June 26, 2026 Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Vol. 56, No. 27

THE CATHOLIC Spirit

A Powerful Message to I-70 Travelers

Colleen Rowan photo

The Wheeling Vicariate-Together in Faith group sponsored this billboard with a powerful message to I-70 westbound travelers just before the Wheeling Tunnels.

Read Bishop Brennan's Latest Pastoral Letter in This Issue

WEST VIRGINIA— Bishop Mark Brennan has released his latest pastoral letter, "Catholic & American: A Pastoral Letter on Faith and the Republic" to coincide with the nation's 250th anniversary celebrations across our country.

The letter discusses the 250-year history of our faith in the United States and lays out his vision for its future.

The letter is being released here, in this issue of The Catholic Spirit, on Pages 5-20. Copies are currently being printed and will be mailed to each parish for distribution to the faithful in your communities. We hope you will take time to read the letter.

Silver Rose Coming to West Virginia, 'Sharing the Message of Our Lady of Guadalupe and Promoting Respect for Life'

By Colleen Rowan

West Virginia will once again welcome the Knights of Columbus Silver Rose Pilgrimage, advancing the message of Our Lady of Guadalupe and praying for the sanctity of life.

The Mountain State is on the fourth of eight routes of the pilgrimage which begins in Canada, moves through the United States, and ends in Mexico. Route 4 began in February in Ontario and is currently in Ohio. The Silver Rose will arrive in West Virginia on July 12 and will be making stops throughout the state through Aug. 18 when it leaves for Pennsylvania.

"The Silver Rose is offered to the people of West Virginia by the Knights of Columbus as a sign of hope," said Brian Gordon, state deputy of the West Virginia Knights of Columbus State

See "Silver Rose" on Page 3

Courtesy photo

The Silver Rose is shown at right.

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Obituary
Deacon Robert Burnside Lilly

Robert Burnside Lilly, 'Bob', loved his wife, his God and his Baltimore Ravens.

Father of seven perfect kids, he devoted his life to their wellbeing and survival, and his prayers to their happiness.

He was ordained as a Catholic Deacon in 1983 and faithfully served 43 years, ministering to the parish families at St. Francis of Assisi in St. Albans, WV, St. Patrick in Mount Savage, MD, St. Vincent de Paul in Berkeley Springs, WV, and St. Joseph in York PA.

He would spend weeks on his homilies, and while not a lover of the spotlight, he delivered them simply in a friendly but uncomfortable cadence.

Bob was born in Newark, Ohio, in the winter of 1935 to Peter Burnside Lilly and Annabelle Roper Lilly. He had two younger brothers, Don and Rus.

He grew up in the Buckeye Lake neighborhood of Harbor Hills, OH, where he met a lifelong friend in Kenny Gilmore. Kenny had a pesky younger sister named Molly, who Bob would fall irreversibly and eternally in love with: 'The Best legs in Harbor Hills'.

Married 67 years, he still loved to tell her every day that she was 'just the prettiest thing!'

They grew up on the water, golfing, swimming and water skiing.

Bob played banjo, sometimes the same three bars of a song for hours- while a tornado of loud (but perfect) kids, dogs and cats swirled around him. He liked to get out on the water, once attempting to take his pontoon boat from St. Albans, WV, to the Mississippi River.

No one knows exactly how far he got.

He was a Boy Scout Master of Troop 126 in St. Albans, WV, and took his troop to all the regional Camporees and the National BSA Jamboree for several years. (Mostly for the coffee mugs that he collected from each.)

Bob served in the US Army in Japan, and after graduating from Marietta College in Ohio with a Petroleum Engineering degree, he worked for Pollock Paper in Columbus, then spent the rest of his career with Texaco in WV.

He was a skilled furniture maker, filling his families' homes with beautiful memories.

He could fix anything, and as he loved to point out: 'carry his half of anything'. Dependable, strong and consistent, he was the person you could count on no matter what. He was dearly loved.

His life's work, his love and his legacy live on in Rob Lilly (Jr), Katie O'Dell, Maggie Grab, Michael Lilly, Susan Lilly, Liz Miller and Ben Lilly, his beloved Molly and their 16 grandkids and 13 (and counting!) great grandchildren, all of whom he adored or tolerated, depending on the day.

He was preceded in death by his grandson Sam and daughter-in-law Rhonda.

He's been our family's backbone, our work horse, our pastor and sergeant-at-arms. He's enabled us to live surrounded by love and immersed in joyful chaos~ Thank you to the man who has loved every one of us, every single day of our lives, no matter how moronic we are.

