS photo/Vatican Media

tians of different traditions are laying down their lives together for their faith in Jesus Christ, embodying an ecumenism of blood.”

“Their witness speaks more powerfully than any words, because unity is born of the cross of the Lord,” Pope Francis said.

Noting the anniversary of Vatican II, he said the council “marked the official entry of the Catholic Church into the ecumenical movement,” which was begun by mainline Protestant churches out of a conviction that the lack of unity among Christians was harming their ability to preach the Gospel.

The goal of the work for Christian unity is the same as the goal for the synod on synodality, Pope Francis

wrote. Both are focused on the mission Jesus gave to all his disciples to share the good news of salvation with everyone.

And, he said, in both ecumenical dialogue and the synodal process, “it is not so much a matter of creating something as it is of welcoming and making fruitful the gift we have already received” and sharing God-given gifts with each other for the benefit

of all.

“Just as we do not know beforehand what the outcome of the synod will be, neither do we know exactly what the unity to which we are called will be like,” he said. However, Christians know that unity will be a gift of the Holy Spirit, and it will not destroy all differences between them, but allow diversity to enrich everyone.

Like the effort to make

the Catholic Church more synodal — marked by respectful listening to the Spirit and each other and by a shared commitment to mission — the search for Christian unity, the pope said, “is a journey: it grows gradually as it progresses. It grows through mutual service, through the dialogue of life, through the cooperation of all Christians that ‘sets in clearer relief the features of Christ the Servant.’”

“We need to pursue the path of unity by virtue of our love for Christ and for all the people we are called to serve,” Pope Francis wrote. “As we travel along this path, let us never allow difficulties to stop us! Let us trust the Holy Spirit, who draws us to unity in the harmony of a multifaceted diversity.”

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# Madonna One of 40 W.Va. High Schools Recognized for Outstanding Efforts to Help Students Plan for College

**ROANOKE** — Principals, counselors, and staff from 40 high schools across West Virginia were recognized Oct. 11 for their efforts to inform students of higher education opportunities after graduation. The “Champion of College Access and Success” recognition awards are annually presented by the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission and the Council for Community and Technical Education to select schools that foster a college and career readiness culture within their communities.

Madonna High School in Weirton was the only Catholic school to receive the award.

Representatives from the Champion schools attended an award ceremony at Stonewall Resort in conjunction with a statewide summit focused on affordable college and career pathways. The three-day summit culminated with this celebration, where Champion school representatives networked with higher education professionals to share their best practices, as well as challenges students are facing when deciding to pursue postsecondary education.

“The Champion for College Access and Success award recognizes schools and administrators who go the extra mile to ensure students have the tools and resources to be successful in their education endeavors after high school,” said Dr. Sarah Armstrong Tucker,

West Virginia’s chancellor of Higher Education. “Despite challenges related to the new FAFSA, these Champion schools understand that education beyond high school is vital to student success – and I am so grateful for their tireless work to help their students succeed.”

For high schools to be considered a Champion of College Access and Success, they must participate in and meet specific criteria for three college-planning milestone events during the school year:

- 1) College Application and Exploration Week
- 2) Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Completion Campaign
- 3) College Decision Day Initiative

Each milestone has specific components to help college-bound students in West Virginia prepare for and transition to college. The Higher Education Policy Commission and the West Virginia Council for Community and Technical Education provide financial aid and college application information, training and support to high schools, and event-planning assistance.

For more information about Champions of College Access and Success and college planning events, visit the College for West Virginia website at [cfwvconnect.com/champion](http://cfwvconnect.com/champion).

College for West Virginia is the student services face of the Higher Education Policy Commission and the Council for Community and Technical Education.



Courtesy photo  
Jason Heckathorn, principal of Madonna High School in Weirton (right), and Amy Granato, college guidance and campus ministry director at the school, accept an award from the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission at the luncheon & ceremony at Stonewall Resort Oct. 11. Only 40 high schools in West Virginia were awarded this distinction and Madonna was the only Catholic school.

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Contact the Director, Gerri Wright at 304.342.0507 or gwright@dwc.org to schedule an interview or for more information.

## Director of Music Ministries Needed

The Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart located in Charleston, West Virginia is looking for a pastoral musician. Responsibilities include overseeing the selection of music for liturgies, substituting for our organist, directing the choir, cantoring when necessary, preparing worship aids and expanding our current music program. Candidates should have a BA degree or higher in a music field, or other field, if musically trained, excellent organ/keyboards/choral conducting skills and vocal technique and be familiar with music notation software. A practicing Catholic is preferred but not required; candidates must be of the Christian faith with willingness to learn about and genuinely support others in their Catholic faith. Conversant with a variety of liturgical styles including contemporary, classical, and traditional. Must demonstrate a commitment to use a blended approach to liturgical music that encourages the assembly to sing. Working hours are flexible and include weekends and some evenings. Complete job description available upon request. Please send résumés to: Bernadette McMasters Kime, Office of Worship and Sacraments, PO. Box 230, Wheeling, WV 26003 or email bkime@dwc.org. Résumé submissions will be accepted until the position is filled.



