

THE CATHOLIC

Spirit

Enrollment Increase is ‘a Testament to Our Schools,’ Interim Superintendent Says



Courtesy Photo

Bishop Mark Brennan cuts the ribbon to officially open the new STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) Lab at St. Paul School in Weirton Aug. 30. With him are, from left, SPS students Riley Lallone, Ally Osleger, and Liam Morris; Jennifer Hornyak, interim superintendent of the diocese's Catholic Schools; Mallory Osleger, 3-year-old preschool aide; and SPS students Benny Feesler, Lilah DeSimone, and Keegan Osleger. In the back, at right, are Father Binu Sebastian, pastor; and Principal Jamie Lesho.

By Colleen Rowan

WEST VIRGINIA— Enrollment is up in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's Catholic schools, preliminary numbers show.

"We're in a state that's

losing population and we've actually increased by 127 students so far, which I believe is a testament to our schools," said Jennifer Hornyak, interim superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of

Wheeling-Charleston. "We are doing great things and people want to be part of it. They want to be part of our academic success. They want a safe environment for their students, and they want the Catholic faith to

be center."

This is evident through the number of families that are choosing the diocese's Catholic schools through the West Virginia Hope Scholarship. Last year, 400 students enrolled in dioc-

esan schools were receiving the Hope Scholarship. This year, the number has risen to 932 students.

The Hope Scholarship gives the state's parents the power to choose which
See "Schools" on Page 3

Theology of the Body K-12 Curriculum Introduced in Diocese's Catholic Schools This Year

By Colleen Rowan

WEST VIRGINIA—A program that helps children and teens understand and grow in their "God-given identity" is being introduced in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's Catholic schools this year. Theology of the Body K-12, a program by the Ruah Woods Institute in Cincinnati, is based on

St. John Paul II's series of talks about sexuality called Theology of the Body.

The institute's website states, "Our K-12 foundational curriculum equips teachers and parents with church-approved tools for forming boys and girls in their God-given identity. REVEALED/ROOTED (age-appropriate lessons)

brings to life Pope St. John Paul II's Theology of the Body in the context of our modern world. Through this curriculum, children gain an understanding of who God is, who they are as image-bearers of God, male or female, and how they fit into the world."

In announcing the implementation of the program in West Virgin-

ia's Catholic schools, Bishop Mark Brennan discussed its necessity in a letter to "colleagues in the educational ministry of the church." This included parents as the diocese's Catholic schools recognize parents as partners in their children's education.

"We live in a very polarized
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Diocesan Official Appointments

Bishop Mark E. Brennan has made public the following appointments:

Father John Rice is reappointed as district friar to the West Virginia State Council of the 4th Degree of the Knights of Columbus. This is in addition to his current assignment as pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish in Parkersburg.

Father Nye "Joseph" Wiley is appointed chaplain to Council #12830 of the Knights of Columbus for the Fraternal Year 2023-2024, effective immediately. This is in addition to his current assignment as administrator of Corpus Christi Parish in Wheeling.

Father Sojan Xavier is appointed chaplain of Council #4694 of the Knights of Columbus for the current Fraternal Year 2023-2024, effective immediately. This is in addition to his assignment as administrator of St. Francis of Assisi Parish in St. Albans.

Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston CONFIRMATION SCHEDULE

Fall 2023

**Bishop Mark E. Brennan,
Celebrant**

Sunday, September 17: St. Stephen, Ona; 4:00 p.m.

Tuesday, September 19: Our Lady of Mercy Mission, Parsons; 5:00 p.m.

Monday, October 23: Sacred Heart, Chester; 6:00 p.m.

Saturday, November 4: St. Francis Xavier, Parkersburg; 5:00 p.m.

Sunday, November 19: Sacred Heart, Bluefield; 9:00 a.m.

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

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

To Report to Diocesan Authorities: The diocese encourages reporting to the appropriate civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. The diocese also encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities.

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

To Report to the Diocese's Victim Assistance Coordinator: please call Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, at 304.559.6742. In addition to the methods listed above for reporting sexual abuse, the Diocese also has partnered with Navex Global to offer the EthicsPoint platform to report other, additional concerns, such as suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, reli-

gious, or lay employee of the Diocese or any Catholic parish or school in West Virginia. The EthicsPoint platform can be accessed via www.dwc.org, under "Accountability", then "Report Misconduct" or by calling 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint is a third-party reporting system that reports to civil authorities

where applicable and Diocesan authorities, and the identity of the person reporting is protected. Links and information: WV Department of Health and Human Resources: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. West Virginia State Police, Crimes Against Children Unit: 304-293-6400.



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Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) requires that all Dioceses/Eparchies have in place a Safe Environment Program for the protection of children and young people.

In accordance with these requirements, the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's Safe Environment Program consists of the following components for persons seeking employment or to volunteer—directly or indirectly—

with children: background check; receipt of the Diocese's Policy Relating to Sexual Abuse of Children; and sexual abuse awareness training for adults. Sexual abuse awareness training may be completed online or via live workshop.

For more information on the Office of Safe Environment, please go to www.dwc.org, click "Diocese", then "Offices," then "Office of Safe Environment."

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School...

Cont'd from Page 1

school will best serve their children's needs. They can choose private schools, private religious schools, or homeschool.

"It's a sign of hope for West Virginia families that they have a choice," Hornyak said about the scholarship, "and they're choosing us."

A number of the diocese's schools have much to celebrate this year. On Aug. 17, St. Joseph School in Martinsburg expanded to accommodate its growing enrollment by officially opening a new middle school for the almost 100 students in grades six through eight.

On Aug. 30, Bishop Brennan cut the ribbon to officially open the new STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Mathematics) Lab at St. Paul School in Weirton. Students in kindergarten through sixth grade will be in the lab weekly for STEM class.

Three of the diocese's schools have new principals—Adrienne Manning at St. Michael Parish School in Wheeling, John Riley at St. Patrick School in Weston, and Nikki Kurten at Sacred Heart Grade School in Charleston.

Bishop Brennan is once again visiting diocesan schools to help welcome students to a new school year. He celebrates Masses for the school communities, tours facilities and classrooms, and engages in discussions with students on his visits.

His first stop was at St. Francis de Sales School in Beckley Aug. 24. Later that day he spent time at SS. Peter and Paul Catholic School in Oak Hill, where he blessed statues outside of the school. The next day he was farther north with a visit to Fairmont Catholic School. It was then on to Clarksburg's Notre Dame High School and St. Mary Central School Aug. 29, and the next day at St. Paul's in Weirton.

The bishop was back in Weirton Sept. 1 for visits to Madonna High School and St. Joseph the Worker Grade School. He celebrated Masses for the students at St. Joseph the Worker Church.

Hornyak, who joins Bishop Brennan on these visits, said that this shows his commitment to



Courtesy Photo

Bishop Mark Brennan prays with students at SS. Peter and Paul Catholic School in Oak Hill before blessing statues outside Aug. 24. With them is Father Jojan Joseph, CST, pastor of the school and SS. Peter and Paul Parish in Oak Hill.

Catholic schools.

"The students are so excited to ask him questions," she said.

Bishop Brennan's school visits will resume later this month. By the fall, he will have travelled to all 18 of the diocese's Catholic elementary and grade schools and six Catholic high schools.

As administrators and teachers readied their schools in August for the new academic year, Hornyak invited them to reflect on the mission of the Catholic school communities of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. It states they "are committed to providing quality education in the Catholic tradition for all students in a nurturing, Christ-centered environment. We accompany families in challenging children to

recognize, develop and share their God-given gifts and talents."

Hornyak shared the statement in a welcome letter to the Catholic school educators at gatherings in Wheeling and Charleston which included Mass celebrated for them by Bishop Brennan. In the letter, she also expressed the diocese's gratitude to them for their commitment to their students and to Catholic education.

