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Newspaper of the Diocese of Jefferson City

Bp. O'Donnell finding himself right at home here



Bishop Ralph B. O'Donnell stands beside a statue of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, patroness of the Diocese of Jefferson City, after offering Mass on Nov. 8 in Mary Immaculate Church in Kirksville. Bishop O'Donnell completed his first year as bishop of the diocese on Oct. 28. — Photo by Jay Nies

A year into his episcopacy, he marvels at the warmth, history, potential of the Church in these 38 counties

By Jay Nies

A young mother had just introduced her two grade-school boys to Bishop Ralph B. O'Donnell as they finished helping with the reception after this year's Chrism Mass in Jefferson City.

A few seconds after their exchange, the younger son turned back around and said, "Wait! You're the bishop?"

Bishop O'Donnell smiled and said, "Yes, I am." To which the boy exclaimed, "Mom, it's Ralph our Bishop!"

The boy's mother shed light on the exchange.

"He plays Mass at home," she said, "and he puts his arms out and says, 'For Leo, our pope, and Ralph, our bishop,' like in the Eucharistic Prayer. And he just realized who you are in relation to that."

Another evening, after Bishop O'Donnell administered the Sacrament of Confirmation in St. Anthony of Padua Church in St. Anthony, a 6-year-old boy asked him, "Will you confirm me someday?"

"Oh, I bet I will," the bishop replied with delight. "You'll be taller, and I'll be older."

See BISHOP, page 18

Rest in peace, Monsignor Michael T. Flanagan

Helped mentor nearly half of the priests of this diocese

By Jay Nies

A woman arose from the full-immersion baptismal font in Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Columbia.

Water cascaded down her face.

"All I could see were those blue, blue eyes," she recalled.

They belonged to her pastor, Monsignor Michael T. Flanagan.

And yes, they were smiling.

"Life is a cycle of death and resurrection," Msgr. Flanagan once pointed out. "We die, we rise! We're low, we come up back again. And if we believe in resurrection, then the Lord will keep raising us up, and we'll keep walking away from the tomb."

Msgr. Flanagan, 88, a retired priest of the Jefferson City diocese, died peacefully on Oct. 30 in his family's home at Ardsoran, Killaraght, Boyle, Co. Sligo, Ireland.

He was surrounded by family and had recently finished celebrating Mass.

He had been a priest of this diocese for over 61 years.

The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Nov. 3 in St. Attracta Church in Killaraght, where Msgr. Flanagan had been baptized, received his First Holy Communion and offered his First Solemn Mass.

Burial was in the parish cemetery.

A Memorial Mass will be celebrated at a later date in Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Columbia, where he served as pastor for 25 years and lived until returning to Ireland to visit family four months ago.

See MSGR. FLANAGAN, page 15

MOVING? If you are moving or changing parishes, please fill out information below. Clip and mail to THE CATHOLIC MISSOURIAN, 2207 West Main Street, Jefferson City, MO 65109-0914. Or complete the online form at **diojeffcity.org/update-information.** Allow two weeks.

NEW ADDRESS

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY, STATE, ZIP _____

NEW PARISH_____

OLD PARISH _____

11/13/26

Pray for deceased priests

Nov. 16 — **Fr. John B. Roettger,** St. Anthony of Padua, Folk (1961)
Nov. 17 — **Fr. J. Patrick Quinn,** Sacred Heart, Rich Fountain; and St. Alexander, Belle (1999)
Nov. 18 — **Msgr. Jerome O. Sommer, PA,** St. Robert Bellarmine, St. Robert (2012)
Nov. 24 — **Fr. Frank A. Bussmann,** St. Peter, Fulton; and St. Jude Thaddeus, Mokane (2017)
Nov. 25 — **Msgr. Joseph T. Bugler,** St. Mary, Shelbina (1997)
Nov. 26 — **Fr. Leo A. Stamm,** St. Joseph, Martinsburg (1975)
Nov. 27 — **Fr. Vincent A. Linnebur,** Sacred Heart, Columbia (2007)

Carmelite prayers

The Carmelite Nuns invite you to send your prayer requests to them at *carmelofjc.prayers@gmail.com* or mail them to 31970 State Highway P, Clyde, MO 64432.

Children's Choir Director

The Cathedral of St. Joseph in Jefferson City, Mo., is seeking a Children's Choir Director. The position is classified as part-time, non-exempt and reports to the Cathedral's Director of Music. Pay is $50/hour, averaging 10 hours/month from September to May. All interested candidates are encouraged to submit an application on **Indeed.com** or send your resume directly to Dr. Andrew Meagher, Director of Music at **Andrew.m@cathedraljc.org.**



Shane Kliethermes Diaconal ordination

DATE: December5
TIME: 10 am

All are invited to attend the Ordination to the Diaconate of Shane Kliethermes, a seminarian for the Jefferson City diocese, at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Dec. 5, in the Cathedral of St. Joseph, 2305 W. Main St. in Jefferson City.

Please register at ***diojeffcity.org/ordination-2026*** to attend.

The Mass will be livestreamed.

Diocesan Youth Rally

DATE: November 22
TIME: 10:30 am-5 pm

This year's Diocesan Youth Rally ***(diojeffcity.org/diocesan-youth-rally)*** will be held from 10:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 22, 2026, at Helias Catholic High School, 1305 Swifts Highway in Jefferson City.

Catholic teens in seventh through 12th grade from throughout the diocese are encouraged to attend.

It will include two keynote presentations from nationally acclaimed Catholic speaker Meg Hunter-Kilmer ***(pierced hands.com),*** a live concert with Catholic performers the Scally Brothers ***(thescallybrothers.com),*** peer testimonies, an unusual gameshow, Adoration of the Most Blessed Sacrament, a chance to go to Confession, and Mass with Bishop Ralph B. O'Donnell.

The $10-per-person cost includes lunch.

The theme for the rally is "Boldly Chosen: Chosen to Be Bold."

Camdenton St. Anthony Thanksgiving Day Dinner

DATE: November 26
TIME: 11:30 am-1:30 pm

St. Anthony Parish in Camdenton will again host a free, sit-down Thanksgiving Day Dinner for people in the Camdenton area who would enjoy having a holiday meal with others.

The parish's 22nd annual dinner will be held from 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. on Thanksgiving Day (Nov. 26), in the lower level of St. Anthony Church, 1874 N. Business Route 5 in Camdenton.

A special invitation is extended to people who are homeless, homebound or alone, or anyone who simply would like to be with others on this special day.

The free dinner will feature roast turkey and all the trimmings.

Deliveries are available to the homebound in Camdenton (west to Macks Creek, east to Y Road, south to Decaturville and north to the first bridge on Highway 5), by contacting Nikki Combs at 573-480-1994.

Carry-outs will not be available.

For information, contact Kate Hodel at 913-526-5900.

National Night of Prayer for Life observance in Holts Summit

DATE: December 8
TIME: 5-11 pm

An observance of the National Night of Prayer for Life will be held on Tuesday, Dec. 8, in St. Andrew Church, 400 St. Andrew Lane, off Center Street in Holts Summit.

All are invited to this nationwide evening of prayer for life, sponsored by the St. Andrew ProLife Committee.

Mass will be offered at 5:30 p.m., with an hour of Adoration and prayer beginning after Mass.

Subsequent hours will begin at 8, 9 and 10 p.m. and end with Benediction.

Contact Kathy Forck at 573-821-5130 for information.

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"A diocesan paper serves as a bond of unity by publishing diocesan happenings and promulgating official regulations and decrees. It also plays a teaching role by reporting notable events of a religious and secular nature, and interpreting them in the light of Christian principles."
— Bishop Joseph M. Marling C.PP.S., July 7, 1957

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Advent Vespers, Sundays in Jefferson City

St. Peter Parish in Jefferson City will host citywide Advent Vespers at 4 p.m. on Sundays, Nov. 29, Dec. 6, 13 and 20 in the Proto-Cathedral of St. Peter,

Vespers, or Evening Prayer, is one of the key prayer times of the Liturgy of the Hours, the official daily prayer of the Catholic Church.

Vespers includes psalms, canticles, hymns, Scripture reading, Mary's "Magnificat," intercessory prayer and the Lord's Prayer.

Vespers is a sacred time to reflect, discern and pray. This is an ideal way for multiple generations of the family to pray together in the weeks of preparation leading up to Christmas.

Bishops, advocates call for prayer, action following defeat of Amendment 3

By Jay Nies

It's business as usual for opponents of unregulated abortion-on-demand in Missouri, following the defeat of Amendment 3 on Nov. 3.

Pregnancy resource centers and local faith communities will continue helping pregnant woman in crisis, prayer advocates will keep vigil and continue offering assistance on sidewalks outside abortion facilities, lobbyists will persist in advocating for policies safeguarding unborn babies and their parents, and faith leaders will go on steadfastly upholding the sanctity and dignity of all human life.

"The Catholic Church in Missouri will continue to advocate for policies that uphold the dignity of every person, protect the most vulnerable among us, and provide compassionate support to those in need, as she has always done," Missouri's Catholic bishops said in a joint statement on Nov. 4.

Missouri voters defeated the proposed amendment to the state's constitution by a margin of 44.56 percent to 55.43 percent of 2,118,419 ballots cast.

Passage would have required a simple majority.

Amendment 3 ***(diojeffcity.org/amendment3)*** would have restored safeguards and regulations on abortion that were removed or weakened by the narrow passage of an abortion-friendly amendment to the state's Constitution in 2024.

Amendment 3 also would have constitutionally prohibited sex-change surgeries, cross-sex hormones and puberty blockers for children.

It would have:

•reinstated health and safety standards and allowed for inspections at abortion clinics;

•reestablished the ability to sue physicians or facilities for malpractice, injury or death due to abortion procedures;

•required parental consent for minors seeking abortion;

•banned fetal organ harvesting; and

•ensured licensed facilities and physicians for abortions.

The amendment would have allowed the state to restrict abortions to cases of medical emergency, rape and incest under 12 weeks gestation, and fetal anomalies, and continue to ensure women's ability to access medical care for medical emergencies, ectopic pregnancies and miscarriages.

"We are profoundly saddened that Missouri voters chose to reject pro-life Amendment 3 and the legal protections for women and children we had hoped to restore," the bishops stated. "This result, however, does not mark the end of our work.

"We remain steadfast in our commitment to accompany mothers and fathers facing hardship in their pregnancies and to offer hope and healing to those who have been wounded by the scourge of abortion," the bishops stated.

Hope and resolve

A majority of voters in the 38 counties that make up the Jefferson City diocese voted in favor of the amendment, 53.8 to 46.2 percent.

Individual majorities in all but two counties in the diocese voted "yes" on the amendment.

Boone County, the most populous in the diocese, which includes Columbia, voted against the amendment, 69.3 to 30.6 percent.

The bishops had urged Catholics and all Missourians of faith and goodwill to pray, fast, advocate and vote for the passage of Amendment 3.

In their Nov. 4 statement, the bishops expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Catholic faithful, clergy and all people of goodwill who worked tirelessly during this campaign.

"In the days ahead, may God strengthen our resolve to defend the dignity of every human life," the bishops stated.

The bishops closed with words of reassurance from St. Teresa of Ávila, a 16th-century mystic and Doctor of the Church:

"Let nothing disturb you, Let nothing frighten you, All things are passing away: God never changes. Patience obtains all things Whoever has God lacks nothing; God alone suffices."



An "I voted" sticker adorns a tattered Amendment 3 prayer card.

Signing the bishops' statement were: Archbishop Mitchell T. Rozanski of St. Louis, Bishop Ralph B. O'Donnell of Jefferson City, Bishop James V. Johnston Jr. of Kansas City-St. Joseph, and Bishop Edward M. Rice of Springfield-Cape Girardeau.

They did so in their role as board members of the Missouri Catholic Conference (MCC) ***(mocatholic.org).***

The MCC is the public-policy agency of the state's four Roman Catholic dioceses.

Idaho defies trend

Missouri was one of four states that considered ballot measures related to abortion policy Nov. 3, with only one state rejecting a measure to expand access to the procedure.

Voters in Idaho rejected a ballot measure that would have established abortion as a state right, but voters in Nevada and Virginia approved similar measures.

Lila Rose, president and founder of Live Action, said in a Nov. 4 statement that "The results of this election bring serious challenges for the fight for life, but also a tremendous victory in Idaho, where voters rejected an extreme abortion measure and preserved protections for preborn children."

"Voters in Virginia and Nevada approved sweeping pro-abortion amendments, while Missouri voters rejected an effort to restore protections for preborn children," said Ms. Rose. "These are devastating setbacks for innocent children who deserve the protection of the law."

The results of the ballot measures came in the same election cycle that saw Democrats win control of both the U.S. Senate and House of Representatives by wide margins.

Bigger developments

Jamie Morris, executive director and general counsel of the MCC, believes the national political landscape going into this year's midterm elections figured into Amendment 3's defeat, along with possibly some "abortion fatigue."

It was a midterm in which the Republican majority lost historically.

"When you consider the enthusiasm from Democrats, who generally don't tend to vote with us on this issue, and the lack of enthusiasm from Republicans, who generally do tend to vote with us on this issue, we got caught up in developments that were way out of our control," he said.

Mr. Morris is convinced that the 10-point loss does not reflect the effort put in from the pro-life side.

He observed that the pro-life campaign in general — "not just the MCC and the

See AMENDMENT 3, page 27

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PAID ADVERTISEMENT

U.S. Catholics Join the Church in Guatemala to Provide Safe Shelter to the Suffering Poor

Cross Catholic Outreach has launched a major effort to provide safe housing for destitute families in rural Guatemalan villages. It is asking U.S. Catholics to become part of that life-transforming mission of mercy through its "Safe Homes in Guatemala" campaign.

The U.S.-based ministry, which has been recognized by the Vatican for its relief and development work in more than 90 countries, has a goal to build 240 storm-resistant homes to benefit 1,212 family members in 22 communities.

While this appeal has many technical objectives, Cross Catholic Outreach President Michele Sagarino is focused on the individual families that will be impacted.

"This is really about Maria and Ancelmo and families like theirs. The challenges they face every day are heartbreaking. Maria and Ancelmo's mud brick house has deteriorated so badly over the years that they're afraid to let their children sleep in it. They've built a separate structure out of tin sheets for the kids, but you can hardly call that a home, she said. "It's a situation that must grieve God — so it should be unacceptable to us too!"

According to Sagarino, Cross Catholic Outreach is working alongside Catholic leaders in several dioceses and archdioceses to find solutions for families Maria and Ancelmo's. The plans they have developed can produce life-transforming results — if U.S. Catholics will step forward to help support their work.

"Our primary goal is to construct durable, concrete-block houses for the poorest families," she explained. "The homes will have two bedrooms and a common area that can serve as a dining room and living room. Each will have a concrete foundation and walls, a galvanized metal roof, a sanitary bathroom, three secure metal doors and shuttered windows, providing a level of comfort and safety these families have never experienced."



Maria is praying for the miracle of having a safe home to raise her children.



Because the design is simple, the cost to provide a home is only about $21,000.

"That is a large sacrificial gift for one donor or family to make, but many have done that and were so happy they got involved. Most had been looking for something specific and significant they could do to bless others," Sagarino said. "This outreach was exactly what they were looking for because a home does more than offer safe shelter. It gives families a foundation for building a better life."

Serving the poor through the local Church also has important spiritual benefits, according to Sagarino.

"When people learn local Church leaders love them and want a better life for them, it strengthens their faith and restores their hope," she said. "Many have felt isolated and unseen. They need to know we care about them."

Father Alejandro Garcia, director of the local Caritas ministry in the Diocese of Santa Rosa de Lima, has these words of encouragement for U.S. Catholics: "We pray for you. We pray that you continue to be generous, that you continue to be a valiant hand to those who are so needy among us. As Jesus said, 'What you have done for the least of these, you have done also for me.'"

Readers interested in supporting Cross Catholic Outreach's housing programs and other outreaches can contribute through the ministry brochure inserted in this issue or send tax-deductible gifts to: Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC06258, P.O. Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. Those interested in making gifts on a monthly basis can indicate that on the brochure in order to become a Mission Partner, or write "Monthly Mission Partner" on mailed checks to be contacted about setting up those arrangements.

Unique Christmas Catalog Created To Honor Christ and the World's Poor

Many readers may remember, as children, browsing through catalogs and circling the presents they wanted for Christmas.

This Advent and Christmas season, Cross Catholic Outreach is offering a catalog too — but theirs is a very different one with a very different purpose. It is designed to bless both givers and receivers by using the holiday gift-giving tradition to help the world's poorest families.

Rather than displaying toys, neckties and jewelry, the Cross Catholic Outreach Christmas Catalog offers food for hungry families, clean water and educational scholarships. It gives Catholics an opportunity to share the blessings in their lives with impoverished families by sponsoring practical and urgently needed items. Of course, it also offers blessings for children, like Box of Joy® gifts that provide toys, school supplies and rosaries to boys and girls who would otherwise receive nothing for Christmas.

"Like most Christmas catalogs, ours offers lots of items so donors can choose something specific that resonates with them. In addition, they can make a general gift to address the poor's greatest needs," explained Michele Sagarino, president of Cross Catholic Outreach. "When donors choose to support urgent needs around the world, they provide us and our Catholic ministry partners the ability to help where it is needed most. The priests and religious sisters we support really appreciate that flexibility. It's an excellent way to empower their work among the poor."

