

THE CATHOLIC

# Spirit

## New Young Saints Encourage Faithful to Live Life to the Full, Pope Says

By Carol Glatz, Catholic News Service

**VATICAN CITY (CNS)** — The greatest risk in life is to waste it by not seeking to follow God's plan, Pope Leo XIV said, proclaiming two new saints — two young laymen of the 20th and 21st centuries.

"Sts. Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis are an invitation to all of us, especially young people, not to squander our lives, but to direct them upward and make them masterpieces," the pope said Sept. 7.

"The simple but winning formula of their holiness," he said, is accessible to everyone at any time. "They encourage us with their words: 'Not I, but God,' as Carlo used to say. And Pier Giorgio: 'If you have God at the center of all your actions, then you

will reach the end.'"

Before canonizing the first saints of his pontificate, Pope Leo greeted the more than 80,000 faithful who had gathered early in St. Peter's Square because he wanted to share his joy with them before the start of the solemn ceremony.

"Brothers and sisters, today is a wonderful celebration for all of Italy, for the whole church, for the whole world," he said before the Mass.

"While the celebration is very solemn, it is also a day of great joy, and I wanted to greet especially the many young people who have come for this holy Mass," he said, also greeting the families of the soon-to-be saints and the associations and communities to which the young men had belonged.

See "Saints" on Page 3a



CNS photo/Lola Gomez

A tapestry depicting St. Carlo Acutis hangs from the facade of St. Peter's Basilica during the Mass for his canonization at the Vatican Sept. 7.

## 'There is a Lot to be Thankful for,' Bishop Brennan Says as Diocese Celebrates 175th Anniversary

*Celebrations to be Held around the Diocese*

By Colleen Rowan

"There is a lot to be thankful for," Bishop Mark E. Brennan said in his homily for Mass celebrating the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's 175th anniversary. The Aug. 22 celebration at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling was held on the feast of the Queenship of Mary which also marked Bishop Brennan's sixth anniversary as the ninth bishop of the diocese.

"We were carved out of the Diocese of Richmond (Virginia), which only 30 years earlier had been carved out of the Archdiocese of Baltimore," Bishop Brennan said. He welcomed Bishop Barry C. Knestout of the Diocese of Richmond and Bishop Adam J. Parker, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Baltimore, who both concelebrated the Mass. Also concelebrating and welcomed was Bishop Edward M. Lohse of the Diocese of Kalamazoo, Mich., who serves as apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Steubenville, Ohio—Wheeling-Charleston's neighboring diocese just across the Ohio River.

More than 30 priests from around

See "Diocese" on Page 4



Colleen Rowan photo

At the Mass celebrating the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's 175th anniversary at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling Aug. 22 are, from left: Bishop Mark E. Brennan; Deacon Robert J. Krall of Wheeling; Bishop Adam J. Parker, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Baltimore; Bishop Barry C. Knestout of the Diocese of Richmond; Very Rev. Donald X. Higgs, Assoc. V.E., V.F., rector of the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston (in the back); and Bishop Edward M. Lohse of the Diocese of Kalamazoo, Mich., who serves as apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Steubenville, Ohio.

**Inside:** Diocese Launches Olive Branch Ministry for Those Going through Separation and Divorce, Page 6

Evangelization at the Point Pleasant Car Show, Page 13

# Diocesan Official Appointments

Bishop Mark Brennan has made public the following appointments:

**Father Joseph Abraham, V.C.**, has been appointed Pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Parish, New Martinsville; Mater Dolorosa Parish, Paden City; St. Joseph Mission, Proctor; and Holy Rosary Mission, Sistersville; effective August 15, 2025. His place of residence is not affected by this assignment.

**Father Ramababu Dakkamadugula, H.G.N.**, has been appointed Pastor of Holy Redeemer Parish, Spencer, and St. Elizabeth of Hungary Mission, Elizabeth, effective August 15, 2025. His place of residence is not affected by this assignment.

**Father Kotaiah (Thomas) Dharelli, H.G.N.**, has been appointed Pastor of St. Anthony Parish, Charleston, and Our Lady of the Hills Parish, Elkview, effective August 15, 2025. His place of residence is not affected by this assignment.

**Father Deepu Joseph, M.C.B.S.**, has been appointed Chaplain of Council 872 of the Knights of Columbus for the current Fraternal Year 2025-2026, effective immediately. This is in addition to his current assignment as Administrator of St. Ann Parish, Shinnston.

**Father Rey D. Landicho** has been appointed Pastor of St. Peter Parish, Welch; Sacred Heart Mission, Powhatan; Our Lady of Victory Chapel, Gary; and Holy Cross Chapel, Pineville; effective August 15, 2025. His place of residence is not affected by this assignment.

**Father Gerald Muoka** has been appointed Pastor of St. Anthony Parish, Follansbee, effective

August 15, 2025. His place of residence is not affected by this assignment.

**Father Douglas A. Ondeck** has been reappointed as State Chaplain of the West Virginia Catholic Daughters of the Americas, effective immediately. This is in addition to his current assignment as Pastor of St. Patrick Parish, Weston.

**Father Joseph Kutty K. Sebastian** has been appointed Pastor of St. Boniface Parish, Camden, and Good Shepherd Mission, Glenville, effective August 15, 2025. His place of residence is not affected by this assignment.

**Father Priyesh Sebastian, M.C.B.S.**, has been appointed Pastor of St. Francis Xavier Parish, Moundsville, effective August 15, 2025. His place of residence is not affected by this assignment.

**Father Martin Smay** has been appointed as Chaplain of the Court Bishop Donahue #784 of the Catholic Daughters of the Americas, effective immediately. This is in addition to his current assignment as Pastor of Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Huntington, and St. Stephen Parish, Ona.

**Father Paul Vazhappilly** has been appointed Pastor of St. Peter Claver Parish and Sacred Heart Parish, Huntington, effective August 15, 2025. His place of residence is not affected by this assignment.


**Mr. Chad R. Carter** is reappointed to the office of Chancellor for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, effective September 16, 2025, for a term of three years.

**To Report Suspected Cases of Sexual Abuse of Children:** The Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston encourages reporting to civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. We also encourage utilizing [www.reportbishopabuse.org](http://www.reportbishopabuse.org) to make a report about any bishop in the U.S. If you have reason to believe that a bishop has engaged in sexual misconduct or has interfered with an investigation into sexual misconduct, please contact civil authorities in the applicable jurisdiction and visit [www.reportbishopabuse.org](http://www.reportbishopabuse.org). **To Report to Civil Authorities: Contact your local law enforcement:** numbers will vary based on your location. If you believe someone is in immediate danger, call 911. To confidentially report any incidence of suspected child abuse or neglect, including sexual abuse, contact the West Virginia Bureau for Children and Families' Child Protective Services by calling the Child Abuse Hotline at 800.352.6513. You may report anonymously to this hotline if you prefer. **To Report to Diocesan Authorities:** The diocese encourages reporting to the appropriate civil authorities first and foremost if a crime has been committed. The diocese also encourages reporting to the appropriate church authorities. To report suspected cases of sexual abuse of children by personnel of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston to the Diocese, contact one of the following designees at 1.888.434.6237 or 304.233.0880: Mr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Mr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; or Sr. Martha

Gomez, ext. 264. You may also call the Diocese's Office of Safe Environment at 304.230.1504 or the Diocese's sexual abuse hotline at 833.230.5656. Additional methods of reporting are available at [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org), under "Accountability." Complaint forms are available online at [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org), click "Diocese" on the menu bar, then "Offices," then "Safe Environment", then "Download Files and Forms." The form is titled "Complaint Form for Allegations of Sexual Abuse of a Minor." The form may be returned via U.S. mail to: Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003. **To Report to the Diocese's Victim Assistance Coordinator:** call Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, at 304.559.6742. The Diocese partners with Navex Global to offer EthicsPoint to report other concerns such as suspected financial, professional, and personal misconduct of a priest, deacon, religious, or lay employee of the Diocese or any Catholic parish or school in WV. EthicsPoint can be accessed via [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org), under "Accountability", then "Report Misconduct" or by calling 844.723.8381. EthicsPoint is a third-party reporting system that reports to civil authorities where applicable and Diocesan authorities, and the identity of the person reporting is protected. Links and information: WV Department of Health and Human Resources: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. West Virginia State Police, Crimes Against Children Unit: 304-293-6400.

## Sexual Abuse Awareness Training

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

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## The Catholic Spirit's Print Schedule for 2025

There are 10 print editions in 2025. Below are the names of the issues and the publishing dates. Please note, the publishing dates may or may not be on feast days. Digital issues are published every Friday, delivered by e-mail to subscribers, and posted on [thecatholicspiritwv.org](http://thecatholicspiritwv.org).

**2025 Print Issues and Dates:** Month of the Rosary, October 10; Advent, November 21; Christmas, December 19



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# Bishops, Officials Call for Prayer after Conservative Activist Charlie Kirk Shot and Killed

**By Kate Scanlon, OSV News** (Please note: This story is not in the print version of this issue of The Catholic Spirit because the story posted after the press deadline.)

**(OSV News)** — Catholic bishops and public officials are calling for prayer following the assassination of conservative activist Charlie Kirk, who died after being shot Sept. 10 during an event at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah.

Kirk was 31 and a married father with two young children. He was shot in the neck, reportedly by a sniper from a campus building. The suspect is still at large, and a manhunt is underway, according to law enforcement officials.

In a statement, President Donald Trump said, “The Great, and even Legendary, Charlie Kirk, is dead.”

“No one understood or had the Heart of the Youth in the United States of America better than Charlie,” Trump said. “He was loved and admired by ALL, especially me, and now, he is no longer with us. Melania and my Sympathies go out to his beautiful wife Erika, and family. Charlie, we love you!”

Law enforcement officials said they had a person of interest in the shooting in custody and being questioned, but that individual was booked on obstruction of justice charges, and an investigation to determine the shooter is still underway.

“To whoever did this, we will find you,” Utah Gov. Spencer Cox, R, said at a press conference.

A staunch ally of Trump, Kirk was the founder of the Republican-aligned Turning Point USA. He was being hosted by that organization’s chapter at the university for his “American Comeback Tour.”

According to multiple reports, Kirk was in the midst of discussing mass shootings in the U.S. with an individual attendee when a single shot rang out, striking Kirk and scattering the crowd.

Bishop Oscar A. Solis of Salt Lake City said in a statement shared with OSV News, “My heart goes out to the family of Charlie Kirk, who was shot and killed today at Utah Valley University.”

“I will pray for the repose of his soul,” Bishop Solis said. “I am also praying for all who were affected, especially those who were present at the event on campus, the many people who admired Mr. Kirk, and most particularly his family. Meanwhile, I continue to pray for all the victims of gun violence throughout the years and their families.”

