

THE CATHOLIC

Spirit

Pope Leo Warns of 'Irreparable Abyss,' If Diplomacy Doesn't Take over Violence in Iran, Middle East

By **Paulina Guzik**

(OSV News) — Pope Leo XIV issued a fervent appeal for return of diplomacy in “these dramatic hours” in the Middle East and Iran, condemning use of weapons that cause “destruction, pain, and death.”

Pope Leo spoke roughly 12 hours after the U.S. and Israel revealed that Iran’s supreme leader, 86-year-old Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, is among the country’s senior leaders killed in their initial assault on Iran, started in the early morning hours on Feb. 28.

During his Sunday Angelus prayer March 1, the pope said he was “following with profound concern” these events and warned of a potential “tragedy of enormous proportions.” He appealed for the warring parties to assume “the moral responsibility of halting the spiral of violence” before it becomes “an irreparable abyss.”

The pope insisted the nations return to diplomacy.

“Stability and peace are not built through mutual threats, nor with weapons that sow destruction, pain, and death, but only through reasonable, authentic, and

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Smoke billows March 3 after an Israeli strike on Beirut’s southern suburbs, following an escalation between Hezbollah and Israel amid the U.S.-Israeli conflict with Iran.

OSV News photo/Mohamed Azakir, Reuters

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The Catholic Spirit's Print Schedule for 2026

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

2026 Print Dates:

The Annunciation of the Lord, March 13 (Solemnity, March 25)
 Easter, April 10 (Easter Sunday, April 5)
 Month of Mary, Mother of God, May 15
 Month of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus, June 12
 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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William A. Anderson, DMin, PhD

William A. Anderson, DMin, PhD, has transitioned to Heaven on March 4, 2026. He has been living with pancreatic cancer since August. He donated his body to the Human Gift Registry at West Virginia University.

As per his request, the diocese is not to send a memorial card to the clergy (He never wore a black shirt).

Also, there is to be no obituary printed in the Catholic Spirit.

An Eucharistic Liturgy of Resurrection will be celebrated at Mt. St. Joseph, Wheeling at a later date. Memorial cards created by Father William A. Anderson, DMin, PhD will be distributed at that Liturgy.

Donations may be made to Pancreatic Cancer Action Network, Donation Processing Center, PO Box 5041, Boone, IA 50950-0041

Sister Patricia Sullivan, CSJ

Sister Patricia Anne Sullivan (92), died peacefully surrounded by her loving sisters on February 20, 2026 at Mount St. Joseph in Wheeling.

Sister Pat was preceded in death by her parents, George William Sullivan and Jeanne d'Aquin Sullivan. She is survived by her dear friend, Sister Ileana Fernandez, her brother Kevin Sullivan (Terry), nephews Greg, Owen and Richard Sullivan, and nieces Laura Sullivan and Katherine Sullivan.

A native of New Orleans, Sister Pat (Sister M. Kevin) entered the Sisters of St. Joseph on September 8, 1952, after her high school graduation from St. Joseph Academy. She attended St. Joseph's Junior College and Loyola University where she graduated with a BS in Education in 1963. Sister Pat began studies at the University of New Orleans where she earned a Masters of Science in Counseling in 1975.

Sister Pat's long career in Education began in 1954 in New Orleans, where she taught in several Archdiocesan Elementary Schools. In 1968 she moved to Bay St. Louis, Mississippi, and served as a teacher and later as Principal at Our Lady of the Gulf Elementary School, a position she held until 1976. Sister Pat became Administrator of St. Joseph's Children's Home (a long-time ministry of the Sisters of St. Joseph to orphans and children from families in need) in Baton Rouge. She was such a kind and caring administrator that local



neighbors considered her their "little mother".

In 1985, Sister Pat began her service as Principal of Sacred Heart of Jesus Elementary School. An inner-city school with a very diverse population in Baton Rouge, Sacred Heart of Jesus tripled its enrollment in the next 21 years under the leadership of Sister Pat. To this day, her former students and faculty members stayed in touch with Sister.

Beginning in 2006, Sister Pat served as Administrator of our Community at Kleinert, which in 2009 moved to our new Center on Hundred Oaks Avenue in Baton Rouge. She remained in that position until 2013.

Retired from Administration ministry, Sister Pat became a mentor for several young women discerning religious life with our Congregation. She also continued to serve as a mentor to a CSJ Associate Circle.

Sister Pat resided in Baton Rouge from 1976 until 2021, then retired and moved to our CSJ center in Wheeling to receive the nursing care she needed. Sister Pat offered her gifts of leadership and prayer until the end. She was a beloved member of the Wheeling community.

The Funeral Liturgy was Tuesday, February 24, at Mt. Saint Joseph, Wheeling.

Memories and condolences may be shared and the services watched at www.AltmeyerFuneralHomes.com

Jeffrey A. Smay

Jeffrey A. Smay of Wheeling, WV, passed away of heart failure at the age of 72 on March 1, 2026 at home in Wheeling, WV. He was born September 12, 1953 in Tarentum, PA. He was a member of Corpus Christi Catholic Church in Wheeling, WV.



He is survived by his wife of 48 years Carole (Przybysz) Smay and his six children: Jeff Jr (Teresa) of Yuma, AZ, Steve (Nicole) of Tewksbury, MA, Andrew (Katrina) of Martins Ferry, OH, Rachel (Ryan) Allchin of Middleburg, FL, Fr. Martin of Huntington, WV, and Austin (fiancée Julianna Perkowski, to be wedded June 27, 2026) of Kearneysville, WV and 19 grandchildren. He is also survived by his brother Jerry (Kathy) Smay of Munhall, PA and his sister Sharon (Jim) Thompson of South Park, PA.

His love for Jesus Christ and the Catholic Church directed his life. He taught his children the love of God and the value of work and responsibility. He was an unwavering advocate for the sanctity and humanity of the unborn.

In high school and college Jeff competed as an all around gymnast. He received a full ride gymnastic scholarship to WVU, where he was a four year varsity letterman. He enjoyed reading and writing.

He joyfully dedicated his life to educating youth. He taught full time in Catholic schools for 38 years. Even in retirement, he found joy in

returning to the classroom as a substitute teacher up until the time of his illness. He started his teaching career at Weirton Madonna High School, continued at Clarksburg Notre Dame High School, St. Ann's Grade School Bronx, NY

(while attending graduate school at Fordham University), St. Vincent-St. Mary High School in Akron, Ohio, Central Catholic High School in Wheeling, and substituted extensively at Bishop Donahue High School until its closure. Over the years, he organized, worked, and led dozens of retreats: Antiochs, TECs, Bread for the Journey, Confirmation retreats, eighth grade retreats, parish retreats, and more. His joy was helping young people understand God's love and plan for their lives and teaching them how to live a virtuous Christian life through their identity as sons and daughters of God.

Jeff's family wishes to express their deep gratitude to Valley Hospice for their generous support over the last 4 months, especially Courtney and Angie.

Friends will be received on Sunday, March 8, 2026 from 2:00 to 4:00 PM and 6:00 to 8:00 PM at Altmeyer Funeral Home Wheeling Chapel on Eoff Street. Vigil services will be held at 8:00 PM. Mass of Christian Burial will be held on Monday, March 9 at 11 AM at Corpus Christi Church with Fr. Martin J. Smay officiating. Burial will follow at Mount Calvary Cemetery.

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Peace ...

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responsible dialogue," he said.

The ongoing joint U.S. and Israeli attack on Iran has targeted Tehran and cities across Iran, with Gulf countries caught in the crossfire as Iran launches retaliatory strikes.

"Faced with the possibility of a tragedy of enormous proportions, I address to the parties involved a heartfelt appeal to assume the moral responsibility of halting the spiral of violence before it becomes an irreparable abyss," he said.

"May diplomacy regain its role and promote the good of the peoples who yearn for peaceful coexistence based on justice," he added, urging the world to "continue to pray for peace."

What Pope Leo called a "spiral of violence" continued to unfold Sunday as mutual attacks escalated hour by hour throughout the Middle East.

Israel and Iran launched fresh attacks March 1, with the BBC reporting that Iran's state-run Islamic Republic News Agency said Tehran has been hit by 60 attacks in 24 hours, leaving 57 people dead — numbers reportedly provided by the Tehran Province Red Crescent Society.

Israel's military said on X March 1 that its strikes have killed 40 Iranian commanders, including Abdolrahim Mousavi, the chief of staff of Iran's armed forces, Abdolrahim Mousavi. Iranian state television confirmed the death.

In the conflict's opening 24 hours, two people were killed in Tel Aviv as an Iranian missile hit a residen-



OSV News photo/Abbas Zakeri/Mehr News/WANA (West Asia News Agency) via Reuters

People and rescue forces work following an Israel strike on a school in Minab, Iran, Feb. 28.

tial building, while 120 people in Israel were injured from Iran's counterstrikes, The Jerusalem Post reported.

The Guardian reported Iran's president, Masoud Pezeshkian, was quoted as having called the killing of Iran's supreme leader "an open war against Muslims" and having said that Iran "considers bloodshed and revenge against the perpetrators and commanders of this crime as its legitimate duty and right, and will fulfill this great responsibility and duty with all its might."

President Donald Trump took to Truth Social on March 1 warning Iran to not retaliate further.