A Mass of Christian Burial was held on Wednesday, June 24th at St. Joseph Roman Catholic Church, 2935 Kingston Rd, East York, PA 17402, with Rev. Kyle Sahd celebrating. The interment will be held at a later date at Indiantown Gap National Cemetery, with military honors provided by the United States Army.

In lieu of flowers, please consider making a donation to St. Joseph School of York, PA, or St. Vincent de Paul Society at St. Vincent de Paul Church in Berkeley Springs, WV.

Visit https://www.beckfunerals.com/obituaries/Robert-Burnside-Lilly?obId=48767626

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

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

The Catholic Spirit's Print Schedule for 2026

There are 10 print editions in 2026. At right are the names of the issues and the publishing dates. Please note, the publishing dates may or may not be on feast days. Digital issues are published every Friday, delivered by e-mail to subscribers, and posted on thecatholicspiritwv.org.

2026 Print Dates:
The Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, July 7
Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary, August 14
Triumph of the Cross, September 11
Month of the Rosary, October 9
Advent, November 20
Christmas, December 18

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Silver Rose ...

Cont'd from Page 1

Council. "This pilgrimage is our way of sharing the message of Our Lady of Guadalupe and promoting respect for life."

Parishes throughout the diocese will host evenings with the Silver Rose which, according to the Knights of Columbus website, will be rosary-centered occasions for Knights, parishioners and community members to pray for respect for life, for the spiritual renewal of each nation, and for the advancement of the message of Our Lady of Guadalupe.

Gordon noted that Our Lady of Guadalupe is the beloved mother of the Mexican people and the patroness of all of the Americas.

"In 1945, her patronage was extended to the entire hemisphere by Pope Pius XII since her message transcends borders and has the power to unite people across multiple continents," he said.

West Virginia parishes that will be hosting the Silver Rose have not yet been announced, but Gordon invites all Catholics to attend pilgrimage stops.

"I encourage all the people of West Virginia to seek out their local Knights of Columbus council to find out if the Silver Rose will be visiting a parish near you so that you can participate in this most edifying event," he said.

Gordon went on to say that the words spoken by Our Lady to St. Juan Diego are still applicable to everyone today. Our Lady said to him, "Listen, my dearest and youngest son, put it into your heart, that the thing that frightened you, the thing that afflicted you is nothing. Do not let it disturb you. Am I not here, I who am your mother? Are you not under my shadow and protection? Am I not the source of your joy? Are you not in the hollow of my mantle, in the crossing of my arms?"

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A Father's Day Blessing

Colleen Rowan

A few of the fathers at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling who were present for Mass on the evening of June 20, receive a special blessing for Father's Day. Father Penumaka Manikyalarao, rector of the cathedral, also gave the men prayer cards with a prayer for fathers and told them he is praying for them.