“It is appalling that senseless acts of violence such as this continue to occur,” he said. “It seems that our society has lost the sense of the sanctity of life, and I pray that our government will undertake appropriate

measures to stop these horrible crimes.”

Vice President JD Vance and Gov. Gavin Newsom, D-Calif., both Catholics, were among the first officials across the aisle who offered their reactions on social media, calling for prayer and condemning political violence, respectively.

“Dear God, protect Charlie in his darkest hour,” Vance wrote prior to confirmation of Kirk’s death by the president.

Newsom called the shooting “disgusting, vile, and reprehensible.”

“In the United States of America, we must reject political violence in EVERY form,” Newsom wrote.

Newsom and Kirk previously joined each other’s podcasts to debate their political differences.

Former President Joe Biden, also Catholic, wrote on X, “There is no place in our country for this kind of violence. It must end now.”

“Jill and I are praying for Charlie Kirk’s family and loved ones,” he said.

Former Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz., who survived after she was shot and gravely injured in 2011, wrote on X, “I’m horrified to hear that Charlie Kirk was shot at an event in Utah.”

“Democratic societies will always have political disagreements, but we must never allow America to become a country that confronts those disagreements with violence,” she said.

At the press conference, Cox said Kirk was known for debates on college campuses, and that debate is “foundational to the formation of our country, to our most basic constitutional rights.”

“And when someone takes the life of a person because of their ideas or their ideals, then that very constitutional foundation is threatened,” Cox said.

Kristan Hawkins, president of Students for Life of America and Students for Life Action and a Catholic, said in a statement she was speaking at her own campus tour at the University of Montana at the time of the incident and stopped it to pray in response to hearing the news.

“As I also stood on a college campus, I was horrified to learn that my friend Charlie Kirk had been shot,” Hawkins said. “Our nation is in crisis when speaking up for preborn children and for love of country leads to violence, and that’s clearly on the rise.”

Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota, was also among those who called for prayer.

Trump directed flags to be flown at half-staff as “a mark of respect for the memory of Charlie Kirk.”

The U.S. House of Representatives observed a moment of silence in response.

In a statement confirming Kirk’s



OSV News photo/Jim Urquhart, Reuters

Law enforcement officers work at the crime scene at Utah Valley University where U.S. conservative activist Charlie Kirk was shot during an event in Orem Sept. 10.

death, his organization Turning Point USA said, “It is with a heavy heart that we confirm that Charles James Kirk has been murdered by a gunshot that took place during Turning Point USA’s ‘The American Comeback Tour’ campus event at Utah Valley University on September 10, 2025.”

“May he be received into the mer-

ciful arms of our loving Savior, who suffered and died for Charlie,” the statement said. “We ask that everyone keep his family and loved ones in your prayers. We ask that you please respect their privacy and dignity at this time.”

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



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## Saints ...

### Cont'd from Page 1

Pope Leo asked that everyone "feel in our hearts the same thing that Pier Giorgio and Carlo experienced: this love for Jesus Christ, especially in the Eucharist, but also in the poor, in our brothers and sisters."

"All of you, all of us, are also called to be saints," he



CNS photo/Lola Gomez  
A tapestry depicting St. Pier Giorgio Frassati hangs from the facade of St. Peter's Basilica during the Mass for his canonization at the Vatican Sept. 7.

said, before leaving to prepare for Mass and paying homage to a statue of Mary with baby Jesus and the reliquaries containing the relics of the two young men.

In his homily, the pope underlined Jesus' call in the day's Gospel reading "to abandon ourselves without hesitation to the adventure that he offers us, with the intelligence and strength that comes from his Spirit, that we can receive to the extent that we empty ourselves of the things and ideas to which we are attached, in order to listen to his word."

That is what the two new saints did and what every disciple of Christ is called to do, he said.

Many people, especially

when they are young, he said, face a kind of "crossroads" in life when they reflect on what to do with their life.

The saints of the church are often portrayed as "great figures, forgetting that for them it all began when, while still young, they said 'yes' to God and gave themselves to him completely, keeping nothing for themselves," the pope said.

"Today we look to St. Pier Giorgio Frassati and St. Carlo Acutis: a young man from the early 20th century and a teenager from our own day, both in love with Jesus and ready to give everything for him," he said.

Pope Leo then dedicated a large portion of his homily to sharing quotes from the two and details of their lives, which is something Pope Francis had shifted away from, preferring to focus more on the day's readings.

"Pier Giorgio's life is a beacon for lay spirituality," Pope Leo said.

"For him, faith was not a private devotion, but it was driven by the power of the Gospel and his membership in ecclesial associations," he said. "He was also generously committed to society, contributed to political life and devoted himself ardently to the service of the poor."

"Carlo, for his part, encountered Jesus in his family, thanks to his parents, Andrea and Antonia — who are here today with his two siblings, Francesca and Michele," he said, as the crowd applauded, and Antonia smiled shyly at the camera.

St. Acutis also encountered Jesus at the Jesuit-run school he attended and "above all in the sacraments celebrated in the parish community," he said. "He grew up naturally integrating prayer, sport, study and charity into his days as a child and young man."

The pope said the new

saints "cultivated their love for God and for their brothers and sisters through simple acts, available to everyone: daily Mass, prayer and especially Eucharistic adoration."

St. Frassati was born April 6, 1901, in Turin and died there July 4, 1925, of polio at the age of 24. St. Acutis was born to Italian parents May 3, 1991, in London and died in Monza, Italy, Oct. 12, 2006, of leukemia at the age of 15.

The pope said that "even when illness struck them and cut short their young lives, not even this stopped them nor prevented them from loving, offering themselves to God, blessing him and praying to him for themselves and for everyone."

Several family members and people closely associated with the new saints attended the Mass, along with dignitaries, such as Italian President Sergio Mattarella.

St. Acutis' parents, Andrea and Antonia, and his twin siblings, Michele and Francesca, who were born four years after their brother died, were present and together brought the pope the offertory gifts. Michele also did the first reading at the Mass in English.

Valeria Valverde, who read the first prayer of the faithful, is a young Costa Rican woman who suffered a severe head injury while living in Italy. It was her unexplained healing that provided the second miracle needed for St. Acutis'



CNS photo/Lola Gomez  
Pope Leo XIV prays before a statue of Mary and the Child Jesus behind the relics of Sts. Carlo Acutis and Pier Giorgio Frassati during the Mass for their canonization in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Sept. 7.

canonization.

St. Frassati was active with Catholic Action, the St. Vincent de Paul Society, the Italian Catholic University Federation and the Dominican Third Order. Lorenzo Zardi, vice president of the youth group of Italy's Catholic Action read the second reading at the Mass and Michele Tridente, the secretary general of the lay movement, also presented the pope with offertory gifts.

Before praying the Angelus, the pope once again thanked everyone for coming to celebrate the church's two new saints.

However, he also called

for people's "incessant prayer for peace, especially in the Holy Land, and in Ukraine and in every other land bloodied by war."

"To governing leaders, I repeat, listen to the voice of conscience," he said.

"The apparent victories won with weapons, sowing death and destruction, are really defeats and will never bring peace and security," he said.

"God does not want war. God wants peace!" he exclaimed to applause. God gives strength to those who work toward leaving behind the cycle of hatred and pursue the path of dialogue.

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## Diocese ...

### Cont'd from Page 1

West Virginia concelebrated the Mass and were joined by a number of deacons who served. Congregation of St. Joseph Sisters—Sister Kathleen Durkin, CSJ, Sister Marguerite O'Brien, CSJ, and Sister Mary Ann Rosenbaum, CSJ—carried the gifts.

Leading a procession into the cathedral for the Mass were diocesan officials carrying the 175th anniversary banner followed by banners of the diocese's six vicariates—Wheeling, Charleston, Beckley, Clarksburg, Martinsburg, and Parkersburg.

Catholic faithful traveled from all over the state to be a part of the celebration. One of them was Jim Copolo, a member of Sacred Heart Church in Powhatan in McDowell County—the state's most southern county bordering Virginia.

"I felt very humbled to share this Eucharistic Celebration to support our Bishop Mark on his sixth anniversary as our shepherd and also to celebrate the diocesan anniversary," said Copolo, who has served as a member of the Diocesan Pastoral Council for four years. "The beautiful music, wonderful fellowship, and delicious food made the six-hour drive memorable."

The Diocese of Wheeling was established in 1850, Bishop Brennan said in his homily. This was more than a decade before the Civil War when the Mountain State was still part of the Old Dominion. The Wheeling Diocese encompassed the area west of the Allegheny Mountains. Wheeling's first bishop, Bishop Richard V. Whelan, was originally Bishop of Richmond—ordained there on March 21, 1841. Nine years later, he was appointed to Wheeling.

According to "Faith in the Mountains: A History of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston 1850-2000," the Diocese of Wheeling became the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston in 1974, and its boundaries were redrawn to take on the eight counties of the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia (which were part of the Diocese of Richmond) to cover the entire state. The 17 and a half counties of Virginia on the northern side of the Allegheny Mountains (which were part of the Diocese of Wheeling) returned to the Diocese of Richmond.



Colleen Rowan photo

At the Mass celebrating the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's 175th anniversary at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling Aug. 22, Bishop Mark Brennan receives the gifts from Congregation of St. Joseph Sisters. From left are Sister Marguerite O'Brien, CSJ, Sister Kathleen Durkin, CSJ, and Sister Mary Ann Rosenbaum, CSJ.



Colleen Rowan photo

Brother John Byrd, FMS, offers the sign of peace to Judy Miller at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling Aug. 22 at the Mass celebrating the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's 175th anniversary.

One hundred years before this momentous change, Bishop Whelan—the "Founding Father" of Wheeling-Charleston and Richmond's second bishop—died on July 7, 1874. His final resting place is at the Bishop's Chapel at Mount Calvary Cemetery in Wheeling.

In his homily, Bishop Brennan spoke of the Catholic faithful from the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's beginnings through the present day and their steadfast commitment to their faith.

"Wonderful people. People of great heroism in times of persecution," he said, noting the presence of the Ku Klux Klan more than 100 years ago.

"We have wonderful parishes that nourish the faith of our people, schools do the same," he said. "A lot of good works done. Catholic Charities is the largest provider of help to people in need in the state as it is in the entire nation. There is a lot to be thankful for, but there's much to do also in looking

forward, especially in the area of sharing our faith with others, our faith in Jesus Christ."

Evangelization is crucial to the future of the diocese, the bishop said, and is carried out through many acts of charity and outreach. He specifically pointed to the response of the Catholic faithful after the catastrophic June 14 flooding in Triadelphia and Valley Grove which claimed the lives of nine people and devastated these small communities.

"Many of our Catholic people, including our chancery employees and high school students, went to work to help with the cleanup," the bishop said.