"Iran just stated that they are going to hit very hard today, harder than they have ever hit before," President Trump wrote on his social network. He added, "THEY BETTER NOT DO THAT, HOWEVER, BECAUSE IF THEY DO, WE WILL HIT THEM WITH A FORCE THAT HAS NEVER BEEN SEEN BEFORE!"

Pope Leo, during his Angelus appeal, reminded

people that in recent days, "we have also received disturbing news of clashes between Pakistan and Afghanistan." He raised a "plea for an urgent return to dialogue."

"Let us pray together that harmony may prevail in all the world's conflicts," he said, adding, "Only peace, a gift of God, can heal the wounds between peoples."

The leader of the U.S. Catholic bishops has echoed Pope Leo XIV's call for deescalation and dialogue in the Middle East.

The attacks prompted a wave of strikes by Iran across the region, with deaths and casualties — including the loss of at least six U.S. military personnel — on all sides.

In a March 1 statement, Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, warned the "growing conflict risks spiraling into a wider regional war."

Noting Pope Leo's plea for peace in his March 1



OSV News photo/Nadja Wohlleben, Reuters
Iranians in exile and their supporters protest for a regime change in front of the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin, Germany, Feb. 28.

Angelus remarks, Archbishop Coakley said, "We are faced with the possibility of a tragedy of immense proportions.

"My brother bishops and I unite our voice with our Holy Father and make the heartfelt appeal to all parties involved for diplomacy to regain its proper role," Archbishop Coakley said. Quoting the pope's remarks, he said, "We ask for a halt to the spiral of violence, and a return to multilateral diplomatic engagement that seeks to uphold the 'well-being of peoples, who yearn for peaceful existence founded on justice.'"

The USCCB president stressed that "all nations, international bodies, and partners committed to peace must exert every effort to prevent further escalation."

Describing the present moment as "critical," Archbishop Coakley invited "Catholics and all people of goodwill to continue our ardent prayers for peace in the Middle East, for the safety of our troops and the innocent, that leaders may

seek dialogue over destruction, and pursue the common good over the tragedy of war."

His statement contained a link to a June 2025 appeal for prayer and diplomacy by Bishop A. Elias Zaidan, chair of the USCCB's Committee on International Justice and Peace, after the U.S. had launched precision strikes on several of Iran's key nuclear facilities.

In that statement, Bishop Zaidan, head of the Maronite Eparchy of Our Lady of Lebanon of Los Angeles, had urged "multilateral diplomatic engagement for the attainment of a durable peace between Israel and Iran."

Archbishop Coakley concluded his March 1 statement by imploring "the intercession of our Blessed Mother, Mary, Queen of Peace, to pray for our troubled world and for a lasting peace."

(Paulina Guzik is international editor for OSV News. Contributing to this story was Gina Christian, a multimedia reporter for OSV News.)

Expert: Violent 764 Group a ‘Growing Problem’ Targeting Vulnerable Kids Online

By **Gina Christian**

(OSV News) — A number of violent extremist groups, led by minors and young adults, are increasingly targeting kids online — in some cases, with deadly results.

And as federal officials, counterterrorism experts and child advocates sound the alarm, parents need to take action amid the “growing problem,” a scholar at a Catholic university told OSV News.

“There is a naive view of the dangers that are currently online,” said Mary Graw Leary, professor of law at the Columbus School of Law at The Catholic University of America in Washington.

Leary, a former federal prosecutor and an expert on technology and victimization, said that despite ongoing efforts to protect children and youth in the digital space, “we see law enforcement issuing more and more warnings.”

In particular, those alerts — which several FBI field offices have issued in recent months — are focusing on 764, a loosely affiliated network of online communities that prey on vulnerable youth, typically coercing them to produce sexually explicit material, and then blackmailing them to harm themselves as well as others, even beloved family pets.

The 764 group was founded in 2021 by then-15-year-old Bradley Cadenhead, a Texas teen raised in a devout Christian family that later unraveled, with Cadenhead — who also experienced bullying — growing increasingly angry, distressed and isolated, according to 2024 in-depth investigation by The Washington Post.

Amid that downturn, Cadenhead — now serving an 80-year jail term for multiple child pornography offenses — took to the social media platform Discord to create a community space where he and other like-minded users harassed and exploited victims, promoting (as he wrote) “cp (child pornography) and gore.”

Cadenhead — who repeatedly eluded Discord’s largely user-moderated safety protocols, creating new user accounts whenever he was kicked off the platform — wrote to a user in one July 2021 chat message, “i can give you a guide on how to kill yourself 10 different ways that are very descriptive. ... i wanna watch somebody kill themselves in vc (video chat),” according to The Washington Post.

Named after the first three digits of Caden-



OSV News photo/Peter Byrne, Reuters
A child is shown using a laptop computer in this undated photo. Catholic experts in online safety and counterterrorism weigh in on NVE (nihilistic violent extremism) threats to children, as the FBI and the DOJ sound the alarm over the 764 network, which Canada has already labeled a terrorist group.

head’s ZIP code in Stephenville, Texas, 764 operates across almost all social media platforms and communities, most prominently Telegram, Discord, Roblox, X, Instagram, TikTok and Reddit, according to a 2025 report by the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, a multinational research organization specializing in countering extremism.

In addition, 764 activity has been detected on Minecraft, Fortnite, Twitch, Steam and Snapchat, said ISD in its report.

Along with related sextortion networks, 764’s scale is “global,” with some Telegram groups counting 15,000 users at once, and in-person violence involving or inspired by 764 members taking place in the U.S., the United Kingdom and Sweden, said ISD.

Group members commonly connect with victims through online groups focused on mental health disorders, gaming and e-girl subculture, a TikTok trend in which girls embrace a mixture of gothic and anime fashion, makeup and music.

Leary noted that online predators in general are “looking for any vulnerability they can find,” but 764 members “seem to have a special goal for people with mental health or deep insecurity vulnerabilities.”

One Seattle-area couple recently filed a wrongful death lawsuit against the social media

platform Discord, arguing the company aided in the suicide of their 13-year-old son, Jay Taylor, by abetting 764, “one of the most depraved and dangerous child abuse cults in modern history.”

Victims’ ages typically range from 10 to 17 years old, with the FBI identifying some victims as young as 9 years old.

Among the self-harm activities encouraged by 764 are “blood signs,” with victims carving perpetrators’ real or online names onto their bodies as a sign of loyalty. Victims also use their own blood to create such signs on other surfaces, such as walls, sending images to group members to prove their loyalty and submission.

“If you’re interested in domination and demonstrating your control over another person, getting them to physically harm themselves and you being able to see it ... is a very tangible way of doing that,” said Leary.

ISD said in its report that such “cutsigns” underscore that “often the self-harm perpetrated within 764 spaces is more extreme than other forms of ‘cutting,’” with “indicators of 764-linked self-harm ... more complex and varied than scarred forearms.”

The insidious dynamic of the 764 group works to trap its targets in a cycle of revictimization, and its perpetrators in an escalating cycle of in-person violence.

Once they have coerced vulnerable children into producing child sexual abuse material, 764 members harass and intimidate victims to silence them, perpetuating the abuse. At the same time, current and prospective 764 members resort to “assault, animal abuse, and attempted murder to impress other members of the network and gain social standing,” according to ISD’s 2025 report.

And, experts note, perpetrators — often only slightly older than those they exploit — coerce their victims to commit such atrocities not because of any cohesive ideology, but out of sheer hatred and hopelessness.

For that reason, such groups are broadly classified by law enforcement and researchers as “nihilistic violent extremists,” or NVEs.

Among such extremists are those “seeking to destroy civilized society through the corruption and exploitation of vulnerable populations, which often include minors,” according to the

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Kids ...

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U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Columbia.

In December, Canada became the first nation to name 764 as a terrorist group.

In the U.S., the FBI is currently conducting at least 250 investigations involving the 764 group, and federal authorities have arrested several members over the past few years.

Back on Feb. 17, two U.S. lawmakers — Rep. James Comer (R-Ky.), chair of the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, and Rep. Clay Higgins (R-La.), chair of the Subcommittee on Federal Law Enforcement, wrote to FBI Director Kash Patel asking for a staff-level briefing on that agency's efforts to counter the 764 group.

Experts also note the 764 group's use of satanic and Nazi symbolism, part of the "shared visual aesthetics" with similar groups that also traffic in child sexual abuse material, extortion and violence.

And in the murky realms of cyberspace, such communities intersect, compounding the threat they pose to individuals and society.

In a 2024 analysis published by the Global Network on Extremism and Technology, researchers Marc-André Argentino, Barrett G. and M.B. Tyler noted that although 764 members have been arrested due to child sexual abuse material charges, they "initially became known to law enforcement following tips from anonymous individuals or schools in the U.S., UK, and Romania regarding plans to commit acts of mass violence."

Citing court documents, Argentino and his colleagues said that "764 members consistently reveal inclinations towards acts of both interpersonal and public violence."

A "convergence" of "terrorist and violent extremism content" and child sexual abuse material "is mediated through digital platforms and ecosystems, particularly those linked to the gaming space," they wrote.

At least one research group has determined that NVE radicalization may have played a significant

role in the deadly August 2025 shooting during a school Mass at Annunciation Catholic Church in Minneapolis.

In an Aug. 28, 2025, executive summary, the Institute for Countering Digital Extremism said the self-deceased attacker, Robin Westman, had been "heavily motivated" by "militant accelerationism mass shooter culture," and "potentially connected to nihilistic violent extremism (NVE) ecosystems online."

