



# The Catholic Virginian

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## 'This award represents all Catholic school teachers'

### Diocese's top teacher dedicates Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Award 'to all of us'

LILY NGUYEN DUNKLE  
The Catholic Virginian

**T**his award really represents ALL Catholic school teachers and I dedicate it to all of us," said Patricia Pitton.

The beloved teacher at St. Pius X Catholic School, Norfolk, won this year's Saint Elizabeth Ann Seton Award, the diocese's top award honoring excellence in its educators.

The diocesan Office of Catholic Schools (OCS) held its sixth annual Excellence in Catholic Education Celebration on Thursday, April 20, in Richmond.

Bishop Barry C. Knestout and Superintendent Kelly Lazzara recognized teachers for their hard work, dedication, and professionalism – and for serving their school communities while exemplifying the mission of OCS.

During the opening prayer, the bishop asked God to "strengthen the vocation" of all teachers and faculty, so they can help their students experience the love and beauty of Catholic schools.

Bishop Knestout also expressed gratitude for the high standard the teachers have set for Catholic education, and the sacrifices they have made so that more students can grow and carry on the faith.

Earlier this year, administrators and colleagues at each Catholic school in the diocese selected a teacher based on their "exceptional commitment to Catholic education through leadership and service to their students, parents, colleagues, parishes and school communities."

From that list of 23 teachers, three were announced as winners of Catholic Educator Awards: Susan Bender, from Our Lady of Mount Carmel School (OLMC), Newport News; Beatrice Korka, from St. Gregory the Great Catholic School, Virginia Beach; and Janet White, from Star of the Sea Catholic School, Virginia Beach.



(left to right) Dominican Sister Anna Joseph, principal of Our Lady of Mount Carmel School (OLMC), Newport News; Megan Jones Pearing, Charlottesville Catholic School; and Susan Bender, OLMC. Both Pearing and Bender received educator awards, and Pearing was once Bender's student at OLMC. (Photo/Michael Mickle)

#### Full circle

Collectively, the group of 23 educators recognized that night shares more than 300 years of teaching experience.

Five of the teachers have spent their entire careers teaching in Catholic schools. Ten were products of Catholic schools themselves.

A former student of St. Pius X School is now the principal there and remembers when Seton Award winner Pitton arrived at the school as a teacher. Decades later, he's back and she's still there!

One of Pitton's former students, Jennifer Grimm, is now a teacher at Portsmouth Catholic Regional School and was one of the 23 teachers honored this year.

"I was probably more proud of that than my own award, because I felt I had come full circle," Pitton said.

Another of this year's honorees, Megan Jones Pearing of Charlottesville

Catholic School, was once a student of Susan Bender, this year's winner from OLMC.

#### 'I am no different'

"I feel like I am no different from any of the other teachers,"



Patricia Pitton

said Pitton.

She said she was astounded when her name was called for the Seton award.

Pitton has spent 39 years teaching at St. Pius X. She has taught third, fifth, and sixth grade, and is currently teaching middle school science and sixth grade math.

She said she started off teaching in public schools but then decided to transfer to Catholic schools because "I was raised with higher expectations."

She calls Catholic school a family, not just a community.

The principal wrote that Pitton is "often the first teacher our alumni visit when they stop by school or school events."

Pitton said her former students often visit her and she stays in touch with many of them.

Her colleagues describe her this way: "Pat is one of the first teachers in school and is one of the last teachers to leave the building and she does it joyfully."

Pitton said many people have tried to convince her to switch to public schools for the higher pay and benefits.

"I believe in Catholic education and all it entails with all my heart," she said.

Pitton's favorite part of the job is when she sees "a child's face and eyes light up when they understand what they have been struggling with."

She remembers a fifth grade student who resisted school the entire year, and she refused to give up on him. At the end of the year, he brought her a bouquet of flowers with a handwritten thank you note, saying he loved her and would always remember her. Pitton said he grew up to be very successful.