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- Has authored hundreds of articles and several publications
- Was one of the 4-member team who wrote the Leader's Guide to accompany the U.S. Bishops' Pastoral Plan for Adult Faith Formation, Our Hearts Were Burning Within Us
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# La misión es el objetivo común del sínodo y el ecumenismo, dice el Papa

Por Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service

**CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS)** —A mitad del Sínodo de los Obispos, el Papa Francisco y los participantes en el Sínodo rezaron para que Dios "elimine las divisiones entre los cristianos" y puedan proclamar juntos el Evangelio.

El Papa presidió una vigilia el 11 de octubre, aniversario de la apertura del Concilio Vaticano II en 1962, y los textos de los documentos conciliares introdujeron las oraciones de alabanza y las oraciones de petición.

Entre los participantes del Sínodo en el servicio de oración se encontraban los 16 "delegados fraternos" que representaban a las iglesias ortodoxa, anglicana y protestante, así como los representantes en Roma de las iglesias anglicana, metodista y reformada ante la Santa Sede y otros ministros y fieles cristianos de la ciudad.

El Papa Francisco no leyó la meditación que había preparado para el servicio, aunque fue distribuida y publicada en el sitio web del Vaticano.

A esta altura del Sínodo de los Obispos, escribió el Papa Francisco, los participantes querían expresar "nuestra vergüenza por el escándalo de la división entre los cristianos, por el escándalo de no dar, unidos, testimonio del Señor Jesús".

"Este sínodo es una oportunidad para mejorar, superando los muros que aún existen entre nosotros", escribió el Papa.

La vigilia tuvo lugar en la Plaza de los Protomártires Romanos, justo al sur de la Basílica de San Pedro, que es el lugar donde San Pedro y otros cristianos fueron martirizados en el siglo I bajo el emperador Nerón.

Estos protomártires, escribió el Papa, "nos recuerdan que hoy, en muchas partes del mundo, cristianos de diferentes tradiciones dan su vida juntos por la fe en Jesucristo, viviendo el ecumenismo de sangre".

"Su testimonio es más fuerte que cualquier palabra, porque la unidad proviene de la Cruz del Señor", dijo el Papa Francisco.

Al recordar el aniversario del Concilio Vaticano II, dijo que el concilio "marcó el ingreso oficial de la Iglesia católica en el movimiento ecuménico", que fue iniciado por las principales iglesias protestantes a partir de la convicción de que la falta de unidad entre los cristianos estaba perjudicando su capacidad de predicar el Evangelio.

El objetivo del trabajo por la unidad de los cristianos es el mismo que el del sínodo sobre la