"Westman represents a growing trend within targeted violence wherein individuals attack an apparent symbolic target (though likely driven more by personal grievance with the target) and have little to no specific ideological motivation for the attack nor the target," said ICDE in its summary.

Leary said that while children and vulnerable persons have throughout history been at risk of abuse and exploitation, groups such as 764 show that "the internet

provides access to large groups of victims" for predators.

And, she said, the internet and such deviant subgroups "provide affinity and normalization" for the worst of human behavior.

"We've got people supporting each other's perverse, violent proclivities in a way that we didn't see before," she said. "These channels are fueling this in a way that didn't exist."

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



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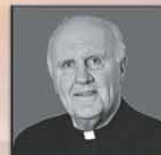
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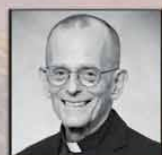
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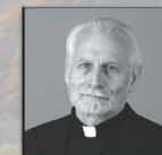
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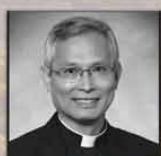
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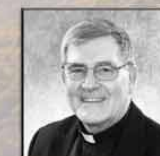
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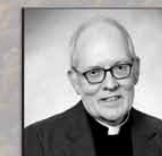
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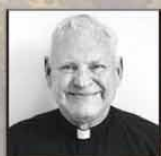
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"I thank you for your lives given in service to the Kingdom, for your daily labors, for so much generosity in the exercise of the ministry, for all that you live in silence, and that at times is accompanied by suffering or misunderstanding." ~ Pope Leo XIV

Rite of Election

At right, a catechumen signs her name in the Book of the Elect at the Rite of Election at St. Alphonsus Church in Wheeling on Sunday, March 1 (AJ Emery photo). Below, catechumens with their godparents and candidates with their sponsors from parishes in the Northern Panhandle and central region of the state fill St. Alphonsus Church at the Rite of Election (Chad Carter photo). Catechumens and their godparents and candidates and their sponsors from parishes of the southern region of the state gathered at the Rite of Election at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston Feb. 22 and at St. Leo Church in Inwood Feb. 28. Bishop Mark Brennan presided over all three services.



The Rose Window at St. Alphonsus, Wheeling: Rediscovered Gem

By **Valleri Gordon**

The historic St. Alphonsus Parish on Market Street in Wheeling has some exciting news. Our rose window is back!

You may be asking, “What is a rose window?”

Parishioners are wondering, “Wait! We actually have one????... Where?”

Firstly, a rose window is a circular feature of many of the Romanesque and Gothic style churches built since as early as the 12th Century. This pleasing design element is even older than that if you consider the many large buildings of the Roman Empire that employed round openings called oculi (or oculus in the singular) in their high walls. These features allowed sunlight into the vast public spaces within the structures. In either age, round or “rose” windows had a dual purpose—to give natural light to a large room and to represent supernatural light.

The Cathedral of Notre Dame which was begun in Paris, France in 1163 boasts to be the first European cathedral to have a rose window. Christians living during those Middle Ages cultivated appreciation for theological and philosophical truths, of course, but absorbed their education in ways that did not require book reading. Books and reading were not to be part of most people’s lives for yet some 300 years. The commoner’s university was, to a large extent, truths manifested in the art and architecture of the local Catholic church.

If you do an amateur study of historic rose windows in Europe, you will not be disappointed to discover the incredible beauty and diversity of designs. The colors and effects achieved by master craftsmen are awe-full—if you don’t mind the archaic expression! There are circular window designs with all numbers and shapes of divisions including sets of 3, 7, 10, 12 and even 13 circles, triangles, curved squares, diamonds, or teardrops. With so many possible combinations, each window is a unique and sparkling



Colleen Rowan photo

The rose window at St. Alphonsus Church in Wheeling

gem. A notable historian who has made it his life passion to seek out and archive rose windows of the world is Painton Cowen. His collection can be appreciated at www.therosewindow.com as well as in his book “The Rose Window.” I think you will be fascinated by the holy lessons in code that inspired artists have given us.

By the early 19th century, the written word was quite accessible, but symbolic architectural elements were still employed to teach the Catholic faith and fill the darker corners of European and American cities where its new churches were built. These churches were places to gather and worship God, but they were also sites where the people could be immersed in symbols of their faith. We are corporeal, intelligent and curious creatures

who need objects to see, hear, taste and smell. We need ponderings for the mind, and hope for our spirit. All these contribute to our understanding of the truth, beauty, and order of God. How magnificently rose windows in the churches throughout the last 1000 years satisfy those ageless needs!

The first thing God made was light, “Let there be light.” (Genesis 1:3-5). We can start with the light that is brought into sanctuaries by a highly put window. In the case of St. Alphonsus Church, the light would have come in brightly from the east in time for a morning Mass, shining down toward the high altar. When newly built in 1856, the first church on the property was not yet so fortunate. A simple building in Rundbognestil style of 112 feet by 50 feet was built for the German speaking immigrants in Wheeling. It

was very similar in size and style to the old school St. Alphonsus School that some of you may remember. Both buildings featured Romanesque design elements such as windows and doorways with rounded arch tops. A tower with a fine rose window was added to the front of this first church in 1871. Then the “matching” school was built on the north side of the church in 1874. By the mid 1880’s the walls of the first church were leaning toward the school quite critically, but the tower remained structurally sound. So, in 1886 the 1856 church was torn down. The tower, however, was left standing and a new (now present church) was built around the tower. Although no drawings, photographs or other renditions of the original church can now be found, it is expected that the rose window was admired from the inside of the original church for about 15 years. If anyone happens to have a photograph or artistic rendering of the first St. Alphonsus Church (before 1886), please contact the parish office!

What was seen and admired then was a miniature catechism of bold shapes and colors, perfected in pleasing mathematical order. Researchers claim that no two rose windows in the world are the same, but all follow similar rules of that study known as geometry. During more ancient times, the field of geometry was not categorically separated from religion or philosophy as is usually the case with modern education. The study of geometry then must have been much more fascinating because its “proofs” were used to explain and connect the beauty and order of God’s creation with the truths of the perfect redemption of the universe. The tools of geometry were the tools of the philosophers, the theologians, the preachers, and the artists.

Our rose window is believed to have been crafted and installed by the G. A Misch firm of Chicago in 1887. At the same time, the other original
See “Rose” on Page 9

Rose ...

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windows of the new church were installed. We can still see these original stained-glass windows of the two sacristies on the side of the high altar. We can appreciate the skill and symbolism in those orderly and colorful treasures. Starting in the center of the rose circular window hidden in the tower is a flower made of alternating yellow and red petals. Here is a first lesson on Christ. Red symbolizes human love and sacrifice, alternating with the yellow which stands for divinity. The divinity petals are prominent and make a cross. In the center of the cross is a double circle of blue symbolizing the union of the natures of Christ—divine and human, which suffered and redeemed. The blue of the background and the blue of the double circle signify the heavenly origin of Christ. This central design is then surrounded by 10 green curved shapes. Green here symbolizing hope radiating from Christ. Then, these are surrounded by 10 blue circles with orange centers and red outlines. Ten was considered by the Christians of the Middle Ages as the number of Godly perfection and Divine order. In Genesis the words, “God said” is used 10 times. God gave 10 Commandments. We could think of those 10 circles as the order of creating things made originally whole by God and then after the Fall, made whole again by Christ, and manifested in the lives of the saints. The use of red and orange here call to mind a passion for the salvation of souls given as a “fire” of the Holy Spirit, manifested in the sacrifices of the martyrs. Finally, the outer elongated shapes of the window show pink and amber with 30 green circles dotting the design in groups of 3. Pinks and ambers depict joy and grace, and green once again further hope for the future. 30 has Biblical significance, as Jo-

seph son of Jacob, David, son of Solomon and Jesus of Nazareth all reached a spiritual maturity and began their mission from God at age 30. Thirty also stands for the completion of creation at the end of time. If one observes the darkness made by the wooden tracer that holds all the individual shapes in a wheel-like configuration, he contemplates a model of the created universe where God is both in eternity and at the same time in the present moment like being at the center of a wheel. There is where we find ourselves—between the beginning and end of creation, in the thick of the passion of salvation, surrounded by moments of hope, joy, sadness and sacrifice.

Several months ago, in the heat of late spring, a team from Willet Stained Glass Studios in Winona, Minnesota arrived to complete Phase 1 of our parish’s “Window Project.” This work involved repairing the wooded frames of the south pictorial stained-glass windows that were purchased in 1904. The Studio team also installed a protection system that preserves our valuable windows against weather damage. Phase 2 followed when this company removed the pieces of the rose window. Many pieces were cracked and some even missing. The damage allowed extremes of heat, moisture and cold into the tower of the church and consequently we saw some mild damage to the paint on the walls and statues in the sanctuary. Willet transported the pieces to their restoration facility in Minnesota where experts were able to clean and repair all the pieces and ship them back to Wheeling.

Finally, on November 24, 2025, just in time for the 120th Anniversary of the Consecration of the 1887 St. Alphonsus Parish Church which was on November 26, the rose window returned. The pieces have been restored to their original beauty by Willet and were

carefully assembled back into the circular wooden frame—or “tracer” on the 1871 tower.