"We are thankful for each of you who teach in our Catholic schools across our great state of West Virginia," Hornyak wrote. "Our diocese is blessed to have you as part of our Catholic school team as we work together with families to live our mission. YOU are a true gift to Catholic education. Thank you for all you do!"

Program...

Cont'd from Page 1

society," the bishop wrote. "People don't talk with one another, they yell at one another. People don't work out their differences, instead they shun or shoot one another. Religion is down, superstition is up. Nowhere is this pattern more evident than in attitudes about sexuality and sexual behavior. From no-commitment sex to adultery to the exaltation of same-sex marriage to a sincere but misdirected rejection of one's own gender, there is rampant confusion about all things sexual. St. John Paul II's teachings on sexuality are desperately needed at this time."

The saint's perspective was solidly grounded in anthropology, philosophy, ethics and the wisdom of Catholic people and their Sacred Scriptures, the bishop said in his letter.

"We want to present his sound teachings to the young people in our Catholic schools for their

present and future benefit," the bishop wrote.

Jennifer Hornyak, interim superintendent of Catholic Schools for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, echoed the bishop's thoughts on the program adding that making Theology of the Body available in the diocese's Catholic schools is especially needed at this time.


"It's very important in today's society because of what our students are facing in the culture," Hornyak said. "So, we want to teach children what the teachings of the church are."

Through the age-appropriate lessons, Theology of the Body K-12 curriculum explores what it means to be male or female, created in God's image; that each person is created as a gift; that God gives each person an essential purpose to live for others; and that all are called to authentically love God and one another. It also helps children understand that when one aligns with God and his or her purpose, he or she is des-

igned for happiness. Understanding how God reveals himself through Jesus, marriage, the sacraments and the dignity of each human person, and their calls to work and love, and God's plan for marital relationships are focused upon as well.

This supplemental curriculum will be implemented in kindergarten through 12th grades with

the lessons designed as a retreat opportunity for the students. "These lessons will concentrate on reflection," Hornyak said, "having students take time to think about themselves, to think about how they treat others. I think that is important that we are reflective and that we provide time for the students to think about these issues."



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Project Leader Thanked for Work on New Saint Joseph Middle School in Martinsburg

Meg Partington Photo
Pat Michel, the operations and financial officer for St. Joseph Parish in Martinsburg who played a leading role in the approximately \$360,000 of renovations at the new Saint Joseph Middle School, was honored Aug. 31 for his tireless work on the project. Standing on the steps with him is Principal Maria Byrd. Some of the students in grades six to eight, school staff, and administrators, are also



Catholic Charities West Virginia Disaster Services Specialist Discusses Importance of Disaster Preparedness

By Lora Pierce, Disaster Services Specialist, Catholic Charities West Virginia

September is Disaster Preparedness Month. It is a time when we are reminded that being prepared for disasters is crucial. We may not always be able to save the homes we live in, but being prepared can help save ourselves and the ones we love.

So, just what is “disaster preparedness”?

Disaster preparedness consists of a set of measures undertaken in advance by governments, organizations, communities, and individuals to better respond and cope with the immediate aftermath of a disaster, whether it be human-induced or natural causes.

How can we be better prepared for “disasters”?

Natural Disasters - Emergency Preparedness makes sense for everyone. Being prepared assures a successful outcome of saving homes and lives. See “Be Prepared - FEMA videos” on YouTube. One of the first steps of preparedness for natural disasters is to be aware ahead of time. You can visit this Ready.gov website “Emergency Alerts” to sign up for weather alerts.

House Fires - Nearly 4,000

Americans die each year in house fires and over 2,000 are severely injured. In only 3 1/2 minutes, the heat from a house fire can reach over 1,100 degrees Fahrenheit. It takes two minutes to exit an average size home. EVERY second counts. The U.S. Fire Marshall reports that smoke detectors decrease death and injury by 55%. The American Red Cross offers free smoke detectors and installation. See “Sound The Alarm - Save a Life | Red Cross” at <https://www.redcross.org/sound-the-alarm.html>. Next, you should create and practice a fire escape plan with all family members. See “How to make a home fire escape plan | NFPA” at <https://www.nfpa.org/Public-Education/Staying-safe/Preparedness/Escapes-planning>.

How does Catholic Charities West Virginia serve in times of “disaster”?

The ministry of Catholic Charities ultimately seeks to strengthen the resilience of individuals, families, and communities before, during, and after disaster events. CCWVa Disaster Services provides help to people in West Virginia when disasters happen with the goal of returning people to safe, secure, and stable housing. We walk

flood-impacted families through the disaster recovery process by providing guidance, support, and funding when available, to long-term recovery. Through our network of disaster partners, we connect people to needed resources. We assist those who have experienced a house fire with up to \$500 to help secure their next place of residence.

I hope this is informative and useful information and wish all the best ahead. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me with any questions or if I can provide additional information at (304) 559-1025 or visit catholiccharitieswv.org.

(For Family Emergency and Communication Plan documents, contact Pierce.)

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Final Vows to Reflect Her Best Self

Sister Jennifer Berridge's Faith Leads Her to Happiest Day

By Joyce Bibey

The day is soon approaching when Sister Jennifer Rebecca Berridge, CSJ, will profess her final vows, surrendering to God, so she can be everything He wants her to be – happy and her best self.

At 11 a.m., on September 16, 2023, Sister Jennifer will take her Perpetual Profession of Vows with the Congregation of Saint Joseph (CSJ). Bishop Mark Brennan will celebrate the Mass at Mount Saint Joseph in Wheeling with several concelebrants, including Msgr. Paul Huddock, who presided over her initial vows in July of 2020, at St. Vincent de Paul Parish in Wheeling.

When talking about her big day she makes it clear that it is a day to confirm her wholehearted belief that God knows us better than we know ourselves – He knows what we are meant to do in life – our purpose to help others with our gifts and talents we have been blessed with. “I’m answering that call,” she said. That call took her down a path she never imagined she would navigate.

Her trusting mindset echoes Psalm 139, “LORD, you have probed me, you know me: you know when I sit and stand; you understand my thoughts from afar. You sift through my travels and my rest; with all my ways you are familiar.”

“Even before a word is on my tongue, LORD, you know it all. Behind and before you encircle me and rest your hand upon me...”

Her repeated responses to her vows, “I will.... I will.... I am.... I am.... Will be affirmation,” she said to God. The faithful can relate it to Psalm 40, “Here I am, Lord. I come to do your will.”

Currently Sister Jennifer works for Catholic Charities West Virginia as a Hospital Transition Program case manager. She is a lifeline so to speak for vulnerable, low-income patients after being discharged from the hospital by providing a helping hand and heart through chronic disease management, home safety, support networks, social service programs, and food security and nutrition.

She is a graduate of Kent State University with a bachelor’s degree in human services and is a registered vascular technician.

For 13 years she worked at Aultman Hospital in Canton, Ohio.

When we first met Sister Jennifer for our FaithInWV feature stories in the diocese back in the Spring of 2020, she said: “I felt like (my career choice in Canton was) what I’m supposed to be doing, but



Courtesy Photo

Sister Jennifer Berridge, CSJ (right), stands with her mom Kathy at the celebration of initial vows in July of 2020.

God obviously had a different plan.”

She said it was after Mass one morning a “sweet lady who I had often seen at church, but didn’t know very well,” stopped her with a sincere question – one that significantly changed her life.

“She simply asked if I’d ever thought about religious life,” Berridge recalled. “I was 38-years-old at the time. Religious life had never even entered my mind. I honestly thought to myself ‘Is this still a thing?’ All the nuns I knew were much older, and most were retired.”

She went home and told her mother Kathy and sister Becky about the talk and later her own “revelation” that she was actually considering religious life.