This unique Christmas catalog is easy to find. Readers can link to it at the ministry's website (CrossCatholic.org) or they can reach it directly by entering the following web address: CrossCatholic.org/Christmas. "Our hope is that everyone will be blessed by the experience," Sagarino said. "It's a fitting way for us to celebrate the birth of our merciful Lord!"

Scan this code to visit Cross Catholic Outreach's Christmas Catalog webpage.

Box of Joy is a registered trademark of Cross Catholic Outreach.

PAID ADVERTISEMENT

Guatemalan Families Living in Extreme Poverty Look to the Church for Renewed Faith and Hope

Maria's home is always full of faith, love and joy. Sometimes, however, her patchwork shack in the rural Guatemalan community of Japón Nacional B also holds discomfort and fear. First, there's the water that floods in when it rains. "The beds get wet, and the floors get muddy," said Maria, who lives with her husband, young son and grandson.

High winds fill the family with fear. Recently, a strong wind knocked off part of the roof, so the family replaced the tin sheets and put heavy blocks on top. There's also the problem of termites, which have created a nest about three feet long on the roof and are destroying the home's wooden supports.

For now, at least, the ceiling remains intact — but what drops from it causes the biggest scare. "A lot of snakes and scorpions fall from the roof," Maria said.

With her husband, Rodolfo, earning just $10 a day as a farm laborer, the family can't afford a better home, so Maria turns to God. "I ask my Lord for a home because we have no money to pay for it," she shared.

"It's heartbreaking to meet women like Maria who have never known what it's like to be protected from the elements. In rural Guatemala, many families are trapped in extreme poverty, with few opportunities to improve their situation," explained Michele Sagarino, president of Cross Catholic Outreach, a trusted Catholic relief and development ministry recognized by the Vatican for its effective humanitarian and spiritual programs. "When we witnessed the extreme needs of Maria's family and so many others, we felt compelled to provide help — and our hope is that compassionate Catholics in the U.S. will want to get involved too."

Sagarino said that many of the communities Cross Catholic Outreach wants to serve can only be reached by dirt roads. These villages have little or no infrastructure, so parents there are raising their children without running water, suitable sanitation facilities or reliable electricity.

Most of the men and women in these rural areas are small-scale farmers who work long hours planting, tending and harvesting corn and beans, defenseless against unpredictable weather. Their hard work may provide simple meals for their children, but it is rarely enough to fully cover their housing, health and educational expenses.



Maria and her family urgently need a safer home that can withstand storms.

Families without access to land for farming face even greater challenges. They typically take work as day laborers, earning about $10 a day when work is available. The Church in Guatemala reports that those families typically earn between $125 and $190 a month — far too little to afford adequate housing. Ultimately, these families must make do with what they have, cobbling together plastic sheets, scrap metal and wood planks to build flimsy, unsafe shacks.

"Our ultimate goal is to improve living conditions in those communities. We want to help families break free from the cycle of poverty that has plagued them for generations," Sagarino said. "We've learned that providing safe homes plays a major part in improving lives, so we are making that our priority. As families move into safer, sturdier homes, their hope is restored and they have a foundation for building a better life."

Cross Catholic Outreach has been partnering with Guatemalan dioceses since 2013 to help rescue families from the poverty that keeps them malnourished, sick and devoid of hope. With the help of U.S. supporters, the ministry has built more than 1,000 homes in Guatemala, in addition to providing educational scholarships for children, microenterprise investments for adults, feeding programs for the malnourished and more.

Through its "Safe Homes in Guatemala" appeal, Cross Catholic Outreach is asking compassionate U.S. Catholics to serve as God's instrument of mercy by funding the construction of 240 homes in several Guatemalan dioceses and archdioceses. Each home will include an earthquake-resistant design, a full bathroom and a self-cleaning biodigester for wastewater.

"The homes we will build are simple but sturdy, secure and sanitary," Sagarino said. "They will change the lives of these families in profound ways, and the benefits will be lasting. Generational poverty has been a major factor in the hardships these families have been facing. Opening this door to generational prosperity will be a major step in the right direction. My prayer is that Catholics in the U.S. will want to play a role in that restoration of hope. Imagine what a powerful testimony of God's love that would be!"

Be Someone's Miracle!

To fund Cross Catholic Outreach's effort to help those in need this season, use the Christmas catalog inserted in this newspaper, or mail your gift to Cross Catholic Outreach, Dept. AC06258, PO Box 97168, Washington, DC 20090-7168. You can also scan the code with your phone to purchase your gifts online. The catalog also includes instructions on becoming a Mission Partner and making a regular monthly donation to this cause.

If you identify an aid project, 100% of the donation will be restricted to be used for that specific project. However, if more is raised for the project than is needed, funds will be redirected to other urgent needs in the ministry.







LEFT: Katie Helfer Ed.D. and Sara Blandford, principal and assistant principal of Our Lady of Lourdes Interparish School in Columbia, serve as emcees for the "Aces for Accessible Spaces" event to benefit the SPIRE Fund on Nov. 5 in Cana Hall in the Cathedral of St. Joseph. RIGHT: Bishop Ralph B. O'Donnell and Father Stephen Jones, vicar general for the diocese and pastor of Cathedral of St. Joseph Parish, enjoy a bit of levity with the rest of the crowd. **— Photos by Jay Nies**

SPIRE event highlights inclusive Catholic education opportunities

By Jay Nies

Bishop Ralph B. O'Donnell visited and laughed with everyone in Cana Hall, but two young women were the belles of the ball.

Elaina and Grace are both graduates of the Vogelweid Learning Center at St. Peter School in Jefferson City, and offering similar opportunities to others is what the gathering was all about.

Nearly 200 people purchased tickets to the Nov. 5 "Aces for Accessible Spaces" event to benefit the SPIRE Fund ***(diojeffcity.org/special-learning-opportunities).***

Those attending enjoyed an evening of fun and games, conviviality and insights into a vision for Catholic education where everyone belongs.

Joining them were principals and faculty from St. Joseph Cathedral School, St. Peter School and Helias Catholic High School in Jefferson City; Our Lady of Lourdes Interparish School and Fr. Tolton Regional Catholic High School in Columbia; St. Stanislaus School in Wardsville and St. Martin School in St. Martins.

The SPIRE Fund was established 11 years ago to support special education services at Catholic schools throughout the diocese.

Its purpose is to help more Catholic schools in these 38 counties welcome and educate students with a broader range of abilities and learning styles.

Its premise is that Jesus loves and welcomes all children, and his schools should do likewise.

SPIRE's objectives fall into two categories:

•raising awareness among school administrators, teachers, staff and parents of the need to provide Catholic education to children with special needs, as well as the availability of workshops and professional development opportunities to help teachers bring out the children's best efforts; and

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Select "Photo Galleries" from the "Multimedia" tab.

•raising money and helping secure grants to pay for staff development, classroom materials and additional personnel to help students with special needs achieve success in Catholic schools.

Last year, money from the SPIRE Fund helped support the Vogelweid Learning Program at Helias Catholic, which in recent years has been established as an expansion of the successful Vogelweid Learning Center.

Vogelweid helps students with a broad range of needs achieve success at both schools.

This is in addition to the good works already done at Helias's St. John Paul II Student Support Center by "building a program that provides specialized classes for those with exceptional learning needs," said Kathryn Coulson, interim diocesan superintendent of Catholic schools.

It expands Helias Catholic's ability to provide a Catholic high school experience that is inclusive to more students.

Promoters of the SPIRE Fund desire to broaden access to Catholic education in other parts of the diocese. They hope to build up an endowment that will provide specialized training for all Catholic school teachers and offer grants to schools for helping provide specialized services to students who need it.

Evident needs

Mrs. Coulson referred to the SPIRE Fund as "an important initiative in our diocese to support all learners."

She pointed out how studies conducted in recent years on the rate of developmental disabilities in children have led to increased awareness, earlier screening and improved diagnostic practices.

"Whether officially diagnosed or not, all schools, including ours, have children enrolled or families who wish to enroll with a variety of needs," she stated.

She noted that approximately 1 in 5 children live with special healthcare needs, with a majority of those carrying a mental health or behavioral diagnosis.

She pointed out that 9.5 to 12 percent of children are diagnosed with ADHD, while 7.6 to 8.8 percent have a specific learning disability, such as in language, reading comprehension or math.

About 1 in 5 students have dyslexia, which affects reading; 5 to 7 percent of students have dyscalculia, which affects math abilities; and 5 to 15 percent have dyspraxia, which affects motor skills.

Five to 30 percent of students have dysgraphia, impacting fine motor skills, writing and language. Two to 5 percent have auditory processing disorders; from 3.1 to 4.5 percent of children — about 1 in 31 — are on the autism spectrum; and 5.5 to 6.4 percent of children have developmental delays.

Having been a student, teacher, principal, diocesan Director of Curriculum and Instruction, and parent in the diocese, Mrs. Coulson has witnessed firsthand what Catholic school teachers do to support students and their academic needs.

"I've been on both sides of the table when that hard conversation was had between school and parent: 'Our school doesn't have the resources to best support the needs of your child,'" she said.

As a school administrator, she worked with her teachers and pastor to find ways to serve the needs of more students: "How can we learn more, how can we provide more resources, how can we create an environment of support and welcome so that our doors are open to those in need?"

She emphasized that people who give sacrificially through their tithe to their parishes support all of that parish's ministries, including the school.

"They, in fact, are sponsoring the Catholic education of children, covering the cost to educate," said Mrs. Coulson.

Given the high cost of all aspects of running a school, parish finance councils, school advisory councils, pastors and principals have to make difficult decisions about what can and cannot be paid for with limited resources.

"These decisions aren't easy and are even more difficult when we look at the finances and have to say there isn't funding for a learning specialist, extra resource teacher, aide, or materials needed for Tier 3 intervention," she said.

Nonetheless, each of the 36 Catholic grade schools and three Catholic high schools

See SPIRE, page 21



Fr. Daniel Merz reappointed as Vicar for the Diaconate

By Jay Nies

One of the Early Church Fathers referred to deacons as "the eyes and ears of the bishop."

Bishop Ralph B. O'Donnell has called on Father Daniel Merz to help be the eyes and ears of the deacons.

Specifically, Fr. Merz has been appointed to an additional three-year term as the diocese's Vicar for the Permanent Diaconate.

"I thank you for your willingness to assist me in the task of governance of the Diocese of Jefferson City," the bishop wrote to him on Oct. 22.

Fr. Merz is also pastor of St. John Henry Newman Parish in Columbia and chairman of the Diocesan Liturgical Commission.

Archbishop Shawn McKnight, who led this diocese from 2018-2025, in 2018 appointed him to succeed the late Father Frank Bussmann as director of the Permanent Diaconate upon Fr. Bussmann's sudden death.

He worked with Deacon John Schwartze, who was director of deacon formation; and Deacon Ray Purvis, who was director of ministry and life of permanent deacons.

Both men are now retired.

Deacon Charles Ochoa now serves as director of formation, and Deacon Mike Berendzen serves as director of diaconal ministry and life.

"I work very closely with them to do all these things," said Fr. Merz. "It's a big job, and I'm very grateful to be able to collaborate with them."

Church ambassadors

The diaconate is the first of three ranks in ordained ministry in the Roman Catholic Church.

Like priests and bishops, deacons receive the Sacrament of Holy Orders through the laying-on of hands and the invocation of the Holy Spirit.

But their vocation is distinct from that of other members of the clergy.

One of the most noticeable differences is that most permanent deacons may be married.

Deacons hold several roles and responsibilities in the Church.

They are expected to be leaders in identifying the needs of others, organizing the Church's response to those needs and addressing the injustices or inequities that lead to them.

"They're ordained for ministry, for service," said Fr. Merz. "They function in the Church as a kind of ambassador, an extension of the bishop."

Deacons have a particular ministry to Word, to Sacrament and Charity.

They proclaim the Gospel at Mass and occasionally preach homilies.

They are also ordinary ministers for distributing Holy Communion and administering the Sacrament of Baptism, and they can witness marriages in the Church.

"And they have a particular ministry to charity," said Fr. Merz. "Hospitals, nursing homes, prisons, people who are poor and vulnerable."

To be a facilitator

Deacons undergo a process of intense spiritual discernment, education and formation before being ordained.

The bishop usually assigns each deacon to assist the pastor of a parish. Some are also entrusted with responsibilities for the whole diocese.

For instance, one deacon serves as diocesan director of cemeteries; another is in charge of marriage ministry; another oversees marriage preparation ministry; another coordinates promotion of Natural Family Planning, as well as the two deacons in the Diaconate Office.

After ordination, deacons, like priests, need ongoing support, formation and personal development to carry out their ministries well.

Bishop O'Donnell, who as a priest served for five years as head of the Diaconate in the Archdiocese of Omaha, Nebraska, made clear his desire to have a vicar who will serve as a close conduit between him and the deacons here.

"Kind of in a parallel way of how Father Gregory Oligschlaeger is vicar for priests in this diocese," Fr. Merz described it.

As Vicar for Deacons, he oversees the formation of candidates for the Diaconate and the wellbeing of the men who are already ordained.



Father Daniel Merz

"I'm also tasked with being the first step in vetting things for the bishop and preparing things for him," he said.

He pointed out that "vicar" means "one who is in place of."

"So, someone who can act with the bishop's mind and heart toward the deacons and deacon candidates," said Fr. Merz. "Not to be an obstacle between them, but a facilitator between them."

Deep foundation

The Apostles established the Order of Deacon shortly after Jesus's Ascension into heaven and the sending of the Holy Spirit.

The Diaconate flourished in the early Church, reaching its apex of influence and responsibility in the third and fourth centuries.

But by the dawn of the Middle Ages, most of its significance had been lost and its responsibilities rolled into the ministerial Priesthood and various religious orders.

Pope St. Paul VI (+1963-1978) restored the Permanent Diaconate in 1969, following the Second Vatican Council.

The Jefferson City diocese was among the first in the United States to form and ordain permanent deacons, ordaining its first class in 1977.

More than 80 deacons now serve throughout the diocese, including some who were ordained for other dioceses and now live here.

Several more are retired but continue to serve the Church in various capacities.

Archbishop McKnight, who developed his doctoral thesis into a book titled *Understanding the Diaconate: Historical, Theological and Sociological Foundations*, worked with Fr. Merz and other advisors to update the curriculum and formation process for preparing new deacons for the diocese.

The five-year process — one year of formal discernment and four years of candidacy and formation — emphasizes intellectual, spiritual, emotional and pastoral growth and maturity.

"They're getting good formation," said Fr. Merz. "Some of the guys going through say this is a lot of work, but they also say they are getting formed and prepared very well for ministry."

"My Brother Deacons"

Fr. Merz continued in his role, without the vicar title, after Archbishop McKnight was appointed archbishop of Kansas City in Kansas last year.

Bishop O'Donnell decided to structure the office of Vicar for the Diaconate to something much like that of the Vicar for Priests, said Fr. Merz — "putting those two positions into a parallel slot to help him in his ministry toward all the clergy."

Fr. Merz also advises the bishop on selection, placement, transfer of deacons and on formation and recommendation for the candidates.

"If there are issues going on with a deacon or his family, I try to find that out and keep the bishop informed," said Fr. Merz.

Fr. Merz can also help mediate any conflicts that arise between a deacon and his pastor.

See VICAR, page 22

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J.C. parish's Care for Creation group shared activities, prayer with I.C. students

By Jay Nies

Kids say some of the most profound things.

The depth of even a kindergartner's questions can take your breath away.

"You listen to them, and sometimes they ask you some philosophical questions, and it blows your mind," said Therese Miller, a member of the Care for Creation group at Immaculate Conception Parish in Jefferson City.

"The little ones bring so much to our conversations," said Mrs. Miller, who helps bring activities focused on the spirituality of God's handiwork to students at Immaculate Conception School.

"It's refreshing, invigorating that we get to have this time together to listen to each other and experience the goodness of God's creation," she said.

The Care for Creation group got started with a half-dozen members about a decade ago, after Pope Francis (+2013-2025) released his groundbreaking encyclical, *"Laudato Si':* On Care for our Common Home."

In that document, the late pontiff wrote of people's relationships with God, with one another and with God's creation, and how they necessarily overlap.

The Care for Creation group welcomed several speakers to the parish, advocated for more nature-friendly practices for parish functions, and recommended books for fellow parishioners to read.

"We were trying to identify ways to inspire, motivate, inform, pray, unite, act and stand in wonder of God's Creation," said Mrs. Miller.

In 2023, members met with Heather Schrimpf, principal of Immaculate Conception School, about working on projects with students to help them recognize their role as God-appointed stewards of his Creation.

Members of the group began working with Mrs. Schrimpf; Father Matthew Flatley, pastor;

See CREATION, page 14

VIEWPOINT

Five, two and one



By Jay Nies

It can be a pain to be a kid sometimes.

I grew up with a lot of potential but had a very hard time turning it into results. My grades were poor, my friendships were fragile, and I didn't want to help out at home.

Then — out of desperation, I think — someone read me Jesus's Parable of the Talents.

You can find it in Matthew 25:14-30 and will hear it as part of the Gospel reading for Sunday, Nov. 15 of this year.