Some may think it is strange that the parish restored a feature of the church that cannot be seen by the parishioners themselves from within. Only a handful of folks who have braved the thin tower ladders in this century to reach the level above the choir loft have experienced its remarkable design. Sadly, the original intention of the artist of this 19th century window was in fact permanently obscured many years ago by the building of the second church in 1887. There is every reason to believe that natural light from our lovely rose window has never brightened the current sanctuary! Can what had been intended by those late 19th century pastors and parish council members be now considered a waste of time?

Absolutely not! Just one week after the reinstallation, Yahn electric was commissioned to put electric lighting behind the window, so that the brilliant work of art can be seen by local residents of Market, Chapline, Jacob and Eoff and beyond to the travelers on Route 2. Our little beacon of hope is poised to be in perfect view of patients and staff members of the anticipated cancer center. Light from within a holy place is going out into the world—and just at a time, God’s time! Some would say our century is a dark age of moral decline. The world needs a fresh call to holiness, peace, hope and beauty yet again. This is a significant mission opportunity for our

neighborhood parish!

Achieving the goal of completion of Phases I and II of the Window Project involved the prayer and sacrifice of many people and organizations. First, sincere thanks are due to the people of the parish who were generous in their giving with much the same spirit as the founding parishioners who put their trust in God as they laid down their monetary gifts to build the first church. Next, appreciation goes to the Hoffmann Foundation and the Hess Family Foundation for their substantial grants. May the members of their boards be remembered for their contribution to the preservation of faith and beauty of our historic parish. Several parishioners and friends of the parish offered advice on historic preservation procedures and funding. The parish also commends and recommends the craftsmen at Willet Stained Glass Studios for their fantastic work in restoring and reinstalling the window. Lastly, St. Alphonsus Parish offers a particular expression of gratitude to Bishop Mark Brennan and the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston for substantial financial and expert management assistance. John Reardon and Ken Staley at the Buildings and Properties Department were superb at managing the process of the project.

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The third and final Phase of the Window Project is underway! The wood frames of the windows on the north and lower east side of the church are also in need of some care and attention. An update to the weather protection systems is due. The parish has begun a campaign to fund this last phase of the Window Preservation Project to be completed as soon as possible. They would appreciate assistance in the form of donations from anyone who would like to help preserve the valuable works of art that give due glory to God and hope to humanity. St. Alphonsus Liguori (1696-1787), patron Saint of the parish was known for his giftedness in expression of the written word. I will allow him to conclude. Perhaps this quote was even inspired by a rose window. “When we see a beautiful object, a beautiful garden, or a beautiful flower, let us think that there we behold a ray of the infinite beauty of God, who has given existence to that object.”

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Members of Weirton Parishes to Stand for Unborn Children Outside Pittsburgh Planned Parenthood

Officials of Weirton parishes invite area faithful to, "Join 40 DAYS FOR LIFE – help save innocent lives in the Tri-State area and promote the dignity of human life! Please consider taking a public stand for unborn children with other members of our Weirton Catholic Churches on Tuesday, March 10, from 11 a.m.-

1 p.m., or Friday, March 20, from 3-5 p.m., outside Planned Parenthood, 933 Liberty Ave, Pittsburgh."

Sadly, there are over 2,400 abortions yearly at this location alone. In Pennsylvania, abortions are legal through the 23rd week of pregnancy. This vigil runs daily from 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m.,

Feb. 18 through March 29, if other times better fit your schedule. Carpooling is available. Call Sheila at (818) 523-2893 for more information. Check out <https://40daysforlifepittsburgh.com> and read the inspiring stories of how lives continue to be saved during this vigil. And please pray daily for an end to abortion.

Fairmont Catholics Join in 1 Million Hail Marys Campaign for Spiritual Renewal and Evangelization

FAIRMONT — St. Peter the Fisherman Parish in Fairmont is participating in 1 Million Hail Marys Campaign for Spiritual Renewal & Evangelization.

"Our parish family is invited to

unite in the power of prayer through a Million Hail Marys Campaign for Evangelization and for the people of our parish and of Marion County, trusting in God's promise that faithful prayer is powerful and effective

(James 5:16; Mark 11:24). From Ash Wednesday 2026 to Ash Wednesday 2027, we aim to pray one million Hail Marys together as a parish family.

Parishioners were asked to consider returning the campaign form

that was in a recent bulletin to the basket in front of the altar or the collection basket and participating in this spiritual campaign. Additional forms are available in the vestibule of the church.

'Work, Family, and Faith: Toward an Integrated Life' Conference for Millennials & Gen Z to be Held March 20-21

STEUBENVILLE, Ohio — Franciscan University of Steubenville will host "Work, Family, and Faith: Toward an Integrated Life," a conference featuring Catholic leaders like Mary Rice Hasson and Terry Schilling to help young adults harmonize professional success with spiritual and family values. The conference will be held March 20 at 3 p.m. to March 21 at 6 p.m. and is being presented by the Veritas Center for Ethics in Public Life. The event aims to provide Millennials and Gen Z with a human vision of vocation that integrates career ambitions with fidelity to Christ. Click here to register <https://franciscan.edu/work-family-and-faith-toward-an-integrated-life/>

Enjoy Irish Music at Spring Dale Church March 15

SPRING DALE — On Sunday, March 15, at 3 p.m. at Sacred Heart Church in Spring Dale, the Trents will play a program of Irish and Celtic music and hymns to celebrate Saint Patrick and the heritage of Irish Mountain. Directions: Take I-64 to Exit 150 at Dawson. Make 3 left turns to get onto Springdale Rd. Travel about 5 miles on Springdale Road, then turn right onto Catholic Church Rd. The church is 1/4 mile in on that road.

Stations of the Cross *'A Time to Reflect and Repent'*



Courtesy photo

HUNTINGTON — "First Stations of the Cross of Lent. A time to reflect and repent," officials at Sacred Heart Church in Huntington posted to the parish's Facebook page. Leading the Stations of the Cross are Father Paul Vazhappilly, pastor of Sacred Heart and St. Peter Claver Parish in Huntington, and altar servers.

Vatican Theological Commission Warns of Replacing God with ‘a World Governed by Machines’

By **Courtney Mares**

ROME (OSV News) — The Vatican’s International Theological Commission has warned that if humanity places total trust in technology in a “world ruled by machines,” it risks replacing the “living God” with a counterfeit “virtual God.”

The assessment came in a sweeping new document, published on March 4, examining how artificial intelligence, transhumanism and other technological developments can pose profound risks to human identity and dignity. The document seeks to propose a response rooted in Christian anthropology and the Gospel.

The 48-page document, titled, “Quo vadis, humanitas? Thinking about Christian anthropology in light of some scenarios for the future of humanity,” was published in Italian and Spanish after being approved by Pope Leo XIV. Its Latin title — meaning “Where are you going, humanity?” — echoes the question tradition holds was put to St. Peter before his crucifixion in Rome.

“At this juncture in the 21st century, the human family is faced with questions so radical that they threaten its very existence as we have known it,” the document says.

“The eruption of scientific and technical development unprecedented in the history of the planet must be accompanied by a corresponding growth in responsibility that directs progress toward the good of human beings, because they are today exposed to risks never imagined before.”

The document, written by a subcommission that met between 2022 and 2025 and approved unanimously at the ITC’s 2025 plenary session, was written to mark the 60th anniversary of “Gaudium et Spes,” the Second Vatican Council’s landmark Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World.

AI, social media and ‘digital spiritualism’

The commission devoted considerable attention to artificial intelligence, describing it as a technology capable of “replacing all computational and operational aspects of human intelligence” and warning that its rapid development sometimes proceeds “without the prudence born of the wise recognition that good always involves an appropriate limit and proportion.”

The document raised particular concerns about automated AI decision-making in sensitive areas, questioning the use of algorithms “when deciding whether

See “Commission” on Page 12

Supreme Court Temporarily Blocks California Policy against Parental Notification of Gender Identity

By **Kate Scanlon**

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — The U.S. Supreme Court on March 2 temporarily blocked California from enforcing policies that generally prohibit public school teachers from notifying parents about a student’s sexual orientation or gender identity, as litigation over that policy proceeds.

A group of educators and parents previously sued California in *Mirabelli v. Bonta* over the policy in federal court, arguing it violated their religious beliefs.

“The parents who assert a free exercise claim have sincere religious beliefs about sex and gender, and they feel a religious obligation to raise their children in accordance with those beliefs,” the court’s majority wrote in an unsigned opinion.

A federal trial judge previously sided with the parents and teachers, blocking the state from enforcing the policy, but an appeals panel later put it on hold. The high court’s order reinstated, for now, the lower court’s ruling.

Critics of the California policy argue parents have a right to know if their child uses names or pronouns at school that do not correspond with their biological sex, while supporters argue that the policy might prevent abuse at home.

Peter Breen, executive vice president and head of litigation at Thomas More Society, a legal group among those representing the parents, said in a statement, “No more can bureaucrats secretly facilitate a child’s gender transition while shutting out parents.”

“California built a wall of secrecy between parents and their own children, and the Supreme Court just tore it down,” he said. “This groundbreaking ruling will protect parents’ rights to raise their children as they see fit for years to come.”

In an unsigned order, the court’s majority said, “Gender dysphoria is a condition that has an important bearing on a child’s mental health, but when a child exhibits symptoms of gender dysphoria at school, California’s policies conceal that information from parents and facilitate a degree of gender tran-

sitioning during school hours.”