project rachel
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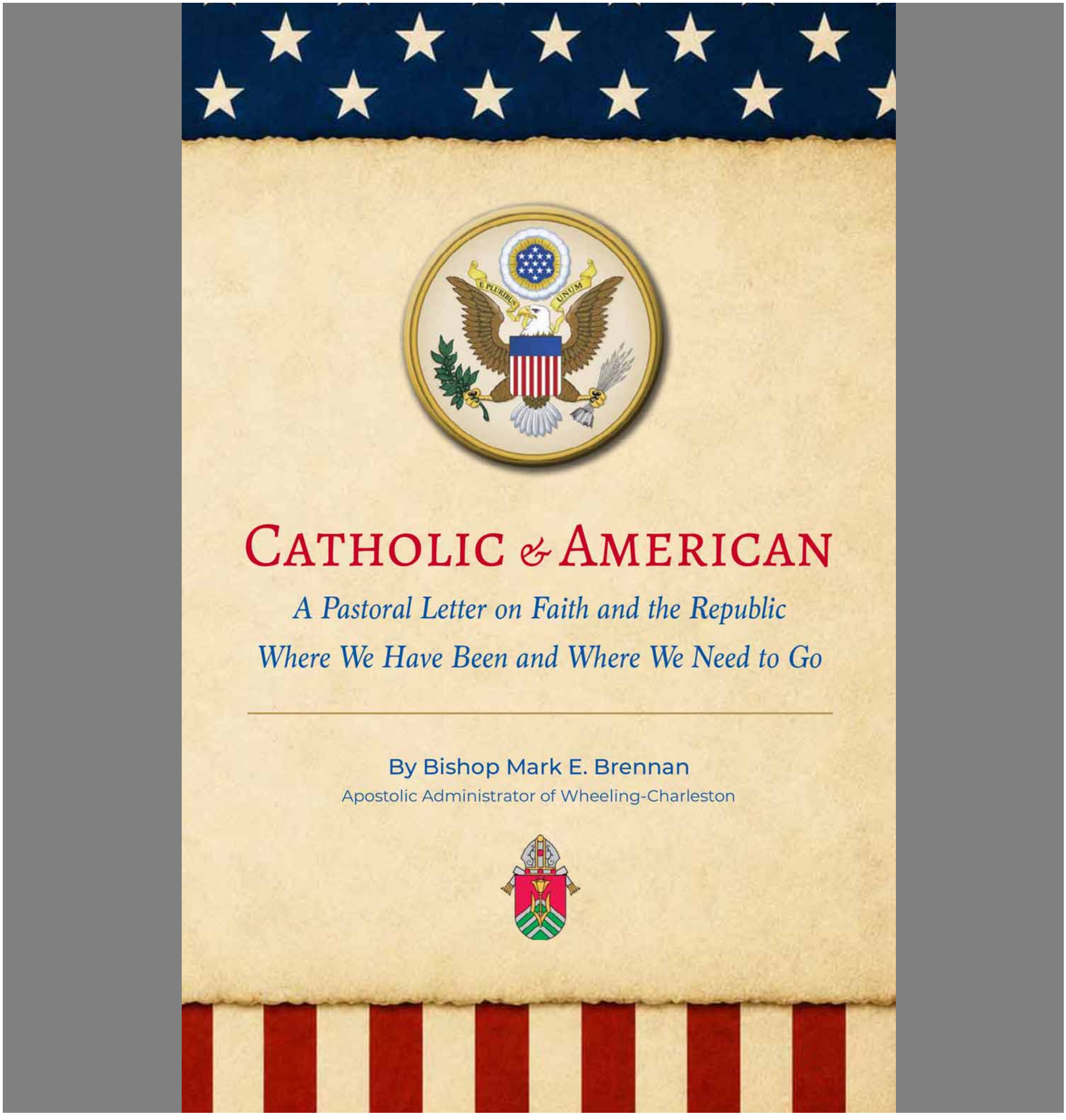
E PLURIBUS UNUM
CATHOLIC & AMERICAN
A Pastoral Letter on Faith and the Republic
Where We Have Been and Where We Need to Go
By Bishop Mark E. Brennan
Apostolic Administrator of Wheeling-Charleston

My fellow Catholics and Americans, I was ordained a priest in 1976, when our country was celebrating its bicentennial. Now, fifty years later, we will soon observe one quarter of a millennium as a nation. Much has happened in these past fifty years and much more since the patriots declared our independence in Philadelphia in 1776. In what will be my last pastoral letter to you as your Bishop, I call upon you to reflect on where we are as a people and where we need to go.

Painting of the signing of the Declaration of Independence - 1819 - by John Trumbull

Many things have changed in the past 250 years. I will highlight only a few. Slavery was abolished and legal racial segregation as well, a Black man has a national holiday and another was elected President of the Republic. Yet racial discrimination and unjust racial disparities still exist. Women now have a more robust social role than they did in 1776. They can not only vote but hold public office. They are a major force in the economy, in the arts, and in sports. They are often leaders and servants, as employees and volunteers, in their religious communities. Still, domestic violence, almost always against women, the sexual abuse of girls and young women, including human trafficking, and the false promise made to women of lasting relief after an abortion are common plagues afflicting women.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. arrives in Montgomery, Alabama on March 25th 1965 at the culmination of the Selma to Montgomery March. Pictured from left, Ralph Bunche, Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., Coretta Scott King, Rev. Fred Shuttlesworth, Hosea Williams. (Photo by Morton Broffman/Getty Images)

Immigrants from around the world have come here throughout our history, many times fleeing religious and political oppression or suffocating poverty, enriching our national life with their work ethic, devotion to family, customs, foods and love for freedom. Our Catholic Church has grown from 1% of the population in 1776 to about 20% now, largely owing to immigration. Yet, in a nation built on the backs of immigrants, many Americans today would like to keep them out and deport those already here who lack legal status.

What do immigrants and so many native-born Americans find to admire in our country? Despite a terrible civil war in the mid-nineteenth century and social upheavals in other eras, our form of government is remarkably stable. Our legislative, executive and judicial branches of government at the national level, even under present strain, function reasonably well compared to most countries. We practice subsidiarity – the treatment of local matters at the local level – by having fifty state governments, which have often been the laboratories of new approaches to social,

economic and political problems. Americans are still willing to offer themselves for public service, which is a blessing. We have a strong tradition of religious liberty: no official religion and a constitutional prohibition of interference by government in people's religious practice (which we must defend, because some citizens want to restrict it). Because of abundant natural resources, incentives to work hard to get ahead and some components of a social safety net, our nation can offer a decent way of life to the majority of its people. Even the poor here are much better off than the poor in most countries of the world. We can say in all honesty that our merciful God has richly blessed our country.