Bishop Brennan also spoke of WVU Medicine Wheeling Hospital, its 175-year history of providing healthcare to the region, and its plans for the future. On Aug. 22, the Wheeling Hospital Foundation announced a gift of \$10 million toward a new WVU cancer complex to be constructed in Wheeling. The name of the center will be WVU Cancer Institute,



Colleen Rowan photo

Altar servers and clergy process out of the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling Aug. 22 following the Mass celebrating the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's 175th anniversary.

Saint Joseph Regional Cancer Complex. Wheeling Hospital, the diocese's hospital, entered into the WVU Medicine System in April of 2021 but retains its Catholic identity. The diocese still owns the land and the buildings but sold the equipment to WVU Medicine, which also pays annual rent to the diocese. The money from that established the foundation.

Bishop Brennan then pointed out two extraordinary examples of evangelization that have taken place in West Virginia this year. The first, at the small Parish of St. Thomas in Gassaway which brought 13 people into the Catholic Church.

"They see a parish that reaches out to people in need," the bishop said. "That parish feeds 900 people a month in a county with no grocery store."

The Newman Center at St. John University Parish in Morgantown, he added, brought 26 young people into the Catholic Church as well.

"They're looking for more than just parties and studies and sports," the bishop said of college-age young people. "This can be

good, but they want a more solid foundation for their faith. There's a field there to harvest."

Bishop Brennan encouraged those gathered to look to Mary, a model disciple for all, in evangelization. She is also known as "the Star of the New Evangelization, the sharing of the gospel of Christ with others," the bishop added, noting the words of Jesus in Matthew's gospel (Mt. 28:19) as he ascended back to heaven: Go and make disciples of all nations.

"We clergy, religious, and laity of this diocese have to take his command seriously rather than let our Catholic faith in West Virginia shrink not just in numbers but in relevance to the people of this state," Bishop Brennan said. "Mary, as the Star of the New Evangelization, prays for us so we can count on her help through prayer. She reminds us of the need for a personal encounter with her son and she serves as an example of reaching out to others to bring them to her son."

More celebrations will be held around the diocese. See Page 5 for the story.

# Celebrations Planned for Diocese's 175th Anniversary

By Colleen Rowan

As the yearlong observance of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's 175th anniversary continues, planning is underway for celebratory events around the state. Diocesan Chancellor Chad Carter is hoping for participation from the faithful to help make this milestone in the life of the church in West Virginia memorable.

"Our diocese certainly has a rich history over these past 175 years. Our God has blessed us and continues to empower us to share the news of his saving love to all people from the mountaintops to the valleys throughout our beautiful mountain state," Carter said. "I encourage all of our faithful to participate in the various anniversary events through July 2026."

The anniversary was marked this summer by parishes of the diocese ringing church bells at 7:19 p.m. on July 19 (the anniversary of the diocese's founding) followed by the Aug. 22 Mass at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling cele-

brated by Bishop Mark E. Brennan and concelebrated by Bishop Barry C. Knestout of the Diocese of Richmond; Bishop Adam J. Parker, auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Baltimore; and Bishop Edward M. Lohse of the Diocese of Kalamazoo, Mich., who serves as apostolic administrator of the Diocese of Steubenville, Ohio.

The next celebration will be in the Charleston Vicariate on Sept. 23 at 6:30 p.m. at Ascension Parish in Hurricane where the faithful will gather for Mass celebrated by Bishop Brennan. Additional celebrations for other vicariates are being planned as well.

On Oct. 3, it's back to Wheeling for the 50th anniversary of the dedication of the Resurrection Chapel Mausoleum at the diocesan cemetery—Mount Calvary. Mass will be celebrated at 5:30 p.m. at the mausoleum.

In recognition of the diocese's anniversary, the Bishop's Chapel at Mount Calvary Cemetery will be open every first Saturday from noon to 3 p.m. giving all the op-

portunity to visit and spend time in quiet prayer. This will continue through July 26, 2026. In November at the chapel, all are invited to Mass on All Souls Day at 10 a.m. and Evening Prayer on Sundays at 5 p.m. For times and schedule changes and updates, visit Mount Calvary's website at [mountcalvarywheeling.org](http://mountcalvarywheeling.org).

In Morgantown, an evening concert will be held with the Monongalia Symphony Orchestra at St. Francis de Sales Church on Nov. 16 at 6 p.m.

"We're inviting choir members from around the diocese to participate," Carter said. "It's going to be hymns from the liturgical year with choir orchestra and handbells."

The concert will be directed by Conductor Shaun Hancher, music director of the Monongalia Symphony Orchestra in Morgantown. He is also music director and conductor of the Wheeling Symphony Youth Orchestra and music director at Our Lady of Peace Parish in Wheeling. The concert is free and

open to public with a reception to follow. To participate in the choir, contact Matthew Berher at the cathedral at (304) 233-4121.

The diocese's 175th anniversary is also being connected with the 50th anniversary of the Appalachian Catholic bishops' 1975 Pastoral Letter "This Land is Home to Me."

At the annual PACE (Pastoral Administration & Collaborative Education) Conference Oct. 15-16 at Saint John XXIII Pastoral Center in Charleston, Jon-Erik Gilot, director of the diocese's Archives & Records, will be presenting a session on diocesan history while Shirley Carter, director of the diocesan Department of Faith Formation and Youth, Young Adult, & Campus Ministry, will present a session on the document. To register or for more information and updates, visit [dwc.org/2025pace/](http://dwc.org/2025pace/)

The closing Mass for the diocese's anniversary year will be July 19, 2026 at 10:30 a.m. at the Basilica of the Co-Cathedral of the Sacred Heart in Charleston.

## Celebration to Mark 50th Anniversary of Resurrection Chapel Mausoleum in Diocesan Cemetery in Wheeling

By Joyce Bibey

**WHEELING** — Resurrection Chapel Mausoleum at Mount Calvary Cemetery in Wheeling was the first community mausoleum in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. On Friday, Oct. 3, the diocese will host a blessing and Mass at the chapel at 5:30 p.m. to mark the 50th anniversary of its dedication in 1975.

According to diocesan Archivist Jon-Erik Gilot, it is recorded the first step toward the realization of the mausoleum was made in a letter from the diocese to Marble & Granite Company, New Orleans, inviting them to send representatives to meet with the advisory committee of Mount Calvary Cemetery. On the strength of their presentation and letters of recommendation received from several dioceses, in which Acme had erected mausoleums, the contract with Acme was signed in October 1972, and ground broken in March 1974. Plans for the number of crypts expanded from 500



Deacon Douglas W. Breiding photo  
Resurrection Chapel's Risen Lord stained-glass window is shown above.

to 1,624.

Gilot further noted, on Oct. 4, 1975, Bishop Joseph H. Hodges presided over

the blessing and dedication of Resurrection Chapel Mausoleum.

From the moment the doors opened to the large crowd that gathered at its dedication, the mausoleum remains a place of beauty and permanence. The polished marble interior and granite exterior present a stately building where visitors step respectfully into a space encouraging prayer and respect in peaceful silence for their loved ones. The entrance area is framed in Ashlar Spanish Rose Granite, with large white Luna Pearl Granite Cross insets on either side of the entrance. The floor of the mausoleum is of terrazzo.

In 1977, a breathtaking stained-glass window was added and installed by Hunt Stained Glass of Pittsburgh. The image is of the Risen Savior based on a design by Msgr. Frederick J. Schwertz, P.A., a longtime chancellor of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

The mausoleum is located on the edge of the Resurrection Shrine section of the cemetery, and within



The Catholic Spirit photo/Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Archives  
The dedication of the Chapel in 1975 with Bishop Joseph H. Hodges is shown above.

sight of the Calvary Shrine marking the priests' plot.

Additional history: It was Bishop Richard Whelan who purchased the 39-acres of land four miles east of Wheeling on National Road in 1872, for the Catholic cemetery. Bishop Whelan

personally oversaw the Mount Calvary Cemetery's layout and design. The Bishop's Chapel was built in 1879, and a house for the sexton (caretaker for the graveyard, chapel, and any other buildings on the grounds) was added in 1883.

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# Diocese Launches Olive Branch Ministry for Those Going through Separation and Divorce

*Retreat Set for Oct. 11 in Wheeling*

**By Colleen Rowan**

**WHEELING** — The Olive Branch Ministry has been established by the diocese for those going through separation and divorce and will hold its first retreat (free and open to all) at St. Michael Parish Angelus Center in Wheeling Oct. 11 from 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m.

The name of this ministry reflects the “olive branch” as a symbol of new life in Genesis, Chapter 8, said diocesan Director for Social Ministry Kathy Barton. The olive branch, she said, was brought to Noah by a dove and was the first real sign that the flood was subsiding and that there was new life beyond the storm.

“While you’re still in the storm, this is something to hold on to. To know that there is life beyond this divorce,” Barton said. “God hates divorce. He loves us. And what we want is for this day retreat to be that olive branch that shows you some direction and guidance, some other folks you can talk to so you realize you’re not in this alone.”

Divorce and separation is something no one should go through alone, she said, and this ministry will offer support through this difficult time. She especially wants Catholics who are divorced or separated to realize that the church is there for them.

“Not only are you wanted and needed, but we want to help you through this process,” Barton said. “We’re here for you.”

The retreat will also offer information and resources for personal and spiritual growth as well as in-

formation Catholics need to know. However, one does not have to be Catholic to participate.

“This program,” Barton said, “is your olive branch of restored faith and hope in the midst of the storm.”

Barton is one of four speakers for the retreat and her topics are as follows: “Road map to where you are — Stages of Grief & Loss”; “Why isn’t divorce enough? — Divorce Vs Annulment”; “What does forgiveness look like?”; and “Give it to HIM.”

Also speaking will be Joelle Moray, a bestselling author, “TED Talks” speaker, and therapist. Her talk is titled: “How to find peace in this process — Dealing With Constant Stress.”

Moray said every person deserves support during life’s most difficult seasons.

“When I was invited to join Olive Branch, I saw it as a meaningful opportunity to share tools that help people find steadiness and strength when life feels overwhelming,” she said. “My work is about helping people recover their energy and hope, and I felt this was a beautiful space to do just that.”

She sees Olive Branch as a safe place where people will be met with compassion, understanding, and practical support.

“Transitions like divorce or loss can leave people feeling isolated, and Olive Branch creates community where healing can begin,” she said. “This ministry reminds us that no one has to walk through these chapters alone.”

Donna L. Niggemyer, M.Ed., LPC, of Christian Counseling Associates, will be presenting “How did we get here? Co-Dependency, Addiction, Infidelity, Finance.”

Niggemyer was drawn to participation in the Olive Branch Ministry because it is grounded in faith.

“I am honored to participate in a ministry with the vision and purpose of advancing God’s kingdom through helping people achieve personal and spiritual growth, find hope and healing, during the difficult time of separation and divorce,” she said. “A faith-based approach enhances divorce recovery by providing a unique framework for healing that addresses emotional and spiritual distress. By incorporating prayer, forgiveness, community, information and resources it helps individuals find hope, direction and new purpose after separation or divorce, where you need not ‘go through this journey alone and where peace and new life are promised to those who remain faithful.’”