“These policies likely violate parents’ rights to direct the upbringing and education of their children,” the court’s majority said.

But in a dissent, Justice Elena Kagan argued the majority used “shortcut procedures on the emergency docket” to grant the request, although the “ordinary appellate process has barely started; only a district court has ruled on the case’s merits.”

“The Court receives scant and, frankly, inadequate briefing about the legal issues in dispute,” she argued, adding the order shows “how our emergency docket can malfunction.”

According to Becket, a religious liberty law firm that filed an amicus brief in the case, Catholic families involved in the case discovered that their children had been socially transitioned at school without their knowledge or consent.

“Parents’ fundamental right to raise their children according to their faith doesn’t stop at the schoolhouse door,” Mark Rienzi, Becket president and CEO, said in a statement. “California tried cutting parents out of their children’s lives while forcing teachers to hide the school’s behavior from parents. We’re glad the Court stepped in to block this anti-family, anti-American policy.”

In guidance on health care policy and practices released in March 2023, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ Committee on Doctrine stated the Church’s opposition to interventions that “involve the use of surgical or chemical techniques that aim to exchange the sex characteristics of a patient’s body for those of the opposite sex or for simulations thereof.”

“Any technological intervention that does not accord with the fundamental order of the human person as a unity of body and soul, including the sexual difference inscribed in the body, ultimately does not help but, rather, harms the human person,” the document states.

(Kate Scanlon is a national reporter for OSV News covering Washington.)

Commission ...

Cont'd from Page 11

or not to provide medical care, granting loans, or mortgages, or providing insurance, or when preparing criminal cases in court ... or when deciding on military strikes."

On social media and the profound changes in mass communications brought by the internet, the commission acknowledged benefits such as more direct and participatory information at the social and political levels, but warned that platforms too often produce contacts "without ties, functional relationships without real solidarity, in an infinite market of news and personal data, not always verifiable and often manipulated."

The document also warned that "spiritual seekers often place indiscriminate trust in online search engines, rendering human mediations of the sacred superfluous, replaced by digital technology," up to and including requests for virtual blessings, exorcisms, and "digital spiritualism."

Trends claiming to save humanity through technology ultimately impact "the relationship with the Mystery of the origin and ultimate purpose of human life," the document states.

"When human beings reduce created nature (person, cosmos) to matter to be transformed, they no longer manifest the glory of the Creator, but replace Him. The same happens when the task of giving meaning to existence and indicating the ultimate purpose is identified with the implementation of technological potential," it says.

"In this context, religious and spiritual traditions still have something essential and indispensable to contribute regarding the wisdom of living in relationship to God."

Cosmetic surgery, biotechnology and the 'cult of the body'

Advances in biotechnology, neuroscience, DNA mapping, pharmacology and robotics have brought changes to how human beings perceive and relate to their own bodies, the commission pointed out. While acknowledging the genuine health gains these advances have produced, the document warns against "the trends that reduce the body to biological material to be enhanced, transformed, and reshaped at will, with the dream of achieving living conditions that avoid pain, aging, and death."

In the West in particular, the commission notes, advances in cosmetic surgery combined with hormone treatments and cognitive-enhancement drugs have fostered a widespread "cult of the body," marked by "the frantic pursuit of a perfect figure, one that always stays fit, youthful, and beautiful."

The document also discusses the concept of "human enhancement," defined as the use of biomedical, genetic, pharmacological and cybernetic



CNS photo/Lola Gomez

In this file photo from June 14, 2025, Pope Leo XIV greets people as they hold up cellphones to take photos and videos as he enters St. Peter's Basilica for an audience with pilgrims in Rome for the Holy Year 2025.

technologies to improve human physical, cognitive or sensory capabilities beyond normal levels. Its applications range from advanced prosthetics and electronic devices implanted in the body, to performance-enhancing drugs in sport, work and military contexts, to artificial fertilization techniques.

Transhumanism and posthumanism

The document's sharpest critique is aimed at transhumanism and posthumanism, which it presents as cultural challenges to Christian anthropology.

Transhumanism, defined as the philosophical movement that believes that science and technology can and should overcome biological limitations including aging and death, is described as holding "a distinctly anthropocentric perspective, subscribing to an ideological and naively uncritical vision of scientific and technological progress." Its utopian pursuit of individual immortality supported by technology, the document says, can be interpreted as "the existential expression of a presumption that is both naive and arrogant."

Posthumanism, which questions the distinctiveness of the human being and envisions a fluid boundary between human and machine, including a world with "cyborgs," is characterized as "an existential expression of escape from reality, which stems from a radical devaluation of humanity."

The document links both movements to what Pope Francis has called "neo-Gnosticism," a mindset that seeks to free the person from the body, the

cosmos, and history, reducing created nature to "matter to be transformed."

"The dreams of transhumanism and posthumanism presume to simplify the tensions that run through human experience," the commission writes. "But on closer inspection, this project proves to be dehumanizing."

A Christian alternative: life as vocation

Against these trends, the commission proposes the concept of life as vocation — receiving oneself as a gift, sharing that gift with others and recognizing its transcendent source in God.

"The anthropological and cultural proposal of Christianity refers, today more than ever, to a conception of life as a vocation, which makes possible a human way of inhabiting time and space," the document states, calling this vision "a prophetic judgment on the most disturbing aspects" of transhumanism and posthumanism.

"Man is not an atom lost in a random universe, but is a creature of God, to whom He wished to give an immortal soul and whom He has always loved," it says.

The document insists that "the future of humanity is not decided in bioengineering laboratories, but in the ability to navigate the tensions of the present," while remaining open to the mystery of the risen Christ.

The poor as a touchstone

The commission closes with a call to keep the poor at the center of any reckoning with technological development, warning that its benefits accrue disproportionately to the powerful and that the weakest risk becoming "collateral damage, swept away without mercy."

Citing Pope Leo XIV, it affirms that Christ's love shows "the dignity of every human being" and calls Christians to act as "humble sentinels" alert to the consequences new developments may hold for the lives of the least fortunate.

"What the human family needs," the document says, "and within it every person who is searching for his or her true identity, is not an evolutionary leap that transcends the present condition, but rather a saving relationship that makes the adventure of self-realization fully meaningful and beautiful. In this sense, we speak of humanity saved, that is, respected as a gift from God and not replaced."

"The encounter with the humanity of Jesus Christ illuminates our humanity and reveals us to ourselves," it adds. "First of all, it restores to us the sense of our freedom in the face of the Creator's call, precisely as He fulfills our vocation to participate in the eschatological fullness of His risen life."

(Courtney Mares is Vatican editor for OSV News.)

St. Francis' Relics Open to Public for First Extended Veneration in 800 Years

By Courtney Mares, OSV News

For the first time in eight centuries, the mortal remains of St. Francis of Assisi are being exposed for an extended period of public veneration, drawing hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from around the world to pray before “the Little Poor Man of Assisi.”

The bones of the beloved saint were unveiled for public display Feb. 22 in the Lower Church of the Basilica of St. Francis of Assisi. Pilgrims waited in line outside of the Assisi basilica, taking in the panoramic views of the Umbrian countryside from the medieval hilltop town, for their chance to pray before the relics.

The veneration runs through March 22 as part of the Catholic Church's yearlong celebration of the 800th anniversary of St. Francis' death in 1226.

Heather Martin, an American mother who has lived in Assisi for five years with her family, was among the first pilgrims to venerate the relics.

“St. Francis is by far the most important saint in my life. He's shown up for me in so many ways and so many dark moments,” she told OSV News.

“This experience to be able to go and physically see his physical form has been utterly life-changing.”

Martin recalled a conversation she had with one of the Franciscan friars about the experience. “He felt like he was finally meeting a long-lost relative for the first time,” she said. “And I can't agree with that more.”

Fabrizio Ballanti traveled from Ancona, Italy, as part of a care home run by the Focolare movement.

“We are a community for people

with HIV and AIDS, and we all came together to live this experience,” Ballanti said.

Standing before the relics of St. Francis, he said, “I felt the presence of the Lord very strongly,” calling it “a truly powerful experience.”

For 21-year-old seminarian Gregory Maloney from the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis, the moment was an opportunity to ask St. Francis for the gift of a deeper conversion “to grow in the virtue of poverty.”

He said that the long wait in line to view the relics gave him an opportunity to reflect on the life of St. Francis in prayer. “Here is the man who wanted to live poverty as Christ really said it in the Gospel,” Maloney said. “He wanted to give up his whole life, to give up all the things of the world to focus on the pearl of great price ... the treasure of heaven.”

“And so that was a great encouragement for me then to say, ‘OK, what are the areas in my life I need to give to the Lord? I need to focus more on the things of heaven,’” the seminarian added.

Franciscan friars opened the sarcophagus to exhume St. Francis' remains Feb. 21, placing his bones on a specially prepared table in the crypt before carrying them in procession through the Lower Church while praying the Litany of the Saints.

Franciscans from across the world participated in a solemn vespers with the exposed relics beneath the basilica's frescoed ceiling on the evening before the relics opened to the public.