Just as there are some genuinely positive features to our national life, so there remain unresolved injustices and setbacks. Consider what Thomas Jefferson, our third President, not noted for his piety, said: "I tremble for my country when I reflect that God is just, that His justice cannot sleep forever." Jefferson, a slave owner, was thinking of slavery. We know it took a civil war to bring that unjust institution to an end.

State Capital Building, Charleston, West Virginia

Like Jefferson, I, too, tremble when I reflect that God is just. When His Chosen People, the Israelites, disobeyed His commandments, he punished them, even allowing them to be conquered by their enemies and deported to a foreign land. Our Church has not been immune from God's stern correction when it has tolerated corruption and abuse. The Protestant Reformation, which split Western Christianity, had many causes but among them were the worldliness of some popes and bishops, the lax living of many priests and neglect of Scripture-based preaching, which scandalized many reformers and laity who reacted by leaving the Catholic Church. More recently the abuse of children by some clergy and religious has caused some laity to leave us and others to distrust the Church, a trust that can only be regained by showing that the Church has learned a painful lesson and has reformed.

While remembering God's mercy and blessings upon our nation, then, we must also recognize that divine punishment can be visited upon a people, whether a nation or a religion, as a salutary aspect of God's justice. Didn't Abraham Lincoln understand this? He said in his Second Inaugural Address: "If God wills that [this civil war] continue until all the wealth piled by the bondsman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid by another drawn by the sword, as was said three thousand years ago so still it must be said: *the judgements of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.*"

The God who gave us life does not want us to take it: not the life of the unborn child, not the life of a sick and depressed person who asks for help to commit suicide, not the life of the criminal, who should be punished but not deprived of the opportunity to

Students from Central Catholic High School supporting the March for Life.

repent. The God who *became flesh and dwelt among us* and who taught us to welcome the stranger does not want us to shun immigrants and deny their human dignity. The God who made man and woman for *the two of them to become one body* does not want us to empty marriage of lifelong fidelity, love and openness to having and raising children. The Christ who said to Peter: *Put your sword into its sheath*, can hardly be invoked to approve of our national leaders' penchant for war and violence and our people's tolerance of high rates of suicide and murder committed with guns. These are only a few of the evils that exist in our country. God will not be mocked. A nation that flaunts God's law cannot expect to enjoy His favor.

I am not by nature a pessimist. I believe reform is possible. The Book of Jonah is a short story that teaches that a people can change its ways, for in the story the city of Nineveh reformed when Jonah warned the people and their king that God was about

to punish them severely because of their wickedness. Real-life Judea in the late 8th and early 7th centuries BC saw a significant reform of Hebrew faith under King Hezekiah, while our Church undertook serious reforms after the Protestant Reformation – and, in our country, has done the same in the wake of the child-abuse scandal.

The Just Government League of Maryland marching in the Women's Suffrage
March 3, 1913

I have seen individuals reform their lives and become God's faithful servants. I have witnessed in my lifetime some genuine social progress in the areas of race relations and respect for women's talents and abilities and I know and have worked with wonderful Americans who are committed to overcoming social injustices that continue to hurt people. But, following the sound advice of the slogan, "Friends do not let friends drive drunk," it is imperative that we look honestly at our national situation and recognize that we must take action to live up to the lofty ideals with which our country was founded and which deserve our firm commitment.

So, what can we Catholics do to preserve what is good and overcome what is evil in our national life? To begin with, we should recognize that our Catholic tradition gives us great moral and spiritual resources to offer our fellow Americans in building up a more just and peaceful society. I can illustrate that with some historical examples.

Karl Marx in nineteenth-century Europe promoted a dialectical materialism that excluded God and pitted the capitalist class of owners and managers against the working class. The Church was slow to engage with European workers and their families in the rapidly industrializing cities and towns and it lost many Catholics to Marxism. In contrast, the Catholic Church in the United States was much closer to its working-class members. Cardinal James Gibbons of Baltimore in 1887 wrote to Pope Leo XIII and persuaded him to acknowledge the right of workers to organize themselves in unions and to strive for just treatment while rejecting class warfare. His influence is seen in the Pope's famous social encyclical, *Rerum Novarum*, issued in 1891. The Catholic working class stayed within the Church and the United States did not succumb to Marxism even as labor leaders, union members and Church officials pressed the political establishment to recognize the rights of laborers, meeting, after great struggle, with much success.