Niggemyer is a member of the Steering Committee for Concepts of Truth, Christian Counseling Association Foundation, American Association of Christian Counselors, West Virginia Counseling Association, and West Virginia Licensed Professional Counselors Association. She has offices at the Center Wheeling Fellowship Church and the Moundsville

Church of the Nazarene.

Catholics can expect answers to the questions: “What can I still do in the Church? Am I still welcome?” through a presentation by Very Rev. Carlos Melocoton, V.F., pastor of St. Michael’s.

There will also be resources on annulments, contact information for the diocesan Tribunal, and how to start the process of an annulment in the diocese.

Barton hopes the Olive Branch Ministry will help address these questions and the misinformation divorced or separated Catholics are faced with. This, she said, keeps them from their faith.

“It makes them feel not wanted in the church and therefore their children don’t go to the church,” she said. “In this one subject of divorce, we are losing two generations.”

This ministry aims to change that.

Those who want to go to confession will be able to after the retreat at 3:30 p.m. Mass will be celebrated at 4:30 p.m. for those who want to attend.

For more information, contact A.J. Emery in the Office of Social Ministry by calling (304) 233-0880, ext. 326, or by e-mail to [aemery@dwc.org](mailto:aemery@dwc.org)

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## Hope and Help for Moms in the Mountain State

By Kayla Kessinger and Kathy Barton

Three years ago this month, we celebrated a shining moment in West Virginia's legacy: the passage of the Unborn Child Protection Act.

As the second state to enact pro-life protections after the Supreme Court's 2022 ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson Women's Health*, we're grateful to our state legislature for paving the way to make West Virginia one of the best places for mothers and families to raise their children.

In the three years since our lifesaving law went into effect, we've doubled down on our commitment to be here for our littlest Mountaineers – and their mothers.

Abortion has never and will never help a woman escape an abusive relationship. Abortion has never and will never help a woman who is behind on rent and fears she won't have a safe shelter for herself and her baby.

Nearly 70% of women with a history of abortion describe their abortions as inconsistent with their own values and preferences, with one in four describing their abortions as unwanted or coerced. Despite the abortion industry's claims that abortion gives women a choice, the majority of women feel like they never had one. Pressured by an abusive partner, shipped dangerous abortion drugs in the mail, left to take the abortion drug in her home, isolated and alone without follow up care – this is the reality of the so-called "choice" the abortion industry claims to offer.

Women deserve better. And that's why we're here – we meet her wherever she is and offer her real options, real hope, and real support.

Each day, we see countless life-affirming providers, passionate individuals, and local leaders step up to serve. These individuals support vulnerable moms with the hope and help they deserve – so they don't have to resort to abortion. And each day, we are encouraged by stories of hope. Stories about women choosing life, mothers being reunited with their children, and families receiving the support they desperately need.

In these last three years, West Virginians have hosted baby showers  
**See "Moms" on Page 8**

## Abortion is Never Medically Necessary, 'Even in an Emergency,' Doctors and Experts Say

By Katie Yoder, OSV News

**(OSV News)** — Abortion — an act performed with the sole or primary intent of ending human life in the womb — is never medically necessary, according to medical doctors and Catholic experts on the issue.

"The direct killing of an unborn child is never necessary, even in an emergency," Dr. Kathleen Raviele, a retired, board-certified OB-GYN and past president of the Catholic Medical Association, said of abortion.

Instead, these experts said, doctors must endeavor to care for the two patients involved in every pregnancy: the woman and her unborn baby.

"When the lives of mother and child are both in danger, the goal should always be to do all we can to save both patients," said Bishop Daniel E. Thomas of Toledo, Ohio, chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Pro-Life Activities.

These experts spoke about so-called emergency abortions in emailed comments to OSV News. Life-affirming alternatives to abortion exist in situations where a mother or her unborn baby faces a life-threatening condition, they said. Some procedures, they added, are also mistakenly called "abortion."

Most of all, they wanted women facing pregnancy complications to know they are not alone.

Their comments followed the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services' decision earlier this year to revoke guidance that instructed hospitals to perform abortions in emergency situations regardless of state law under the federal Emergency Medical Treatment and Labor Act, or EMTALA.

The term "emergency abortion," Joseph Meaney, past president and senior fellow of the National Catholic Bioethics Center, or NCBC, said, is "often used by abortion supporters to describe situations where a pregnant mother's life is at risk and they believe a direct abortion is indicated as a means to prevent the mother's death."

He and the other experts began their discussion by defining abortion itself.

The definition of "abortion" includes the purpose or intent to end human life, experts agreed.

An induced abortion is "a medical intervention to end a pregnancy such that it does not end in a live birth," Dr. Christina Francis, a board-certified OB-GYN and CEO of the American Association of Pro-Life Obstetricians and Gynecologists, or AAPLOG, cited the definition provided by the American College of Obstetrics and Gynecology, known as ACOG.

colony, known as ACOG.

"Note the phrasing 'such that it does not end in a live birth,'" she said, "which reveals that the purpose of induced abortion is to end the life of the child in the uterus."

Raviele agreed, saying, "Every procedure or medication whose intention is to directly kill a human life from fertilization until birth, is a direct abortion."

Meaney cited the U.S. bishops' Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services, which identify abortion as "the directly intended termination of pregnancy before viability (or before a baby can survive outside the womb) or the directly intended destruction of a viable fetus (who can survive outside the womb)."

With this definition in mind, these experts said that abortion is never necessary.

"It is never medically necessary to purposely end the life of a preborn child in order to save her mother," Francis said, adding that "under certain circumstances where a pregnancy complication threatens a mother's life, a physician must separate mom from baby, sometimes when the baby is too young to survive outside the womb."

This separation of a mother and her baby is not an abortion, she said.

"AAPLOG recommends referring to these interventions as 'maternal-fetal separations' given the clear difference of intent between those lifesaving treatments and induced abortion," she said.

According to the Guttmacher Institute, a reproductive research organization that supports abortion, only 7% of women cited their physical health or possible problems affecting the health of their unborn baby as their "most important reason" for an abortion in 2004.

More recently, a 2022 analysis from Charlotte Lozier Institute, the research arm of pro-life advocacy group SBA Pro-Life America, found that over 95% of abortions are for "elective and unspecified reasons" rather than "risk to the woman's life or a major bodily function" (0.03%) or "abnormality in the unborn baby" (1.2%).

Raviele and Meaney recognized situations can exist where a pregnant woman may receive life-saving treatment for herself even if it threatens or indirectly leads to her baby's death. The intent, here, is to save her life, not end her baby's life. Both cited the bishops' directives: "Operations, treatments, and medications that have as their direct purpose the cure of a proportionately serious pathological condition of a pregnant

**See "Experts" on Page 8**

*Walking with Moms in Need is a nationwide, parish-based initiative to increase support for pregnant and parenting mothers in need. It works to ensure that any woman who finds herself unexpectedly pregnant, or parenting in difficult circumstances, can turn to her local Catholic Church and be connected with the resources she needs. Volunteers walk with moms throughout the motherhood journey, offering them authentic Christian friendship and ongoing support.*

**To start this ministry in your parish, contact:**  
Kathleen Barton, Director of Social Ministry for the  
Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston  
(304) 3233-0880, Ext. 289; kbarton@dwc.org

Walking with  
*Moms* in Need



## Moms ...

Cont'd from Page 7

for struggling mothers. Pregnancy centers and maternity homes, dedicated to serving moms and babies, met critical needs for emotional and material support and provided housing and transportation assistance. In the New River Gorge region, a community member with a heart for moms and babies has opened a brand-new pregnancy center. Local businesses donated new flooring and over 15 volunteers helped to paint the center's rooms and prepare it to be a beautiful and welcoming place of refuge for vulnerable moms facing unexpected pregnancies.

Walking With Moms in Need, a nationwide, parish-based initiative

to increase support for vulnerable pregnant and parenting mothers, has been here for her. This ministry ensures that any woman who finds herself unexpectedly pregnant or parenting in difficult circumstances can turn to her local Catholic Church and connect with the resources she needs. Volunteers are here to walk with moms throughout their journey of motherhood, offering tangible, ongoing support and authentic friendship.

The nearly 6,000 life-affirming providers and resources on Her PLAN's Directory – with over 260 of them right here in West Virginia – have been here for her by providing quality, life-affirming support across seven categories of care, including mental health support, childcare, food and nutrition assis-

tance, job training, medical care, and so much more.

We've always been here for her, and we're not going anywhere.

As long as vulnerable mothers and their children need us, we will be here. It's who we are as Mountaineers: we're compassionate, we're resilient, and we'll never stop standing in the gap to give our littlest Mountaineers a chance at life and to empower their mothers with the support they need to achieve their dreams.

So, as we celebrate three years of West Virginia's lifesaving law, we also look to the days and years ahead with hope as we renew our commitment to moms and babies: we'll always be here for you, no matter what.

(Born and raised in West Vir-

ginia, Kayla Kessinger is State Program Director for Her PLAN, an initiative of SBA Pro-Life America Education Fund to connect and grow communities of support for moms and their babies. She previously served as a Member of the West Virginia House of Delegates from 2015-2022.

A West Virginia native, Kathy Barton is the Director for Social Ministry for Walking With Moms in Need in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. She is passionate about encouraging parishes to engage with the Walking With Moms in Need ministry, an initiative of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Currently, Kathy also chairs the board of directors for the West Virginia Mothers and Babies Support Program.)

## Experts ...

Cont'd from Page 7

woman are permitted when they cannot be safely postponed until the child is viable (or can survive outside the womb), even if they will result in the death of the unborn child."

Raviele gave an example.

A woman "who is 12 weeks pregnant and diagnosed with ovarian cancer, could undergo a complete hysterectomy with the baby in utero, even though there is no chance the child will survive," she said. "The surgery is to treat her cancer, not to kill the baby."

Meaney cited the principle of double effect attributed to St. Thomas Aquinas, which "involves evaluating certain good actions intended for a good purpose that can also have foreseen but unintended bad effects," as he describes in an NCBC essay.

"What the church is saying is that the principle of double effect can justify treatments to save the life of the mother if everything is done to also save the child and there is no other option available," Meaney said of

the directives. "What is never ethically acceptable is to directly kill or abort the preborn child as a 'treatment' for the mother."

Francis echoed Meaney and Raviele while responding to claims that women need abortion for complications such as miscarriages or ectopic pregnancies, a life-threatening situation where an embryo implants outside the womb.

"In the case of miscarriage management, the preborn child has already passed away, and the purpose of the physician's interventions is to help the mother's body safely pass the baby's body and pregnancy tissue," she said. "In the case of ectopic pregnancy treatment, early delivery for preeclampsia, and other similar interventions, the purpose is to save the mother's life, not to end the baby's (life)."