Friar Ignacio Ceja Jimenez, a Franciscan friar from Mexico, called it a historic moment of fraternity for all branches of the Franciscan family “because we all rec-



OSV News photo/Courtney Mares

A 12th-century painting of St. Francis with Angels by an unknown artist known as the Master of St. Francis is on display at the Basilica of St. Mary of the Angels in Assisi, Italy, Feb. 22. The basilica encompasses the chapel St. Francis helped restore known as the Portiuncula.

ognize ourselves as children of St. Francis, heirs to his charism.”

“Seeing and praying before the body of St. Francis also means that we must commit ourselves to living what he lived,” he said.

“St. Francis reminds us that the Gospel can not only transform human beings, hearts, but that the Gospel can also transform the structures of our world and help us build a fraternal, peaceful world.”

Cardinal Ángel Fernández Artime, the pontifical delegate for the Papal Basilicas of Assisi, presided over both the vespers and the inaugural Mass Feb. 22.

The cardinal recalled St. Francis' final hours on Oct. 3, 1226, in his homily for the Feb. 21 vespers.

“When St. Francis felt his death approaching, he asked a friar to read the Gospel to him. Not just any passage, but chapter 13 of John: ‘Before the feast of the Passover, Jesus, knowing that his hour had come ... having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end,’” Cardinal Artime said.

“His life had been this: a constant listening to the Word, a burning desire to conform himself to the poor and crucified Christ. Service and self-sacrificing love are the heart of Francis's spirituality.”

Brother Jimmy Zammit of Toronto, now based in Rome as general defensor for the Franciscan

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St. Francis ...

Cont'd from Page 13

order, shared his advice for Catholics unable to make the trip to Assisi who want to live out the special Jubilee Year of St. Francis in a particular way.

"If our heart becomes more Franciscan, we become makers of peace," Brother Zammit said. "We seek out to help those who are less fortunate than we are to help the poor, but also to help those who are suffering because they're feeling isolated and maybe even shunned in some way."

Approximately 370,000 people from five continents have registered to venerate the relics, with Italians making up 80% of registrants. International registrations include 5,000

from the United States, 3,100 from Croatia, 2,000 from Slovakia and 1,500 each from Brazil and France. Some 400 volunteers from dozens of countries are giving of their time to make the monthlong historic event possible.

Entry to view St. Francis' relics is free, but it requires advance registration at saintfrancisliveson.org. The exposition will close with Mass on March 22 in the Upper Church, to be presided over by Cardinal Matteo Maria Zuppi, archbishop of Bologna and president of the Italian Episcopal Conference.

"We are experiencing an event of extraordinary grace: For an entire month, in this holy land where St. Francis of Assisi lived and was buried, the exposition of his body is offered for the veneration of the faith-

ful, on the eighth centenary of his death," Cardinal Artime said.

"This body, fragile and poor, reminds us that the Gospel is also lived with the body, with real choices, with daily gestures. Francis did

not love an idea of Christ: He loved Christ, poor and crucified, to the point of bearing his marks in his flesh."

(Courtney Mares is Vatican editor for OSV News.)



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Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart—All are invited for presentations and reflections based on the FORMED program “Wilderness Within.” In this program, Sister Josephine Garrett invites us to explore the interior wilderness of our hearts to expand our love as we prepare for Easter.

Sessions began Feb. 15 and continue through April 1. We will have 3 sessions each week on the same material Sundays at noon in the Gathering Space, Tuesdays at 10 a.m. in the Cordis Center, and Wednesdays at 6:30 p.m. in the Gathering Space. Please attend any sessions whenever you are available. Make this Lent your best ever as we prepare for Easter!

Clarksburg

Knights of Columbus Hall—Pray the rosary. Make a sacrifice to Our Lady of Fatima by joining in the rosary at noon on Friday, March 13.

Morgantown

St. John University Parish Center—Join Father Brian Crenwelge for the the annual St. John’s Lenten Series! Each Sunday during Lent, from 9:45-10:45 a.m., there will be refreshments, a brief witness from a fellow parishioner, and a teaching from one of our priests. The Holy Eucharist is our Source and our Summit, a profound place to meet Jesus and be drawn more deeply into His Heart, a balm for souls that are weary, and strength for souls that are weak. The Eucharist is at the heart of the stories of many saints who radically changed the world. Come and hear about how you can fall more in love with Christ through the Eucharist!

Parkersburg

St. Francis Xavier Church—The Sixth Annual Holy Hour for Life Novena with Eucharistic Adoration continuing on Wednesdays: Feb. 25, March 4, 11, 18, and 25, and April 1 at St. Francis Xavier Church, 6-7 p.m. Mass follows at 7 p.m.

This is an hour of prayer before the Blessed Sacrament for respect for the dignity of human life from conception to natural death, for repentance and healing for all those who have been wounded by abortion, and that those who govern may be guided by justice, truth, and love for the gift of life.

South Charleston

Blessed Sacrament Parish—To assist you in your Lenten journey, we are offering a Bible Study which will focus on the seven “I AM” say-

ings of Jesus as recorded in the Gospel of John. These proclamations of Jesus tell us a great deal about Him, especially His character and nature. The study will be on Wednesday evenings in Room 5 from 6:30 to 7:30 p.m. according to the schedule below: March 18, I AM the Resurrection and the Life; March 25, I AM the Way and the Truth and the Life; and April 1, I AM the True Vine.

Feel free to attend whichever classes fit into your schedule. You do not need to attend all the sessions to benefit from the study. The study will be facilitated by Terry Mathias.

Star City

St. Mary Parish—Journey with Christ through His Passion this Lent in a guided adult book study of “The Dolorous Passion of Our Lord Jesus Christ.” There will also be a viewing of the movie “The Passion of the Christ” during Holy Week. Began Feb. 19 and runs through March 26, 10:45-11:45 a.m. and 6-7 p.m. on Thursdays, Movie Viewing: March 31 at 5:30 p.m. Materials provided.

Weirton

Sacred Heart of Mary Church—WALKING WITH PURPOSE. Join the women of Sacred Heart of Mary, Weirton for Beholding Your King, and learn about God, King David, and many Old Testament prophets on Wednesday, March 28, at 10 a.m. or 6 p.m. Contact Sharon Duda at (304) 670-0710 or sharonjduda@gmail.com to let them know you will attend.

St. Joseph the Worker Parish—Lenten Mission with Deacon Harold Burke-Sivens, a.k.a. the Dynamic Deacon, March 22-24, 7-8 p.m. followed by confession, meet & greet, book sales, & refreshments.

Deacon Burke-Sivens is one of the most sought-after speakers in the Church today. He is a powerful and passionate evangelist and preacher, whose no-nonsense approach to living and proclaiming the Catholic faith will challenge and inspire those who hear him. Questions? Call (304) 723-2054.

St. Paul Church—“Led by the Spirit, Discover How the Holy Spirit Can Help You Have Your Best Lent Ever” will be held 6:15-8 p.m. March 9 & 10. Give The Holy Spirit 2 Nights and He Will Give You guidance, strength, re-

newal and transformation. Come be a part of St. Paul’s Lenten Parish Mission and experience dynamic preaching, beautiful worship, and a powerful encounter with the love of God. Plus have your best Lent ever! The mission will be led by John Beaulieu, a missionary evangelist who travels to parishes and dioceses offering parish missions, retreats, and training the laity to fulfill their mission.

There is no charge for the mission - a free will collection will be taken to help with expenses.

Call the parish office at (304) 748-6710 with any questions.

Wheeling

Cathedral of St. Joseph—Sung Solemn Vespers, Sundays of Lent at 6 p.m. This short liturgy (usually lasting no more than 30 minutes) is part of the Liturgy of the Hours and consists of the singing of psalms and the Magnificat by the Cathedral Schola. Vespers is a beautiful way to give thanks to God at the end of the day and prayerfully observe the Season of Lent.

St. Vincent de Paul Parish—Each Thursday at 6 p.m. during the Lenten Season, St. Vincent de Paul Parish will be hosting the Lenten Study Series “Conversion and Renewal: A Lenten Journey with Christ” in the sanctuary.

Week 4: March 12, “Conversion and Renewal: The Journey of Lent” — repentance, confession, spiritual combat, and growth in holiness. Presented by Father Joseph Wiley, pastor Corpus Christi, Wheeling.

Week 5: March 19, “The Seven Last Words of Christ,” forgiveness, suffering, hope, trust, surrender — presented by Father John Soplinski, vocation director for the diocese, vice rector of the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling and parochial vicar of St. Alphonsus Parish in Wheeling.

Week 6: March 26, “Walking with Jesus to Calvary: The Passion Narratives,” study the Passion in the Gospel of John, presented by Father Jeason Stephan, MCBS, pastor St. Vincent’s.

(The graphic shown above is a CNS graphic/Nancy Wiechec)

2026 Knights of Columbus West Virginia State Free Throw Held in Weston



Courtesy photo

The 2026 Knights of Columbus West Virginia State Free Throw took place March 1 in Weston. Front row are the winners left to right: Boy age 14, Kevin Kerr, Davis; 13, Evan Kerr, Wheeling; 12, Westyn Huffman, Thomas; 11, Daxx Pinkney, Jane Lew; 10, John Justice, Scott Depot; 9, Quinn Bell, Wheeling; Girl age 9, Dahlia Poling, Wheeling; 10, Keara Creighton, Wheeling; 11, Lola Morando, Wheeling; 12, Elaina Pregley, Davis; and 13, Addy Johnson, Thomas. Second row runner-ups; Boy age 14, Joseph Parker, Charlestown; 13, Elijah O'Brien, Elkins; 10, Mason Karp, Weston; 9, Zayn West, Weston; Girl age 9, Presleigh Rosenay, Parsons; 10, Cambrie Freeman, Hambleton; 11, Reese Cunningham, Weston; 12, Nora Thalman, Wheeling; and 13, Claire Phillips, Wheeling. Back Row: Past State Deputy, Frank Koenig; Youth Director, Joe King; State Secretary, Tom Burke; and State Deputy, Brian Gordon.