The Church historically participated in racial segregation in its Southern parishes, schools and other institutions but God's grace slowly penetrated the minds and hearts of more Catholics, some of whom supported African Americans' civil rights movement. Archbishop Patrick O'Boyle of Washington desegrated the Catholic schools in the capital city in 1948, then gradually, despite death threats, in the Southern Maryland counties. He sat next to

Chief Justice Earl Warren one night at a formal dinner when the Supreme Court was considering a case seeking the overthrow of racial segregation in public schools. The two men were overheard discussing how the Church's desegregation efforts had gone in its schools. O'Boyle's successful efforts may have helped the Warren Court reach its landmark decision in *Brown vs. Board of Education* in 1954 to end racial segregation in public schools.

Students during a Chemistry class at the Blessed Martin School, Wheeling, WV.

If the two examples I have just given highlight the good that two enlightened bishops did for our country, the Catholic laity offer another example. There are many just causes in which members of the laity are involved but, over the years, their leadership and participation in the prolife movement stand out. Nellie Gray, a Catholic lawyer, organized the March for Life for many years. Many pregnancy resource centers and homes for homeless mothers were started and staffed by Catholics. Thousands have petitioned, marched and voted to end abortion. Their work is needed now more than ever but what they have already accomplished redounds to the good of the American people.

The examples I have cited, of the many I could have offered, show that being true to Catholic principles – in these cases, the dignity and rights of working people, the equality of races under the law and the fundamental right to life – can contribute to the common good of the whole nation. Because Catholic social teaching begins with the human person situated in community, it promotes the good of individuals and the whole of society. Where is the Catholic approach to the public good needed today?

Many people in our country separate social justice issues – too narrowly defined, in my opinion – from basic personal morality. I saw this split when I was in college. While promoting civil rights and workers' rights I noticed that some of my friends were willing to indulge in various vices and betray one another even as they stood up against social injustices. I was hardly the perfect Christian but I thought that a person is, after all, one person, not two, and that every person should strive to be consistent in living by sound moral values in all of his or her activities. That understanding of the need to be consistent in public and private morality came from my Catholic faith and is a contribution that we Catholics can make to the renovation of our society.

We speak in the Church of a *culture of life* which promotes the good of the person and that of society as a whole. This resembles the statement in our Declaration of Independence: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of Happiness." The *culture of life* recognizes that no other rights matter if a person is denied the right to life. It affirms everyone's right to enjoy a genuine freedom to seek personal fulfillment, a right limited only by how its exercise affects other people and by objective circumstances.

Promoting a *culture of life* provides a positive agenda for Catholics and potentially for American society. In a country in which too few children are being born, our Catholic teaching on being open to life is a prophetic call to our society to change its priorities and put people first. We do this by opposing the killing of unborn children by abortion and by promoting natural family planning as the morally appropriate way to postpone a pregnancy when a couple's circumstances make that advisable. The *culture of life* opposes the abuse and manipulation of children while fostering good marriages in which the couple's love embraces the joy and burden of raising children. It cares for the sick, the injured, the frail elderly.

The *culture of life* is genuinely inclusive. It welcomes immigrants, members of all races, handicapped persons and persons who are predominantly same-sex attracted, while expecting of all the same standards of behavior that promote personal integrity and the common good. It favors the incarceration of criminals not just for punishment but for their rehabilitation and, therefore, it opposes the death penalty, which may preclude a criminal's repentance and conversion. It defends religious freedom and encourages all

people to honor their Maker, for the *abundant life* Jesus came to bring, while beginning on earth, reaches its fullness only in the blessed life of heaven.

Pope St. John Paul II wrote about the *civilization of love*. This goes beyond a simple respect for justice and basic human rights. It fosters true solidarity with others and a willingness to extend ourselves beyond mere duty to our neighbor in need. The *civilization of love* appears in the hospice movement with its ideal of providing loving care for terminally ill persons until natural death occurs. It is seen in soup kitchens and pantries that feed the hungry, in coaching young people in sports and the arts, tutoring children and adults who lack reading skills. Catholic religious orders and fraternal organizations such as the Knights of Columbus are also signs of the *civilization of love* as they care for their members and engage in activities that contribute to the welfare of society. The many activities and movements that join people together in the pursuit of honorable and beneficial ends are like a great quilt of many parts that yet forms a beautiful and useful whole.

Isaac Collins helping at the Catholic Charities Community Center of Charleston.

In promoting a culture of life and a civilization of love our Catholic faith does what George Washington said religion must do for the good of the nation: "Let us with caution indulge the supposition that morality can be maintained without religion. Whatever may be conceded to the influence of refined education on minds of peculiar structure, reason and experience both forbid us to expect that national morality can prevail in exclusion of religious principle. It is substantially true that virtue or morality is a necessary spring of popular government" (Farewell Address). Washington recognized that faith in God, who commands His children to practice goodness, builds up the civic virtues on which a just government depends to fulfill its role.