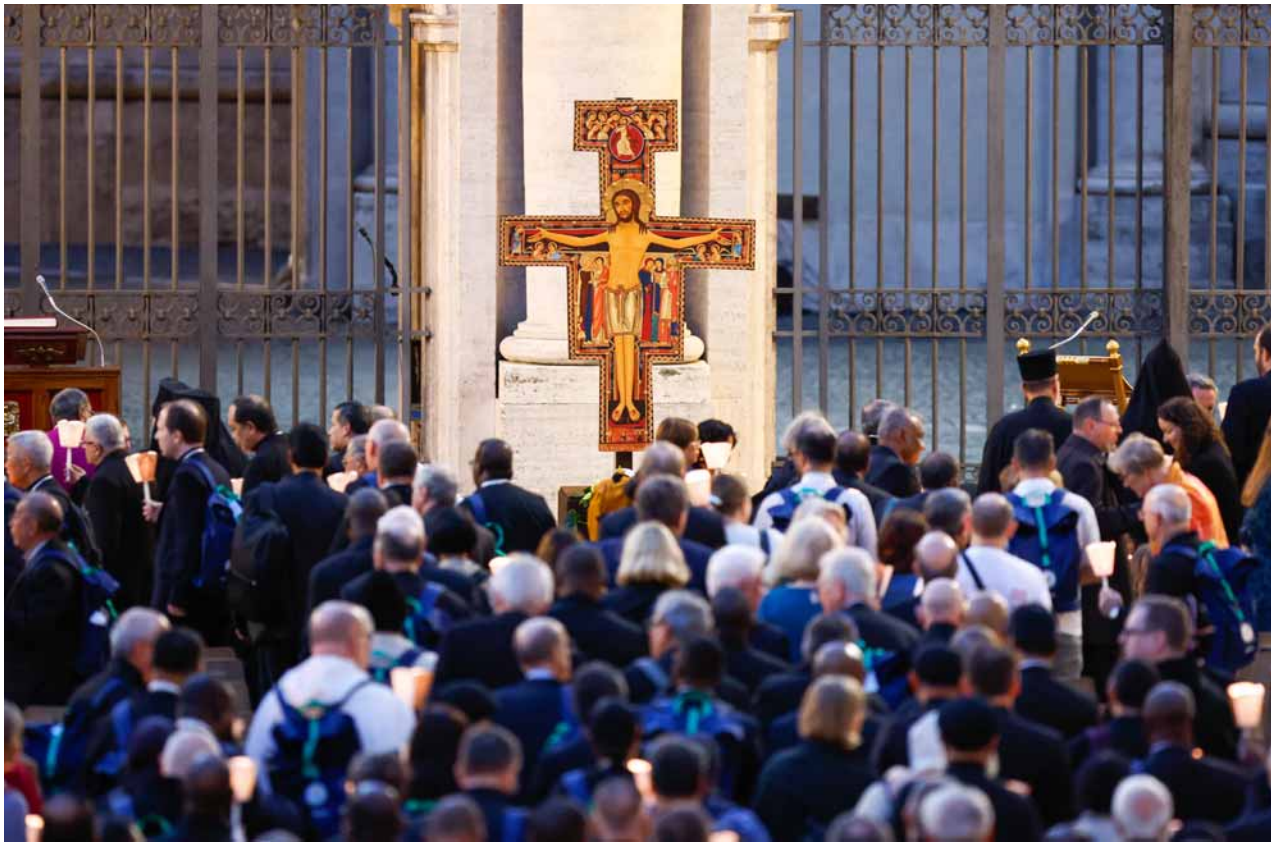


Foto CNS/Lola Gómez

**Miembros del Sínodo de los Obispos se reúnen con el Papa Francisco para una vigilia ecuménica con los participantes en el Sínodo de los Obispos el 11 de octubre de 2024, en la Plaza de los Protomártires Romanos del Vaticano. La plaza, justo al sur de la Basílica de San Pedro, es el lugar donde San Pedro y otros cristianos fueron martirizados en el siglo I bajo el emperador Nerón.**

sinodalidad, escribió el Papa Francisco. Ambos se centran en la misión que Jesús dio a todos sus discípulos de compartir la buena nueva de la salvación con todas las personas.

Y, dijo, tanto en el diálogo ecuménico como en el proceso sinodal, "no se trata de construir algo sino de acoger y hacer producir el don que ya hemos recibido" y compartir los dones que Dios nos ha dado unos con otros en beneficio de todos.

"Como no conocemos con anticipación cuál va a ser el resultado del sínodo, tampoco sabemos exactamente cómo será la unidad a la que estamos llamados", afirmó. Sin embargo, los cristianos saben que la unidad será un don del Espíritu Santo, y no destruirá todas las diferencias entre ellos, sino que permitirá que la diversidad enriquezca a todos.

Al igual que el esfuerzo por hacer que la Igle-

sia Católica sea más sinodal -- marcada por una escucha respetuosa del Espíritu Santo y de los demás y por un compromiso compartido con la misión --, la búsqueda de la unidad de los cristianos, dijo el Papa, "es un camino: madura con el movimiento, caminando. Crece con el servicio recíproco, con el diálogo de la vida, con la colaboración de todos los cristianos que 'presenta con luz más radiante la imagen de Cristo Siervo'".

"Tenemos necesidad de recorrer el sendero de la unidad en virtud de nuestro amor a Cristo y a todas las personas a las que estamos llamados a servir", escribió el Papa Francisco. "A lo largo de este camino, ¡nunca nos dejemos paralizar por las dificultades! Tengamos confianza en el Espíritu Santo, que nos impulsa hacia la unidad en una armonía de (multifacética) diversidad".

## Para denunciar presuntos casos de abuso sexual de niños:

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

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

**Para informar a las autoridades diocesanas:** La diócesis alienta a informar a las autoridades civiles apropiadas, ante todo, si se ha cometido un delito. La diócesis también alienta a informar a las autoridades eclesásticas 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 Sor Martha Gómez, ext. 264. También puede llamar a la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro de la Diócesis al

304.230.1504. También puede llamar a la línea directa de abuso sexual de la Diócesis al 833.230.5656. Los formularios de queja están disponibles en línea en [www.dwc.org](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 Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, al 304.559.6742.

Además de los métodos enumerados anteriormente para denunciar el abuso sexual, la Diócesis también se ha asociado con Navex Global para ofrecer la plataforma EthicsPoint para informar otras inquietudes adicionales, como sospecha de mala conducta financiera, profesional y personal de un sacerdote, diacono, 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.



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