A message from the West Virginia Knights of Columbus State Council

Deep within the heart of every man is a call to live with purpose and meaning; a call to lead, to protect, to serve and to defend.

Men today need a band of brothers – other Catholic men to share in that call, who walk together on the journey towards something better.

The **Knights of Columbus** is a trusted name, tried by time, present where men are, providing inspiring resources and support for strengthening your faith and living a life of virtue.

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Now is a good time for parishes and schools to plan ahead and order materials for **Lent '26 "Operation Rice Bowl."** This now fifty year old program is a major way for American Catholics to be part of the worldwide work of Catholic Relief Services, our bishops' sponsored international relief agency.

Rooted in the history of the Eucharistic Congress, **CRS Rice Bowl** invites Catholics and faith communities in the United States to encounter God and our global family throughout Lent by practicing the **pillars of prayer, fasting and almsgiving.** Lenten alms donated through CRS Rice Bowl support the work of CRS in more than 120 different countries each year. Twenty-five percent of donations to CRS Rice Bowl stay in the local diocese, supporting hunger and poverty alleviation efforts. Since its inception in 1975, CRS Rice Bowl has raised more than \$350 million. With drastic federal cuts in international humanitarian aid our support of CRS is even more critical.

Free materials for Lent '26 "Operation Rice Bowl" can now be ordered at:
<https://www.crsricebowl.org/order-crs-rice-bowl-materials>

These materials include:

1. The now iconic "mite boxes" to collect saving from fasting,
2. Prayer materials for each day of Lent,
3. Stories and photos about communities being served by our support of CRS and even recipes based on meals of those people.
4. Videos and printed materials suitable for use during announcements at Sunday mass and other gatherings.
5. Materials for various levels of student and university participation.

For more information about Catholic Relief Services: search CRS.org

Diocesan contact **Chad Carter**, Chancellor, at 304-233-0880

or

Fr. Larry W. Dorsch, CRS Global Fellow,

For guest homilist or program speaker: Phone 304-281-6503



If you experience regret, guilt, or grief after abortion, be assured that God's healing love and mercy are always available to the repentant heart.

For confidential, non-judgmental help, call 888-456-HOPE (4673), or visit www.HopeAfterAbortion.org

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‘A Beautiful Turn out for Bible Study’ at Marshall University in Huntington



Courtesy photo

“Such a beautiful turn out for Bible Study” at the Marshall Catholic Newman Center at Marshall University in Huntington, center officials posted on Facebook Feb. 3. The center is home to Marshall’s Catholic community. Current students as well as faculty and staff are always welcome. To connect with the center, visit marshallcatholic.com. The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston has 25 Catholic campus ministry centers at colleges and universities in West Virginia. These centers help students stay connected to their Catholic faith while they are away from home and family. For more information, contact the diocesan Office of Youth, Young Adult, and Campus Ministry at (304) 233-088, ext. 374.

El Papa León advierte que si la diplomacia no se impone a la violencia en Irán y Oriente Medio la situación se volver un 'abismo irreparable'

Por Paulina Guzik, OSV News

(OSV News) — El Papa León XIV ha hecho un ferviente llamamiento para que se restablezca la diplomacia en "estas horas dramáticas" en Oriente Medio e Irán, condenando el uso de armas que causan "destrucción, dolor y muerte".

El Papa León pronunció estas palabras aproximadamente 12 horas después de que Estados Unidos e Israel revelaran que el líder supremo de Irán, el ayatolá Alí Jamenei, de 86 años, se encuentra entre los altos dirigentes del país asesinados en su ataque inicial contra Irán, iniciado en la mañana del 28 de febrero.

Durante su oración dominical del Ángelus del 1 de marzo, el Papa dijo que estaba siguiendo "con profunda preocupación" estos acontecimientos y advirtió de una posible "tragedia de enormes proporciones". Hizo un llamamiento encarecido a las partes beligerantes para que asumieran "la responsabilidad moral de detener la espiral de violencia" antes de que se convirtiera en "un abismo irreparable".

El Papa insistió en que las naciones volvieran a la diplomacia.

"La estabilidad y la paz no se construyen con amenazas mutuas, ni con armas, que siembran destrucción, dolor y muerte, sino solo a través de un diálogo razonable, auténtico y responsable", afirmó.

El actual ataque conjunto de Estados Unidos e Israel contra Irán ha tenido como objetivo Teherán y otras ciudades del país, con los países del Golfo

atrapados en el fuego cruzado mientras Irán lanza ataques de represalia.

"Ante la posibilidad de una tragedia de enormes proporciones, hago un llamamiento encarecido a las partes implicadas para que asuman la responsabilidad moral de detener la espiral de violencia antes de que se convierta en un abismo irreparable", dijo el Santo Padre.

"Que la diplomacia recupere su papel y se promueva el bien de los pueblos, que anhelan una convivencia pacífica, basada en la justicia", añadió, instando al mundo a "seguir rezando por la paz".

Lo que el Papa León denominó una "espiral de violencia" siguió desarrollándose el domingo, a medida que los ataques mutuos se intensificaban hora tras hora en todo Oriente Medio.

Israel e Irán lanzaron nuevos ataques el 1 de marzo, y la BBC informó de que la Agencia de Noticias de la República Islámica, gestionada por el Estado iraní, había declarado que Teherán había sufrido 60 ataques en 24 horas, que habían dejado 57 muertos, cifras proporcionadas, según se informa, por la Sociedad de la Media Luna Roja de la provincia de Teherán.

El ejército israelí afirmó el 1 de marzo que sus ataques habían matado a 40 comandantes iraníes, entre ellos Abdolrahim Mousavi, jefe del Estado Mayor de las Fuerzas Armadas de Irán. La televisión estatal iraní confirmó la muerte.

En las primeras 24 horas del conflicto, dos personas murieron en Tel Aviv cuando un misil iraní impactó en un edificio residencial, mientras que

120 personas resultaron heridas en Israel por los contraataques de Irán, según informó The Jerusalem Post.

The Guardian informó de que el presidente de Irán, Masoud Pezeshkian, calificó el asesinato del líder supremo de Irán como "una guerra abierta contra los musulmanes" y afirmó que Irán "considera el derramamiento de sangre y la venganza contra los autores y comandantes de este crimen como su deber y derecho legítimos, y cumplirá con esta gran responsabilidad y deber con todas sus fuerzas".

El presidente Donald Trump publicó el 1 de marzo en Truth Social una advertencia a Irán para que no tomara más represalias.

"Irán acaba de declarar que hoy va a golpear muy fuerte, más fuerte que nunca", escribió el presidente Trump en su red social.

Añadió: "¡PERO MEJOR QUE NO LO HAGAN, PORQUE SI LO HACEN, LES GOLPEAREMOS CON UNA FUERZA NUNCA ANTES VISTA!".

El Papa León, durante su llamamiento del Ángelus, recordó a la gente que en los últimos días "llegan además noticias preocupantes de enfrentamientos entre Pakistán y Afganistán". Y elevó una "súplica por un urgente retorno al diálogo".

"Recemos juntos para que prevalezca la concordia en todos los conflictos del mundo", dijo, y añadió: "Solo la paz, don de Dios, puede sanar las heridas entre los pueblos".

(Paulina Guzik es editora internacional de OSV News.)

Para denunciar presuntos casos de abuso sexual de menores:

La diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston te exhorta a denunciar cualquier delito ante las autoridades civiles. Para realizar una denuncia en contra de cualquier obispo en todos los Estados Unidos, favor de reportarlo en la página web www.repostbishopabuse.org. Y si, además, existen motivos para creer que un obispo ha cometido alguna conducta sexual inapropiada favor de comunicarse con las autoridades civiles de la jurisdicción correspondiente y también puede realizar un reporte en la página web antes mencionada. **Para informar a las autoridades civiles:** comuníquese con la policía local; los números varían según su ubicación. Si considera que alguien está en peligro inmediato, favor de llamar al 911. Para informar de forma confidencial sobre cualquier sospecha de abuso o negligencia infantil, incluido el abuso sexual, favor de comunicarse con la Oficina de Servicios de Protección Infantil de Niños y Familias de West Virginia, llamando a la línea directa de abuso infantil al 1-800.352.6513. **Para informar a las autoridades diocesanas:** La diócesis exhorta a informar primeramente a las autoridades civiles correspondientes, cuando la denuncia incluye un delito, y también alienta a informar a las autoridades eclesiales correspondientes. Para reportar casos sospechosos de abuso sexual de menores por parte del personal de la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston, comuníquese directamente con la diócesis a los teléfonos 1.888.434.6237 o 304.233.0880 para hablar con cualquiera de las siguientes personas asignadas: Sr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Sr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; y si desea hablar en español con Sor Martha Gómez, ext. 264. También puede llamar a la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro de la diócesis al 304.230.1504 o a la línea