The enemies of a *culture of life* and the *civilization of love* are many. As Pope Benedict XVI pointed out, *secularism, relativism* and *individualism* weaken and can even destroy those worthy goals. *Secularism* seeks to exclude God from any consideration in the public square, relegating faith to private life – ignoring the role that people of faith and their religious bodies have had in forging and reforming our national life. It is seen in those who oppose state aid to religious schools, saying that this constitutes a de facto establishment of religion when in fact it simply recognizes that religious schools, like public schools, perform a public service, educating students not only in basic skills and knowledge but also forming them as responsible members of society.

Bishop Mark E. Brennan speaking to students at St. Joseph Central Catholic High School located in Huntington, WV.

Relativism proclaims that there is no objective truth: "You have your truth, I have mine." This makes it very difficult to achieve the common understandings and standards a society ruled by reason must have. This leads to social strife. For example, persons who do not accept the sex their bodies reveal to them need our compassion and help but their subjective experience should not lead to injustice toward others: it's not fair that biological males should be allowed to compete in women's sports.

Individualism seeks a heightened personal liberty that ignores the common good and does it harm. It shows up in the promotion of an unbridled freedom in sexual matters and in prejudices against certain classes of people, such as immigrants "who do not look like us," whom the powerful want to exclude from full participation in society and its benefits. It also is seen in the demand of some parents and guardians that their children be exempt from childhood vaccinations for religious or conscience reasons, despite the fact that such vaccinations have nearly eliminated many childhood diseases. (Exemptions for medical reasons are acceptable.) In this case parental freedom must be limited by a concern for the health of a vulnerable class of human beings who need more protection than adults do: children. Such exemptions tilt too far toward individual freedom and away from the common good.

Those who drink of the wine of *secularism*, *relativism* and *individualism* will use government, large business corporations, media allies, celebrities and professional societies in fields as diverse as medicine and sports to advance their agenda. Those powerful institutions and influential people are also strongly motivated to protect their own interests. In them are some good people but, collectively, they tend to act on their own behalf. They seek to keep the rest of society distracted in order to maintain their dominant position. It is the same strategy used by the elite families of ancient Rome to keep the lower classes in their place: *panis et circus*, bread and the circus. The lower classes were given enough bread to eat and provided with constant entertainment in the stadiums and coliseums of ancient cities so that they would not rebel against the ruling class.

Look at modern China. The Communist government adopts a similar strategy, giving enough access to material goods and personal choices to keep most of the people happy while the Communist Party maintains a firm overall control. In the United States we enjoy a standard of living that allows most people to avoid starving to death while many diminish their humanity by taking mind-altering drugs. Sports have become a practical idolatry, sex without responsibility is commonplace and a constant array of new technologies enthralls us (the latest smart phone or video game). These elements of modern American society function as *panis et circus*, distracting large segments of the population from pursuing their true personal good and our common national good. This leads to the neglect of serious issues of justice and social harmony and allows the elite class and powerful institutions to maintain their dominance.

In the struggle between the Catholic approach to our national project and the principles of *secularism, relativism* and *individualism*, one side or the other will eventually prevail. I believe, as did Abraham Lincoln, who, citing Jesus Christ, declared, *"A house divided against itself cannot stand."* We who believe in the *culture of life* and the *civilization of love* need to see clearly what is at stake: the very soul of our country. What kind of nation do we want to be? We must repent of any indifference toward our nation's welfare.

Are we willing to take a stand for what we believe to be best for our country? Our opponents are doing so. We must put God's way first, educate our children in it and not shrink from the struggle.

Faced with such formidable enemies, we need both wisdom and courage. God generously provides these gifts to His children. Jesus said to his Apostles several times after his resurrection: *Be not afraid.* He also said: *Come to me, you who are heavily burdened and I will refresh you.* We can count on the Lord to help us. It is said that, as the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia was meeting in 1787, a woman asked Benjamin Franklin what kind of government the delegates to the Convention had created. His reply was: "A republic, Madam, if you can keep it." As we joyfully celebrate our nation's two hundred and fiftieth anniversary of independence, we are the Americans who must "keep it." We Catholics have a lot to offer our fellow citizens, if we have the courage and patriotism to do so. Catholics of West Virginia, be truly Catholic and truly patriotic! Work for the genuine good of your country and trust that God will bless your efforts.