"When we see our students succeed, when they send their own students back to us to teach them and see the love of God shining through

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## Express gratitude for those who grow our food



**CHRIST OUR HOPE**  
MOST REV. BARRY C. KNESTOUT

Last month I watched a Virginia Public Media program about one of my favorite foods — Virginia Peanuts. Part of its Made in Virginia series, the program, which originally aired in 2017 (<https://www.pbs.org/video/virginia-peanuts-svqh6q/>), explained why the dry, sandy soil in Sussex County, the right combination of sun and rain, and generations of farmers have developed the most efficient way of growing the best peanuts.

Even before I was assigned to Richmond, I knew about Virginia Peanuts. As those interviewed explained the process for growing the peanuts, they spoke with affection not only about their product but about their connection to the earth and to farming life.

Shortly after I watched the program, I was reminded of something else about farmers and farming — that they have a patron saint named Isidore. I was more familiar with St. Isidore of Seville, a seventh century Spanish archbishop who was known for his emphasis on education.

He not only established seminaries and schools, but he compiled a Catholic encyclopedia and a dictionary. In 1997, St. Pope John Paul, recognizing the impact of St. Isidore's scholarship, named him patron saint not of farmers, but of electronics and the internet.

The patron saint of farmers and all who work the land is another Isidore — St. Isidore the Farmer. In the late 11th and early 12th centuries, this Isidore worked the fields owned by a wealthy landowner in Madrid.

He began each day by attending Mass and then, as he walked behind the plow, he would continue to pray. What Isidore and his wife, St. Maria de la Cabeza, believed, they practiced through their service to the poor, particularly feeding the hungry.

In recent decades there has been much growth in urban and suburban regions of the Commonwealth. Nonetheless, there are still many farmers in the territory of our diocese who earn their living from the land. Among them are those who have family farms. They are people of faith — people who deal with vagaries of the weather, uncertain markets, and daunting competition from conglomerates. Yet, they continue to work the land.

While the Made in Virginia episode focused upon the peanut farmers in southeastern Virginia, there is rural life in other parts of our diocese, including along the Eastern Shore. Every summer I have an opportunity to celebrate Mass with and administer the sacrament of confirmation to migrant workers who work the fields where various fruits and vegetables are grown. It is the labor of so many like them that provides us with healthy food.

Monday, May 15, is the Memorial of St. Isidore the Farmer. Having food is something we might take for granted, rarely giving thought to the people who make it possible for us to enjoy that food. As farmers have already planted and are planting crops, this is an excellent time to express our gratitude to God for them and for all who work the land, and to pray that their harvest may be plentiful.

As part of our thanksgiving, we do well in calling to mind the words St. Pope John Paul spoke to farmers in Des Moines, Iowa,

during his first visit to the United States: “To all of you who are farmers and all who are associated with agricultural production I want to say this: the Church highly esteems your work” (Oct. 4, 1979).

May we always pray for them and the work they do.

### CLERGY APPOINTMENTS

Most Reverend Barry C. Knestout, bishop of Richmond, has announced the following clergy appointments.

#### OFFICIAL

**Father Esteban DeLeon**, Father Esteban DeLeon, pastor of Star of the Sea, Virginia Beach, is appointed ecumenical officer for the Diocese of Richmond, effective April 21, 2023. Father Esteban DeLeon replaces Monsignor Joseph Lehman who passed away in December.

**Father Matthew Kim Taekmin**, of the Diocese of Daejeon, South Korea, to pastor of St. Kim Taegon, Richmond, effective April 19, 2023.

**Father Paul Byong Seob Min**, from pastor of St. Kim Taegon, Richmond, to retired status, effective April 19, 2023.

**Father Thomas M. Yehl**, from parochial vicar of Blessed Sacrament, Alexandria, Diocese of Arlington, to chaplain of the Catholic Campus Ministry serving Virginia Tech, effective July 1, 2023.