She added: "By contrast, in the case of induced abortion, if the baby survives, the procedure is considered to have failed."

Bishop Thomas also addressed "certain rare and life-threatening conditions" that "may require

medical interventions that unintentionally and indirectly lead to the death of the preborn child," including ectopic pregnancies.

"(E)thical treatment for an ectopic pregnancy is not considered an abortion," he said. "These interventions may include the removal of the damaged fallopian tube containing the embryo or, if the death of the embryo has already occurred, medication may be used to resolve the ectopic pregnancy."

Addressing church teaching, Bishop Thomas said that abortion is "never the right moral decision" and that "(w)e must make a clear moral and legal distinction between tragically losing a child and intentionally taking the life of a child."

The Catechism of the Catholic Church, which summarizes church teaching, recognizes the inherent dignity of the human person beginning at conception and condemns any "crime against human life," such as abortion.

"Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured

abortion," it reads. "Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law."

At the NCBC, Meaney repeated that direct abortion is never allowed.

"Both the preborn child and mother are human beings with rights. Both their lives are precious and have equal dignity," he said. "One can never intentionally kill one person to save another."

These experts shared their guidance for pregnant women who are feeling overwhelmed or scared by their situation.

Francis wanted them to know that no state law prevents excellent obstetric care and that they have access to additional support through pregnancy centers and other programs.

Raviele added that, if a woman has been told to abort her baby, she should seek a second opinion. She recommended women turn to the Catholic Medical Association, which provides a search tool for Catholic physicians, or AAPLOG, which hosts an online directory of pro-life OB-GYNs

and other pro-life medical professionals.

Bishop Thomas addressed how the church, including everyday Catholics, can accompany pregnant women facing life-threatening situations.

"First, to accompany with love and pastoral care pregnant women who find themselves in these frightening situations," he said.

He called on pastors and pro-life family and friends to be aware of the nuances to better help women.

"(M)any women facing life-threatening maternal health conditions may be offered abortion as their only option and may be unaware of moral and ethical alternatives to abortion," he said. "It is good to be informed about and to advocate for these ethical treatments."

(Katie Yoder writes for OSV News from Maryland.)


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# Mary's Refuge Opens Doors to a Brighter Future for Mother of Three

By Meg H. Partington

**MARTINSBURG**—Eight months pregnant and already the mother of two children younger than 3, Caitlin was living in a homeless shelter that would not let her stay after she delivered her baby. All the maternity homes she called in her native Virginia were unable to house the young family.

Doors were closing everywhere she turned until a woman living at the shelter told her about Mary's Refuge, a maternity home in a former Martinsburg convent. Executive Director Allison Ferrell responded promptly to Caitlin's pleading email, providing an opening to a better life for the recovering addict and abuse victim.

"I could hear the desperation in her voice, and she had told me how many people she called and already reached out to, with everyone turning her away for one reason or another," Ferrell recalled.

All nine of the refuge's rooms were full, but Ferrell and the program manager at the time decided to convert a first-floor computer room into a 10th bedroom so they could welcome Caitlin and her kids. Ferrell's husband built bunk beds for the two older children to help maximize the space.

On July 28, 2024 — just five days after her C-section — Caitlin and her three children moved into Mary's Refuge. Her daughter, Laci, is now 3; Ryan Jr. is 2; and Kane is a year old.

"I was scared and felt alone, but my faith in God gave me strength," said Caitlin, 29. "Through Ayla (Gressler, a licensed therapist and former case manager), Allison and my parents' support, I began to rebuild."

While recovering from her surgery, she moved everything from Orange County, Va., to the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia.

"I just felt like God wanted me here," Caitlin said. "He wanted me out (of Virginia)."

The last decade in Virginia was tough. Caitlin met her partner — the father of her children — in 2016, while they were in counseling to try to overcome drug addiction.

"The first two years were horrific," Caitlin said of her relationship. "We were both pretty toxic."

Caitlin said she never sought help for her postpartum depression and carried in her heart plenty of guilt, shame and pain while cradling her children because she didn't feel like she was a good mother. When she was pregnant with Kane, her partner was on the run — not for the first time — from law enforcement over drug charges and his family evicted Caitlin and the children from the apartment in which they were living. She did not have access to a car.

"Being completely dependent on his family was hard to overcome," she said.

That's what led Caitlin, at that point eight months pregnant, to a 90-day family homeless shelter in Virginia, where she encountered the fellow mother who told her about Mary's Refuge, a 501(c)(3) ministry of St. Joseph Parish and the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston.

"You never know who's going to give you a solution," she said.

With help from Gressler, she applied for Medicaid and food stamps. In December 2024, she received a Recovery Coach Academy certificate so she can help others detoxify their lives.



Photo courtesy of Hallie Michelle Photography  
Caitlin and her children found a safe place and a new beginning at Mary's Refuge, a maternity home in Martinsburg. From left are Ryan Jr., Kane, and Laci.

In April 2025, she completed the five-month medical billing and coding certification program at Blue Ridge Community and Technical College and in early September, she started a 40-hour externship at a Martinsburg medical office.

The refuge staff placed Caitlin in a vehicle donation program, and helped her transfer her driver's license to West Virginia and create a plan to pay off her debts.

Laci and Ryan go to a preschool/day care center five days a week and Caitlin works in the day care center at Mary's Refuge, the first job she's had since she became a mother. Prior to that, she had supervisory roles at gas stations and a Family Dollar store.

"They have provided for my family when I couldn't, offering clothing, diapers, wipes, hygiene and cleaning supplies," Caitlin said. "They've also invested in my healing. Through weekly therapy and neurofeedback, I've been

able to address deep struggles, and soon, my oldest will also begin therapy."

Caitlin said she is focusing on being a better parent, using her own mother and father as role models and gaining insight from the other women living at Mary's Refuge. The pro-life home is at capacity right now with 10 mothers and 11 children; a set of twins is due to one of the women at the end of November, according to Ferrell.

"I've learned more being around other moms," Caitlin said. "I had great parents and I still do," she said, adding that maintaining routines and a tidy living space are among the ways she tries to emulate them.

Having three children who depend on her for everything gave Caitlin incentive to move through the doors that opened for her and toward a brighter future.

"Motherhood has transformed me completely," she said. "Choosing to keep my babies required great sacrifice, including leaving my home state to start over. But it was the best decision I have ever made because it led me to Mary's Refuge. And they have truly lived up to their name. They became a safe place when I had none, a refuge that pushed me to grow into a stronger mother and a better person."

"For years, I struggled with addiction. Becoming a mother gave me the strength to choose a different path, one that I pray God is proud of. I have never once regretted my decision to keep my children. Every day is a lesson, and even my oldest has already taught me so much about patience, resilience and love."

Ferrell said finding space for Caitlin's young family has been a gift to the refuge, too.

"We made it work, and Caitlin and her three children have been a blessing to Mary's Refuge," Ferrell said. "She is a hardworking, dedicated mother, and she is taking every opportunity that Mary's Refuge has to offer."

To women who are in precarious situations, Caitlin shared this advice: "Use your voice and speak up. You have to use your resources. You can't give up."

A gala fundraiser for Mary's Refuge is taking place Thursday, Nov. 6, at the Hilton Garden Inn Martinsburg at 65 Priority Drive. Doors open at 5 p.m. and the event begins at 6 p.m. for the annual event, to which attendees are invited to wear cocktail attire; black-tie outfits are optional.

For more information about Mary's Refuge or to purchase tickets to the gala, call (304) 350-1632; email [life@marysrefuge.com](mailto:life@marysrefuge.com); or go to [marysrefuge.com](http://marysrefuge.com).



# 'America Prays' Initiative Launches to Prepare for Nation's 250th Anniversary

By Tyler Arnold, Catholic News Agency

President Donald Trump launched an initiative that urges Americans to pray for the country and its citizens in preparation for the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence on July 4, 2026.

The initiative, called "America Prays," urges Americans to dedicate one hour of prayer every week for the United States and its people. The White House is encouraging the faithful to create prayer groups of 10 or more people to pray together for the nation.

"America's always been a nation that believes in the power of prayer and we will never apologize for our faith," Trump said during a speech announcing the initiative at the second hearing of the Religious Liberty Commission, which took place at the Museum of the Bible in Washington, D.C., on Sept. 8.

"We will never surrender our God-given rights; we will defend our lib-

erties, our values, our sovereignty, and we will defend our freedom," said Trump, who is a Protestant Christian. "And with the help of amazing faith communities across the land ... we will truly make this the golden age of America."

The White House suggested that prayer groups organize their meetings by different subjects, such as prayer for government leaders, cultural renewal, protection of freedom, and families. It also encouraged every member to commit to praying daily for a specific issue or person.

In addition to forming groups, the White House encouraged people to join online prayer communities, such as Hallow and Pray.com, both of which are participating in the initiative.

To date, more than 70 organizations and well-known personalities are participating in the initiative. This includes Catholic groups, such as Catholics for Catholics and CatholicVote, and Protestant groups, such as the Southern Baptist Convention and

WallBuilders.

On the "America Prays" website, the White House has posted a 22-page document titled "Prayers and Proclamation Throughout American History" that contains historic prayers, sermons, and presidential proclamations. This includes the prayer for George Washington's army, Benjamin Franklin's prayer at the Constitutional Convention, and Franklin D. Roosevelt's D-Day prayer from the day the United States formally started fighting in World War II.

During the speech, Trump invited Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Secretary Scott Turner to the stage to speak about the initiative. Turner is also a Baptist pastor.

"What if 1 million people pray for our country every single week between now and next July Fourth?" Turner asked. "More specifically, what if believers all across this great nation got together with 10 people — friends, family members, colleagues, work associates — 10 people each week to pray

for our country and for our fellow citizens?"

"Think about the miracles that would take place over the next year," he said. "Think about the transformation that you and I could witness in communities all across the land."

Turner urged Americans "to pray with unwavering faith for the renewal of our nation and our fellow citizens."

The HUD secretary also said a prayer to "rededicate America to 'one nation under God'" during his speech, referencing the Pledge of Allegiance.

"As we call our nation to pray, Lord God, as we rededicate our nation to 'one nation under God,' Father, we pray for your forgiveness, we pray, Lord Jesus, that you would give us great favor and understanding, Father God, as we bow our knee before you, as we humble ourselves before you," Turner prayed.

Turner also prayed for "healing and revitalization" and "new life" to come to the country.

## Department of Education to Issue Guidance on Protecting Prayer in Public Schools, Trump Says

By Kate Scanlon, OSV News

WASHINGTON (OSV News) — The Department of Education will issue new guidance "protecting the right to prayer" in public schools, President Donald Trump said Sept. 8 during remarks at the Museum of the Bible for the Department of Justice's Religious Liberty Commission.

The Trump administration previously reduced the workforce at the Department of Education and stated its intent to scale the department back.