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A message from the West Virginia Knights of Columbus State Council

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You are invited to put your faith in action

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Huntington Parish's Quilt Group Gifts Beautiful Creations to Domestic Violence Shelter

Courtesy photo

Branches Domestic Violence Shelter thanked the #HuntingtonWV Piecemakers Quilt Group for presenting the organization with beautiful handmade lap quilts and pillowcases at their annual presentation at St. Peter Claver Church Huntington in May 19. "It's not easy to establish a new home from scratch, but many of our clients are forced to do so in order to find safety," organization officials said. "Comfort items like quilts or a soft place to rest your head can make a real difference on those difficult nights when it feels it might be easier to go back to the abuse than starting your life over at square one. We're so grateful for community members who support our mission to make a shelter or an empty apartment feel slightly more like a home." Shelter and quilt group members are pictured above with the quilts.

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El Papa León XIV les dice a los adolescentes de EEUU que la verdadera alegría no se encuentra 'navegando sin cesar' por las redes sociales

Por Courtney Mares, OSV news

(OSV News) —El Papa León XIV tiene un mensaje para los adolescentes de Estados Unidos reunidos este verano en las conferencias juveniles de Steubenville: la verdadera alegría no se encuentra "pasando horas frente a una pantalla o navegando sin cesar por las redes sociales".

En un mensaje de video difundido el 20 de junio con motivo del 50.º aniversario de las conferencias organizadas por la Universidad Franciscana de Steubenville, en Ohio, el Papa dijo a los jóvenes que su mensaje es sencillo: "Solo el amor de Dios puede darnos una alegría verdadera y perfecta".

"La verdadera paz y la alegría perfecta son dones de Dios que recibimos cuando nos abrimos a él y confiamos en su poder para transformarnos", afirmó.

El Papa León subrayó que las horas dedicadas a navegar por las redes sociales a menudo restan tiempo que sería mejor emplear en la oración, en forjar amistades auténticas, en estar con la familia, en estudiar o en practicar deporte. Fue más allá y advirtió de que las drogas, el alcohol, la promiscuidad o la obsesión por la imagen o la apariencia tampoco son caminos hacia la plenitud, añadiendo que incluso la riqueza, la belleza, la fama y la salud son efímeras.

Para el Papa, reflexionando sobre el mensaje de San Francisco de Asís, la respuesta se encuentra en otro lugar por completo. Les dijo a los adolescentes católicos que solo el amor de Dios puede darles una alegría auténtica y duradera, y que confiar en Dios es lo que permite a las personas mantenerse firmes incluso cuando la vida se vuelve difícil.

"Si estamos profundamente convencidos de que Dios nos cuida como a sus hijos amados, no nos confundiremos ni nos desanimaremos, ni siquiera en las situaciones difíciles", afirmó.

El Papa reconoció que a muchos de los adolescentes les han dicho toda su vida que Dios los ama, pero les pidió que reflexionaran sobre si realmente lo creen y viven de acuerdo con ello.

"Muchos de ustedes han oído desde pequeños que Dios os ama. Pero, ¿lo crees de verdad? ¡Son preciosos a los ojos de Dios! ¡Él los ama incondicionalmente! ¿Están seguros de ello?", dijo.

El Papa León añadió que el "secreto para poder afrontar circunstancias difíciles con una sonrisa" reside en tener una relación auténtica con Dios, construida a través de la oración y los sacramentos.

"Si cultivan una relación de confianza con él, mediante la oración regular, mediante la recepción de los sacramentos, si se abandonan en sus manos, entonces la ansiedad, la tristeza y la soledad desaparecerán a medida que su gracia los llene y su amor inflame su corazón", dijo.

Dirigiéndose directamente a los miles de adolescentes estadounidenses que participarán este verano en las jornadas juveniles de Steubenville (llamadas Steubenville Youth Conferences), el Papa también hizo un llamamiento directo a los jóvenes para que disciernan y sigan con valentía la vocación a la que Jesucristo les llama.

"¿Qué podemos ofrecerle a cambio de tan gran amor, de dones tan generosos? ¡Nada más que a nosotros mismos!", dijo el Papa León. "Hoy, el Señor necesita misioneros que anuncien su mensaje a quienes no lo conocen, hombres y mujeres santos que formen familias católicas amorosas, sacerdotes que sean padres espirituales y ministros de los sacramentos, así como religiosos y religiosas que sean testigos de la verdadera alegría de su Reino".

"Si sientes que el Señor podría estar llamándote a una de estas vocaciones, no te cierres ni te alejes por miedo; da un paso al frente y dile al Señor: 'Aquí estoy, envíame!'", dijo el Papa León. "Al mismo tiempo, no temas hablar de ello con alguien de confianza, ya sea un amigo, un sacerdote o una religiosa".

Se animó a los jóvenes participantes en las conferencias juveniles de Steubenville a aprovechar los momentos de silencio durante el evento "para descubrir la paz de Cristo que Él prometió dar a sus discípulos".