*Editor's note: Father Thomas M. Yehl serves the Youth Apostles congregation, founded in the Diocese of Arlington. The Youth Apostles' goal is to inspire youth to a Christ-like life.*

## Papal academy to evaluate Marian apparitions

CAROL GLATZ  
Catholic News Service

ROME (CNS) – The Pontifical International Marian Academy has created a commission to study and monitor cases of alleged Marian apparitions and other mystical phenomena.

The new “observatory” or monitoring body was officially inaugurated at the academy in Rome April 15 and will study cases that have not yet received an official Church pronouncement regarding their authenticity.

Its purpose is “to provide concrete support to the study, authentication and correct disclosure of such events, always in harmony with Church teaching, relevant authorities and applicable norms of the Holy See,” Franciscan Father Stefano Cecchin, president of the Marian academy, said April 13.

It will specialize in cases such as alleged Marian apparitions, “weeping” statues of Mary, private revelations and stigmata.

“It is important to provide clarity because often presumed messages generate confusion, spread anxiety-inducing apocalyptic scenarios or even accusations against the pope and the Church,” he said in a written press release.



**Gisella Cardia kneels and looks skyward Aug. 3, 2020, in the moment devotees claim Mary appeared to her and revealed a message. The alleged apparitions take place in Trevignano Romano, Italy.** (CNS photo/Robert Duncan)

“How could Mary, mother of the Church, undermine (the Church’s) integrity or sow fear and conflict, she who is mother of mercy and queen of peace?” he asked.

“At the same time, it is important to provide formative support because facing certain cases requires adequate preparation,” Father Cecchin added.

The observatory will be made up of experts from different fields, including a lawyer specializing in safeguarding people who

are susceptible to criminal manipulation, fraud or deceit.

Father Cecchin said the body will set up commissions on the national and international level to “evaluate and study apparitions and mystical phenomena reported in various parts of the world” and to promote opportunities for keeping people updated and educated about the events and their “spiritual and cultural significance.”

The local commissions will also serve the local Church and its

bishops by acting as consultants and providing accurate information.

The new monitoring body was inaugurated just as an alleged visionary in a town 30 miles from Rome faced increased scrutiny by law enforcement and the local bishop.

Gisella Cardia, who claims she receives messages from Mary on the third day of every month, is currently under investigation by the district attorney’s office of Civitavecchia for “abuse of public credulity” or trust.

A commission set up by the local bishop is also conducting its own investigation.

Cardia also claimed a statue of Mary that she bought in Medjugorje, Bosnia-Herzegovina, cried tears of blood. However, a private investigator recently provided evidence to law enforcement alleging that the blood came from a pig.

Cardia had been found guilty and convicted of bankruptcy fraud in a business she used to run before moving to Trevignano Romano and claiming to receive messages from Mary.

Hundreds of people flock to the site the third of each month to hear the alleged messages.

# Preparing for the transitional diaconate

*David Arellano and Seth Michael Seaman will be ordained deacons on May 20 at the Cathedral of the Sacred Heart, Richmond, bringing them one step closer to the priesthood. They received the Call to Orders by Bishop Barry C. Knestout on March 30.*

LILY NGUYEN DUNKLE  
The Catholic Virginian

David Arellano was born on September 19, 1997, in Orange, California, then moved to Mexico soon after, where he lived for nine years with his grandmother and aunt. Arellano returned to the United States in 2006 after his grandmother's death to live in Rocky Mount with his mother, Maria, and his only sibling, Juan.

Arellano said his family and friends helped him adjust to his new life, which included learning to speak English as a fourth grader. His home parish is St. Francis of Assisi, Rocky Mount.

Arellano began discerning his vocation in the eighth grade, when he started attending church youth group and became an altar server. He described his family as being "culturally Catholic," but said "something in me stirred" as he learned more about the faith.

"I think God is calling me to something greater than myself ... I think what father (the priest) is doing is pretty cool, so that began turning the gears in my head," Arellano recalled about that time.

He said he put his discernment on the "back burner" while he adjusted to high school. By his junior year, he was active in youth group again, which "re-ignited the call."