“They both looked at me and without hesitation agreed. They too, could see that for me,” she said.

“Once I began discerning religious life, I knew I needed to talk to the Sisters of Saint Joseph who were so important to my church and my family,” she said. It was the Fall of 2014.

There are seven communities that make up the Congregation of Saint Joseph. They are in Cleveland and Wheeling, as well as Kansas, Illinois, Michigan, Indiana, Louisiana, and Minnesota. As the Sisters of Saint Joseph, these women “respond to the unmet and critical needs of our contemporary society and the world.”

In December of 2015, she officially applied to be a candidate for

religious life with CSJ and was formally accepted as a candidate on Jan. 23, 2016.

After being a candidate for two and a half years, she entered what is called the novitiate stage of formation, which is typically a two-year period to continue discernment and experience a concentrated program on prayer, study, reflection, and ministry.

She also spent a month in Peru

working with children in an after-school program as part of the congregation’s third world missionary work.

As with her temporary vows back in 2020, her perpetual profession means she accepts the vows of poverty – “giving of your time, yourself, and resources for the life of the world, as we challenge ourselves to live ever more simply;” chastity – “meaning I belong to God, and I agree to give and receive love, the healthy genuine love of many (loving others like Christ);” and obedience – “a deep listening to the voice of God and being vulnerable, knowing I need to reflect and pray about what God is truly calling me to do,” she told us.

“It’s almost unreal to think that my temporary (first) vows were in the midst of a global pandemic,” she said, reminiscing about how grateful she was for that moment of honor, joy, and hope during a time in history that was filled with restless fear for so many.

The road to her final profession of her perpetual vows has had its twists and turns, including being slowed down by COVID twice, and the loss of a dear friend, mentor, and roommate Sister Christine Riley.

“It was rough, but I continued to cling to my faith in God and put my life and others in His hands,” she said.

See “Vows” on Page 6



Courtesy Photo

Sister Jennifer Berridge, CSJ, works with a child in an after-school program in Peru as part of the congregation’s third world missionary work.

Vows...

Cont'd from Page 5

"Right now I'm just so excited, humbled, and honored that our (CSJ) leadership team – a team full of visionary women has after three years and not five, given their collective wholehearted 'yes' for me to make my final profession," she said.

Having Bishop Mark Brennan as the celebrant will make the day more extraordinary.

"Because of him I have given many vocation talks to a variety of clubs, groups, and high schools," she said. "He is a full supporter and promoter of religious life and vocations, including young women, who a lot of the time are overlooked."

Bishop Brennan has a mutual respect for Sister Jennifer.

"It is going to be a great day to celebrate her call to serve God and His people," he said. "She has done great work already and eagerly shares her gifts, encouraging others to do the same – a great example."

Her advice to those who haven't acknowledged or admitted to themselves that God is calling them to a special vocation? "Pay attention to your personal prayer life and that still, small voice of God that pops up in so many ways – messages put in front of you and messages from people, repeated messages, totally unexpected," she said. These messages are not coincidental. If you stop for a moment and realize you are getting the same message over and over just in different ways, it's hard to ignore what God is calling for you to do.

"It is very important to know yourself and your heart," she said. "Before any vocation – religious life or marriage – be mindful of where you can be your best self, the happiest, and does that line up for what God would want for you."

For Sister Jennifer she knew God wanted her life to be faithful to Him "in a way that others could see it in her. Religious life wasn't what I initially set out to do, but looking back it was always my faith that was so important to me. Even now, not every day is easy. I have difficult work days or personal days, but at the end of each day I stop and take time to realize how grateful I am. I am so grateful to God. Each difficulty teaches me something new about myself and my faith. I rely on God; He is stronger than all and wants me to be the best version of myself."

Sister Jennifer is glad she is breaking the mold of what most – even her younger self – thought of religious sisters in to-



Courtesy Photo

Sister Jennifer Berridge, CSJ, pictured at right, poses for a quick selfie with Sister Sarah Simmons, CSJ. While Sister Jennifer will profess her vows in Wheeling on Sept. 16, Sister Sarah will take hers in Chicago on Oct. 28.

day's society.

"It gets frustrating, when you hear so much talk about religious life in the future diminishing," she said. "We assume our religious sisters are just getting older and dying out. Thank God there are those strong willed among us that totally see it differently and believe religious life will continue in good ways – God's way – and we trust in that."

To learn more about becoming a religious sister contact Sister Martha Gomez, the delegate for consecrated life in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, by calling (304) 233-0880, ext. 264, or mgoomez@dwc.org or the Sisters of St. Joseph at vo-


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Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston

October 5, 2023

9:00am - 4:15pm

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To register, visit dwc.org/2023-life-expo.

For more information, contact A.J. Emery at aemery@dwc.org, or 304.233.0880, ext. 326.

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one of the least of these
brothers and sisters of
mine, you did for me."


-Matthew 25:40

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Infant of Prague Novena, Holy Hour for Military and First Responders to be Held as Part of Eucharistic Revival

By Colleen Rowan

WHEELING—Two Wheeling parishes will hold prayerful opportunities for the faithful this month as part of the National Eucharistic Revival's Parish Year.

"The Eucharist: Gift, Mystery, and Reality" is the theme of 12th annual Novena to the Infant Jesus of Prague at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling, parish officials said in announcing the devotion. The novena begins Sept. 11 and continues on consecutive Mondays through Nov. 6. Each night of the novena begins at 7 p.m.

"Each week consists of Exposition and Benediction of the Blessed Sacrament, a homily given by a guest priest, music, and prayers to the Infant of Prague," officials said in the announcement. "Everyone is invited to attend this beautiful devotion. God has been astonishingly generous in blessing those who have been devoted to His Infant Son."

Presiders of the novena are as follows: Father Sateesh Nariseti; Father Carlos Melocoton; Father Martin Smay; Deacon Douglas Breiding; Father Chester Pabin; Father Joseph Augustine; Deacon Paul Lim; Father Justin Golna; and Auxiliary Bishop William Waltersheid of Pittsburgh, who will be the presider on the last night of the novena. Bishop Mark Brennan is unable to be



Tyler J. Greenwood Photo

The Most Blessed Sacrament is pictured at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling.

present due to scheduling conflicts.

Each month of the Parish Year of the Eucharistic Revival, the neighboring Wheeling Parish of

Corpus Christi is hosting an evening Holy Hour on every third Monday praying for a group or cause. The parish invites all to this month's Holy Hour on Sept. 18 at 6:30 p.m. in the church to pray for those in the military and for first responders, parish officials said.

"Please give one hour of your time to pray for those who put themselves in harm's way to protect and defend our country in the Army, Navy, Marines, Coast Guard, Air Force, National Guard and for those who have ultimately sacrificed their lives for our country," parish officials said. "Come also to pray for first responders who help in times of emergency within our local communities and throughout the country, including firefighters, police, paramedics, and EMTs. They are all there for us in times of crisis. Let us give one hour of prayer for them."

Corpus Christi began its Holy Hour for a group or cause in February, praying for the family. In March, the parish prayed for those struggling with cancer. April brought prayers for those struggling with faith, while prayers were offered in May for mothers and in June for fathers. In July, the parish prayed for vocations, and August was dedicated to praying for those struggling with mental health issues and addiction.

Blue Masses to be Celebrated at Northern Panhandle Parishes for Those Who Risk Their Lives for Others

By Colleen Rowan

NORTHERN PANHANDLE—Blue Masses will be celebrated at parishes in the Northern Panhandle in the coming weeks praying for law-enforcement officers, firefighters, EMTs, first responders, military personnel, and their families. Prayers will be offered for their safety as these men and women put their lives on the line every day. Blue Masses are celebrated all over the country each year.