In a statement shared with OSV News, Savannah Newhouse, press secretary for the Department of Education, said, "Free exercise of religion is a founding principle and a constitutionally protected right afforded to all citizens of our great nation. The Department of Education looks forward to supporting President Trump's vision to promote religious liberty in our schools across the country."

Neither Trump nor the Department of Education offered details about what that guidance may include.

Trump in May signed an executive order creating a religious liberty commission,

which includes Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York and Bishop Robert E. Barron of Winona-Rochester, Minnesota. The commissioners gathered at the Museum of the Bible in Washington to examine what recommendations they should make to the president about promoting and protecting religious freedom in a report next spring. Their second hearing focused on religious freedom in public schools.

Trump also expressed condolences for the victims of the deadly Aug. 27 mass shooting at Annunciation Catholic Church in Minneapolis during a liturgy marking the start of the school year.

"Two weeks ago in Minneapolis, a demonic killer shot 21 people and murdered two precious children at a Catholic school," Trump said. "Can you believe that? Hard to believe."

Trump said there have been "too many" school shootings, and "our hearts are shattered for the families of those beautiful children."

"And I've made clear, Attorney General Pam Bondi is working really hard, we must get answers about the causes of these repeated attacks, and

we're working very, very hard on them," he said.

Some of the Trump administration's policy positions have been criticized by faith leaders, perhaps most notably on immigration. In January, Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, who is president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, said in a statement that executive orders signed by Trump upon returning to office on issues including migration, the environment and the death penalty were "deeply troubling," but praised other actions such as one on gender policy.

Trump touted his administration's actions on gender at the hearing, criticizing a position he called "transgender for everybody."

"On Day One of my administration, I signed an executive order to slash federal funding for any school that pushes transgender insanity," Trump said.

The same day as the commission hearing, Trump wrote, "Happy Birthday Mary, Queen of Peace!" on his website Truth Social, in a reference to the Nativity of Mary. The Sept. 8 feast is celebrated as Mary's "birthday" and is a sig-

nificant Marian feast in the Catholic Church, although Trump is not Catholic.

In opening remarks, Cardinal Dolan said while he was in Rome for the conclave that led to the election of Pope Leo XIV, his fellow cardinals from other countries where religious freedom is under threat expressed their concern.

"My brother cardinals from all over the world," Cardinal Dolan said, "came up to me, and I presume other of the other American cardinals, to thank us for our strong defense of religious liberty."


"I was fascinated by that, and asked them why, and they said, 'Well, because you in the United States serve as a beacon for the rest of us,'" he

said.

"Doesn't this give us an added sense of responsibility?" he continued. "We're not doing this in a self-serving way ... (but in a) benevolent way to help others, because they look to us for the protection of religious liberty."

Witnesses at the hearing included Lana Roman, a mom and petitioner in the Supreme Court case *Mahmoud v. Taylor*, where the high court ruled in favor of an interfaith group of Maryland parents who sought to opt their children out of classroom instruction pertaining to books containing LGBTQ+ themes to which they object on religious grounds.

See "Prayer" on Page 11



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# 'We Need to Pray a Lot,' Pope Says after Israeli Attack in Qatar

By **Cindy Wooden, Catholic News Service**

**VATICAN CITY (CNS)** — The "whole situation" in the Middle East "is very serious," Pope Leo XIV told reporters after Israel launched an attack on Hamas leaders in Qatar.

"In these moments, there is very serious news of an Israeli attack against some Hamas leaders, but in Qatar," the pope said Sept. 9. Qatar, in the Persian Gulf, has been trying to mediate an end to the war between Israel and Hamas. The country's capital is Doha.

"The whole situation is very serious," the pope told the reporters who were waiting for him as he left Castel Gandolfo to return to the Vatican.

Danny Danon, the Israeli ambassador to the United Nations, posted on X: "The precise strike in Doha targeted senior Hamas leaders who planned the October 7 massacre and celebrated while our citizens were abducted. I commend our security forces for this courageous and precise operation. There is no hiding place for terrorists, and we will continue to pursue them everywhere."

But António Guterres, U.N. secretary-general, told a news conference in New York, "We are just learning about the Israeli attacks in Qatar, a country that has been playing a very positive role to achieve a ceasefire and the release of all hostages."

"I condemn this fragrant violation of the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Qatar," Guterres said.

Pope Leo also told reporters gathered outside the Villa Barberini in Castel Gandolfo that he had just tried to phone Holy Family Parish in Gaza City, the only Latin-rite Catholic Church in Gaza.

"I just tried to call the pastor, but I have no news," the pope said. Israeli planes dropped leaflets on Gaza City in the morning, warning of a new attack on the city and encouraging civilians to evacuate.

Priests at both the compounds of the Greek Orthodox St. Porphyrius Church and Holy Family Church previously refused to evacuate since they were providing refuge for hundreds of civilians, including the elderly and children, who have nowhere else to go.

Both church compounds have been damaged by Israeli forces — St. Porphyrius in October 2023, and Holy Family in December 2023 and in July of this year. Israel's military said the strikes were unintentional.

"We need to pray a lot," Pope Leo said.



OSV News photo/Gregory A. Shemitz

A man photographs a 9/11 memorial on the side of the firehouse of F.D.N.Y. Engine Co. 10 and Ladder Co. 10 in New York City Sept. 8, 2025. Six firefighters from the fire station were killed while responding to the Sept. 11, 2001, terror attacks on the World Trade Center. The 24th anniversary of the attacks is observed this year.

## CEO of 9/11-Related Foundation Reflects on Service to First Responders, Vets, Families

By **OSV News (This story was originally published in 2024)**

**NEW YORK (OSV News)** — The passage of 23 years has only strengthened Frank Siller's resolve that first responders to the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and the soldiers lost in the war that followed will never be forgotten.

Siller is founder, chairman and CEO of the Tunnel to Towers Foundation, established by his family to honor the sacrifice of their youngest sibling, Stephen. A firefighter with the Fire Department of the City of New York, Stephen Siller died while trying to save lives at the World Trade Center. He was off-duty that day, but ran through the Brooklyn-Battery Tunnel to lower Manhattan with his 60 pounds of FDNY turn-out gear.

Two of four planes hijacked by terrorists on the morning of Sept. 11 destroyed the twin towers. The third smashed into the

Pentagon in Washington and the fourth went down in a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, after passengers on the Washington-bound plane thwarted the hijackers. Nearly 3,000 people were killed in the attacks; more than 6,000 were injured, and thousands more suffered long-term, sometimes-fatal health consequences.

The foundation is a reflection of the Siller siblings' Catholic faith and the example of their late parents, George and Mae, who were secular Franciscans. Siller said his parents demonstrated and taught Franciscan values of "service, sacrifice and doing good."

Tunnel to Towers helps injured first responders and veterans; helps spouses and children of firefighters and police officers killed in the line of duty, or as a result of 9/11-related illnesses; and has an increasing focus on helping homeless veterans.

Learn more about the organization on its website at [t2t.org](http://t2t.org).

## Prayer ...

Cont'd from Page 10

Roman said, "As Christians, we teach our son that every person is loved by God and should be treated with dignity and respect."

"We also teach him that sex is a gift from God and a natural, unchanging part of who we are. Many of these books introduced sexual concepts to children at an inappropriately young age putting children in the untenable position of having to

question who to trust: their teachers, or their parents," she said.

Sameerah Munshi, a member of the commission's advisory board and a Muslim community advocate in Mahmoud case, acknowledged a diversity of views in her faith tradition, but urged the commission to make clear recommendations to protect religious minorities.

"Opt-out protections must be made clear, accessible and enforceable," she said. "Ofentimes, these policies are in

place on paper, but can be difficult to actualize."

Munshi further argued that "laws on religious liberty must be implemented with transparency and consistency."

"Public institutions need guidance and accountability to ensure that they're not silencing only a particular viewpoint or voices on one particular issue," she said.

Ryan Anderson, president of the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington and one of the commissioners,

argued in response to witnesses' testimony that "it seems that there's a certain type of public school administrator who thinks that functional, practical atheism is neutrality."

"The founders' vision was that Jewish students could be authentically Jewish, Muslim students could be authentically Muslim, Protestant students could be authentically Protestant, Catholics to be authentically Catholic, it would be pluralistic," he said, adding, "I think that's a huge

problem here is that we've allowed ourselves to think that secularism is somehow neutral and it's not."

The commission's next hearing is scheduled for Sept. 29. It will examine "religious liberty issues in education from the perspectives of teachers and coaches, as well as religious liberty issues in school funding and educational choice," the Department of Justice said.

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

# Grace upon Grace over 105 Years

By Joyce Bibey, courtesy of #FaithInWV

The parishioners of St. Peter Catholic Church in Farmington were able to celebrate a life that spanned over 105 years — a life that experienced tremendous changes in our nation and West Virginia history and significant life lessons she shared with her family, friends, and acquaintances met along the way.

Her name may not be in a history book or ever make headlines outside of her small town in West Virginia, but Alice Rock Priester is a life of grace worth honoring.

Alice Rock Priester passed away at the age of 105 years, on June 25, 2025.

She was buried on June 28, the eve of the Feast of St. Peter, the patron of her parish, the rock of the Catholic Church, and her steadfast faith.

In John 1:16 we read, "From his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace."

Alice lived her life as inexhaustible as God's graces, and He energized her soul. She was more than the "sweet old lady" older than the Farmington church itself, which began in 1921. She had a storied life that deserves to be honored and appreciated.

Alice Rock Priester was born on Almond Street in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on February 2, 1920. She was the second child of Andrew and Mary Rock. The family moved to four states before West Virginia where her father found work in the coal mine in 1924. Her mother was a loving housewife who tended to 5 children and taught them many skills to last lifelong. Cooking, housekeeping, planting, and pickling, as well as

respect for all living things. They also tended two cows (Daisy and Pansy), numerous chickens, ducks, and the watchdogs of the property — geese.

Growing up Alice had numerous pets which fostered her lifelong love of dogs. Alice attended Farmington High School, and although she didn't graduate, she obtained a GED and later attended Fairmont State University.

Alice noted that she did not graduate high school because she accepted a job with the co-owners of Hartley's Department Store, J.H. "Jack" and Elizabeth Rownd, as a domestic (nanny and maid) at their home "Summerfield" on the crown of Hillcrest in Fairmont.

She became an extension of their family, accompanying them on trips across the southwest, New York City, Chicago, Cleveland, and Washington, D.C.

During this time, Arthurdale was being developed by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt as a homestead project during the Great Depression. It was a way to create communities to relocate families from struggling industrial areas to a rural, self-sustaining community. It was the first of about 100 homestead communities the federal government planned and built.

Alice traveled to Arthurdale several times with the Rownd family and was privileged to speak with the wife of President Franklin D. Roosevelt on a couple of occasions. Arthurdale, which is in Preston County, is recognized today as a national Historic District.