In his senior year, he planned on going to Hampden-Sydney College before entering seminary. He said he prayed about his decision and real-



ized going to college would only delay his vocation.

He graduated high school in 2015 and headed to St. John Paul II Seminary in the fall instead.

Arellano completed formation at St. John Paul II and also earned a bachelor's degree from Catholic University of America and is currently studying at Mount St. Mary's Seminary. His favorite classes so far

have been Introduction to Liturgy, a literature course about the Gospel of John, and Homiletics.

He said the best part of formation is being "completely immersed in the liturgical life of the Church." Arellano said he's been able to "see liturgy for what it is, not just a set of rules, but

entering into the mystery of God so we can offer God worship."

Arellano says as a deacon, he is looking forward to presiding over certain liturgies – such as baptisms and weddings outside of Mass – as well as reading the Gospel and preaching.

Arellano admits he is a little nervous about this next step in his formation because he considers himself an introvert.

"I don't like being the center of attention, but knowing people will be looking to me, I don't want to stay in my shell – I want to be with the people and be able to help them," he explained.

Arellano says his hobbies are fishing, playing the saxophone and cooking for others.

"I'm known for texting my (seminarian) brothers and saying, 'hey, dinner at 5 in the rec room.'"

LILY NGUYEN DUNKLE  
The Catholic Virginian

Seth Michael Seaman was born May 26, 1986, in a small town in Pennsylvania, living there with his parents, Lon and Veronica, and brother, Shane.

He was baptized in the Catholic Church but said his family did not have an active faith life.

Seaman said his family moved to Hampton when he was nine years old, and he considers it his hometown, with his home parish being St. Joseph, Hampton.

Seaman said he was "a normal kid" – but things changed drastically when he was 17.

He said he was standing in his room when "the Lord decided to make himself known to me in a very powerful way." He was compelled to get to know God.

Seaman found a small pocket New Testament in his home and read it, finding himself enthralled by the stories of Jesus. He read the Bible daily for the next few years.

He said he wanted to return to his Catholic roots, but decided after doing research online that the Bible and the Catholic Church did not complement one another. He became active in a Methodist church.

During this time, he graduated from Old Dominion University and was working as a design engineer. He decided to go to a Methodist seminary to become a pastor, entering Asbury Theological Seminary in Kentucky.

Through his studies at Asbury,



Seaman said his eyes were finally opened to the truth and beauty of the Catholic Church. He described it as a "gut-wrenching time" when he felt "stretched between two opposing sides." He graduated with a Master of Divinity degree and was confirmed as a Catholic a few months later.

He is now studying at the Theological College at Catholic University of America (CUA).

His favorite courses have been Wisdom Literature, which focuses on books from the Old Testament; and Eschatology, which is the study of death, final judgment, and Jesus' return.

Seaman said the most formative and fun part of formation so far has been his pastoral year, when he served at Holy Trinity, Norfolk, with Father James Glass.

As he looks ahead to being a deacon, Seaman said he looks forward to being able to preach, proclaim the Gospel, and be with families during funerals and baptisms. He said he is excited to have that "capacity to be the Lord's minister."

Seaman said he hopes to learn more during his diaconate year about helping couples undergoing marriage preparation classes. "I know I have room to grow there," he explained.

In his free time, Seaman enjoys swimming and other water-related activities, and names Grandview Beach in Hampton as one of his favorite beaches.

## Deacons connect the dots



The Diocese of Richmond is blessed with the ministry of nearly 235 active and retired deacons. Since 1997, I have been

privileged to work with some exceptional deacons at every parish in which I have served.

On the Fifth Sunday of Easter, we have the reading from Acts of the

Apostles where the apostles institute the diaconate. It is, therefore, a fitting Sunday to reflect upon the essential vocation of deacons in the Church and the role the diaconate has in the Church's structure.

Deacons are the ones who connect the dots. Their ministry has its origin in the ministry of Christ the

Servant, but they are not sacramentalized social workers.