El videomensaje del Papa marca un año histórico para las Steubenville Youth Conferences, organizadas por la Universidad Franciscana desde la década de 1970 y que se han convertido en una de las iniciativas de evangelización juvenil católica más grandes del país. Este verano, la universidad acoge cuatro conferencias con entradas agotadas en su campus de Ohio, y se celebran otras 15 conferencias en toda Norteamérica, incluido el primer evento del programa en Belice, realizado en marzo.

Las sedes de las conferencias de este año incluyen Georgia, Massachusetts, Florida, Illinois, Texas, Missouri, Washington, Colorado, Minnesota, California, Louisiana, Arizona y Nueva Escocia, Canadá. Entre los ponentes de este verano figuran el padre Mike Schmitz, Chris Stefanick, el padre Leo Patalinghug, Paul J. Kim y Katie Prejean McGrady. La Universidad Franciscana también organiza conferencias de verano para adultos, paralelamente a su programación juvenil.

Según Brian Kissinger, director ejecutivo de conferencias de la Universidad Franciscana, el 18% de los sacerdotes ordenados en Estados Unidos este año asistió a una Conferencia de Steubenville durante su adolescencia.

"Nos sentimos honrados y con humildad ante las muchas formas en que Dios sigue llegando a miles de jóvenes cada año a través de nuestras conferencias, y por el profundo impacto que estos eventos tienen en la fe y las vocaciones de los jóvenes", afirmó Kissinger.

(Courtney Mares es editora de temas del Vaticano para OSV News.)

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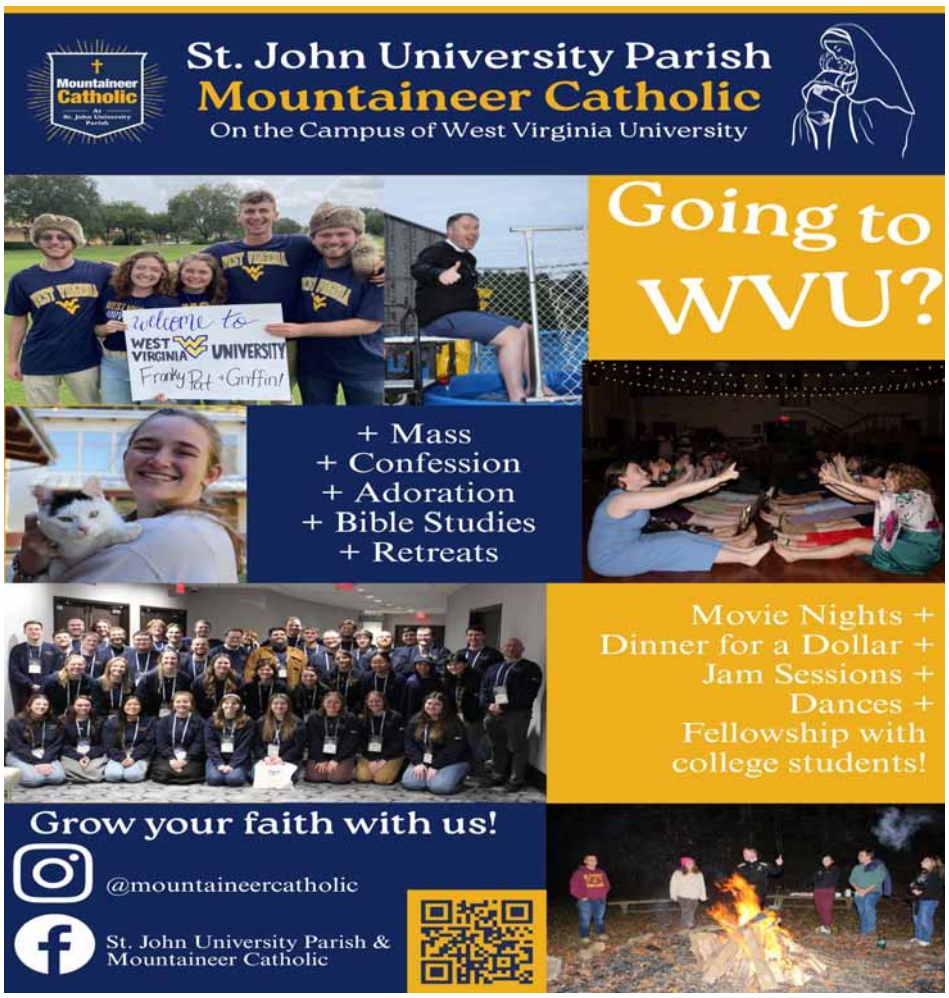

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