In that parable, Jesus tells of a demanding boss who gets ready to leave on a trip and puts three of his servants in charge of certain amounts of money, which are known as talents.

One servant receives five talents, another receives two, and another receives one.

When the boss returns, the men who had received five talents and two talents tell him they had invested the money and doubled it. The boss is pleased with them.

The third man, who had been given only one talent, was afraid of losing what little had, so he buried it until the boss returned. The boss is furious. "You worthless wretch!" he says, taking that one talent and giving it to the man who

See NIES, page 22



QUESTION CORNER

What is the Church's teaching on the death penalty?

By Jenna Marie Cooper
OSV News



Q: I know officially the Catholic Church is against the death penalty, but what about Genesis 9:6?

A: It looks like there are two dimensions to your question: the Church's teaching on the death penalty, and how we are to read the Old Testament as Catholics.

Starting with this latter aspect, it's good to keep in mind that the Old Testament (and the Bible in general) is not so much a single book as it is a whole library of books.

Different books of the Old Testament have different genres. For example, a book recounting historical events is going to have a different nature and purpose than a book of sacred poetry, and these are going to be different from a book meant to expound directly on the law or other moral principles. Furthermore, the Old Testament is filled with complicated, flawed characters who often sin grievously despite having been chosen by God for a special mission.

Even in cases where a passage of the Old Testament was meant as a straightforward moral directive, there is often some significant cultural context to take into consideration when discerning what message we should be taking away today. In particular, the teachings of Jesus in the New Testament often add a new depth of meaning or a more layered obligation. For example, although divorce was permitted in the Old Testament law of Moses, Jesus forbids divorce for his followers on the basis that this was not the plan for marriage that God originally intended (Matthew 19:1-12).

The quotation you mention specifically is part of the story of Noah and the ark. This passage is found towards the end of that narrative. After the flood is over, and Noah and his family have disembarked, God is exhorting Noah on how to go forward in rebuilding life in the post-flood world.

Echoing the story of the creation of Adam and Eve, Chapter 9 begins with God telling Noah and his children to "be fertile and multiply," and God reminds them that they have dominion over all the animals. But while human beings are given the right to kill and eat animals for food, God forbids them from killing each other.

Genesis 9:6 reads: "Anyone who sheds the blood of a human being, by a human being shall that one's blood be shed; For in the image of God have human beings been made."

In context, clearly the "point" of this passage is that all human beings are made in the image and likeness of God, and thus all human life has a special dignity.

God is using the language of the time — that is, a language that often phrases transcendent values in terms of concrete consequences — to express this truth. This is not the same thing as God commanding Noah to execute offenders, and it certainly isn't the same thing as God ordering all human societies to enact capital punishment for all time across all societies in history.

This biblical emphasis on the dignity of human life actually supports our current Church teaching on the death penalty.

Historically, the Church's moral theology did tolerate the possibility of societies making use of capital punishment in certain circumstances, where this was the best or only option for the protection of innocent citizens.

As the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* notes: "Recourse to the death penalty on the part of legitimate authority, following a fair trial, was long considered an appropriate response to the

See QUESTION, page 23

A parable and reminder to 'stay awake'

By Greg Kandra
OSV News



Reflections on the readings for Sunday, November 8:
Wisdom 6:12-16
Psalms 63:2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8
1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 or 4:13-14
Matthew 25:1-13

Are you nervous yet?

Whether we want to admit it or not, the last line of this Gospel should leave us on edge. It might even keep you up at night.

Jesus says as much. "Stay awake," he warns, "for you know neither the day nor the hour." Judgement is coming. Christ himself will return. History will end. The world as we know it will come to a close. Will we be ready?

If you haven't been thinking about mortality lately, or considering loss and the limits of life, you haven't been paying attention. This scripture comes to us just days after we've remembered and prayed for those who have gone before us all the saints and souls (on Nov. 1 and 2). As the days grow shorter, we're being asked to stop the rush of daily life and think about it all. Ponder. Pray. Remember.

The Church is giving us a lot to think about these days. If we thought Halloween was full of ghosts, what can we say about this second Sunday of November?

Well, for one thing, we are a haunted people — and this time we're being haunted by ourselves.

We're being told to take nothing for granted. Be ready. Be vigilant. Keep your lamp lit. Don't get caught napping. In the darkening days of autumn, just before the end of the liturgical year, the Church is asking us to take stock — and take nothing for granted.

"We do not want you to be unaware," St. Paul writes, "about those who have fallen asleep." I can't help but wonder: Who are the ones who are really asleep? Is he talking about us, the ones Jesus urges to stay awake?

And the first reading from Wisdom reminds us to keep watch: "Whoever for her sake keeps vigil shall quickly be free from care."

We have work to do. If you thought you were going to spend these weeks making a dent in your Christmas list, baking pies, getting ready for holiday parties, buying tickets on Travelocity and looking forward to Thanksgiving leftovers, think again.

Just for now, for a little while, maybe we should be doing something else. Maybe we need to take time to reflect, remember and prepare.

Between this week and next, the Church offers us in the Sunday readings parables about vigilant bridesmaids and diligent servants — allegories designed

See KANDRA, page 23

Together After Ordinary Times

By Lucia A. Silecchia



They sat together at Mass for many years, he in the aisle seat and she to his right, Sunday after Sunday of their married life. Suddenly, however, death parted them as it eventually parts all, at least for a time. He was no longer at her side, politely motioning for her to enter the pew before him.

She now keeps the aisle seat empty beside her, saying — sometimes with good cheer, sometimes with wistful melancholy — "That's his seat." We all know what these three words mean to her, and the grief and the hope embedded in them.

In this month of November, the Church invites our gaze to what lies after this life. Our hearts are drawn toward our loved ones who have passed from this world to the next, with prayerful hope that one day we will see them again in the presence of God.

A widow's simple act of saving a seat for her husband is, for me, a visible way of expressing that hope.

With great love, it is clear that she misses him. Yet, when she says "that's his seat," it is also clear that in some profound way, far beyond mere sentimentality, she knows that what they shared is not gone.

She knows, in a way not fully understandable on this side of life, that he is still with her and, somehow, still by her side. For me, her seating arrangement is a tangible expression of the way in which death does not truly separate us from those we love.

I have also thought, often, that there is something very beautiful about the way in which her simple witness to the hope of eternity happens at Mass.

There are many special times and places in which we seek to draw closer to those we have loved and lost.

All of us who have mourned know the inexplicable paradox that it is in the most important moments and special places of our lives that both the absence and the presence of our loved ones are most deeply felt.

This happens so often in old childhood homes, at favorite vacation spots, at gatherings around holiday dinner tables and at family weddings or birthday celebrations.

Yet, it is at Mass that we know heaven and earth meet in a way unlike any other time or place here on earth. It is here that the *Catechism of the Catholic Church* teaches that "we share in a foretaste of that heavenly liturgy which is celebrated in the Holy City of Jerusalem toward which we journey as pilgrims."

I can read this, and believe it to be true. I can hear this taught by those whose faith I trust. I can read scholarly discourse on the way in which Mass unites us with all the saints of heaven. I can look at stunningly beautiful paintings in which gifted artists do their best to illustrate this glorious communion.

In spite of all this, however, this mystery is beyond my grasp. The idea that I can join in prayer with all the saints of heaven is something that lies beyond my human understanding.

But, when the profound mystery is too much to fathom, the simple sight of an empty seat a few rows in front of me is a simple, welcome reminder that what was, what is now and what is to come are not as separate as they can seem to be.

It is a reminder to hold hope that my loved ones with whom I shared this finite life will some day share the fullness of life with me.

And, it is a reminder to pray that we will be together again at the end of our ordinary times.

Lucia A. Silecchia is a Professor of Law at the Catholic University of America. "On Ordinary Times" is a biweekly column reflecting on the ways to find the sacred in the simple. Email her at silecchia@cua.edu.

REFLECTION

Sticking to their story

By Mark Saucier

I come from a storytelling family. That's not unusual. It seems by nature, homo sapiens are a storytelling people.

Stories are the way we remember, communicate, and consciously or not, express our values.

At our annual family reunion, you can walk up to any small group and hear a story. It may be a long-ago memory or just a personal health update. But it is offered in the form of a story, complete with characters and action.

I was visiting with one of my sisters and asked her about a nearby boy whose name I could not remember.

She gave me his name, claimed him as her grandson and then told me his story.

On the first day of school this year, he and four of his friends were horsing around, happy to be reunited daily. They were fifth graders, the seniors of elementary school, and this was their year.

They entered the cafeteria, looked around and saw one student sitting alone at a table. As a group, they were drawn to him.

From his perspective, though, this had to be a menacing sight, like the beaten man on the road to Jericho, eyeing the approach of a dreaded Samaritan.

They introduced themselves, but he didn't respond. They quickly learned that he had Down Syndrome and was nonverbal.

This information, and the fact that he was a lowly third grader, didn't deter them. The returned to his table the next morning and then the next.

In what became a daily routine, they included him in their laughter and stories, kidding him like they did each other.

Someone discovered their new friend's birthday, and unbeknownst to any of their parents, they got him some small gifts.

When the child brought those gifts home, his mother wondered where they came from. He couldn't answer his mother, but his older sister told her they were from "his breakfast club."

Through Facebook, his mother found out who those five boys were, contacted their families, and invited them to her son's birthday party.

The "breakfast club" was featured on the local news and made their parents (and grandparents) understandably proud.

All this had little effect on the boys, though. They still meet every day, not because they're doing something special, but because it is something friends do.

Hearing that story from my sister, I became a little watery-eyed, as did others in the group.

I think those tears tell another story, one of the world we all long for.

Encounter AT CATHOLIC CHARITIES

World Day of the Poor: A call to relationship, not just service

By Christopher Hammann, Director of Community Services

Last Christmas, I had the opportunity to ask neighbors visiting our Food Pantry a simple question: Would you like a ham or a turkey for your holiday meal?

Thanks to a generous donation, each household could choose one.

I still remember the surprise on people's faces. Some asked, "Really?" or "You're joking, right?"

Others were moved to tears.

Their reactions reminded me that something as simple as having a choice can make a meaningful difference.

Each year, World Day of the Poor invites us to reflect on how we respond to neighbors experiencing poverty.

Established by Pope Francis, this observance reminds us that our Christian responsibility extends beyond meeting material needs.

It calls us to recognize the dignity of every person, build relationships and encounter Christ in one another.

Charity is often expressed through tangible acts of generosity: food, clothing, financial assistance and other essential resources.

Yet, charity also asks us to look beyond the immediate need and recognize the person behind it, someone with unique gifts and a story deserving respect.

In James 2:1–5, James challenges favoritism based on wealth or social standing.

He describes a gathering where someone in fine clothing receives special treatment while someone poor is made to feel less important.

His words confront our tendency to measure people by outward circumstances rather than inherent dignity.

James reminds us that God has chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom.

It's easy to overlook how much we have in common when we focus on someone's financial circumstances rather than the person standing before us.

Poverty is a circumstance, not an identity.

It does not define a person's character, diminish their dignity, or erase the contributions they make to their family and community.

After a year working at Catholic Charities, I've built personal connections with neighbors who visit our pantry.

I see them outside of work, whether at Walmart, my son's soccer game, or simply out walking.

They'll stop to ask how I'm doing and share what's new in their lives.

If I miss a pantry day, some ask where I've been and tell me they've missed our conversations.

Those moments touch me deeply.

They remind me that what happens at the pantry isn't only about the assistance we provide.

It's also about getting to know one another and building relationships that extend into our community.

Neighbors come to Catholic Charities from a wide range of backgrounds and circumstances.

Some seek food or financial assistance.

Others need guidance, encouragement or someone willing to listen.

Each person brings experiences, accomplishments and hopes that cannot be captured by a financial assessment or reduced to the assistance they receive.

Through these encounters, I've learned that the people we serve have much to teach us.

We witness perseverance amid uncertainty, generosity in the midst of limited resources and the courage it takes to ask for help.

Compassion does not flow in only one direction; it grows through mutual respect.

This raises an important question: What if the greatest gift we offer someone is not only what we provide, but how we make them feel when they ask for help?

Seeking assistance can be vulnerable.

An encounter marked by judgment or indifference can deepen that burden.

By contrast, a welcoming presence, a willingness to listen without assumptions, and genuine respect affirm that each person matters.

In 1 Corinthians 12:26, St. Paul reminds us, "If one part of the body suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it."

We are members of a shared community whose well-being is intertwined.

World Day of the Poor challenges us to move beyond charity as a transaction between those who have resources and those who need them.

Each of us has something to offer, and each of us, at different points in life, will need the support of others.

Recognizing this shared vulnerability deepens our understanding of service.

I think back to those Christmas meals and the neighbors who got to choose what they would share with their families.

The hams and turkeys mattered, but so did the opportunity to make a choice, exchange a few words and share in someone's joy.

As we observe World Day of the Poor, perhaps the question isn't simply, "What can I give?" but rather, "How can I help build a community where every person feels seen, valued and welcomed?"

Perhaps that begins by listening without judgment, taking time to know someone's story and offering the same warmth when we meet again beyond the pantry doors.



A neighbor shops with her daughter at Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri's client-choice Food Pantry in Jefferson City. — Photo courtesy Catholic Charities of Central and Northern Missouri

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Pilgrims at Georgia Martyrs' beatification admire the friars' missionary zeal, defense of marriage

By Lauretta Brown
OSV News

Savannah, Georgia

On the eve of All Saints' Day, the day the Church celebrates its saints and blesseds, five 16th-century Franciscan martyrs were given the title "blessed" at the Savannah Convention Center in Georgia.

Friars Pedro de Corpa, Blas Rodríguez de Cuacos, Miguel de Añon, Antonio de Badajoz and Francisco de Veráscola, known together as the Georgia Martyrs, were missionaries who came from Spain to serve the Guale people in coastal Georgia.

They were all killed within days of each other in 1597 by the order of the soon-to-be chief Juanillo after Father Pedro de Corpa stood by the Church's teaching on marriage when Juanillo wanted to take a second wife.

Pilgrims poured in from all over Georgia, the United States and even around the world to honor these Franciscan missionaries.

Some of the thousands who gathered for the Beatification Mass Oct. 31 told OSV News why they chose to spend their Halloween celebrating martyrs from Georgia's distant past.

Relatives present for beatification

Two of the pilgrims at the beatification had an extra special connection to Francisco de Veráscola: They are descendants of one his brothers. María Isabel Inoriza de Villota, a 12th-generation descendant of the brother of the new blessed, came with her son Imanol Goitia Inoriza, 16, all the way from Spain to attend the beatification of this relative who gave his life for the faith over four centuries ago.

Inoriza de Villota told OSV News ahead of the beatification that her uncle had found the connection in the family tree and their family had a lot of devotion to Francisco de Veráscola.

They live in his hometown of Gordexola, Spain, where he is honored, especially for his love of sports — which he was known to play with the Guale youth — there is even a sports club there that shares his name.

Inoriza de Villota and her son were able to have a quiet moment at Fort King George in Darien, Georgia, where Francisco is believed to have been killed.

She said that moment was "indescribable" and "a feeling that can't be put into words."

The thing that inspired her about Francisco, she said, was "the courage he showed--coming from the village of Gordexola, where he lived, which was in the mountains" and how "he set out to board a ship and travel halfway around the world back then to evangelize and spread the faith."

Her son also admired that bravery, and after having made a modern version of the journey himself for the beatification, he noted that there were "no planes" when Francisco made such a long trip all those centuries ago.

Inoriza de Villota was very proud to be at the beatification and grateful for those who made it possible. "It's like a dream," she said.

Families, religious attend

Traveling a shorter distance, Angelo and Valerie Cannizaro made the trip to the beatification from Macon, Georgia, because they wanted to experience it as a family and give their seven kids, ranging in age from two months to 10 years, the memory of going to a beatification.



This is the official image by artist Jared Seff for the beatification of the Georgia Martyrs on Oct. 31 in Savannah, Georgia. Seff won a competition hosted by the Diocese of Savannah, which brought in about 100 paintings. — OSV News photo/courtesy Diocese of Savannah

"Beatifications don't happen on U.S. soil too often," Valerie noted, adding, "when we learned that these friars died protecting the sanctity of marriage, since that is our vocation, we felt even more inspired to come and to celebrate them."

Angelo said it felt important to honor the Georgia martyrs "as a married couple and as a big family" because of the friars' brave witness to the sanctity of marriage.

Sister of Life Sister Gemma Grace, originally from the Diocese of Savannah, traveled to the event from the sisters' motherhouse in New York.

"It's such a huge moment in our Church," she said, "And as Sisters of Life, we believe in the dignity of life, the dignity of marriage. So we're so proud of these martyrs for standing up for that." She added that she loved the martyrs' "missionary zeal and their love for Jesus and their desire to share that with the world, with those who hadn't heard the name of Jesus before."

'So much depth and richness'

Mary Elizabeth Crissy, 25, came to the event from Atlanta and first heard about the martyrs when a nearby parish hung up a photo of them. "It just really struck my heart that we have so much depth and richness to the faith, literally in our backyards," she said.

Her fiance is from Savannah and they've been excited to celebrate the beatification together. As she is preparing for the sacrament of marriage, she was touched by "the beauty that they were willing to stand up for the sanctity of marriage and also their courage to do that."