Deacons assist at the altar and are called to teach and preach, preside at baptisms, marriages and funerals. But they are not a priest "lite."

Deacons are a sacramental sign of a particular and indispensable part of Christ's identity and ministry – Christ the Servant.

Deacons help the Church connect the dots between one essential aspect of the ministry of the Church – care of the poor, justice and administration – and the other aspect of the Church's ministry: word and sacrament.

The connection between the two helps give the Church's ministry life. In his very person, the deacon is the sacramental presence of this twofold aspect of the ministry of the Church. This connection, personified in the deacon, prevents the Church from devolving

into simply one more non-governmental agency in the world.

During the Easter season, yes, the Church wants us to reflect on Christ's Resurrection. But the Church is also reflecting on how she lives out that reality in time. The Church is the continuation of Jesus' words and deeds until, in the fullness of time, all things are brought together in the risen Christ.

During the Second Sunday of Easter, we reflected on the gift of Divine Mercy. On the Third Sunday of Easter, we had the Kerygmatic preaching of Peter and the apostles that is still the mission of their successors, the bishops of the Church, to proclaim in season and out of season.

On the Fourth Sunday of Easter, Good Shepherd Sunday, the Church sets before us Jesus' priesthood through the image of the Good Shepherd. Many priests use Good Shepherd Sunday as an opportunity to reflect on the vocation of priesthood.

The Fifth Sunday of Easter shows us that the diaconate was

instituted to protect and promote the central ministry of the apostles and their successors – preaching the Gospel of the Lord.

A deacon's mission is for the whole Church, not just for the parish to which he happens to be assigned. The mission of a deacon is to look out for the unmet needs of the Church and to address those needs. He connects the dots between the proclamation of the Gospel and serving God's people.

Conversely, in the practical ministry of a deacon, he grows closer to God's people. Through that closeness, the deacon is a bridge connecting the dots between the needs of the individual members of the Body of Christ with the Body of Christ at prayer in the eucharistic liturgy.

We give thanks to God for all deacons who have allowed themselves to be configured to Christ the Servant for the sake of the Church and her ministry.

*Msgr. Timothy Keeney is pastor of Incarnation, Charlottesville.*

**Fifth Sunday of Easter – Year A**  
**Acts 6: 1-7**  
**Ps 33: 1-2, 4-5, 18-19**  
**1 Pt 2: 4-9**  
**Jn 14: 1-12**

# Planting seeds of faith and service in Young Vincentians



Volunteer Greg Fick supervises as the Young Vincentians of St. Benedict, Chesapeake, work to build a community garden in the front yard of a house providing office space to Catholic Charities of Eastern Virginia and Ghent Area Ministries in Norfolk, on March 11. (Photo/Wendy Klesch)

WENDY KLESCH

Special to The Catholic Virginian

It may be too early for tomatoes, but it's never too soon to grow in faith and service.

The Young Vincentians, the youth apostolate of the St. Vincent de Paul Society of St. Benedict, Chesapeake, spent two Saturdays this March building a community garden in the front yard of a small brick house in Norfolk's Ghent area – the shared home of Ghent Area Ministries (GAM) and an office of Catholic Charities of Eastern Virginia (CCEVA).

"I thought it would be nice to help with the garden," sixth-grader Noah Wagler said. "It seemed like it would be worth it to sacrifice the time to help build it."

"The people who run the office are going to plant vegetables that anyone can take," Noah added.

Nancy Von Tersch, president of the St. Vincent de Paul Society's St. Benedict conference, said

that the project sprouted up out of pure happenstance, when she met Tracy Fick, CEO of CCEVA, during a tour of the new Catholic Charities facilities off Military Highway.

"I was explaining to her that we were looking for a project for a youth group," Von Tersch said, "and she said, 'do we ever have a project for you.' It was like divine intervention."

Fick said that she had hoped for some time to plant a garden in the front yard of the house, to supply visitors to CCEVA and to GAM – an ecumenical organization comprised of 18 neighborhood houses of worship dedicated to serving people in need – with fresh vegetables.