Wheeling

Bishop Mark Brennan will celebrate the second-annual Blue Mass at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling on Sept. 16 at 6 p.m. The Mass is being co-sponsored once again by the cathedral and the Knights of Columbus Charles Carroll Assembly 1185 of Wheeling.

All law enforcement, firefighters, EMTs, first responders, and their families are invited to the Mass.

Matt Koval, a member of 1185, said the assembly wanted to honor those who protect and serve the community as they embody the four pillars of the Knights of Columbus: charity, unity, fraternity, and patriotism.

"All of our first responders demonstrate those every day," Koval said. They do this especially in charity, he continued, by helping those in need and in their patriotism as they strive to make their community a better

place to live and work for everyone.

"They put their lives on the line for us every day and this is a small tangible way for us to show them our appreciation for what they do for us," Koval said. "At the end of the day, we want to go home to our loved ones and so do they. With the Blue Mass, we can show our appreciation and pray for their safety along with the sacrifices they, and their families make."

The Mass will include a Last Bell Ceremony by members of the City of Wheeling Fire Department. A light reception will be held in the Great Hall of Wheeling Central Catholic High School following the Mass.

"The Charles Carroll Assembly 1185 would like to thank Bishop Brennan and the Cathedral of St. Joseph for making this an annual event for our first responders," Koval said.

In anticipation of the Mass, Ohio County Homeland Security Director Lou Vargo urged people not to forget the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks in the U.S. and the first responders who lost their lives while trying to help the victims.

"For hundreds of New York City first responders," he said, "they answered their last call. They along with thousands of others lost their lives that day in the worst attack on our homeland since Pearl Harbor. As we heard in the aftermath of the tower collapse, 'These first responders went in toward the danger

as others came out.' This is true of each first responder who answers the call each and every day."

Vargo pointed to the Gospel of John: "No one has greater love than this, to lay down one's life for one's friends" (John 15:13), and the words, "We shall never forget!!" This declaration, he said, is placed on first response vehicles throughout the country.

"By Bishop Brennan offering the Blue Mass, this has true meaning to all of us," Vargo said. "First, there was no greater love than these over 400 responders who gave that day. Second, it reminds each of us, first responders and the congregation that we truly 'shall never forget' their sacrifice."

It is through this remembrance, Vargo said, that each first responder continues to improve his or her skills and continues each day to answer the call, no matter at what risk it poses.

"Finally," Vargo said, "as each first responder in Wheeling and Ohio County continues to answer these calls, it is so important for us to have the bishop offer a blessing for our continued safety."

Vargo also noted the lyrics of the hymn, "Be not afraid," which have great meaning to him: "If you pass through raging waters in the sea, you shall not drown. If you walk amid the burning flames, you shall not be harmed. If you stand before the power of hell and death is at your

side, know that I am with you through it all."

"These lyrics come to the heart of our continued mission of serving the public," Vargo said. "It is with this, that the Blue Mass and the bishop's prayers and blessing are so important to us."

Weirton

Each year on Sept. 11, students from St. Joseph the Worker Grade School, St. Paul Grade School, and Madonna High School gather with the Weirton community for the annual Blue Mass at St. Joseph the Worker Church. This year's Mass will once again be celebrated on Sept. 11 at St. Joseph's at noon by Very Rev. Dennis R. Schuelkens Jr., V.E., pastor of the parish, to honor police, fire, EMS, the military, and their families.

The parish and Catholic schools of Weirton welcome all to this Blue Mass to honor those who are willing to lay down their life every day and to pray for them.

"They get the call, and they go. And they're very often laying down their lives for people that they don't even know," Father Schuelkens said at last year's Blue Mass. "Where everybody is running away from danger, they are running into it. Why? Because they're trying to save lives. They're trying to help."

A reception will follow in the St. Joseph gymnasium.

Resources for Success

#MillionRosaries4WV

By Joyce Bibey

Many faithful in and outside of WV have now heard about and made their pledge of rosaries as part of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's One Million Rosaries for Vocations in WV. So, now what?

The diocese has put together a page of resources — <https://dwc.org/onemillionrosaries/> — featuring printables, free apps, websites, children's activities, etc. to help you say the rosary, enhance your prayer life, and fulfill and even surpass your commitment.

Not clear on what are we talking about?

Bishop Mark Brennan and Sister Martha Gomez are rallying your support for one million rosaries to be said with the special intention of increased vocations in WV.

The pledge period began on the Feast of the Assumption Aug. 15 and will wrap up on the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary on Oct. 7. We need you to prayerfully consider being part of this mission and enter your pledge amount by Oct. 7, Sister Martha said, emphasizing:

"We need to clarify that Aug. 15 through Oct. 7 is the pledge period," Sister Martha said. "We do not want people to stop praying on Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary. It is important for people to know that is just the last day to pledge how many rosaries they will say for increased vocations here in WV. It is an honor system. Your pledge is between you and God. We will keep a running tally, so we have a tangible motivator for the faithful — not to mention it is also a visible life line of love and support for those who are discerning their vocation."

Strong Catholic vocations include priesthood, religious life, marriage, and single life dedicated to serving others in work and prayer. We are all called to holiness in the Sacrament of Baptism, serving God as we serve others. This mission #Million Rosaries4WV is to increase and strengthen vocations in WV. One million is a huge number, but not impossible with the help of the faithful — their prayer and their voices in rallying others outside of WV and around the world to join us, she said.

Don't know the rosary or unsteady to do it on your own? No worries. Click on the "How to Pray the Rosary" printable on the dwc.org/onemillionrosaries page, download one of the suggested free apps, or search "Rosary" on your favorite audio streaming service like Spotify.

Pledge if you haven't. Share this mission with others. Challenge yourself to exceed even your own expectations. All glory and honor to God.

Free Catholic Apps

CatholicMega — Like its name suggests it has mega offerings — Order of



Photo Illustration by Joyce Bibey

Visit Making Rosaries for Kids — <https://youtu.be/ozBmHTnbOg0> — where Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart's Ruth and Josephine Haas (pictured above) share their Rosary making skills for their peers and parents so you can have fun making your own special rosary!

Mass, daily readings, Breviary, reading reflections, interactive Rosary, Stations of the Cross, NABRE Catholic Bible, links to popular Catholic blogs and web sites, pro-life-resources, youth ministry resources, link to the Catechism of the Catholic Church and many prayers.

The Holy Rosary app — helps you to pray the Holy Rosary with options to customize the font size of text, listen to the mysteries in audio form and even give your reminder just not to miss the devotion. There are also background pictures and music to help you focus. The voices are clear, and the recitation is slow enough to understand what you are praying. The audio rosary works offline after downloading so you can listen and pray without an internet connection.

Amen from the Augustine Institute is a guided meditation app for Scriptures and Catholic prayers including the rosary. It also has inspiring stories of Saints and peaceful background music.

Relevant Radio — shows produced by Relevant Radio are available in live streaming, podcasts, audio and text prayers, daily readings, and Catholic news from all over the world. Downloads available to use offline.

Laudate is one of the original Catholic apps offering Prayer for the Day, Rosary and Chaplets, the New American Bible, Catechism of the Catholic Church, Stations of the Cross, Podcasts and more. Very complete and easy to use but without the trendy graphics.

God Calls — an app aimed at 16-35-year-olds to help reflect on what God is calling you to do. It includes prayers, saints, journal, news, and more.

iBreviary — It has Office Readings, Morning, Daytime, Evening, and Night prayers. It also includes the Rosary and Daily Mass Readings. The interface is simple and easy to use. Multiple languages are also available.

PrayAsYouGo — under the series heading you will find Rosary Reflections designed for everyone familiar and unfamiliar.

Web Pages

Rosary Specific:

FaithInWV: <https://faithinwv.org/the-rosary/>

USCCB: <https://www.usccb.org/how-to-pray-the-rosary>

Bishop Robert Barron: <https://wordonfire.org/rosary>.