She was also impressed by the "true poverty of the Franciscan spirituality" in that the martyrs ministered to a territory that Jesuit missionaries had withdrawn from because of its difficulties. "To see the way that they embraced this place that maybe others rejected was so beautiful," she said, "and a testament of their spirituality to really lean into that poverty of the mission."

Sin and Lin Bui made the trip with their parish, Holy Vietnamese Martyrs Catholic Church in Norcross, Georgia, where they are part of a Marriage and Family Enrichment program.

Lin said the martyrs "sacrificed their life for marriage" and that's why she and her husband felt they had to come to the beatification.

Hai Ha, another member of their parish, said she liked that the martyrs were "trying to protect the Christian family." She believes it's an important example for our times because "what they stood for back then is something that needs to be protected now too."

'On mission to the farthest extreme'

Pilgrims Ava Doyle and Francesca Bosch, both 20, took advantage of their fall break at the University of Georgia to come to Savannah from Athens, Georgia, for the beatification.

Doyle said that "the fact that the martyrs are from Georgia is so special" and she was struck by the Georgia Martyrs' "accompaniment" of the Guale people in their evangelization efforts.

Bosch said the martyrs show "what it means to live on mission to the farthest extreme" and added that their love for the Lord in "their willingness to die for the fullness of the truth is just so beautiful."

Lizzie Peacock, 24 and Elise Devine, 22, traveled from South Carolina for the event while doing music missions with the Regnum Christi Music Collective. Peacock said of the martyrs that she was "very inspired by their method of evangelization" of "living amongst the people and singing with them and playing games with them."

Devine felt like the Lord put the beatification in her path and said it was wonderful to have beatified martyrs from Georgia because it's "a place that we're familiar with and used to" and "it's so beautiful" to "have such holy people who walked here."

Lauretta Brown is culture editor for OSV News.

Poll: Support for death penalty dips to minority among U.S. adults

Washington, D.C.

OSV News

Support for the death penalty among U.S. adults has dropped below the majority level for the first time since 1971, a new Gallup poll found.

Forty-nine percent of U.S. adults said they are in favor of the death penalty for convicted murderers, while another 45% said they are opposed, the Nov. 10 poll said.

While Gallup called the findings statistically similar to last year's rate of 52% approval, the new poll marks the first time support for the practice has been below the majority level since 1971, when it was also at 49%.

Krisanne Vaillancourt Murphy, executive director of Catholic Mobilizing Network, said, "These results are a clear indication that fewer and fewer people are buying the false rhetoric

See DEATH PENALTY, page 23

In Pope Francis' homeland, his successor carries forward a legacy of prioritizing the poor

By Josephine Peterson
Catholic News Service

Buenos Aires, Argentina





LEFT: Pope Leo XIV arrives for a visit at the Federal Penitentiary Complex in the Villa Devoto neighborhood of Buenos Aires, Argentina, Nov. 11, 2026, during his Nov. 6-17 apostolic journey to Uruguay, Argentina and Peru. RIGHT: Pope Leo XIV waves as he arrives to celebrate Mass Nov. 11, 2026, at the Basilica of Our Lady of Luján, Argentina's national Marian shrine. — OSV News photos by Yara Nardi, Reuters

Argentina gave the Catholic Church its first Latin American pope but never welcomed him home during his 12-year pontificate.

Now Pope Leo XIV has come to a country where Pope Francis's memory remains a source of both pride and political controversy, retracing his predecessor's footsteps while advancing his vision of a Church close to the poor.

Throughout his visit, Pope Leo's itinerary has been closely connected to Pope Francis's years in Argentina, including stops at Buenos Aires Cathedral, where Cardinal Bergoglio served as archbishop from 1998 until his election as pope in 2013, and the Pequeño Cottolengo Don Orione de Claypole, a charitable institution associated with his ministry.

At the Catholic University of Argentina, where the Argentine pope once served as grand chancellor, Pope Leo addressed workers, business leaders, trade unions and popular movements Nov. 9, emphasizing the dignity of work and the responsibility of governments and businesses to protect vulnerable workers.

He specifically mentioned farmers, artisans and people who reclaim recyclable materials destined for landfills as examples of grassroots movements that organize themselves to address economic hardship, recalling Pope Francis's longstanding support for such workers.

Pope Leo said those movements advocate the three principles Pope Francis frequently identified as essential to social justice: "*tierra, techo y trabajo*" — land, housing and work.

The pope emphasized that economic activity must serve human dignity rather than reduce workers to their productivity, drawing on the social teachings of both Pope Francis and Pope Leo XIII.

He also defended the role of workers' associations and trade unions in protecting people excluded from formal employment, calling on public authorities to promote stable policies that foster employment and social inclusion.

For waste pickers, organizing collectively transformed what began as a means of survival into a movement seeking recognition, labor protections and a greater voice in Argentine society.

Initially, waste pickers faced resistance, particularly from police, but grassroots organizing eventually helped them establish cooperatives and join a union of informal workers.

Under previous government programs, some received a supplemental payment equivalent to half the minimum wage, while cooperatives gained access to spaces where workers could sort cardboard, plastic and glass for sale to larger companies.

There are now approximately 6,000 waste pickers in Buenos Aires.

One of the movement's leaders, Sergio Sanchez, was invited to Rome for Pope Francis's inaugural Mass in 2013 and subsequently participated in dialogues with Vatican officials and popular movements on social inclusion and labor rights.

Pope Leo's itinerary in Argentina reflected his predecessor's longstanding relationship with the poor and marginalized in Buenos Aires, where the former Cardinal Jorge Bergoglio was known for traveling by public transportation and personally engaging with people living in poverty.

Marian Father Diego Maximino, an Argentine priest now based in Washington, said Cardinal Bergoglio was deeply involved in the daily lives of ordinary Argentines.

Although some disagreed with his political positions and theological approach, Fr. Maximino said Pope Francis's commitment to mercy, particularly toward the poor, was widely recognized.

"He was like a prophet," the priest told CNS in an Oct. 22 interview by phone.

Yet Pope Francis's willingness to challenge political leaders and established interests also contributed to his complicated relationship with his homeland.

Argentina's last papal visit was in 1987, when Pope St. John Paul II visited for the second time.

David Lantigua, an associate professor of theology at the University of Notre Dame who specializes in Latin American Christianity, said Pope Francis knew how easily the Church could become entangled in Argentine politics and may have feared a visit would be interpreted as an endorsement of a particular political administration.

"I think it was just too close to home. I think he probably did have the intention of going back," Lantigua told CNS Oct. 30, adding that Pope Francis became more explicit about that desire toward the end of his life.

While Pope Francis was frequently outspoken in his criticism of economic and political systems, Pope Leo has largely advanced similar concerns through an emphasis on dialogue, social cohesion and institutional responsibility to protect the human dignity of all people.

Addressing President Javier Milei, government authorities, civil society leaders and diplomats Nov. 8, Pope Leo called for the protection of democratic institutions and urged public officials to exercise power in service of the common good.

"Democracy, then, is also a part of Argentina's heritage that needs to be safeguarded," he said, emphasizing the importance of listening to people with opposing views and seeking agreement.

He also stressed that political authority carries an obligation to promote the well-being of all citizens, including those struggling to support their families despite working.

Pope Leo's message echoed Pope Francis's longstanding defense of popular movements and their role in advancing social justice.

Throughout his Argentina visit, Pope Leo repeatedly invoked his predecessor's teachings on poverty, human dignity and the Church's responsibility toward marginalized communities.

During his four days in the country, Pope Leo drew immense crowds, with an estimated 2.5 million people attending his Nov. 9 Mass, another 1 million gathering for a prayer vigil in Buenos Aires Nov. 10, and more than 2 million at his Nov. 11 Mass outside the Basilica of Our Lady of Luján, according to local estimates.

At a Nov. 10 Mass in Córdoba where an estimated 650,000 people attended, Pope Leo again recalled Pope Francis's insistence that the poor need not only material assistance but also the love and spiritual care of the Church.

In a meeting with clergy Nov. 10, Pope Leo emphasized the need to provide spiritual care to the poor, a priority his predecessor had championed as archbishop through his support for the "*curas villeros*," that is, priests who live and minister in Buenos Aires' impoverished settlements.

Earlier, during a Nov. 9 visit to the Pequeño Cottolengo Don Orione de Claypole, which serves people with disabilities and other needs, Pope Leo emphasized the inherent dignity of every human life.

"Today I would like to affirm that your lives are not a burden on society," he said. "A nation's progress is also measured by how it welcomes all people with disabilities and particular needs."

Although Pope Francis never returned to Argentina as pope, his successor has brought his message back to the country where much of it first took shape.

With two Holy See flags flying in front of the Casa Rosada, Argentina's presidential offices, Rosa González told CNS that Pope Leo's visit offered hope for greater unity in a country marked by political divisions.

"I believe Francis left a great legacy, but I think Leo's new dawn awakens in us another chapter of the papacy," she said.

CREATION

From page 8

school librarian Cindy Wolken and middle school religion teacher Phyllis Emmel on age-appropriate, seasonal lessons for children in kindergarten through eighth grade.

"Everyone has been super supportive," said Mrs. Miller.

As with everything else at a Catholic school, God is the source and the destination.

"We start by reminding students that when we talk about God's Creation, it's something we're all a part of," said Mrs. Miller. "The respect and love and care that we give to all of Creation is important, because we're all connected.

"We're all called to care for the gifts that we have been given," she stated. "That's one way we love God and each other."

Last Spring, group members worked with students to demonstrate the "Three Rs" — reduce, reuse and recycle — by working together to turn a discarded canvas into a piece of artwork for the school.

Other projects followed.

Last year, students focused on biodiversity and how all of nature exists in magnificent equilibrium.

To illustrate this delicate balance, each class created a shoebox diorama illustrating one of the major environments in which life flourishes.

Among these were deserts, prairies, oceans and alpine forests.

Students then assembled each into an intricately leveraged "biodiversity tower," its design inspired by the Jenga game.

"'Playing the Jenga biodiversity game' reminds us to honor the interconnectedness of nature by 'moving a block' only with thoughtful and careful consideration," members of the Care for Creation group noted.

"As in the Jenga game, peace with Creation happens when every piece counts."

This year, from Sept. 1 through Oct. 4, the group helped students observe the Season of Creation by focusing on the theme, "Living Water."

The theme comes from Ezekial 47:9-12, which includes the phrase, "Wherever it flows, the river teems with every kind of living creature. ... Everything lives where the river goes."

Lessons for each grade focused on exploring the wonder, beauty, power and lifegiving ways of water.

The students prayed, reflected and acted together through demonstrations and experiments highlighting the "Wonder of Water," the "Power of Water," the "Beauty of Water," and "Living Water."

They learned about and shared ways to conserve and care for the watershed and local water supply.



Students at Immaculate Conception School in Jefferson City survey the balance of nature illustrated by a "Biodiversity Tower" they helped create as part of a Care for Creation project in the Fall of 2025. — Photo from the Immaculate Conception Catholic School Facebook page

Members of each of the middle school "houses" created a prayer fountain — an integrated project of prayer, Scripture, world water issues and solutions, art and engineering.

"They used prayers that relate to water in the many different ways it is depicted in the Bible," said Mrs. Miller. "They did that as a way of integrating this life-giving compound into their physical life and their faith life."

Students conducted four "little experiments" at their tables during library period.

They also helped create a "living water wave" of streamers outside to weave into the fence outside one of the school buildings, highlighting their own role as "wave makers."

Mrs. Schrimpf summed up the lessons for the students at the conclusion of an all-school Mass.

"Every day, we have opportunities to make a difference," she noted. "We can choose to conserve water. We can care for the world God has entrusted to us. We can notice when someone needs help. We can bring kindness, encouragement and hope to others."

She emphasized that Jesus identified the gift of his very self as Living Water.

"Jesus is the source of the grace, hope and life that we need," she pointed out. "He tells us that those who come to him will never thirst."

"God is the source of all life, and we are called to help his Creation flourish," she stated. "May we leave this Mass ready to be wave makers — bringing Christ's love and Living Water to the people and the world around us."

Participation among students in these Care for Creation activities has intensified over the years.

Mrs. Miller likened students' reactions to a panel from a 1980s "Calvin & Hobbes" comic strip, in which a little boy tells his best friend, "If people sat outside and looked at the stars each night, I'll bet they'd live a lot differently."

"Everyone's response is unique," Mrs. Miller observed. "What stands out for me is having them see something differently that they take for granted every single day. They're in awe! It's like, 'Wow! God's Creation is incredible!'"

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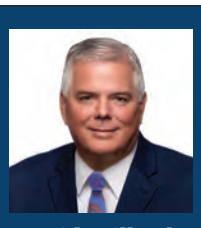
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DIOCESE OF Jefferson City

MSGR. FLANAGAN

From page 1

Friends, fellow priests and the beneficiaries of Msgr. Flanagan's lengthy ministry remember him as a compassionate shepherd, faithful mentor, decisive administrator, enthusiastic golfer and portrait of a life well lived for God.

"Whenever I went to Confession to him, he was so kind and caring and really Christlike in all his love and care," said Our Lady of Lourdes parishioner Alice Neville. "And he had a twinkle in his eye."

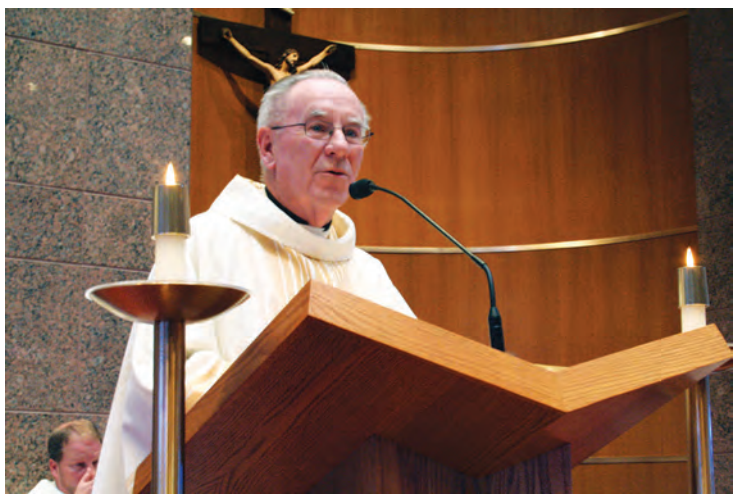
Social media brimmed with accolades and memories.

"Oh, how we will miss this kind, holy man," stated Julie Arment.

"His kind, wise way and his example and guidance brought many back to the faith," stated Keith Wright.

"We were so lucky to have known him and that he was our priest at Our Lady of Lourdes," wrote Beth Luebbering.

"Very kind, merciful, a great teacher to up-and-coming priests and deacons," said Cheryl Scherer. "He was a marvelous Church leader."



Monsignor Michael T. Flanagan (1938-2026) addresses parishioners during a 2008 Mass to celebrate the 50th anniversary of Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Columbia. — Photo by Jay Nies

"He always showed up when needed," wrote Annette Kline Robbins. "He was our spiritual anchor and will be so dearly missed."

Rocky road to Missouri

In 61 years, Msgr. Flanagan ministered as associate pastor at St. George in Linn, Sacred Heart in Columbia and Cathedral of St. Joseph in Jefferson City; as a faculty member at the former St. Thomas Aquinas Seminary in Hannibal; and as pastor of St. Robert Bellarmine in St. Robert, Mary Immaculate in Kirksville and St. Rose of Lima in Novinger, Immaculate Conception in Jefferson City, and Our Lady of Lourdes in Columbia.

He became well-known for his pastoral instincts as well as his administrative acumen.

He was born on May 31, 1938, in Ardsoran Boyle, Co. Roscommon, Ireland, a twin son of the late James and Catherine (Rock) Flanagan.

He and seven siblings grew up on his parents' farm.

His father was one of nine siblings and the only one not to eventually move to the United States.

Young Michael admired priests and thought about joining their ranks. Like his twin brother, Patrick, he wanted to be a missionary priest.

He went to a high school for future missionaries and spent a year in the novitiate of the African Mission Priests in Ireland.

Realizing that was not his calling, he followed some friends to St. John Seminary in Waterford.

See PRIEST, page 16



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PRIEST

From page 15

Bishop Joseph M. Marling C.PP.S. (+1956-1969), founding bishop of Jefferson City, visited the seminary and invited the future priest to minister in central and northeastern Missouri.

Msgr. Flanagan never actually visited the United States until after he was ordained.

"But all of my father's family was living in Connecticut," he once recalled. "We had a liking for the people of the United States."

He was ordained a transitional deacon on Sept. 7, 1964.

On June 12, 1965, in the Cathedral of the Holy Trinity in Waterford, Ireland, Archbishop Morris ordained him to the Holy Priesthood.

The first place he offered Mass in Missouri was Our Lady of Lourdes Church in Columbia — which at that time was in the middle of a cornfield.

Mission field

Msgr. Flanagan was part of an impressive wave of Irish missionaries who became priests of the Jefferson City diocese in its first two decades of existence.

Many were ordained shortly before or after the Second Vatican Council (1962-1965), which brought tectonic changes to Church governance and culture and to how the Mass was celebrated.