While with the Rownds, she also had the privilege and experience working with Charles White, a respected employee of the

Rownds, who had also been a former slave from South Carolina. She learned from White, who proudly shared his Gullah Geechee heritage and his Gullah language, traditions, and stories.

Alice Rock stayed with the Rownds for 10 years, who guided her purchase of a brand new 1949 Cream Buick Roadmaster convertible, which she said made few in Farmington jealous. She was 29.

Alice had known Paul Daniel "P.D." Priester all her life. Soon after her settling into her new life independent of the Rownds, Priester started courting her. They married a year later on June 14, 1950, at St. Peter's Catholic Church in their hometown of Farmington.

Alice and P.D. Priester "setup housekeeping in the #9 community" (now Rachel between Farmington and Mannigton) Alice was greatly involved in the push to obtain "city" water to the area. She worked 40 hours a week job at the Farmington company store. The couple had a son, Fred Rock Priester.

Not only did she continue working, and raising her son, but Alice also changed her career and became employed by Fairmont State University in the cafeteria, working for Frank Pulice.

She loved working there, and she especially loved the students and football players, who became lifelong friends and admirers.

Alice was proud to be a lifelong member of St. Peter's Catholic Church in

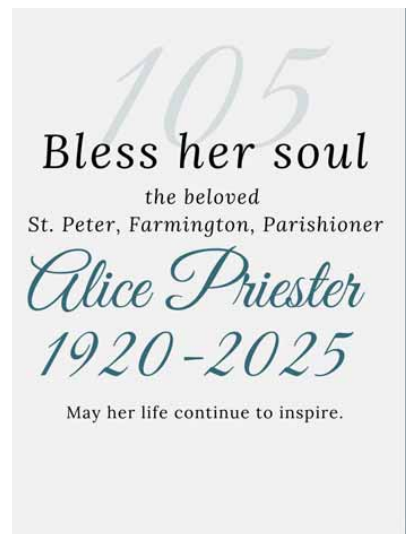


Photo illustration by Joyce Bibey

Farmington.

She served on numerous committees over the decades. Her character, faith, and work ethic earned her great respect, which was evident in 2020 when more than 300 people attended her 100th birthday Mass and social.

Alice also was on the first committee to raise funds to build the new Farmington Community Building and was very proud of the results.

Alice is survived by her son Fred Rock Priester of Farmington; Stepson Richard Daniel Priester, and nephew Richard (Maria) Priester, all of Norfolk, Va.

She was preceded in death by her husband Paul Daniel Priester, sisters Anna Rock of the #9 community, Mary Rock Marquez of Alhambra, Calif., Katy Rock Reeves of Norfolk, Va., and a brother Fred Rock of Rachel (#9 community).

Her fellow parishioners, family, and friends thank

those who keep her in their hearts and who made time to call her on the phone (she loved to talk on the phone) such as Linda and Mickey Abruzzino, Betty Jo and George Tippner, and Meredith and Rudy Banick.

The family would like to thank the staff and management of Fazio's Eldercare for their devoted and professional care for Alice. It is also important to recognize the pallbearers — Andrew Opyoke, K.C. Jones, George Tippner, Bill Glasscock, Rich Priester, and Fred Rock Priester. Honorary pallbearers are Richard Priester Sr. and Stephen "Cicso" Priester.

The life of Alice Rock Priester was celebrated at her funeral Mass at St. Peter's Catholic Church on Saturday, June 28.

Alice was buried next to the love of her life Paul Daniel Priester and beside her Mother Mary and brother Fred at Mt. Carmel Cemetery in Fairmont.

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# Evangelization at the Point Pleasant Car Show

By Father Bill Kuchinsky

“We are called to share our experience of faith with others, bearing witness to the love of Christ and becoming missionary disciples.” These words from Pope Leo XIV were shown in action recently.

It was a steamy hot Saturday on Main Street in Point Pleasant on the 26th of July. Lining the boulevard were over 100 “hot rods” – mostly vintage cars. Also, there was a booth set up for evangelization.

This evangelization effort was born from the hearts of the laity from Sacred Heart of Jesus (in town) which is a Mission of St. Matthew Parish in Ravenswood. Marqkita Sexton organized the effort working closely with her Pastor, Father Roy Kurakula. The planning for this event was accomplished in short order.

The desire to reach out to the community, to tell them about Jesus and the richness of the Catholic Faith was expressed just a couple of months ago. That same missionary zeal was evident in those who helped with the effort.

Pope Leo XIV recently remarked, “Don’t limit yourselves to theoretical knowledge; live your faith in a concrete way, experiencing God’s love in your daily lives.” This ex-

perience of God’s love seemed to be witnessed by the ease in which the parishioners engaged with those who passed by. It was as if by nature.

Many, including Catholics, stopped to chat. There were several conversations in addition to the many casual greetings along the way.

The “booth” was under a picnic tent. The space was so nicely set up that it looked like a chapel. There was a painting of the Mary, Undoer of Knots, along with an iconic print of The the Sacred Heart of Jesus (patron of this mission), prominently displayed along with Bibles, including a KJV.

Pamphlets were available to the visitors (many apologetic in nature – telling what Catholics really believe in this mostly Protestant area). A number of sacramentals were also freely offered; including rosaries, Miraculous Medals, St. Benedict medals, and prayer cards (some with explanations of the sacramentals).

Thoughtfully on such a sweltering day, the street evangelizers offered free ice-cold water and juice boxes. Certainly, this was a part of the Christian witness given that day.

Father Godwin Olugbami and I



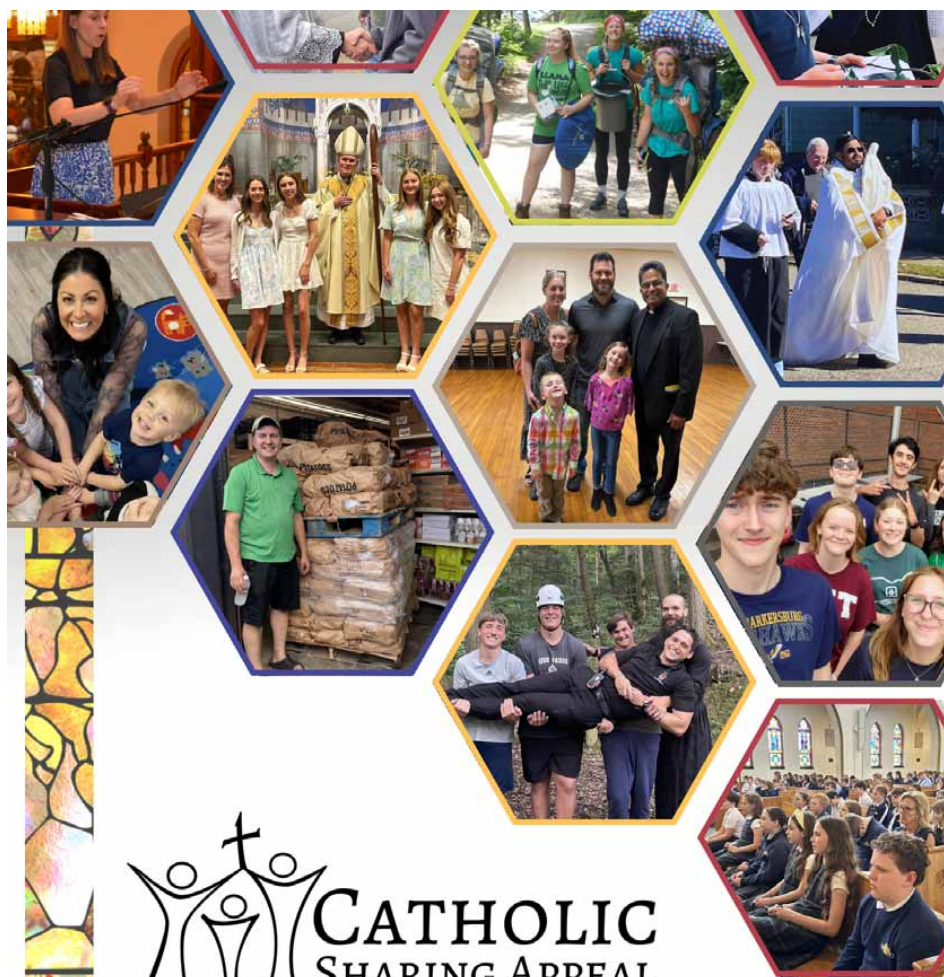
Courtesy photo

At their booth at the car show are, from left, Knights of Columbus Grand Knight Frank Nester, Father Godwin Olugbami, Father Bill Kuchinsky, Father Roy Kurakula, and Marqkita Sexton with her son John.

were asked to be a part of the effort, and were welcomed by Father Roy and his people with great hospitality. There was blessed fellowship among all. Grand Knight Frank Nester was there for the duration. Also present and aiding in the effort were Debbie Shook, Dave Shook

(helped set up), Jody Durst, Judy Browning, John Sexton, and Travis Sexton.

A number of the items were purchased from St. Paul Street Evangelization which offers sacramentals, teaching materials and training for such an effort.




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# Los nuevos santos Acutis y Frassati animan a los fieles a vivir la vida plenamente, dice el Papa

Por Carol Glatz, Catholic News Service

**CIUDAD DEL VATICANO (CNS)** — El mayor riesgo en la vida es desperdiciarla al no buscar seguir el plan de Dios, dijo el Papa León XIV al proclamar a dos nuevos santos: dos jóvenes laicos de los siglos XX y XXI. "Los santos Pier Giorgio Frassati y Carlo Acutis son una invitación para todos nosotros, sobre todo para los jóvenes, a no malgastar la vida, sino a orientarla hacia lo alto y hacer de ella una obra maestra", dijo el Papa el 7 de septiembre

"Esta es la fórmula, sencilla pero segura, de su santidad", dijo, es accesible a todos en cualquier momento. "Nos animan con sus palabras: 'No yo, sino Dios', decía Carlo. Y Pier Giorgio: 'Si tienes a Dios como centro de todas tus acciones, entonces llegarás hasta el final'".

Antes de canonizar a los primeros santos de su pontificado, el Papa León saludó a los más de 80.000 fieles que se habían reunido temprano en la plaza de San Pedro porque quería compartir su alegría con ellos antes del inicio de la solemne ceremonia.

"Antes de comenzar la solemne celebración de la Canonización, quería saludarlos y decirles unas palabras a todos ustedes, porque, si bien la celebración es muy solemne, también es un día de gran alegría. Quería saludar especialmente a tantos jóvenes, chicos y chicas, que han venido a esta Santa Misa", dijo, saludando también a las familias de los futuros santos y a las asociaciones y comunidades a las que habían pertenecido los jóvenes.

El Papa León pidió a todos que sintamos "en el corazón lo mismo que vivieron Pier Giorgio y Carlo: este amor por Jesucristo, sobre todo en la Eucaristía, pero también en los pobres, en los

hermanos y hermanas".