directa de abuso sexual de la diócesis al 833.230.5656. Los formularios de quejas están disponibles en línea en la página web www.dwc.org, favor de hacer clic en "Diócesis" en la barra de menú, luego en "Oficinas", en "Ambiente seguro" y en "Descargar archivos y formularios". El formulario se titula "Formulario de queja para denuncias de abuso sexual de menores". El formulario se puede enviar por correo en Estados Unidos a: Office of Safe Environment, Diócesis of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003. **Para informar al Coordinador de Asistencia a Víctimas de la Diócesis:** Favor de llamar a Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, al 304.559.6742. Además de las vías mencionadas anteriormente para denunciar el abuso sexual, la diócesis se ha asociado con la compañía Navex Global que ofrece la plataforma EthicsPoint para informar cualquier inquietud adicional, como sospecha de mala conducta financiera, profesional y personal de un sacerdote, diacono, religioso, o empleado laico de la diócesis o cualquier parroquia o escuela católica en West Virginia. Puede acceder a la plataforma EthicsPoint a través de la página web www.dwc.org, en "Rendición de cuentas", luego "Informar mala conducta" o llamando al 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint es una herramienta de denuncia confidencial y anónima, ellos se encargarán de transmitir su denuncia directamente a las autoridades civiles y a las autoridades diocesanas correspondientes, y lo más importante al denunciar a través de ellos, la identidad de la persona que denuncia está protegida. **Enlaces e información:** Departamento de Salud y Recursos Humanos de WV: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. Policía Estatal de Virginia Occidental, Unidad de crímenes contra a menores: 304-293-6400.

Confirmation Schedule

Bishop Mark E. Brennan, Celebrant

- Saturday, April 11: St. Agnes, Charleston, 5 p.m.
- Sunday, April 12: Our Lady of the Hills, Elkview, 8:30 a.m.
- Monday, April 13: Our Lady of Peace, Wheeling, 6 p.m.
- Tuesday, April 14: St. John University, Morgantown, 5:15 p.m.
- Saturday, April 18: St. James, Charles Town, 5 p.m.
- Sunday, April 19: Assumption, Keyser, 4 p.m.
- Wednesday, April 22: St. Francis de Sales, Morgantown, 6 p.m.
- Thursday, April 23: Corpus Christi, Wheeling, 6 p.m.
- Saturday, April 25: Our Lady of Perpetual Help, Stone-wood, 5 p.m.
- Sunday, April 26: St. Brendan, Elkins, 11 a.m.
- Friday, May 1: St. Francis de Sales, Beckley; 6:30 p.m.
- Saturday, May 2: SS Peter & Paul, Oak Hill, 5:30 p.m.
- Sunday, May 3: St. Catherine of Siena, Ronceverte, 11 a.m.
- Saturday, May 9: Immaculate Conception, Clarksburg, 4:30 p.m.
- Sunday, May 10: St. Joseph the Worker, Weirton, 7 p.m.
- Monday, May 11: St. Michael, Wheeling, 5:30 p.m.
- Wednesday, May 13: Immaculate Conception, Fairmont, 6 p.m.
- Saturday, May 16: St. Vincent de Paul, Wheeling, 5 p.m.
- Sunday, May 17: St. Jude, Glen Dale, 9 a.m.
- Friday, May 22: Epiphany of the Lord, Moorefield, 6 p.m.
- Saturday, May 23: St. Leo, Inwood, 5 p.m.
- Sunday, May 24: St. Bernadette, Hedgesville, 11 a.m.
- Sunday, May 24:
St. Joseph, Martinsburg, 4 p.m.
- Saturday, June 6:
Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Charleston, 5:30 p.m.
- Sunday, June 14:
St. Matthew / Sacred Heart Mission, Point Pleasant, 11:15 a.m.
- Saturday, June 20:
St. Sebastian, Kingwood, 6 p.m.

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Mark your calendars and keep an eye on social media for more info!

This one-day retreat is designed for those in your parish who are currently going through separation/divorce. This can be a very lonely, painful and confusing time for those going through the process. Let us help you, help them get the information and resources that they need to find healing within their faith and church community.

More details to come.

If you would like to host an Olive Branch in your parish, contact Kathy Barton at kbarton@dwc.org.

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Employment Opportunities

Cook

Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, St. John XXIII Pastoral Center, has an employment opportunity for a cook. The Cook at St. John XXIII Pastoral Center, as a member of Diocesan Services, is committed to advancing the mission of Jesus Christ and offering hospitality to our guests.

The cook is responsible for the preparation, service, clean-up and storage of all meals, snacks and food service for special functions. Assures the kitchen/dining room/dish room areas are clean and in good order at the end of a shift or function.

Oversees and assists kitchen aides in the preparation, service and storage of food and cleanliness of the kitchen/dining area. Works early mornings, days, evenings, weekends and holidays/holydays as needed. Prefer a minimum of one year experience in food service.

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

Pastoral Associate

Pastoral Associate (Full-Time ~30 hrs/week) Catholic Churches of McDowell & Wyoming Counties, W.Va.

The Catholic communities of McDowell and Wyoming Counties seek a faithful Catholic Pastoral Associate to assist our shared parish communities in advancing the mission of evangelization, faith formation, and pastoral outreach. Working alongside our priest, this person will help nurture parish life across four rural church locations.

Primary Responsibilities

- Support preparation for liturgies and sacramental celebrations
- Coordinate adult faith formation, OCIA, CCD, prayer groups, and Bible studies
- Encourage and train lay ministry participation
- Visit the sick and homebound and assist with pastoral outreach, including local correctional facilities
- Assist with parish administration, records, calendars, and communications
- Collaborate with Catholic Charities,

food pantry efforts, and parish fundraising initiatives

Qualifications

- Practicing Catholic in good standing
- Bachelor's degree in Theology or related field (or in progress)
- Prefer parish/office ministry experience
- Ability to work collaboratively, maintain confidentiality, and serve diverse communities
- Virtus Safe Environment certification (current or in progress)

Schedule

- About 30 hours weekly, including some weekend visibility at liturgies

This position offers an opportunity to serve the Church by strengthening faith, fellowship, and outreach in our rural Catholic communities while supporting the diocesan evangelization mission.

Click [link](https://dwc.org/job/mcdowell-wyoming-counties-wv-mcdowell-wyoming-counties-46-pastoral-associate/) to apply: <https://dwc.org/job/mcdowell-wyoming-counties-wv-mcdowell-wyoming-counties-46-pastoral-associate/>

Campus Minister – Marshall University

The Campus Minister's responsibilities are to plan and implement a broad campus ministry for the Marshall Catholic Community, based on the principles of Empowered by the Spirit.

ESSENTIAL DUTIES: Develop and implement, in a collaborative manner, a strategic plan for campus ministry for the Marshall Catholic Community; Coordinate and facilitate the schedule of Masses and Sacramental ministries; Develop and implement, in consultation with students and faculty, catechetical opportunities and pastoral services appropriate to the needs, concerns, and schedules of the community; to include retreats, faith-sharing groups, formational gatherings, etc.; Manage the day-to-day operation of the center; Represent the Catholic Church on campus, becoming actively involved in the academic community while ministering not only to students but faculty, staff, and administration as well; Form and support Catholic student groups or organizations on campus; Work irregular

hours including weekends and evenings.

ADDITIONAL DUTIES: Collaborates with the Office of Faith Formation and the Charleston Vicariate in offering joint young adult ministry opportunities; Participate in and attend Vicariate, Diocesan, and other professional enrichment gatherings.

Supervise support staff of the center; Support ministry volunteers and committees; Support volunteer peer ministers.

QUALIFICATION REQUIREMENTS: To perform this job successfully, an individual must be able to perform each essential duty satisfactorily. The requirements listed are representative of the knowledge, skill and/or ability required: M.A. in Theology, Religious Education or related field preferred.; C.C.M.A. Certification preferred.; Working knowledge of USCCB CM document "Empowered by the Spirit"; Sound knowledge of the Theological tradition of the Catholic

Church; Practical experience and theological knowledge of young adult Catholics and the special needs, concerns, and developmental tasks which are theirs; Experience in and knowledge of campus life; Interpersonal communication skills; Word processing and related computer skills; Effective presentation

skills; Ability to organize and facilitate meetings; Ability to work collaboratively in a team environment.

For full posting and to apply, click here: <https://dwc.org/job/diocese-of-wheeling-charleston-faith-formation-huntington-wv-46-campus-minister-marshall-university/>



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 6:30 WOWK CBS 13 Huntington-Charleston
 8:00 WBOY NBC 12 Weston-Clarksburg-Fairmont
 6:30 WOAY ABC 4 Beckley-Bluefield-Oak Hill (Lewisburg)
 8:30 WVNS FOX 59 Beckley-Bluefield-Oak Hill (Lewisburg)
 9:30 WVVA NBC 6 Beckley-Bluefield-Oak Hill (Lewisburg)
 11:00 WDVM 25 Hagerstown-Washington D.C.

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The WVU Heart and Vascular Institute Structural Heart Program is the only program in West Virginia that offers eight specialized, structural heart procedures and is one of the few programs in the United States (and the only one in West Virginia) offering cerebral embolic protection during transcatheter aortic valve replacement (Protected TAVR) and transcatheter mitral valve replacement.

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Interventional Cardiology



Deepak Hooda MD
Interventional Cardiology



Sushant Sharma MD
Cardiology