"They left their families, came to America, knowing almost nothing about central and northern Missouri, with its scorching summers, and adjusting their accents and to the ways of the Catholic Church in the United States," said longtime friend Monsignor Gregory L. Higley, pastor of Our Lady of the Lake Parish in Lake Ozark.

As "Vatican II" priests, Msgr. Flanagan and his contemporaries were obliged to draw forth the baptismal gifts of the laity for the good of the entire Church.

"So, they had to adjust to a new country, a new culture and a new expression of the Church," said Msgr. Higley. "And they not only did it, they embraced it!"

They started parish pastoral councils, "and that's when Msgr. Flanagan really learned to recognize the gifts and wisdom of the laypeople," said Msgr. Higley.

Msgr. Flanagan trusted the people of his parishes.

"Granted, he never gave up his authority," Msgr. Higley noted. "He was never afraid of exercising authority. At the same time, he was never afraid of adapting his authority."

Mentor to many

Msgr. Flanagan served in Kirksville and Novinger for 10 years, then in Jefferson City for eight.

He became pastor of Our Lady of Lourdes in Columbia on Nov. 26, 1990.

His time there coincided with tremendous growth in the parish. He oversaw the construction of a new, 800-seat church, along with additional classrooms for the school.

He was also instrumental in establishing Fr. Tolton Regional Catholic High School in Columbia.

Nearly half the priests of this diocese at one time served as associate pastors or transitional deacons under Msgr. Flanagan.

He went out of his way to be a mentor and friend to all who were assigned to minister with him.

"He taught me how to always be kind to people, no matter how mad they made you," said Father Michael Coleman, pastor of Holy Spirit Parish in Centralia and part-time chaplain at Tolton Catholic.

Fr. Coleman spent two summers as a seminarian with Msgr. Flanagan in Kirksville.

"He could be gruff, and he needed to be sometimes, but he always erred on the side of kindness," said Fr. Coleman.

He recalled how Msgr. Flanagan saved up for a nice set of golf clubs and was getting ready to go buy them.

But first, he met with a young parishioner with two children, whose husband had recently deserted her.

She couldn't pay her rent and was about to get evicted.



The late Monsignor Michael T. Flanagan administers the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick during a Mass for the Sick in Our Lady of the Lake Church in Lake Ozark in February 2023. — Photo by Jay Nies

"She went into that meeting with him, crying her eyes out," Fr. Coleman recalled, "and she was laughing when she left."

Fr. Coleman then asked him, "Are you ready to go get those clubs now?"

"Let's hold off on that right now," Msgr. Flanagan replied.

Father Christopher Cordes, pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish of Pettis County, succeeded Msgr. Flanagan as pastor in Columbia.

"He was supportive of me as a deacon and as a priest at Our Lady of Lourdes, and during the years in between," said Fr. Cordes. "I admired his faith, commitment and passion. He served the parish and diocese faithfully and well. I'm grateful for him and will miss him."

Father Simon Jude Kanyike, pastor of Sacred Heart Parish in Eldon and Our Lady of Snows Parish in Mary's Home, was an associate pastor at Our Lady of Lourdes after Msgr. Flanagan retired.

"Everybody loved him," said Fr. Kanyike. "He was a very practical man, a man of great experience. He loved the Church very much."

Fr. Kanyike saw how Msgr. Flanagan handled the gradual breakdown of his own health.

"His doctors kept advising him to rest more, but that wouldn't keep him away from the Church," the younger priest recalled. "He would come and be a part of the congregation."

Fr. Kanyike felt deeply humbled when Msgr. Flanagan came to the sacristy before Mass on Sunday and asked, "Would you let me celebrate with you?"

"He loved to celebrate the Mass!" Fr. Kanyike recalled. "He could see how much it defined his Priesthood. It gave him purpose."

Father Christopher Hoffmann, pastor of Holy Rosary Parish in Monroe City and St. Stephen Parish in Indian Creek, spent a year at Our Lady of Lourdes as a seminarian on a parish internship.

Msgr. Flanagan had retired by then.

Things were quiet, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

"He was always a great storyteller," Fr. Hoffmann recalled. "Fr. Coleman would come over, and we'd have dinners in the rectory, and they would go back and forth telling stories of happenings in their parishes and all sorts of things."

By watching and listening, Fr. Hoffmann gained valuable insight into cultivating Christian fellowship and "how to love the people."

Persuasive voice

Janie Theobald was certified to teach kindergarten through high school but had never taught grade school.

She had stepped out of teaching to raise her three young children at the time Msgr. Flanagan was pastor in Kirksville.

Aware of a sudden opening for a junior high teacher at Mary Immaculate School, he directed her to report for duty on Monday.

She objected, saying there would be no one to watch her youngest.

"I've taken care of that," the priest told her. "I found you a babysitter."

She spent the next 30 years lauding him for getting her back into teaching.

A few years later, the school was suddenly without a principal.

Several fellow teachers and parents at a school board meeting nominated Mrs. Theobald for the position.

Overwhelmed at the prospect, she refused.

Msgr. Flanagan, who had become pastor of Immaculate Conception Parish in Jefferson City, got word of the situation and drove more than two hours to give her a message:

"Stop being an ass. You know what you have to do."

That story has a familiar ring to Debbie Portell, whom Msgr. Flanagan hired to be director of religious education (DRE) at Our Lady of Lourdes in Columbia.

The previous DRE retired, and Mrs. Portell was on the parish council.

The priest called her into his office after a meeting and asked if she'd serve.

"I said, 'What makes you think I'm qualified for that?'" she recalled.

He fired back: "You're Catholic, aren't you?"

He then asked her to pray about it.

"I did, and I took the job," she said. "And man, it was a privilege, a blessing to work with him. He was such a great mentor, a beautiful mentor!"

She marveled at how he ministered: "He always said the right things. He was part of so many families, from birth to death."

"He was no-nonsense, but his compassion was abounding," she said.

Carolyn Saucier got to know Msgr. Flanagan while raising her large family in Jefferson City.

She later served as diocesan assistant director of religious education.

See FAREWELL, page 17

FAREWELL

From page 16

"He was always a man of quick and dry wit but also a deep spiritual guide," she recalled.

He became a friend, mentor and "an engaging conversation partner" to her.

"There was something about him — private and a bit mysterious but always inviting," she said.

He challenged her to think in new ways.

"He was forward-thinking and had a solid vision for all that the parish could be," she said.



The late Monsignor Michael T. Flanagan visits with a few of the grade school children who were praying for him during a serious health episode in 2023. He often referred to the prayers of children as the Prayer of Innocents.

Teeing off

Our Lady of Lourdes was on its way to becoming the largest parish in the diocese when Msgr. Flanagan was appointed pastor.

The parish hall that now bears his name was still serving as the church. Some people had to stand outside during Mass, even though an addition had been built a few years earlier.

The parish had a $400,000 debt.

"It looked a little bit impossible," he recalled in 2015. "But I said, 'Listen, this is a great parish. If you get it going, it will boom!'"

Parishioners "pulled up their socks," paid down the debt and wound up planning and paying for an impressive new church with room for everyone.

Bishop John R. Gaydos, now deceased, who led the diocese from 1997-2018, dedicated the church in 1999.

On Feb. 14 in the Great Jubilee Year 2000, at Bishop Gaydos's request, Pope St. John Paul II elevated Msgr. Flanagan to the dignity of a Prelate of Honor, accompanied by the title, "Reverend Monsignor."

As pastor, he played a vital role in helping establish Fr. Tolton Regional Catholic High School.

He served on the executive committee, helped secure the land and supported the fundraising efforts.

He successfully battled cancer late in his tenure at Our Lady of Lourdes.

"I particularly appreciated the prayers of the schoolchildren," he stated at that time. "The Prayer of Innocents, I call it. It's most effective."

Parishioner Kathleen Basi, whom Msgr. Flanagan hired as director of liturgy and music at Our Lady of Lourdes, recalled him baptizing her daughter, Juliana, in the Pediatric Intensive Care Unit while the baby was on a ventilator and he was taking chemotherapy.

He retired as pastor that year.

"I am very proud of you as a parish," he wrote to the people at that time. "I know that I have grown spiritually, and I know many of you have, too."

Parishioner Gene Schmidtlein wrote a tribute to Msgr. Flanagan for the Our Lady of Lourdes Parish Directory that year.

"He wanted his parishioners to join him in serving and helping others to grow in their love of God and his Church," Mr. Schmidtlein wrote.

He said Msgr. Flanagan's habits on the golf course gave insight into his success as a pastor.

"He doesn't mess around with extended practice swings or sizing up his putts," Mr. Schmidtlein noted. "He steps up and hits the ball.

"That's how he deals with administrative challenges: Don't mess around. Dig in and get the work done."

Msgr. Flanagan embraced the Cursillo movement, which helps laypeople appreciate their Baptismal calling to get involved in the Church and share their gifts and talents.

"The role of the laity, the participation of the laity, the collaboration of the laity — he was a big supporter of all that," said Msgr. Higley.

"That's something I learned from him: 'Trust the laypeople,'" he said.

Amazing recovery

Msgr. Flanagan served as senior priest in service at Our Lady of Lourdes until 2023, when another major health crisis nearly claimed his life.

A stubborn infection and an intestinal ulcer landed him in the hospital, where he wound up having a stroke and experiencing kidney failure.

"The bishop came and gave me all the absolutions," Msgr. Flanagan noted at that time.

Fr. Cordes sent out an urgent prayer request to fellow priests and parishioners.

"I remember praying that God would take him just so he wouldn't have to suffer anymore," Mrs. Portell recalled. "But God wasn't quite ready for that."

The children of Our Lady of Lourdes Interparish School prayed for him several times each day.

He knew people were praying for him.

"I somehow could feel it," he said. "I came to rely on the strength of those prayers. I could feel an energy beyond myself."

His malfunctioning kidneys started functioning on their own. He began to bounce back and steadily moved toward full recovery.

"He wanted to be able to celebrate Mass again," Mrs. Portell noted. "And he did."

"Abundance of gift"

Msgr. Flanagan stayed in close contact with his family back in Ireland and his cousins in the United States.

"He gave so much of his life to his vocation," one of his cousins said at his funeral. "He chose to serve. He chose to care. He chose to accompany our family and community and people through many seasons of their lives: Baptisms, weddings, funerals and everything in between."

He often spent a few weeks each summer in his hometown, celebrating Mass each morning and spending his days with extended family.

He knew his health was failing when he left for one last visit in June.

He intended to come back to Missouri but wound up staying.

"I'm really pleased that he got to spend the last months of his life in Ireland with his family," a longtime friend stated. "He was so happy. That's part of what our faith is about: sharing it with friends and family."

He offered Mass each day at the kitchen table of his family homestead.

Seven family members representing three generations were present the last time he did so.

Shortly thereafter, they could see he was tired and led him to bed.

He died shortly thereafter.

Hymns in English and Gaelic echoed during his Funeral Mass off the walls of the church of his childhood and of numerous summer visits.

Father Joseph Cauffield, pastor, presided.

Father Edwin Flanagan, a grade school classmate, friend and distant relative, concelebrated.

In procession, young relatives presented mementos before the altar: Msgr. Flanagan's first prayer book, the certificate he received upon being named a monsignor, a golf ball, his Smartwatch, and a bulletin from Our Lady of Lourdes Parish.

"He did not simply occupy a place in church," his cousin stated. "And what a wonderful story! A ministry marked by kindness, generosity, friendship, a sense of humor and an unmistakable zest for life.

"We give thanks today not only for the priest he was, but for the person he was."

Preceding Msgr. Flanagan in death were his parents; a sister, Rita; his brothers, Bernard, William, Seamus and his twin brother, Father J. Patrick Flanagan of the order of St. Patrick's Missionary Society, Kiltegan.

Surviving are a sister Jane Patricia; a brother, Francis; a sister-in-law, Joan; nieces and nephews, and his brother priests.

"We all need a Monsignor Flanagan in our lives," Kathleen Bruegenhemke stated online. "A steady source of strength through every season, good or bad."

"Thank you, Father Mike Flanagan, for your wisdom and courage shared with the people of this diocese," said Mrs. Saucier. "What an abundance of gift you offered to so many!"

"What a beautiful soul," Erin Berry Hervey stated. "He had so much love in his heart, and you could see it every time you looked into his eyes."

BISHOP

From page 1

"Those are the moments when you realize the real joy the Lord offers us through the perspective of children," observed Bishop O'Donnell, who came from Omaha, Nebraska, to become Jefferson City's fifth bishop a year ago, on Oct. 28, 2025.

"I, too, was once a child," he pointed out. "I remember those who taught me and my family. And to be a part of that in this way is a real gift."

The no-longer-new bishop likened settling into his episcopal role this past year to an old Elvis Presley song: "Home is where the heart is, and my heart is anywhere you are. Anywhere you are is home."

"When our hearts are focused on Christ, and we know he is present in all those we meet, then we can truly be at home with other people," the bishop said.



Bishop O'Donnell administers the Sacrament of Confirmation in St. Peter Church in Fulton in May. — Photo by Madeleine Cerneka

"Jesus says, 'Where your heart is, there your treasure lies,'" he noted. "So, finding the quality of home comes when we recognize the Lord in the people we serve."

Every day on the job has deepened Bishop O'Donnell's understanding that he was sent here by God — through his servant, Pope Leo, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit — to minister to all the souls of this diocese.

"And not just our parishes, but all the souls in our 38 counties," he pointed out.

He referred to a phrase from the Rite of Ordination of a Bishop: "You will pattern your life after Christ, the Good Shepherd, who knows his sheep and who is known by them."

The more communities Bishop O'Donnell visits and the more people he meets, the more at home he feels.

"Because my heart is in serving the Lord," he said, "and the treasure is in the people he's called me to serve."



Bishop O'Donnell imposes hands on the head of Father Jacob Hartman while ordaining him to the Holy Priesthood on June 6. — Photo by Jay Nies

"I call you friends"

There have been many firsts for Bishop O'Donnell over the past year: administering Confirmation, anointing new altars, presiding at diocesan rituals for the first time.

"But there's no way I could have imagined what it would be like to ordain a man to the Priesthood of Jesus Christ!" he said. "Having the opportunity and the privilege of ordaining Father Jacob Hartman was truly a moment of tremendous joy."

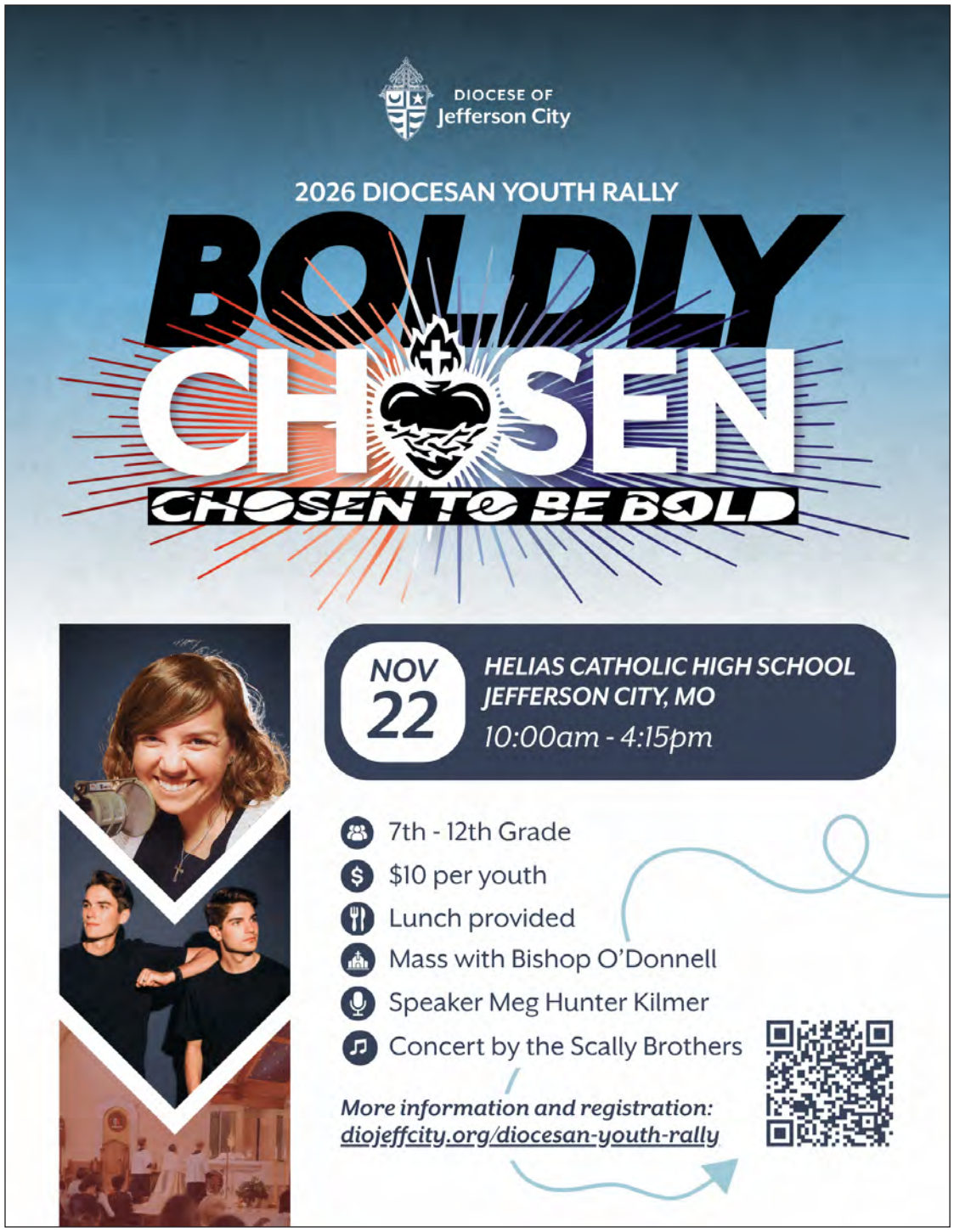
The bishop looks forward to many more ordinations, and he hopes his sense of unabashed wonder at the prospect of those unique moments, great and small, in his ministry never fades.