"También ustedes, todos nosotros, estamos llamados a ser santos", dijo, antes de retirarse para prepararse para la Misa y rendir homenaje a una estatua de María con el niño Jesús y los relictarios que contienen las reliquias de los dos jóvenes.

En su homilía, el Papa subrayó la llamada de Jesús en la lectura del Evangelio del día "a lanzarnos sin vacilar a la aventura que Él nos propone, con la inteligencia y la fuerza que vienen de su Espíritu y que podemos acoger en la medida en que nos despojamos de nosotros mismos, de las cosas y de las ideas a las que estamos apegados, para ponernos a la escucha de su palabra".

Eso es lo que hicieron los dos nuevos santos y lo que todo discípulo de Cristo está llamado a hacer, dijo.

Muchas personas, especialmente cuando son jóvenes, dijo, se enfrentan a una especie de encrucijada en la vida cuando reflexionan sobre qué hacer con ella.

Los santos de la Iglesia suelen ser retratados como "grandes personajes, olvidando que para ellos todo comenzó cuando, aún jóvenes, respondieron 'sí' a Dios y se entregaron a Él plenamente, sin guardar nada para sí", dijo el Papa.

"Contemplamos hoy a san Pier Giorgio Frassati y a san Carlo Acutis: un joven de principios del siglo XX y un adolescente de nuestros días, ambos enamorados de Jesús y dispuestos a dar todo por Él", dijo.

El Papa León dedicó gran parte de su homilía a compartir citas de ambos y detalles de sus vidas, algo de lo que el Papa Francisco se había alejado, prefiriendo centrarse más en las lecturas del día.

"La vida de Pier Giorgio representa una luz para la espiritualidad laical", dijo el Papa León.

"Para él la fe no fue una devoción privada; impulsado por la fuerza del Evangelio y la pertenencia a asociaciones eclesiales, se comprometió generosamente en la sociedad, dio su contribución en la vida política, se desgastó con ardor al servicio de los pobres", dijo.

"Carlo, por su parte, encontró a Jesús en su familia, gracias a sus padres, Andrés y Antonia --presentes hoy aquí con sus dos hermanos, Francesca y Michele", dijo, mientras la multitud aplaudía y Antonia sonreía tímidamente a la cámara.

San Acutis también encontró a Jesús en la escuela jesuita a la que asistía y "sobre todo en los sacramentos, celebrados en la comunidad parroquial", dijo. "Creció integrando naturalmente en sus jornadas de niño y de adolescente la oración, el deporte, el estudio y la caridad".

El Papa dijo que los nuevos santos "cultivaron el amor a Dios y a los hermanos a través de medios sencillos, al alcance de todos: la Santa Misa diaria, la oración, y especialmente la adoración eucarística".

San Frassati nació el 6 de abril de 1901 en Turín y murió allí el 4 de julio de 1925, a los 24 años, a causa de la poliomielitis. San Acutis nació de padres italianos el 3 de mayo de 1991 en Londres y murió en Monza, Italia, el 12 de octubre de 2006, a los 15 años, a causa de la leucemia.

El Papa dijo que "incluso cuando los aquejó la enfermedad y esta fue deteriorando sus jóvenes vidas, ni siquiera eso los detuvo ni les impidió amar, ofrecerse a Dios, bendecirlo y pedirle por ellos y por todos".

Varios familiares y personas cercanas a los nuevos santos asistieron a la Misa, junto con dignatarios, como el presidente italiano Sergio Mattarella.

Los padres de San Carlo Acutis, Andrea y Antonia, y sus hermanos gemelos, Michele y Francesca, que nacieron cuatro años después de la muerte de su hermano, estuvieron presentes y juntos llevaron al Papa las ofrendas. Michele también hizo la primera lectura de la Misa en inglés.

Valeria Valverde, quien leyó la primera oración de los fieles, es una joven costarricense que sufrió una grave lesión en la cabeza mientras vivía en Italia. Fue su inexplicable curación la que proporcionó el segundo milagro necesario para la canonización de San Acutis.

San Frassati participó activamente en la Acción Católica, la Sociedad de San Vicente de Paúl, la Federación Italiana de Universidades Católicas y la Tercera Orden Dominicana. Lorenzo Zardi, vicepresidente del grupo juvenil de la Acción Católica Italiana, leyó la segunda lectura de la Misa y Michele Tridente, secretario general del movimiento laico, también presentó al Papa los dones del ofertorio.

Antes de rezar el Ángelus, el Papa volvió a dar las gracias a todos por haber acudido a celebrar a los dos nuevos santos de la Iglesia.

Sin embargo, también pidió a los fieles una "incesante oración por la paz, especialmente en Tierra Santa y en Ucrania, y en todos los demás territorios ensangrentados por la guerra".

"A los gobernantes les repito: ¡escuchen la voz de la conciencia!", dijo.

"Las aparentes victorias obtenidas con las armas, sembrando muerte y destrucción, son en realidad derrotas y nunca traen paz ni seguridad", afirmó.

"Dios no quiere la guerra. quiere la paz", exclamó entre aplausos. Dios da fuerza a quienes trabajan para dejar atrás el ciclo del odio y seguir el camino del diálogo.

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

La diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston te exhorta a denunciar cualquier delito ante las autoridades civiles. Para realizar una denuncia en contra de cualquier obispo en todos los Estados Unidos, favor de reportarlo en la página web [www.repostbishopabuse.org](http://www.repostbishopabuse.org). Y si, además, existen motivos para creer que un obispo ha cometido alguna conducta sexual inapropiada favor de comunicarse con las autoridades civiles de la jurisdicción correspondiente y también puede realizar un reporte en la página web antes mencionada.

**Para informar a las autoridades civiles:** comuníquese con la policía local; los números varían según su ubicación.

Si considera que alguien está en peligro inmediato, favor de llamar al 911.

Para informar de forma confidencial sobre cualquier sospecha de abuso o negligencia infantil, incluido el abuso sexual, favor de comunicarse con la Oficina de Servicios de Protección Infantil de Niños y Familias de West Virginia, llamando a la línea directa de abuso infantil al 1-800.352.6513.

**Para informar a las autoridades diocesanas:** La diócesis exhorta a informar primeramente a las autoridades civiles correspondientes, cuando la denuncia incluye un delito, y también alienta a informar a las autoridades eclesásticas correspondientes. Para reportar casos sospechosos de abuso sexual de menores por parte del personal de la Diócesis de Wheeling-Charleston, comuníquese directamente con la diócesis a los teléfonos 1.888.434.6237 o 304.233.0880 para hablar con cualquiera de las siguientes personas asignadas: Sr. Bryan Minor, ext. 263; Sr. Tim Bishop, ext. 353; y si desea hablar en español con Sor Martha Gómez, ext. 264. También puede llamar a la Oficina de Ambiente Seguro de la diócesis al 304.230.1504 o a la línea directa de abuso sexual de la diócesis al 833.230.5656.

Los formularios de quejas están disponibles en línea en la página web [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org), favor de hacer clic en "Diócesis" en la barra de menú, luego en "Oficinas", en "Ambiente seguro" y en "Descargar archivos y formularios". El formulario se titula "Formulario de queja para denuncias de abuso sexual de menores". El formulario se puede enviar por correo en Estados Unidos a: Office of Safe Environment, Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, PO Box 230, Wheeling WV 26003.

**Para informar al Coordinador de Asistencia a Víctimas de la Diócesis:** Favor de llamar a Erin McFarland, M.Ed., LPC, al 304.559.6742. Además de las vías mencionadas anteriormente para denunciar el abuso sexual, la diócesis se ha asociado con la compañía Navex Global que ofrece la plataforma EthicsPoint para informar cualquier inquietud adicional, como sospecha de mala conducta financiera, profesional y personal de un sacerdote, diacono, religioso, o empleado laico de la diócesis o cualquier parroquia o escuela católica en West Virginia. Puede acceder a la plataforma EthicsPoint a través de la página web [www.dwc.org](http://www.dwc.org), en "Rendición de cuentas", luego "Informar mala conducta" o llamando al 844.723.8381.

EthicsPoint es una herramienta de denuncia confidencial y anónima, ellos se encargarán de transmitir su denuncia directamente a las autoridades civiles y a las autoridades diocesanas correspondientes, y lo más importante al denunciar a través de ellos, la identidad de la persona que denuncia está protegida.

## Enlaces e información:

Departamento de Salud y Recursos Humanos de WV: <https://www.wvdhhr.org/report.asp>. Policía Estatal de Virginia Occidental, Unidad de crímenes contra a menores: 304-293-6400.

# Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston Confirmation Schedule, Fall 2025

## Bishop Mark Brennan, Celebrant

Sunday, Sept. 28: St. James the Apostle Parish, Clarksburg, 11 a.m.

Thursday, Oct. 9: St. Anthony Parish, Fairmont, 6 p.m.

Saturday, Oct. 18: St. Anthony Parish, Charleston, 5 p.m.

Sunday, Oct. 19: Sacred Heart Parish, Huntington, 9 a.m.

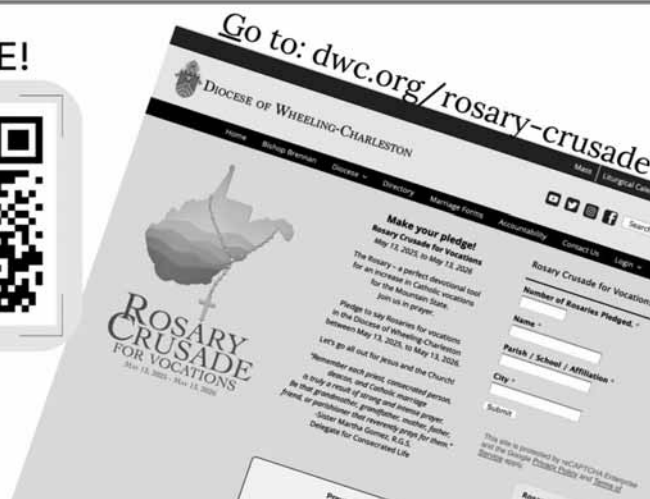
Saturday, Nov. 15: St. Francis Xavier Parish, Parkersburg, 5 p.m.

Tuesday, Nov. 18: St. Patrick Mission, Bancroft, 6 p.m.

Saturday, Dec. 6: St. Anthony Parish, Follansbee, 4 p.m.

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  - 8:00 WBOY NBC 12 Weston-Clarksburg-Fairmont
  - 6:30 WOAY ABC 4 Beckley-Bluefield-Oak Hill (Lewisburg)
  - 9:30 WVVA NBC 6 Beckley-Bluefield-Oak Hill (Lewisburg)
  - 9:30 DC News Now Hagerstown-Washington D.C.
- Plus watch online at - [www.mydailyliving.com](http://www.mydailyliving.com) and YouTube

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

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