Catholic Icing (activities for kids): <https://www.catholicicing.com/celebrating-month-of-rosary-html/>

Sadlier (K-8): <https://go.sadlier.com/religion/rosary-activity>

The Religion Teacher: <https://www.thereligionteacher.com/?s=rosary>

Catholic Mom: <https://www.catholicmom.com/articles/2012/08/14/10-rosary-tips-for-rosary-strugglers>

Children's Resources:

Catholic Icing (activities for kids): <https://www.catholicicing.com/celebrating-month-of-rosary-html/>

Catholic Inspired <https://catholicinspired.design/product/rosary-prayer-sheets-great-for-kids-and-teens-pdf-download/>

The Catholic Kid <https://www.thecatholickid.com/category/catholic-coloring-pages/rosary-coloring-pages/>

Making Rosaries for Kids — <https://youtu.be/ozBmHTnbOg0>



Morgantown Parish Garden Provides Fresh Produce for Local Food Pantries

By Colleen Rowan

A Morgantown parish is helping to ease food insecurity in the community by providing fresh produce from its garden to local food pantries. The effort began at St. Francis de Sales Parish two years ago and has grown so much that regular donations of vegetables are being made to Catholic Charities West Virginia and St. Ursula Food Pantry & Outreach.

Karen Modzik, director of Religious Education at St. Francis, who spearheaded the project, said the goal is to help provide fresh and healthy options for people in need seeking help from the food pantries. "This gives them an opportunity to have some fresh vegetables. They can can them or cook with them, and that's wonderful," she said.

Donations from the garden this summer began in July, and include zucchini, green and yellow peppers, poblanos, cucumbers, green beans, and tomatoes.

"There's a couple watermelon plants out there that are still growing," Modzik added.

This year was the first experiment with green beans, she said. "And we've discovered that rabbits do crawl under fences," she said, laughing. "So, we have a plan for that for next year."

The parish donates produce for the food distributions at Catholic Charities Morgantown at least once a week, and for St. Ursula's in Pursglove which is held on the first and third Wednesdays of the month.

In between food distributions, the Parish Garden Committee places baskets of vegetables in the back of church after Masses for fellow parishioners to enjoy. "So that the parish also gets a taste of the garden," Modzik said.

The parish garden began as a parish religious education project with more than 100 students participating. The kids planted the seeds in cups and cartons, watered and cared for them; and when it was time, they planted them in the garden.

Modzik praised fellow parishioner Richard Bell for building the garden and for his continued commitment.



Courtesy Photo

Standing at the gate of the St. Francis de Sales Parish Garden in Morgantown are Karen Modzik, director of religious education, who spearheaded the project, and Richard Bell, facility director at the church, who built the garden.

"He was dedicated to the project, and relentlessly worked until it was done," she said of Bell, who serves as facility director at the church.

Among those serving with Modzik and Bell on the Parish Garden Committee are Stephanie Henry, "Our original garden committee chairperson and a master gardener," Modzik said. "She was really instrumental in the very beginning."

Henry had to step back recently because of illness. "I told her she's still going to be our expert and on our committee," Modzik said.

John Shreve, also a parishioner, has stepped up in the effort. "He's in that garden more than he's in his own," Modzik said.

As the garden project grows, Modzik's vision is to incorporate an educational aspect.

"Stephanie also has a few wonderful ideas for educational ventures for children," Modzik said. "We would also like to do something for the parish in the future, possibly as a farm to table event. We are hoping not only will the garden continue to grow but so will interest to enhance its continued success. We of course want to continue supporting the food pantries in the area, but we'd love to see it become a true community garden for everyone's benefit."



Courtesy Photos

Clockwise from top: Fresh produce from the parish garden is shown; Kimberly Wright and her daughter Cora plant vegetable plants in the garden; part of the garden is shown on parish grounds; and the garden's fresh produce is received at Catholic Charities West Virginia in Morgantown.

Excitement about 2024's National Eucharistic Congress is Growing, Says Congress Official

By **Natalie Hoefler**

INDIANAPOLIS (OSV News) — Local and national organizers of the National Eucharistic Congress — which will take place in Indianapolis July 17-21, 2024 — have been meeting virtually for some time.

But for the first time, scores of them met in person in Indianapolis Aug. 30 at Lucas Oil Stadium, where in less than a year tens of thousands of Catholics will gather for the closing Mass of the historic event — the first such event in 83 years. The congress will launch the third year of a three-year National Eucharistic Revival, an initiative of the U.S. Catholic bishops to renew devotion to the Eucharist.

"The Holy Spirit is inviting the United States to find unity and renewal through a grassroots National Eucharistic Revival," Jaime Reyna, event lead for the National Eucharistic Congress, said, quoting remarks from a letter written by executive director Tim Glemkowski. "This movement — discerned and approved by the bishops of the U.S. — is critical to rekindling a living faith in the hearts of Catholics across America, unleashing a new missionary chapter at this pivotal moment in church history. ... The goal is to start a fire, not a program."

More than 25,000 have already registered for the event, said Reyna.

"We just have a lot of people who are excited about gathering," he noted. "Remember that feeling after COVID when people just wanted to come back together? It's almost the same way, that there's that spiritual connection of wanting to come together and pray and for the many different reasons that people are just

wanting to come together."

In addition to general and breakout sessions, the five-day event will be filled with opportunities for prayer, worship and the sacraments, said Father Patrick Beidelman. The pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary Parish in Indianapolis is chair of the National Eucharistic Congress liturgy committee.

"We'll have a large Mass each day, three at the Indiana Convention Center and the closing Mass at Lucas Oil Stadium, ... and opportunities for confession all over the place," he said, adding that St. John the Evangelist Church across from the convention center "will be turned into a place of perpetual adoration starting on Wednesday evening through Sunday."

The route of a massive Eucharistic procession during the congress is still being determined, he noted.

The day before the five-day congress opens, Catholics from around the U.S. participating in pilgrimages leading to Indianapolis will converge on the city. Planning is well under way for "Eucharistic caravans." There will be four, each following a different route and each with its own name: the "Marian Route" the "Juan Diego Route," the "Seton Route" and the "Junipero Serra Route." Pilgrims on all four routes will begin their journeys with Pentecost weekend celebrations May 17-18, 2024, leaving May 19. They will all reach Indianapolis July 16, 2024.

In his remarks Aug. 30, Reyna spoke with excitement about the speakers scheduled for the general and breakout sessions at the National Eucharistic Congress. Among them are well-known Catholic speakers, including priests, religious

and bishops.

The church is diverse, Reyna also noted, and event coordinators are taking that into consideration. In addition to programming in English and Spanish, he said the congress team is working with existing ministries to address other language needs as well.

"We're talking about Vietnamese, Native Americans, Asian-Pacific Islanders and others," he said.

The team also is cognizant of engaging those with special needs.

"We are working with national ministry organizations, like the National Catholic Office for Deaf Ministry," said Reyna. "We also (are) trying to be as inclusive as possible for all our brothers and sisters, including those who may have some physical disabilities, to make sure that they are able to participate and to see how we can accommodate and serve them."

The event will involve "hundreds if not thousands" of volunteers, said Nikki Slater of Maribeth Smith & Associates, the Indianapolis-based event planning firm contracted to coordinate the National Eucharistic Congress.

While registration for specific volunteer opportunities and shifts will go live next spring, Slater noted that a section of the congress website — <https://www.eucharisticcongress.org> — will be created soon for people to sign up as interested in volunteering.

The Knights of Columbus are providing many volunteers as well.

"I'm on the volunteer committee, so I'm working with NEC to figure out where they need volunteers," Scott Schutte said after the meeting in an interview with The

Criterion, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis. Schutte is state deputy of the Indiana Knights of Columbus. "I've got guys who are all excited about being part of the event."