"Anytime you are serving vulnerable populations, you really want people to feel respected and cared for," she said. "So I thought, let's make this really beautiful and just more inviting for people who come to use the center."

"Those who are passing by can even reach over the fence, if they want, and just pick something that they can use," said Fick.

## A budding partnership

Founded in 1833, the Society of St. Vincent de Paul is a worldwide organization of lay Catholics whose mission is to follow Christ's call to serve people who are lonely, suffering, and in need.

The conference at St. Benedict was founded just over a year ago, in March 2022, Von Tersch said. The Young Vincentians, the organization's youth apostolate, held its first meeting the following November.

"They started out with 11 members," Von Tersch said. "By December, they had about 22 members. By January, they had 28. It's been wonderful, seeing how it's grown."

Von Tersch said that she invited Fick and her husband, Greg – who planned and designed the community garden – to present the idea for the service project at the Young Vincentians' February meeting.

"They told them all of what the project would entail," she said. They gave them the diagram of the garden and the rundown of the level of commitment it would take: at least two Saturdays.

CCEVA offered to sponsor and fund the venture, if the Young Vincentians were willing to accept the task at hand.

The group voted unanimously to adopt the project, eighth-grader Elora Rusk said.

"Everyone decided that it sounded like a good idea – that they wanted to help," she said.

## Plotting and planning

During the first work session on March 4, Greg Fick volunteered to teach two shifts of teens how to use the power tools necessary to build the wooden frames of the raised beds, Von Tersch said.

On March 11, a third shift of students arrived to shovel dirt into the new beds and to mulch the surrounding areas, in order to prepare the garden for planting.

"I told them that it something that was going to require a lot of elbow grease," Tracy Fick said, laughing.

Before they began, the students gathered by the door of the house to open their meeting with prayer. Then, fueled by oranges, peanut butter crackers and youthful enthusiasm, they set to work.

Sixth-grader Vincent Macera said he thought it would be fun to come out to the garden, since he has a lot of friends in the group.

"I just wanted to come and help," he said, as he shoveled along the sidewalk, uprooting any vestiges of weeds.

The Ficks, Von Tersch, Mike Gray, building supervisor of GAM, as well as a few parents all gathered on the sidewalk outside of the yard's low



Moira Gintyrapp, Noah Wagler and Vincent Macera shovel dirt into raised garden beds on March 11 as part of a Young Vincentians project to benefit Catholic Charities of Eastern Virginia and Ghent Area Ministries. (Photo/Wendy Klesch)

chain-linked fence to watch the kids' progress.

Von Tersch explained that the group is almost entirely student-run, giving the teens the chance to hone their organizational skills and to grow as servant leaders of Christ.

"They made up the schedule, and they decided who was going to work what shift," she said. "They were responsible for distributing permission slips and for seeing all the paperwork was turned in."

"This is their first big project out of the gate," said Von Tersch. "They are building their own relationships as a group. It's nice to see them develop friendships with that spirituality level."

## Flourishing together

Out on the driveway at the side of the

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Noah Wagler, Vincent Macera and Elora Rusk shovel dirt into raised garden beds in front of a small brick house on Colonial Avenue in Norfolk's Ghent providing office space to Catholic Charities of Eastern Virginia and Ghent Area Ministries, on March 11. (Photo/Wendy Klesch)

# 'Next step up' for Society of St. Vincent de Paul

## First St. Vincent de Paul thrift store in diocese opens



**ROSE MORRISSETTE**  
Special to The Catholic Virginian

When the doors to the new Society of St. Vincent de Paul (SVDP) Thrift Store swing open, the mission of the society is on full display – literally.

Patrons immediately find a Mission Center to the right of the entrance with informational materials that introduce them to SVDP.

"It also serves to communicate why we're different," Deacon Andy Cirmo explained. "This is not just another thrift store. This is a thrift store that supports SVDP's mission."

Deacon Cirmo is spiritual advisor for both the St. Michael the Archangel Catholic Church SVDP Conference and for the SVDP Richmond Council of conferences.