"Wherever I go, I hear people responding to the work of our priests and sharing the stories of the dedicated and heartfelt ministry of the presbyterate," he stated.

"It's incredible to witness God's work through their generosity, through the service of our Diaconate community, the religious and lay faithful as I go from parish to parish." he said. "It's just amazing."

All the while, he's set about confidently but prudently car-

See O'DONNELL, page 19



O'DONNELL

From page 18

rying out the duties of his office: teaching, sanctifying and governing the people entrusted to his care.

He serenely acquiesces to whatever God will make of him.

"I'm still me," he pointed out. "You take yourself with you wherever you go — all the grace, all the challenges, my life and my history, that's all part of what God calls to this order.

"But, sacramentally, from the point of receiving Holy Orders as a bishop, there is by right and responsibility a certain newness," he noted.

Such is the way of any vocation in life.

"How we encounter and experience the ups and downs of life helps to shape us," he said. "God truly blesses that."

Bishop O'Donnell realizes he will be called upon to make difficult decisions, and at times they may be unpopular.

"That's part of the nature of leadership," he said. "There are always moments that draw forth from us a decision that belongs solely to the one who holds the office."

At the same time, even when decisions come down to the one person, "the consultation process is always important," he said. "It is essential to be open to hearing the perspective of all those in the community. We are blessed to have structures in place to facilitate that process among our deaneries across the diocese."

"We stand on the shoulders of those who have gone before us," he noted. "We are surrounded by a cloud of witnesses who have suffered and served in the Church for generations. I am confident that with their intercession and God's grace, we will continue to thrive as we move forward together."

He hopes never to lose his sense of humor.

"Levity doesn't take away the serious quality of the work we do," he said. "But not taking ourselves too seriously helps us to place our efforts into God's hands, who desires that we all be saved."

Challenges will come, "but back to the exhortation in the Rite of Ordination: 'It is ours as successors to the Apostles to preach the Good News, in and out of season,'" he said.

"So, those difficult human challenges, struggles, those moments that would be considered 'out of season' — that gift is every bit as important as in the times when it's easy," he stated.

Seasons

A year ago, Bishop O'Donnell chose *"Servite Domino in laetitia"* — "Serve the Lord with gladness" (Psalm 100:2) as his episcopal motto.

What could he possibly add to that now that he's been a bishop for 12 months?

"Always," he stated.

"That verse is a central concept in truly knowing the Lord," he said. "Because a relationship with the Lord always calls us to service and joy in response to knowing him: 'As I have done, so you must do.'"

Bishop O'Donnell was echoing Jesus's instruction to his Apostles after washing their feet at the Last Supper (John 13).

"Gladness and service are a sure sign that the Holy Spirit is present," the bishop stated. "It can't be any clearer than that."

The School Sisters of St. Francis at Bishop O'Donnell's grade school taught him about the signature characteristics of the life, work and ministry of St. Francis of Assisi.

The bishop stated, "St. Francis found joy in all of creation, by trying to be a channel of God's peace. Asking that God would make him an instrument for bringing goodness into the world. I hope I can imitate his dedicated simplicity in my ministry as bishop.

"Serving others in the spirit of Christ brings me joy," he said. "I enjoy people, and I'm so grateful for those whom God has placed in my life. And I hope they are grateful for me."

Rest for the weary

Between carrying out his responsibilities, Bishop O'Donnell enjoys walking several miles each day to clear his head, spending some time at the gym, and reading, especially history.

"In the past month or two,



Father Nicholas Reid, pastor of St. Martin Parish in St. Martins and St. Michael Parish in Russellville, and Bishop Ralph B. O'Donnell hold two young parishioners during the St. Martin Parish Picnic in July.

— Photo from the St. Martin Catholic Parish Facebook page

I've been doing quite a bit of reading about our diocese," he said. "I love learning about the impact and influence of history."

In addition, he enjoys visiting with family and friends, writing letters, sending note cards, making phone calls and otherwise "staying connected."

He's also working to learn conversational Spanish so he can better communicate with and minister to the sizable population of Catholics in the diocese for whom Spanish is the language of their heart.

He begins each day with silent prayer in the chapel of his residence.

"Time spent first quieting myself to be present with the Lord," he said. "Then, first and foremost, holding up the needs of the faithful, the needs of all who live in our diocese, and asking for God's grace in their lives."

He prays for priests, especially those who are having challenges or difficulties, for people in leadership roles in the diocese, and for "all who are dedicated and committed to the life of the Church, and their families."

He usually offers his daily Mass right after that, unless he is scheduled to celebrate Mass somewhere else in the diocese.

Pray, listen, act

Since his appointment last fall, several seasoned bishops counseled Bishop O'Donnell to listen intently to the people of his diocese and their priests.

"They encouraged me always to take the time to really hear people when important decisions need to be made," he said.

He emphasized that such intentional deliberation on his watch "doesn't mean we won't take action."

"But it does mean we'll consult, get feedback, process and listen to one another as God, through the power of the Holy Spirit, helps shape and form our decisions," he said.

He noted that the parishes and deaneries throughout the diocese are busy implementing the third year of the three-year diocesan pastoral plan discerned and adopted under his predecessor, Archbishop Shawn McKnight.

Bishop O'Donnell is excited about working with the clergy and laypeople of the diocese to prepare the next steps in response to the good work that has been completed, carrying out future action based on the themes that have surfaced from the implementation of the pastoral plan over these past years.

These themes point to important questions:

- "How is God calling us to go deeper in our relationship with the Lord and with one another?" and
- "How can we share our faith with others?"

Bishop O'Donnell wants to help forge greater unity within the Church and within society.

"How we interact with our neighbors and friends to bring Christ's love to others," he elaborated. "We're being called to recognize our unity as disciples of Jesus Christ and to see no one else as 'other' than us.

"God wills that all be saved, and as disciples, we are to carry that message to all we meet," he said.

He pointed to the rich history of the faith communities throughout this diocese receiving God's gifts and putting them to good use for his Kingdom, from the early 1800s to the present day.

Seeing that as an indication of what is still to come, "I look forward to all that God has in store for us," he said.

Praise and thanksgiving

A few weeks into his second year here, Bishop O'Donnell is more grateful than ever to God "for his unwavering faithfulness."

"As St. Paul says so beautifully, 'God will supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus," the bishop noted.

He asks for renewed prayers for vocations in the Church, and for a great outpouring of "the peace the world cannot give."

He pointed out that of the priests who have been ordained in this country in the past 20 years, on average more than 65 percent said they were invited to consider the Priesthood by trusted adults, faculty, neighbors, friends, parish priests and fellow Catholics.

"That's why I encourage everyone to invite young men to think about whether God is calling them to the Priesthood, and young women to consider whether they're being called to Religious Life," he said. "I really believe the Lord continues to call, as he has ever called. But it can be hard to hear his voice."

Bishop O'Donnell also asks all the faithful to pray "for the work in this part of God's vineyard in Central and Northeastern Missouri that is ours."

"And let's pray for each other," he requested, "that we all respond generously to all that God asks of us."



ACROSS the Diocese

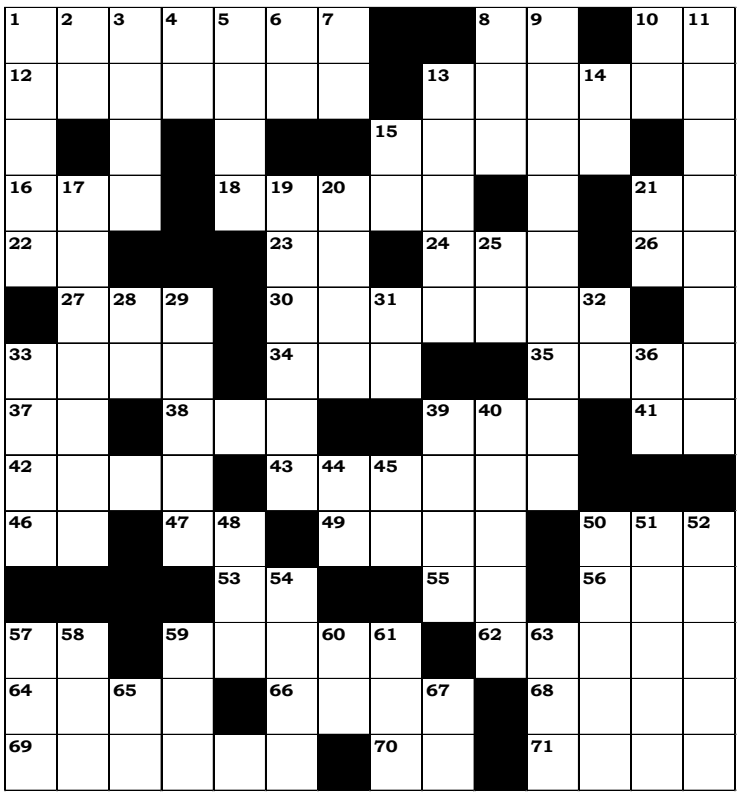
By Father Donald Antweiler

ACROSS

1. This puzzle presents some of the colorful events in Missouri's ____ involving the automobile.
8. To __ __ something is to throw rolls of toilet paper around someone's house, tree, or yard as a rather adolescent practical joke (2 ltrs.).
10. In Monopoly, pass ____ and collect $200.
12. "Thus ____ came, and morning followed — the first day," (Genesis 1:5).
13. "____ the throne was a halo as brilliant as an emerald," (Revelation 4:3).
15. A moonshiner's piece of equipment.
16. "Monks are better ____ when they retain the ability to laugh at themselves," —*The Cloister Walk,* by Kathleen Norris.
18. Theodore Tanner ____ 3 years building Jefferson City's first car before its debut in 1900.
21. "I did try to be original; but I only succeeded ____ inventing all by myself an inferior copy of the existing traditions of civilized religion," —*Orthodoxy,* by G.K. Chesterton.
22. Abbr. for Drug Abuse.
23. Initials of the name of the Catholic Church in Loose Creek, St. James, Montgomery City.
24. Abbr. for Incorporated, after a company's name.
26. 34th book of the Bible, from which Jesus identifies himself with the title "Son of Man" found there.
27. "Yo-Ho-Ho and a bottle of ____"; an old sea shanty made famous in R.L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island.*
30. In May of 1901, two cars in KC collided. They collided because these only two cars in the entire town decided to play "____." Nobody was hurt.
33. Prefix for present or potent; or, a luxury hotel brand.
34. "I guess some rumors are just too good ____ to keep alive," —*A Murder in Hollywood,* by Michael Crichton.
35. What the Post Office is supposed to deliver.
37. __&__; Arts & Entertainment cable network.
38. Hawaiian necklace.
39. "Together, as ____ people, as brothers and sisters, let us walk toward God and love each other," —Pope Leo IV in "Leo IV begins his Pontificate," *ONE Magazine.*
41. Land of Lincoln State (abbr.).
42. "The Lord sets prisoners ____," (Psalms 146:7).
43. "Just as we were drifting past a great ____ within a raised portcullis, a most uncommon jackass in there split the world with his bray, and I fell out of the saddle," —*Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc,* by Mark Twain.
46. Letters for Sacred Scripture.
47. Abbr. for street.
49. Himalayan bigfoot.
50. "Drake felt a nagging concern. It was the ____ that looked simple that bit you in the rear end," —*Cold Zero,* by Brad Thor.
53. Stomach muscle.
55. Bone.
56. Letters for "Undelivered As Addressed"; a Post Office term.
57. ____ *cum spiritu tuo.*
59. "So humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that he may ____ you in due time," (1 Peter 5:6).
62. One of the major ingredients missing in unleavened bread.
64. Burn or char, as meat or other food.
66. Anything that is sexual in an obvious, crude or offensive way.
68. Ritual (e.g., "no sacramental ____ may be modified or manipulated at the will of the minister or the community," —*Catechism of the Catholic Church,* #1125).
69. The Missouri Highway ____ was created in 1931.
70. Periodic Table letters for gold.
71. You didn't ____ a driver's license in Missouri until 1937.

DOWN

1. King ____ ordered the massacre of all male children in Bethlehem three years old and younger (the Holy Innocents), —Matthew 2:16-18.
2. An __ __ stands for intravenous (i.e., a line delivering fluids, medications or blood directly to the bloodstream).
3. In 1893, Missouri's first ____-propelled vehicle which could be called an automobile was built in St. Louis able to move at seven or eight MPH.
4. The Volunteer State (abbr.).
5. The Holy ____ used in the sacraments are stored in an ambry in Church.
6. Letters after a registered nurse's name.
7. Letters for Youth Group (e.g., a parish's organization for young people).
8. Prefix for angle, cycle, or pod.
9. In 1902, the Kansas City Council had before it an ordinance banning cars from the streets as pests and nuisances. Cars were often stopped for speeding by ____ on horses.
10. The first bk. in the Bible.
11. Our Bishop, Bishop Ralph ____.
13. Upper room.
14. Letters for Underwriters Laboratories; a global safety scientific org. founded in 1894.
15. Letters for Serial Number, on a product or device.
17. In 1905, a group of ____ tried to ban cars in Mexico, Mo.
19. In August of 1900, three cars raced a horse at a St. Louis ____. The horse won.
20. "The written Word is but an ____ of the living Word, God's Son Jesus Christ, whom he does not cease to speak into the world and our hearts," —*The Way of the Disciple,* by Erasmo Leiva-Merikakis.
21. You need an __ __ to buy liquor or beer (2 ltrs.).
25. Letters for North Korea.
28. Letters for the United Nations.
29. By 1903, the first state law licensing automobiles had been passed and the first speed limit in the nation was set — nine ____ per hour.
31. "The time was right. I walked in, loosened his soul, and carried ____ gently away," —*The Book Thief,* by Markus Zusak.
32. Chemical letters for sodium.
33. Clumsy, awkward, rude or ill-mannered persons.
36. Vatican __ __ transformed the Catholic Church from a "defending fortress," to "engaging directly with the contemporary world."
39. "Let us go __ __ the nearby villages that I may preach there also," —Mark 1:38 (2 wds.).
40. By 1905, Columbia experienced the ____ car vehicle when W.B. West arrived in his merry Oldsmobile having motored from St. Louis in only 14½ hours.
44. A two-letter valid Scrabble word worth five points; an alternate spelling for "aye" meaning yes, approval or assent; or, an exclamation of distress or regret.
45. Home State of our Bishop (abbr.).
48. The first gas ____, two cents, came in 1924.
50. The five vowels, not including the sometimes "Y."
51. Glue, epoxy, plaster.
52. Completely full or fully satisfied.
54. A word often connected to the back of base, soft, foot or volley.
57. 6th sense.
58. The Boston ____ Party.
59. To make a mistake.
60. The 24-hour annual ____ Mans car race in France is the world's oldest and most prestigious active sports car endurance race.
61. Former airline which had its hub in St. Louis (abbr.).
63. Suffix for West or East.
65. "God had blessed Robert Prevost (Pope Leo IV) with the spirit of a natural leader, giving him both the desire and the ability to handle many responsibilities ____ once with grace and effectiveness," —*When the White Smoke Clears,* by Ascension Press.
67. Letters for Ducks Unlimited; a leader in wetlands conservation for North America's waterfowl.



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See ANSWERS, page 23

SPIRE

From page 6

in this diocese go about doing what they can to welcome and serve children in their parishes and communities who have special needs.

They want to do more.

The main thing

The event's emcees were Katie Helfer Ed.D. and Sara Blandford, principal and assistant principal of Our Lady of Lourdes Interparish School.

"SPIRE isn't simply a fundraiser, and it isn't simply about purchasing equipment or funding programs," said Dr. Helfer. "SPIRE is ultimately about children and families."

Mrs. Blandford spoke of how Catholic school parents want their children to attend Mass together, grow up in the same school community, and learn the academic fundamentals from teachers who will also teach them that they are created and loved by God.

If one child has learning needs that their Catholic school cannot support, that child loses out on the opportunities for formation that his or her siblings and peers have available to them in the Catholic school setting.

"That is where the mission of SPIRE becomes very real," said Mrs. Blandford.

Dr. Helfer said the question isn't whether our Catholic schools care about these children.

"They absolutely do," she stated. "The question is: How do we give our schools the resources, training, staffing, tools and support necessary to serve more of them well?"

That's the opportunity SPIRE presents.

Mrs. Blandford noted that the word "accessible" means more than physical accessibility.

"It means creating educational environments where children with diverse learning needs have a genuine opportunity to flourish — academically, socially and spiritually," she said.

SPIRE is about helping Catholic schools move from wanting to serve every child to having more of the resources necessary to actually do it well, she said.