His current efforts are focused on the four routes pilgrims will walk from the north, south, east and west portions of the United States, all meeting in Indianapolis just before the National Eucharistic Congress begins.

"We're trying to get with diocesan coordinators (for the routes) to find out where the Knights can provide water, food, a place to rest, maybe direct a little traffic, whatever, or at least participate in some way," said Schutte.

He noted that the Knights of Columbus Supreme Council is a national sponsor for the congress.

"We want to give our 33,000 men the opportunity to be involved," he said.

Speaking on behalf of Indianapolis Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, Christopher Walsh, the archdiocesan chancellor, said it is "a tremendous honor to be the host diocese for this historic event."

He noted the archdiocese's commitment to the effort. But he also recognized the vital help from all of the local organizers — including state and local police, firemen and emergency medical services — for their help "in making this event the success that we certainly know it is going to be."

Walsh called the National Eucharistic Congress "truly an event for all, as all are united in the mystical body of Christ.

"That is what this is about, and certainly about representing the real presence of Christ in the world

today through this event."

(Natalie Hoefler is a reporter for The Criterion, the newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.)

For information on the National Eucharistic Congress, registration, schedule, speakers or to become a sponsor, go to eucharisticcongress.org. A section on the site will be available soon for those interested in volunteering.



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Wheeling Teen's Faith Filled Heart Leads Her to Memorable Summer

By Joyce Bibey

Doing for others when they cannot do something for you in return has proven to be the best life lesson in love for a Northern Panhandle teen.

Angelene Ricci is an eighth grader at St. Vincent de Paul School in Wheeling. When you meet her you are immediately impressed with what you see — her sweet nature, maturity in her conversations for her age, and smiling eyes. What you can't see is her heart. Angelene Ricci has a heart of gold.

The 13-year-old is an altar server at St. Vincent. She enjoys volleyball, cheering, and competing with her school's forensics team.

While many of her peers would prioritize a family vacation packed with summer silliness, awesome restaurants, and being lazy by a pool or beach; Ricci chose to make memories in a completely opposite environment.

Ricci spent more than a week of her summer in Buffalo, N.Y., volunteering with Eight Days of Hope, a prayerful group of volunteers who recognize their gifts and talents as treasures from God. Volunteers for the organization prioritize being God's hands and feet on earth to help others. People from all over the country and from all faiths make up the Eight Days of Hope workforce. The group rebuild homes, serve meals to those in need, and do manual labor such as yard work, painting, clean up needed as a result of natural disaster or devastating circumstance.

The Ohio County teen learned of the opportunity through her friend Ella Wheeler last Spring. Wheeler's church group at the Vineyard Church was going to make the trip north to help residents of Buffalo who had a long list of needs but no means to complete them without the help of an army.

"I went home and told my parents about it and how I thought it would be a good opportunity for me to do good for people I don't even know," Ricci said. "I'd be missing our big family trip and reunion in D.C. but I honestly felt like I needed to go."

Her parents, Michael and Anne Ricci, were proud of their daughter and gave her their permission after they made sure their daughter knew that she would be giving up a trip of family fun and laughter for eight days of getting up super early and working to the point of exhaustion everyday no matter the weather or heat.

Her parents were right — right about the sweaty long hours and less than ideal working conditions, and also right about being proud of their teen.

Angelene and her group woke up at 5 a.m. every morning. They started the day with a prayer service and then breakfast. The group would hold another circle prayer on their work site just before starting their chores.

For Ricci it was going to homes and working landscaping jobs — pulling weeds, digging out old roots, clearing weeds, mulching, and general yard clean up. They would take a little break for lunch on site and keep working until dinner time followed by evening prayer.



Photo Illustration by Joyce Bibey

"We worked so hard in so many neighborhoods," Angelene said. "The people who lived in the homes were so happy we were there."

She said she loved it when she would work at a home with little ones, because they would run to the windows to wave hello.

She and Wheeler were among the youngest in the group.

"It was like a big sleep over when we went to bed," she said. "We would be in bed by 9 p.m., and all of us slept in a big gym, some on cots and some on the floor. No one complained. We met so many people from other states there to help. It was neat to be with people who were like me, but also at the same time so different from me."

She said they all were there for the same reason, "to help people out even when it's hard, because it is the right thing to do. There is no better feeling you can get than making someone you don't know happy, especially when you know that someone won't ever be able to repay you."

"It's that special feeling you really can't put into words," she said.

Ricci's favorite saint is St. Therese of Lisieux, who wrote about that feeling, "I feel that when I am charitable it is Jesus alone who acts in me; the more I am united to Him the more do I love..."

Volunteering is second nature to Ricci, who with her school and parish do a variety of mer-

ciful works and projects. Her mother, who works for Wheeling Health Right, is also a shining example of what St. Therese taught us in her lifetime, "Remember that nothing is small in the eyes of God. Do all that you do with love."

The Wheeling teen hopes to be a part of Eight Days of Hope again.

"I'd love the chance to do it all again," she said. Until then Ricci will be enjoying her eighth-grade year and all the milestones that brings with it in a Catholic school. "I just now have a better idea and recognition of how I can help others even if it is just in a small way like pulling weeds," she said. "A little work that makes a big impact on someone's heart."

#FaithInWV

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



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Good Shepherd Nursing Home Honors Sister Marie James Cody, RGS, on Her 100th Birthday

Good Shepherd Nursing Home in Wheeling has honored Sister Marie James Cody, a member of the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd (RGS), for many years of dedicated service.

Good Shepherd Administrator Donald R. Kirsch announced at Sister Marie James' 100th birthday celebration that the meditation room at the entrance of the Good Shepherd's chapel has been renamed "The Sister Marie James Cody, RGS, Meditation Room."

Kirsch noted that Sister Marie James began her service at Good Shepherd in 1950, two decades before it became a nursing home. In the early days of the 20th century, the Sisters of Our Lady of Charity established a monastery in Wheeling to care for young women. When the monastery closed, Sister Marie James was a member of the Sisters' leadership that decided to donate the land, building, and furnishings to the diocese to serve the needs of area residents.

"Sister Marie James not only spent her life in service to young women who were in need of her love and care, but

she also served the aged of our area in numerous capacities through Good Shepherd Nursing Home," Kirsch said.

"Sister also worked in the Good Shepherd Social Services Department, providing comfort and prayer to individuals faced with one of the most difficult decisions of their lives, admission to a nursing home."

Sister served many years as a Eucharistic minister, distributing Holy Communion to residents, and spent much of her time providing comfort to them and praying for them in the final hours of their lives to ensure that they did not die alone, Kirsch said.

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



Courtesy Photo

Good Shepherd Nursing Home Administrator Donald R. Kirsch congratulates Sister Marie James Cody, RGS, at a celebration of her 100th birthday.



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Este 9 de septiembre se recordará a los niños abortados en todo el país

Por Gina Christian, OSV News

(OSV News)—Este mes, una celebración de costa a costa conmemorará las almas de los niños perdidos a causa del aborto.

El Día Nacional del Recuerdo por los Niños Abortados se celebra el 9 de septiembre, con servicios y reuniones en unos 225 lugares de todo el país. Alrededor de 56 de esos lugares son tumbas donde descansan los restos de niños abortados, mientras que la mayoría son monumentos conmemorativos.

En su decimoquinta edición, este evento, que se celebra anualmente el segundo sábado de septiembre, está patrocinado conjuntamente por dos organizaciones del Medio Oeste, Citizens for a Pro-life Society (Ciudadanos por una sociedad provida), de Michigan, y Pro-Life Action League (Liga de acción provida), de Illinois.