"Because ultimately, every child who walks through the doors of one of our Catholic schools deserves to be seen first for who they are: a child of God," she stated.

Behind every story are real children, real parents, real teachers, real Catholic schools and real families who want what every family wants — for their child to be known, loved, challenged, supported and given every opportunity to become the person God created them to be.

"This is a story we want to continue writing," said Mrs. Blandford.



Elaina, a graduate of St. Peter School in Jefferson City, draws the winning card during the "Aces for Accessible Spaces" event to benefit the SPIRE Fund. — Photo by Jay Nies

Dollars to doing

The Aces for Accessible Spaces event raised about $80,000 in pledges for the SPIRE Fund.

"Take a look around this room," said Dr. Helfer. "This is what community looks like!"

"What you gave tonight isn't ultimately about a dollar amount," Mrs. Blandford stated. "It's about what that dollar amount makes possible: more resources, more support, more opportunities for schools, more families hearing, 'Let's figure out how we can make this work.'"

Online contributions to the SPIRE Fund and other diocesan initiatives can be made online at ***diojeffcity.org/donate***.

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NOVEMBER 20-21, 2026



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FRIDAY, NOV 20TH
6:30pm-9:00pm (Doors open at 6:00)
$25 Dinner Fee



FALL RETREAT
SATURDAY, NOV 21ST
10:00am-3:00pm (Doors open at 9:30)
$15 Lunch Fee



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DIOJEFFCITY.ORG/WOMENS-MINISTRY-FALL-EVENTS-2026

To get your event listed here and the diocesan calendar AND/OR to request advertising, go to:
DIOJEFFCITY.ORG/EVENT-LISTING

Fundraisers & Social Events

Nov. 21

Loose Creek, Christmas Extravaganza & Pork Burger Sale to benefit the Megan Boehm Memorial Scholarship Fund, 9 am-3 pm, Loose Creek Community Center

Nov. 22

Argyle, K of C chicken dinner, 11 am-5 pm; **Crocker,** St. Cornelius Ladies Group annual fundraiser bake sale, 11 am-1 pm

Nov. 26

Camdenton, St. Anthony Parish Free Thanksgiving dinner, 11:30 am-1:30 pm; **Tipton,** St. Andrew Parish Annual Thanksgiving Event, 8 am-9 pm, K of C Hall

Nov. 28

Starkenburg, Sounds of Starkenburg Concerts, noon & 2:30 pm, St. Martin Church Museum

Dec. 5

Shelbina, K of C Farm Toy Show, 9 am-2 pm, Fr. Buhman Center

Dec. 10

Jefferson City, Christmas Celebration for Divorced and Separated, 6:30-8 pm, Immaculate Conception Parish, for info call 573-338-4028

Dec. 13

Jefferson City, Advent Concert, 2-3 pm, Immaculate Conception Church

Meetings & Conferences

Every Wednesday & Saturday

Jefferson City, 12-Step Meetings, 7-8 pm, Immaculate Conception Parish's Emmaus Room

Every Wednesday thru Nov. 25

St. Martins, Seasons of Hope Grief Support Group, 2-3 pm, St. Martin Church cry room

Nov. 16 & 23

St. Martins, "Forgiveness 101 Workshop," 4-session class, sponsored by the Forgiveness Institute KC, 6:30-8:30 pm, St. Martin Parish undercroft, for questions call 573-338-6772 or to register visit ***yeabut.org/events***

Nov. 18

Jefferson City, Men of Signum Crucis monthly gathering, 6:30-8 pm, Helias Catholic High School, for info visit ***menofsignumcrucis.com;*** **Rolla,** "10 Keys to Recovering from Divorce" workshop, 5:30-7:30 pm, St. Patrick Parish Center, for info or to register visit ***diojeffcity.org/divorce-ministry***

Nov. 19

Various locations, Parish Leadership Deanery Meeting, 6:30-8 pm, for info visit ***diojeffcity.org/deaneries-2***

Dec. 16

Jefferson City, Men of Signum Crucis monthly gathering, 6:30-8 pm, Helias Catholic High School, for info visit ***menofsignumcrucis.com***

Faith Formation & Spiritual Renewal

Every Monday

Jefferson City, Centering Prayer, 12:10-12:40 pm, Cathedral of St. Joseph Parish's Sacred Heart Center

Every Tuesday

Jefferson City, "Tuesday With Faith," small group discussions, 6:30-8 pm, Immaculate Conception Parish's Pleus Hall, for info, call 573-645-2478 or email *jimkemna@gmail.com*

Every Friday

Jefferson City, Centering Prayer Group, 2-3 pm, Emmaus Room, Immaculate Conception Parish

Every other Tuesday thru Oct. 5, 2027

Columbia, "The Bible Timeline: The Story of Salvation," 6:30-7:30 pm, in-person or online, St. John Henry Newman Parish, for info or to register email *Laura@comonewman.org*

Nov. 5-16

Laurie, "Who is the Man of the Shroud?" traveling exhibit, Tue. 3:30-7:30 pm, Wed.-Fri. 10 am-1 pm, Sat. 1-6 pm, Sun. 9:30 am-12:30 pm, National Shrine of Mary, Mother of the Church

Nov. 20

Jefferson City, "Ladies Night Out," diocesan Women's Ministry event, 6-9 pm, Cathedral of St. Joseph, Cana Hall, for info or to register visit ***diojeffcity.org/womens-ministry***

Nov. 21

Jefferson City, Diocesan Women's Ministry Fall Retreat, 10 am-4 pm, Cathedral of St. Joseph, Cana Hall, for info or to register visit ***diojeffcity.org/womens-ministry***

Nov. 20-22

Clyde, Mo., Monastic experience weekend with the Benedictine Sisters of Perpetual Adoration, for single women ages 18-40, for info or to register visit ***benedictinesisters.org/come-let-us-adore***

Dec. 5

Laurie, First Saturday Tour and Devotions, 1:30-5:30 pm, National Shrine of Mary, Mother of the Church, for info visit ***mothersshrine.com***

Dec. 11

Hermann, St. George Parish Mission with Sr. M. Gianna Casino, a Sister of the Leaven of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, 7-9 pm

Liturgical

Nov. 19

Jefferson City, Healing Mass for those who have been divorced or separated, 6 pm, Immaculate Conception Church

Nov. 22

Columbia, African Catholic Thanksgiving Mass, 3-6 pm, Sacred Heart Church

Dec. 14

Jefferson City, Monthly community prayer hour for support of our diocesan priests, 5:30-6:30 pm, Immaculate Conception Church

Dec. 19

Salisbury, Rorate Mass, 6 am, St. Joseph Church

Youth & Young Adults

Nov. 22

Jefferson City, Diocesan Youth Rally, 10 am-4:15 pm, Helias Catholic High School, for info visit ***diojeffcity.org/diocesan-youth-rally***

Dec. 3

Columbia, CoMo LifeTeen's First Thursday XLT, 6:45-7:45 pm, St. John Henry Newman Parish, for info visit ***comonewman.org***

Health & Wellness

Dec. 3

Columbia, Blood drive, 9 am-3 pm, Fr. Tolton Regional Catholic High School

Dec. 7

Boonville, Blood drive, 1-5 pm, Ss. Peter & Paul Parish

VICAR

From page 7

He also works with Deacons Berendzen and Ochoa to organize two weekends per year for the deacon community to spend together, growing in their shared ministry and learning about things that are going on in the diocese.

"You want a spiritually healthy Diaconate so they can be healthy in their ministry," he said.

Fr. Merz pointed out that like all priests, he was ordained a deacon before he became a priest, as was Bishop O'Donnell.

They remain deacons for the rest of their lives.

"When I communicate with the Diaconate Community, I call them 'my brother deacons,'" said Fr. Merz.

He pointed out that this diocese has one of the highest deacon-to-parish and deacon-to-priest ratios in the country.

"Deacons play a sizable role in the life of the Church here, because so many parishes have them," said Fr. Merz. "They preach and sometimes baptize and witness marriages. They do all kinds of preparation for Sacraments, for Baptism, for Confirmation, for Marriage."

With God's help

As Vicar for the Diaconate, Fr. Merz asked for prayers for God to grant him wisdom and discernment in making decisions, to help him always be rooted in charity in working with his brother deacons and their wives and families, "and always placing them in the Lord's hands and being a good communicator with the bishop and whoever else is involved."

diojeffcity.org/diaconate

NIES

From page 8

had been given five.

I HATED THAT STORY! Very, very much. I felt like I was the man who had been trusted with little and then told I wasn't good enough because I had been given less to work with than those around me.

It bugged the heck out of me for years.

But as I got older, I actually observed people — good, wise, insightful, Bible-reading people — making the most of whatever God had given them, and then THANKING him for the opportunity to serve him.

Through their example, I've gradually come to see that no matter how much or little God has entrusted to me, I owe him my very best. I owe him everything. I owe it all back to him with all the love of my heart. No matter how difficult.

That is the Bible in action in a faith community. Seeing it and hearing it and reading it makes me want to help God make me better for the sake of all those around me.

His Good News is changing me.

Jay Nies has been editor of The Catholic Missourian since 2000.

To submit items for the PEOPLE PAGE, including **Baptisms, Birthdays** for ages 90 and older, **Anniversaries** of 10+ years in increments of 5 ONLY (e.g., 15, 25, 45 years, etc.), **Marriages, Deaths, Elections, Honors and Appointments,** please go to:

diojeffcity.org/update-information

Anniversaries

Boonville, Ss. Peter & Paul
Don & Jill Campbell, 50 years
Darin & Diana Gerke, 40 years
Dan & Shelly Schuster, 25 years
Shane & Brittney Lowe, 15 years
Matt & Stacey Kueny, 10 years

Mary's Home, Our Lady of Snows
Freddy & Cathy Klindt, 60 years
Greg & Amanda Koetting, 20 years
Ben & Katie Schulte, 10 years

Palmyra, St. Joseph
Darrell & Nancy Neisen, 45 years
Brad & Nancy Speak, 30 years
Randy & Susie Obert, 25 years
Brad & Cassidee Wigle, 15 years

St. Clement, St. Clement
Lewis & Kathy Smith, 35 years

St. Martins, St. Martin
Bob & Joan Kauffman, 65 years

Taos, St. Francis Xavier
Daryl & Mary Heet, 50 years

Tipton, St. Andrew
Dennis & Charleen Meyer, 65 years
Randy & Kay Clifford, 50 years
Carl & Susie Dowell, 40 years

Vandalia, Sacred Heart
Al & Cami Blackman, 25 years

Vienna, Visitation
Arnold & Ann Bax, 65 years
Larry & Mary Kampeter, 55 years

Birthdays

Boonville, Ss. Peter & Paul — **Jerry Schuster,** his 91st on Nov. 27

Loose Creek, Immaculate Conception — **Connie Haslag,** her 92nd on Nov. 20

Osage Bend, St. Margaret of Antioch — **David Braun,** his 92nd on Nov. 13; **Betty Hirschman,** her 92nd on Nov. 17

St. Clement, St. Clement — **Laura Mae Scherder,** her 97th on Nov. 16

St. Martins, St. Martin — **Alfred Schulte,** his 95th on Nov. 2

St. Thomas, St. Thomas the Apostle — **Pat Loethen,** her 90th on Nov. 1

Vienna, Visitation — **Gloria Brunnert,** her 91st on Oct. 15; **Rita Henderson,** her 90th on Nov. 4; **Marvin Zimmer,** his 90th on Oct. 13

Wien, St. Mary of the Angels — **Mary Lou Burstert,** her 93rd on Nov. 13

Marriages

Holts Summit, St. Andrew — **Austin McMichael & Grace Cooper**

Mary's Home, Our Lady of Snows — **Alexis Angerer & Tanner Sneller; Hannah Evers & Drew Sommerer**

Westphalia, St. Joseph — **Jennifer M. Brendel & Benjamin C. Hale**

Baptisms

St. Patrick, Shrine of St. Patrick — **Dax Michael Uhlmeyer,** son of Ryan & Katelyn Uhlmeyer

Wardsville, St. Stanislaus — **Alfred Charles** and **Isabelle Catherine Moeller,** children of Matthew & Jade Moeller

Westphalia, St. Joseph — **Stella Jane Reinkemeyer,** daughter of Curtis & Sarah Reinkemeyer

Deaths

Kathleen M. Lavery, 66 — Communications Director at the Missouri Catholic Conference — on Nov. 2. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Nov. 12 in the St. Peter Proto-Cathedral in Jefferson City, with burial in Resurrection Cemetery.

Martinsburg, St. Joseph — **Diana Renstrom; Doris Wieberg**

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KANDRA

From page 9

to teach, provoke, challenge.

The final feast of the liturgical year is drawing close, Christ the King — and we're called to think more deeply about the King we serve, and how we can be ready for his return and his judgement.

How are we doing with that?

Are we even giving it any thought?

In these passages and others from Matthew's Gospel, Jesus was making some pointed connections for his disciples, and urging them to think differently about the days to come.

What oil are we burning?

What plans are we making?

Significantly, what comes after this passage is one of the most famous parables in Matthew's 25th chapter, the story of the final judgment and the separation of the sheep from the goats.

After preaching about the importance of keeping our lamps lit and our eyes open, Jesus went on to speak about what that really entails: Feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, caring for the imprisoned and sick.

This chapter from Matthew serves as a powerful summation of what the Christian life demands.

It demands wakefulness — and, beyond that, it demands action.

If we haven't been thinking about that, now is a good time to start.

Deacon Greg Kandra is an award-winning author and journalist, and creator of the blog "The Deacon's Bench."

A Dynamic Catholic Welcome Retreat



Men of St. Anthony of Padua Parish in Folk and St. Joseph Parish in Westphalia take part in a men's Dynamic Catholic Welcome Retreat in Folk. The retreat was sponsored by the Knights of Columbus Council 1171. Men from both parishes gathered for the weekend to deepen their faith, build community and become active disciples. A team of deacons, priests and laypeople from around the Jefferson City diocese led the retreat. **— Photo by Mike Massman**

DEATH PENALTY

From page 12

that the death penalty is effective or fair."

Gallup said the findings reflect a poll conducted Oct. 1-19, which began the day after the failed execution of Tennessee death-row inmate Christa Pike. Also during that timeframe, President Donald Trump called off Secretary of Defense Pete Hegseth's plans to livestream the execution of Fort Hood shooter Nidal Malik Hasan by firing squad in December. The plan was met with widespread condemnation, including from U.S. bishops.

QUESTION

From page 8

gravity of certain crimes and an acceptable, albeit extreme, means of safeguarding the common good."

But as this same paragraph of the *Catechism* goes on to elaborate: "Today, however, ... more effective systems of detention have been developed, which ensure the due protection of citizens ... Consequently, the Church teaches, in the light of the Gospel, that 'the death penalty is inadmissible because it is an attack on the inviolability and dignity of the person.'"

Jenna Marie Cooper, who holds a licentiate in canon law, is a consecrated virgin and a canonist whose column appears weekly at OSV News. Send your questions to CatholicQA@osv.com.

Crossword puzzle answers



Clothed with the Sun



Students of St. Andrew School in Tipton gather to pray an all-school Rosary in the parish Rosary Garden for the Commemoration of Our Lady of Fatima. — Photo from the St. Andrew Church and School Facebook page

At your service ... in South Bend, Ind.







Several students of Helias Catholic High School in Jefferson City take part in the school's annual Mission Trip to South Bend, Indiana. They had the privilege of serving the homeless at Catholic Worker House, working at the local community garden, engaging with school children St. Adalbert School, and packaging nutritious meals at Cultivate Food Rescue. They also took part in spiritual activities at Holy Cross Seminary and the University of Notre Dame.

— Photos from the Helias Catholic High School Facebook page

Decorating doors in Macon





First- and second-graders and seventh- and eighth-graders at Immaculate Conception School in Macon help decorate doors at Macon Health Care & Rehab Center for autumn.

— Photos from the Immaculate Conception School Faceobook page

E-I-E-I-O in Glasgow







Students at St. Mary School's "Little Saint" Preschool in Glasgow enjoy Barnyard Day, courtesy of the Glasgow FFA.

— Photos from the St. Mary School Facebook page

Creativity in full bloom



Children from the St. Andrew Early Learning Center in Tipton display the blooming flowers artwork they created.

— Photo from the St. Andrew Church and School Facebook page

Bible Accent

In Matthew 25, Jesus told another parable to underscore the importance of preparing and watching for his return.

Beginning in verse 14, we read that a man was going on a journey. Before he left, he put his three servants in charge of his possessions. The man gave each servant money according to his ability. The first received five talents, the second received two talents and the third received one talent. After the man left, the first servant immediately traded his talents and made five more. The second servant quickly put his talents to work and made another two. But the third servant buried his one talent in a hole he had dug in the ground. After a long time, the man came home. He asked his servants what they had done with the money he had entrusted to them.

He was very pleased that two of the servants had prepared for his return by making additional money with the talents they had been given. "Well done, my good and faithful servant," he told each one. "Since you were faithful in small matters, I will give you great responsibilities. Come, share your master's joy." Then the servant who had buried his one talent came forward. He explained that he had buried it in the ground out of fear.

"Take the talent from him and give it to the one with 10," the man commanded. "For to everyone who has, more will be given and he will grow rich; but from the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away."