Remontando sus orígenes al entierro de unos 1.200 bebés abortados en 1988 en el cementerio de la Santa Cruz en Milwaukee, la ocasión — que se inició en 2013 — se ha convertido en "una importante oportunidad para sanar del aborto", dijo a OSV News Eric Scheidler, director ejecutivo de la Liga de Acción Pro-Vida.

Los participantes han "apreciado mucho" la oportunidad de "centrarse en la vida de los niños y expresar su dolor por su fallecimiento", dijo.

Para las mujeres que han abortado, la oportunidad de expresar su "arrepentimiento y duelo" es catártica, dijo Scheidler.

Señaló que los eventos durante esta conmemoración se celebran en "lugares ya preparados para experiencias emocionales difíciles: iglesias y cementerios", donde "esperamos que la gente derrame lágrimas".

"Tanto si te empujaron a tomar esa decisión como si lo hiciste tú misma, la realidad es que el aborto es una tragedia increíble", dijo Scheidler. "Esconderte de ello, negar el impacto que tuvo en tu vida y la vergüenza que conlleva, no hacen ningún bien a nadie".

Estar dispuestos a afrontar ese dolor ofrece la

oportunidad de "reconciliarnos con nuestro pasado... y pedir la curación de Dios, que venga e infunda nuestros recuerdos y experiencias, y nos transforme".

Él y sus compañeros organizadores han "escuchado historias de transformación", añadió.

"Una abuela se me acercó llorando después de uno de nuestros servicios, y estaba muy alterada pero increíblemente agradecida", dijo Scheidler. "No podía dejar de agradecerme que le diera la oportunidad de salir y llorar públicamente la muerte de su nieto. Se había enterado a principios de semana, a través de una factura del seguro, de que su primer nieto había sido abortado por su hija, que estaba en su plan de salud".

Las diversas concentraciones han cobrado un significado renovado incluso después de que el Tribunal Supremo de Estados Unidos anulara la sentencia Roe contra Wade de 1973, que legalizaba el aborto, explicó.

"En algunos estados, muchas actividades provida, como el asesoramiento en las aceras, se han paralizado", afirmó Scheidler.

Lois Dark, coordinadora del ministerio Respeto a la Vida en la parroquia de St. Simon Stock en Berlín, Nueva Jersey, dijo a OSV News que es fundamental asegurar la "visibilidad y la educación sobre" el tema del aborto.

Con la bendición de su párroco, el padre Michael A. J. de Leon, la parroquia instaló un monumento a los niños abortados en la entrada principal de la iglesia.

"Todo lo que hacemos es por medio de la oración y la educación", dijo Dark, que junto con sus compañeros feligreses marcará la observancia con un rosario delante del monumento. "Muchas personas no conocen la verdad.

"El proceso de duelo nunca termina", dijo Scheidler. "Hasta el fin del mundo, tendremos que recordar a todos nuestros difuntos, incluidos los que murieron a causa del aborto. Creo que este acontecimiento apunta al futuro, y es-



Foto de OSV News/archivo CNS, Sam Lucero, The Compass
Un participante en el Día Nacional en Recuerdo de los Niños Abortados, el 12 de septiembre de 2020, en el Cementerio Católico de Allouez en Allouez, Wisconsin, sostiene un programa y un rosario. El 9 de septiembre de 2023, se planificaron servicios y reuniones en unos 225 lugares en todo el país para conmemorar la celebración anual de las almas de los niños perdidos por el aborto.

tamos modelando el luto y la reparación que tendrá que hacer toda la sociedad, si alguna vez conseguimos ese objetivo de proteger a los niños del aborto en toda la tierra".

(Gina Christian es reportera nacional de OSV News. Síguela en X (antes conocido como Twitter) en @GinaJesseReina.)

NOTAS: Para localizar sitios y servicios para el El Día Nacional del Recuerdo por los Niños Abortados, visite <https://nationaldayofremembrance.org>.

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

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

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

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

Para informar al Coordinador de Asistencia a Víctimas de la Diócesis: llame a la Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, al 304.559.6742.

Además de los métodos enumerados anteriormente para denunciar el abuso sexual, la Diócesis también se ha asociado con Navex Global para ofrecer la plataforma EthicsPoint para informar otras inquietudes adicionales, como sospecha de mala conducta financiera, profesional y personal de un sacerdote, diácono, religioso, o empleado laico de la Diócesis o cualquier parroquia o escuela católica en West Virginia. Se puede acceder a la plataforma EthicsPoint a través de www.dwc.org, en "Rendición de cuentas", luego "Informar mala conducta" o llamando al 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint es un sistema de informes de terceros que informa a las autoridades civiles cuando corresponda y a las autoridades diocesanas, y la identidad de la persona que informa esta protegida. Enlaces e información: Departamento de Salud y Recursos Humanos de WV: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. Policía Estatal de Virginia Occidental, Unidad de Crímenes contra Niños: 304-293-6400.

Across the Nation, Aborted Children Will be Remembered and Mourned

By **Gina Christian**

(OSV News) — A coast-to-coast observance this month commemorates the souls of children lost to abortion.

The National Day of Remembrance for Aborted Children takes place Sept. 9, with services and gatherings at some 225 locations across the country. About 56 of those locations are gravesites for the remains of aborted children, while the majority are memorials.

Now in its 15th year, the event — annually held on the second Saturday of September — is jointly sponsored by two Midwestern-based organizations, Citizens for a Pro-life Society in Michigan and the Pro-Life Action League in Illinois.

Tracing its origins to the 1988 burial of some 1,200 aborted babies at Holy Cross Cemetery in Milwaukee, the occasion — which was initiated in 2013 — has become “an important opportunity for healing from abortion,” Eric Scheidler, executive director of the Pro-Life Action League, told OSV News.

Participants have “really appreciated” the chance to “put the focus on the children’s lives and express sorrow at their passing,” he said.

For women who have had abortions, the chance to express their “regret and mourning” is cathartic, Scheidler said.

He noted the events take place in “locations already set up for difficult emotional experiences: churches and cemeteries,” where “we expect people to shed tears.”

“Whether you were pushed into that choice, or you made it yourself, the reality is that abortion is an incredible tragedy,” said Scheidler. “To hide from that, to deny the impact it had on your life and the shame that goes along with that, isn’t doing anyone any good.”

A willingness to face such pain offers a chance to “reconcile with our pasts ... and to ask for God’s healing, to come and infuse our memories and experiences, and

transform us.”

He and his fellow organizers have “heard stories of transformation,” he added.

“A grandmother came up to me in tears after one of our services, and she was very upset but incredibly grateful,” Scheidler said. “She couldn’t stop thanking me for allowing the opportunity to come out and publicly mourn for her grandchild. She’d found out earlier in the week, through an insurance bill, that her first grandchild had been aborted by her daughter, who was on her health plan.”

The various gatherings have taken on renewed significance even after the U.S. Supreme Court’s overturning of the 1973 *Roe v. Wade* decision that legalized abortion, he said.

“In some states, a whole lot of pro-life activities, such as sidewalk counseling, have come to a halt,” Scheidler said.

Ensuring the “visibility of and education on” the issue of abortion is critical, Lois Dark, coordinator of the Respect Life ministry at St. Simon Stock Parish in Berlin, New Jersey, told OSV News.

With the blessing of its pastor, Father Michael A. J. de Leon, the parish installed a memorial to aborted children at the front entrance of the church.

“Everything we do is in prayer and education,” said Dark, who along with her fellow parishioners will mark the observance with a rosary in front of the memorial. “So many people just don’t know the truth.”

“The mourning process never ends,” said Scheidler. “Until the end of the world, we will have to remember all of our dead, including those who were killed through abortion. I think this event points to the future, and we’re modeling the mourning and reparation that will have to be done by the whole of society, if we ever achieve that goal of protecting children from abortion through the whole land.”

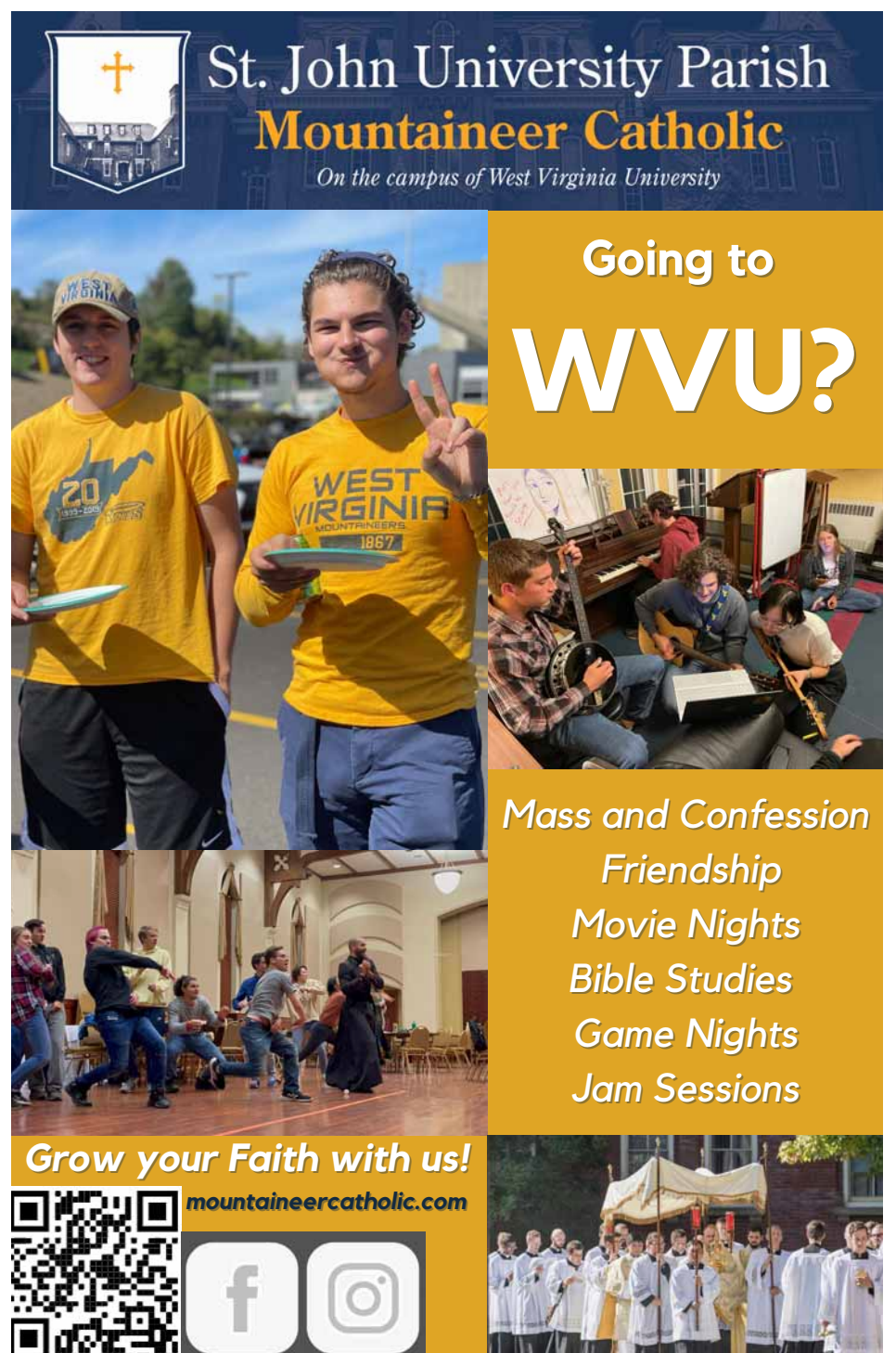
(Gina Christian is a national reporter for OSV News.)



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6:30 WOAY ABC 4	Beckley-Bluefield-Oak Hill (Lewisburg)
8:30 WVNS FOX 59	Beckley-Bluefield-Oak Hill (Lewisburg)
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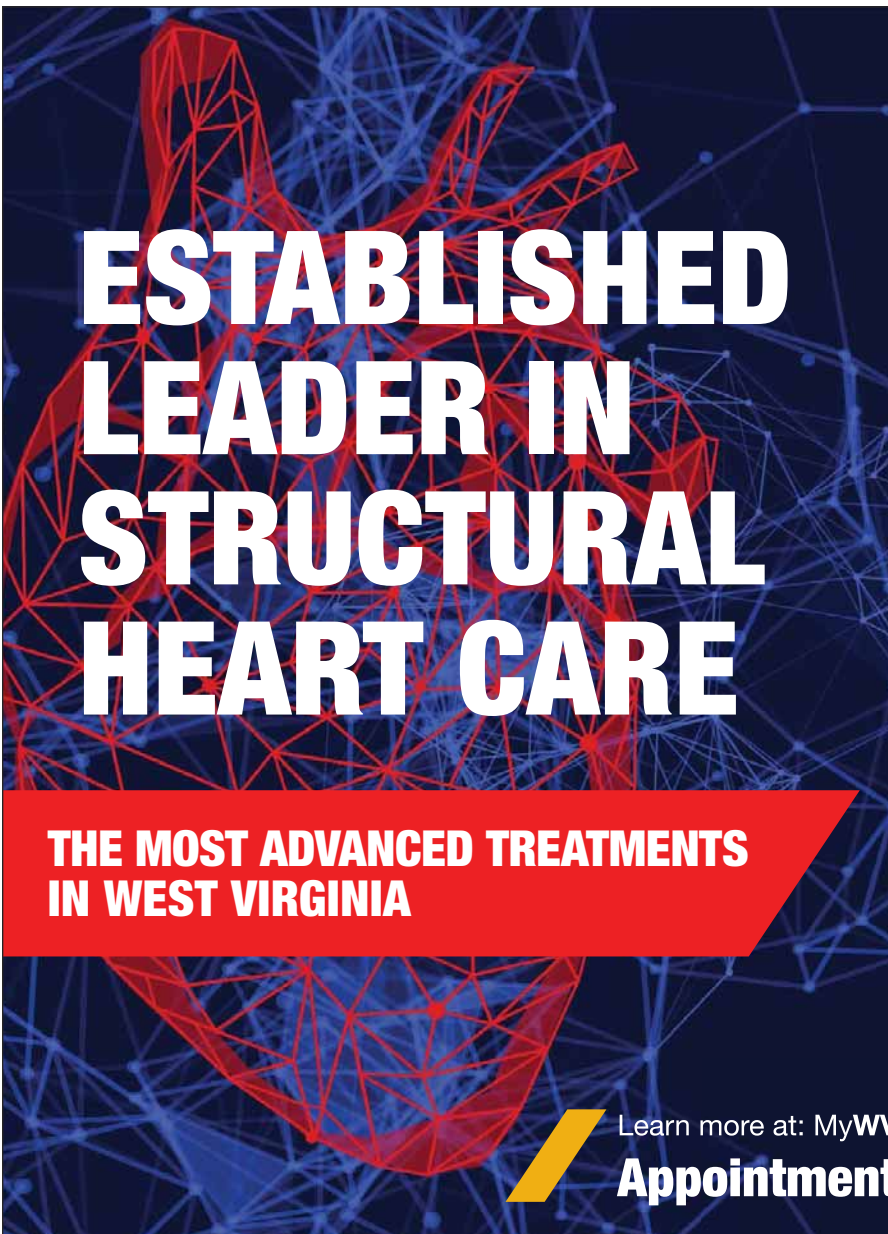
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