The man had an additional punishment for this servant's unwise decision.

"And throw this useless servant into the darkness outside, where there will be wailing and grinding of teeth," he said.

St. Cecilia



According to a written legend, St. Cecilia was a Roman Christian who lived in the third century. She was betrothed to a pagan named Valerian, whom she converted to Christianity. His brother, Tiburtius, also became a Christian. Cecilia's husband and brother-in-law were martyred for burying other martyrs. After their deaths, she was visited by officials who attempted to persuade her to make sacrifices to pagan gods. When she refused, she was martyred as well. We honor Cecilia on Nov. 22.

The apostles ask Jesus about the signs of his return

By Jennifer Ficcaglia
Catholic Courier



Illustration by Linda Rivers

One day, Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives. The apostles approached him in private to ask him some questions.

"Tell us, when will this happen, and what sign will there be of your coming, and of the end of the age?" they wanted to know.

Jesus said the signs included reports of famine, earthquakes and war, as well as the appearance of people falsely claiming to be the Messiah.

He also said that only God knows the exact time of his return.

"But of that day and hour no one knows, neither the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone," Jesus said. "So too, you also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come."

To underscore the importance of preparing for and watching for his return, Jesus told his friends a parable.

"The kingdom of heaven will be like 10 virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom," he said.

Five virgins were wise and five were foolish.

The five wise virgins brought extra oil with them, but the five foolish ones did not, Jesus explained.

The bridegroom was delayed for so long that the women became drowsy and fell asleep.

At midnight, they woke up to people shouting.

"Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!" the people cried.

The virgins got up and trimmed their lamps.

"Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out," the foolish virgins said to the wise ones.

"No," the wise virgins replied, "for there may not be enough for us and you. Go instead to the merchants and buy some for yourselves."

The foolish virgins were away purchasing oil when the bridegroom finally came. Those who were ready went into the wedding feast with him.

Then the door was locked.

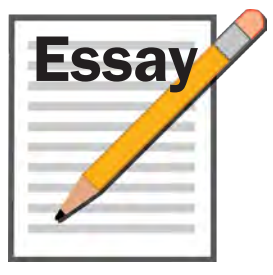
When the foolish virgins returned, they found the door locked and said, "Lord, Lord, open the door for us!"

"Amen, I say to you, I do not know you," the bridegroom replied.

"Therefore, stay awake, for you know neither the day nor the hour," Jesus said of his return.

Read more about it...
Matthew 24 & 25

1. What did Jesus compare heaven to?
2. Who waited for the bridegroom to arrive?



Reading for November 8, 2026: Matthew 25:1-13

Describe a time when you waited patiently for something.

Puzzle

Unscramble the letters in each word and arrange the words to form a quotation from the children's story.

su loi fo vige ryuo mose

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____

Sentence:

_____ _____ _____ _____ _____ _____.

Answers: us, oil, of, give, your, some; Give us some of your oil.



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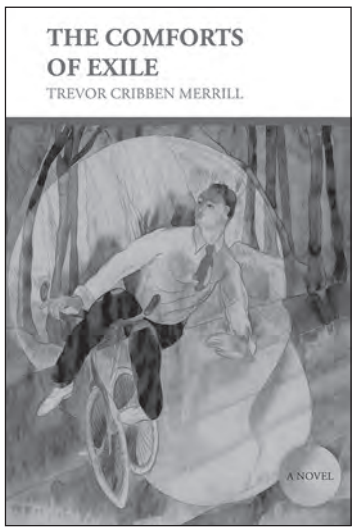
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Angelic imaginations, human foibles explored in new Catholic novel

The Comforts of Exile, by Trevor Cribben Merrill, Wiseblood Books (2026), 311 pages, $17.

Reviewed by Madelyn Reichert
OSV News



How can one get a self-absorbed young man out of his head and into reality?

That is the question posed by Trevor Cribben Merrill's latest novel, *The Comforts of Exile*, the sequel to his other well-known work, *Minor Indignities*.

No longer a freshman blundering his way through Ivy League life, the now 22-year-old, recently graduated and earnestly converted Colin Phelps has set high goals for himself, shunning his grandfather's offer of a comfortable career in architecture for more literary aspirations.

Those aspirations take on a decidedly Parisian bent when his college girlfriend, Julia, simultaneously kicks him to the curb and recommends he spend a year teaching abroad in France.

Perhaps to the surprise of readers familiar with *Minor Indignities*, Colin quickly makes a good impression on his host family and even falls mutually head-over-heels for the youngest daughter, the beautiful and devout Laure; furthermore, a chance meeting with Harry McClatchy, the aggressive ex-professor from his undergraduate days, gives him an unexpected entrance into the French literary scene.

However, despite these apparent personal and professional successes, Colin has found himself in a familiar writer's predicament: He can't write a single sentence worth reading. A religious examination of his psyche reveals what he terms an "angelic imagination" — the inability to get out of the realm of "big ideas" and into the concrete stuff of everyday life.

Although Colin may be struggling to find the devil (or angel?) in the details, Merrill certainly is not. *The Comforts of Exile* immerses the reader in the experience of being an American in early 2000s Paris; the reader is treated to all the tangible details of Colin's expatriate life, from bike rides on drizzling streets and visits to iconic museums to broken noses and less-than-elegant dinners of boiled eggs and beer in a basement apartment.

For those of us who have never had the pleasure of visiting this famous city, *The Comforts of Exile* is delightfully transportive — and, as with all good novels, the style supports the theme.

While Colin is trapped in the realm of ideas, the plot is dragging him headfirst into the realm of the physical and real, whether he's aware of it or not. Humans, after all, are not angels; we have a body as well as a soul.

The book does have a few flaws. Although it's in-character for a self-absorbed and lustful young man's internal monologue, Colin's distaste for women who aren't conventionally attractive is still a bit unsettling, especially given that it goes more or less unchallenged by the narrative.

Furthermore, given how frequently they're discussed by the secondary characters, a reader might anticipate that Merrill would do more with the setting's rising xenophobic and political tensions, instead of leaving them merely as an intriguing background detail.

Nevertheless, *The Comforts of Exile* is not only a worthwhile sequel to *Minor Indignities,* it also surpasses the original novel in terms of drama and pathos.

Although *Minor Indignities* was a very funny novel, this reviewer could only take cringing through Colin's disastrous — and at times borderline creepy — attempts to win the heart of the tempestuous Margot so many times before wanting to throw up her hands in exasperation at his juvenile antics.

In *The Comforts of Exile*, however, Colin is doing the much harder work of trying to improve himself and get out of his own head (and way); it's a more worthwhile project, and therefore a more enjoyable read.

If you, like this reviewer, sometimes get too caught up in wondering how many angels can dance on the head of a pin, pick up *The Comforts of Exile* for a delightful reminder that oftentimes, we are all too human.

Madelyn Reichert is publications administrative coordinator at The Catholic Spirit, the official publication of the Archdiocese of St. Paul and Minneapolis.

Movie Ratings

A-II Adults and Adolescents	The Cat in the Hat (PG) Forgotten Island (PG) Sense and Sensibility (PG)
A-III Adults	Klara and the Sun (PG-13) Other Mommy (R) The Social Reckoning (R) Street Fighter (PG-13) Whalefall (PG-13) Wicker (R) You Can See Everything (R)
L Limited Adult Audience	Primetime (R)
O Morally Offensive	Clayface (R) Digger (R) The Mongoose (R)

Ratings are supplied by OSV News Service.

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New Book on St. Edith Stein, a martyr for our time

Sophia Institute Press announces the release of *A Spacious Place*, by Claire Dwyer, which takes a deep dive into the life, times, and spirituality of St. Edith Stein.

We've been peddled the lie that a life lived for others is suffocating, narrow, and stifling. We've been told that truth is relative, that freedom is merely license to do what we want, and that masculinity and femininity can be redefined or repackaged at will.

In such a world — full of confusion yet ripe with conversion, renewal, and an authentic desire for happiness — St. Edith Stein's story calls us to reflect on the mystery of our own journey.

This brilliant woman, a convert from Judaism who rose to prominence as a philosopher and lecturer, joined the Carmelites before being martyred at Auschwitz. Her brave witness during some of the darkest days of human history reveals that our hearts expand,

See MARTYR, page 27

AMENDMENT 3

From page 3

Catholic Church, but the entire pro-life campaign" — was more organized than the one that saw a narrow loss in the fall of 2024.

"I thought our messaging was good," he said. "I thought we got out to more churches, we made it to more parishes, had more information available for Catholics in the pews."

He recognized a more unified and active presence among faith groups throughout the state.

"We also had the governor and First Lady behind this since the beginning," he noted. "We had a lot going for us."



Children pray with "Yes on 3" signs during a gathering at St. Patrick Church in Rolla.

Supply and demand

Mr. Morris is convinced that the ballot language on Amendment 3 was much more reflective of where average Missourians stand on abortion than that of the abortion-friendly, regulation-free amendment that passed in 2024.

"You heard a lot of people say lawmakers were trying to undo the will of the people," he said. "I talked to lawmakers who said they were trying to be responsive to the will of the people."

There were people on social media who said they wouldn't vote for the amendment because it included cases in which abortions would be allowed.

"We tried as best we could to address that issue," said Mr. Morris. "We talked about Pope St. John Paul II and how he addressed the particular problem of conscience, when you have an opportunity to vote for something more protective of life, but not fully.

"I think we and the bishops were clear that the alternative is unlimited, unregulated abortion, verses an unperfect but much more protective law," he added.

More voting and polling data will become available in the weeks ahead, while the MCC and its Public Policy Committee go about setting legislative priorities and preparing for the state's upcoming Leiglsative Session.

Mr. Morris joined the bishops in urging people to continue taking the issue to God in prayer.

"I know the Lord is going to bring some good out of this situation, whether we ever grasp it or not," he said.

He emphasized that promoting a culture of life requires more than victories at the ballot box.

"Even if we had won this, I'd be telling you the same thing," he said. "We have to keep getting out there and helping women in need — and help them help their preborn children and give them the resources they need."

He noted that passing Amendment 3 wasn't going pay the rent for a woman struggling financially or repair a difficult familial situation "or anything else that would lead a woman to be abortion-minded."

"So, now is the time we roll up our sleeves, and whether that's through your church, Birthright or one of the many, many pregnancy resource centers, we need to get to work helping people who are abortion-minded," he said.

Only by addressing abortion demand and abortion availability will babies and their mothers be served.

"It matters a lot less if abortion is legal when people aren't seeking abortions," Mr. Morris noted.

Contributing to this report was Kate Scanlon, a national reporter for OSV News covering Washington, D.C.

MARTYR

From page 26

rather than harden, when we surrender to God's will under adversity.

Stein's writing reorients us to the fundamental principle that vast interior freedom comes not from rejecting our nature but from embracing our God-given design.

Her relentless search for truth reminds us that Truth is magnetic, exhilarating, and liberating. Her surrender to Love invites us to contemplate love's far-reaching, cruciform nature, and her martyr's death illuminates the full meaning of self-gift.

Through the lens of St. Edith's life, readers will learn many lessons, including wisdom for seasons of disappointment and waiting, and how God makes us whole in prayer. They will also find her teaching on the unique capacity and beauty of the feminine soul, and how the fullness of life is found by embracing our unique vocations.

Claire Dwyer is an author, speaker, writing coach, and podcast host of Your Best Yes. As the content editor of the Avila Foundation's ***Spiritualdirection.com***, she works alongside a team committed to helping the faithful move deeper into authentic Christian prayer.

In this book, Dwyer invites readers to accompany St. Edith on her journey, and along the way they see how Edith transformed from judgmental and critical to empathetic and protective.

They also encounter the central teaching she always emphasized, and her extraordinary courage in the turbulent times in which she lived. Edith called on the pope to speak out against Nazi ideologies and atrocities and was later declared both a martyr and a confessor.

Each chapter closes with questions for personal reflection and group discussion.

SophiaInstitute.com

Daily Readings

Sunday, Nov 15
THIRTY-THIRD SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
Prv. 31:10-13, 19-20, 30-31
Psalm 128:1-5
1 Thes. 5:1-6
Mt. 25:14-30 or 25:14-15, 19-21

Monday, Nov 16
St. Margaret of Scotland; St. Gertrude, virgin
Rv. 1:1-4; 2:1-5
Ps. 1:1-4, 6
Lk. 18:35-43

Tuesday, Nov 17
St. Elizabeth of Hungary, religious
Rv. 3:1-6, 14-22
Ps. 15:2-4ab, 5
Lk. 19:1-10

Wednesday, Nov 18
The Dedication of the Basilicas of Saints Peter and Paul, apostles; USA: St. Rose Philippine Duchesne, virgin
Rv. 4:1-11
Ps. 150:1b-6
Lk. 19:11-28

Thursday, Nov 19
Rv. 5:1-10
Ps. 149:1b-6b, 9b
Lk. 19:41-44

Friday, Nov 20
Rv. 10:8-11
Ps. 119:14, 24, 72, 103, 111, 131
Lk. 19:45-48

Saturday, Nov 21
The Presentation of the Blessed Virgin Mary
Rv. 11:4-12
Ps. 144:1, 2, 9-10
Lk. 20:27-40

Sunday, Nov 22
OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST, KING OF THE UNIVERSE
Ez. 34:11-12, 15-17
Ps. 23:1-3, 5-6
1 Cor. 15:20-26, 28
Mt. 25:31-46

Monday, Nov 23
St. Clement I, pope and martyr; St. Columban, abbot; USA: Blessed Miguel Agustín Pro, priest and martyr
Rv. 14:1-3, 4b-5
Ps. 24:1bc-4ab, 5-6
Lk. 21:1-4

Tuesday, Nov 24
St. Andrew Dũng-Lạc, priest, and companions, martyrs
Rv. 14:14-19
Ps. 96:10-13
Lk. 21:5-11

Wednesday, Nov 25
St. Catherine of Alexandria, virgin and martyr
Rv. 15:1-4
Ps. 98:1-3ab, 7-9
Lk. 21:12-19

Thursday, Nov 26
USA: Thanksgiving Day
Rv. 18:1-2, 21-23; 19:1-3, 9a
Ps. 100:1b-5
Lk. 21:20-28

Friday, Nov 27
Rv. 20:1-4, 11–21:2
Ps. 84:3-6a, 8a
Lk. 21:29-33

Saturday, Nov 28
Rv. 22:1-7
Ps. 95:1-7ab
Lk. 21:34-36

The Holy Father's prayer intentions for November:
Let us pray for the proper use of wealth, that not succumbing to the temptation of selfishness, it may always be put at the service the common good and solidarity of those who have less.

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Eccumenical prayer services for Thanksgiving

In addition to Mass being available in many Catholic parishes on Thanksgiving Day (Thursday, Nov. 26), many local ministerial alliances organize ecumenical Thanksgiving prayer services in the days leading up to the holiday as a chance to pray as one faith community and take up an offering for local people in need. These services are a long-standing tradition in areas of the diocese and offer a rare opportunity to gather and pray united with members of other Christian congregations. Here is a partial list of ecumenical Thanksgiving prayer services that are scheduled in the diocese.

Boonville — Tuesday, Nov. 24, 6:30 pm, St. John's United Church of Christ, 14191 Billingsville Road

Edina — Sunday, Nov. 22, 6 pm, St. Joseph Church, 509 N. Main St., with Deacon Kenneth Berry giving the welcome, Father Boniface Nzabonimpa delivering the message and the Clark Family leading the music

Kahoka — Sunday, Nov. 22, 2 pm, St. Michael Church, 622 W. Exchange St., with Pastor Dan Moore giving the message

Monroe City — Monday, Nov. 23, 7 pm, Family Church of Monroe City, 24 Gateway Square Drive, with Father Christopher Hoffmann offering the Opening Prayer and Deacon Michael Long proclaiming one of the readings

Salisbury — Tuesday, Nov. 24, 7 pm, St. Joseph Church, 301 W. Williams St.

Find us online at **cathmo.com**



African Thanksgiving Mass in CoMo

DATE: November 22
TIME: 3 pm

This year's African Catholic Thanksgiving Mass will be celebrated at 3 p.m. on Sunday, Nov. 22, in Sacred Heart Church, 103 Waugh St. in Columbia.

It will include prayers and uplifting sacred music representing an abundance of African languages and cultures.

Refreshments will be offered in the activity hall immediately after Mass.

Divorce Healing Mass in J.C.

DATE: November 19
TIME: 6 pm

A Healing Mass for anyone who has been divorced, separated or negatively impacted by divorce and all who wish to show support will be offered at 6 p.m. on Thursday, Nov. 19, in Immaculate Conception Church, 1206 E. McCarty St. in Jefferson City.

diojeffcity.org/divorce-ministry

'Sounds of Starkenburg'

DATE: November 28
TIME: noon & 2:30 pm

This year's Sounds of Starkenburg Holiday Concerts will be held at noon and 2:30 p.m. on Saturday, Nov. 28, in the historical St. Martin's Church Museum, 197 Highway P in Starkenburg.

The concerts will include vocal performances, sing-alongs, and instrumental performances on the 1860s Pfeffer pipe organ.

There is no cost for the concerts, but a free will offering will be accepted.

A soup lunch, vendor market and religious articles stand will be held from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. in nearby Valentine Hall.

risensavior.diojeffcity.org