Shopping in the store furthers SVDP's work.

Society members, or Vincentians, do that work, mainly through parish conferences that serve those in need – their 'friends in need' – as they fondly refer to them; and, in so doing, grow spiritually.

The new store is an outgrowth of SVDP's rapid expansion in the diocese since 2016. Currently there are eight – and soon-to-be nine – conferences and a Richmond Council that manages them, headed by Executive Director Dan Kearns who previously was president of the St. Michael's conference, one of the first in the diocese.

As council president, Kearns is now at the helm of another first ... the store at 2611 Buford Road, North Chesterfield, the diocese's inaugural thrift store.

"It's a wonderful next step up," he said.

### 'Four legs for the table'

The thrift store, a nonprofit, is governed by a five-person "store's committee" which reports back to the council.

"We had four reasons for opening

the store," Kearns said. "We called them 'four legs for the table.'"

The reasons were to generate income for the work of the society in the diocese, to be accessible to those in need, to provide opportunities for volunteering, and to provide community outreach for those unfamiliar with SVDP – to be a visible presence.

Kearns believes the store will start seeing some profit by its second year, then pick up steam by the third.

"The big goal is to be able to take money and turn it back to the conferences," he said.

### Herculean task, record time

The Herculean task of opening the store was accomplished in record time.

It was less than a year ago that Kearns visited the society's model thrift store in Avondale, Arizona. After that visit, the store was a go.

While in Arizona, he learned how to run a thrift store, then based the new store on that model.

"We follow what St. Vincent has. SVDP has best practices," Kearns said. "They don't do anything without a reason, and nothing is left to chance."

The hunt for space for the store took five months, but early this year, the council secured an ideal building in an ideal location for a good price; and, by April, it was open for business.

### Blessed twice

In the lead-up to its grand opening on April 15, the new store was blessed twice.

On March 28, Father Brady, St. Michael's pastor, formally blessed the store.

Kearns and Steve Lindsey, a member of the store's committee, joined Father Dan in delivering remarks to about 50 guests, expressing gratitude for the many volunteers and donors who stepped up to make the thrift store a reality.

"Many volunteers have spent countless hours preparing the St. Vincent de

Above: Bishop Barry C. Knestout visits the St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store in North Chesterfield on April 4, blessing the first SVDP thrift store in the diocese and its volunteers before the grand opening day. (Photo/Dorothy Abernathy)

Far left: WWII veteran Bob Polich, 99, hoists the American flag and the SVDP flag at the thrift store on Tuesday, March 28. (Photo/Dorothy Abernathy)

Left: Father Dan Brady, assisted by Deacon Andy Cirmo, blesses the diocese's first St. Vincent de Paul Thrift Store, Tuesday, March 28, in North Chesterfield. (Photo/Brian Olszewski)

Paul Thrift Store for its opening. The transformation of the space has been incredible," Lindsey noted.

And from the beginning, there has been no shortage of willing donors.

Less than a year ago, one generous donor provided seed money for the new venture. The establishment of a Thrift Store Founders Campaign to raise additional money followed.

At the blessing ceremony, Lindsey, who has assisted Kearns in securing funds for the store, cited 12 of his fellow Vietnam veterans who immediately said "yes" to his request for financial support, and "helped get things started."

He also cited St. Michael's Knights of Columbus Joseph P. Solari Council #11172 for its support.

The March 28 ceremony was replete with history. World War II veteran Bob Polich raised both the American flag and the SVDP's flag over the store for the first time. Polich, who turned 99 on April 28, hoisted the flags on the store's refurbished flagpole over the 103-year-old building that once housed a U.S. post office for 25 years, an appliance store, and most recently, a consignment shop.

The following week, on April 4, Bishop Barry C. Knestout made a special visit to the store and blessed it and its volunteers. The bishop believes the store will help grow awareness of the society and its work throughout the diocese.

### Accessible, warm, welcoming

The 6,100-square foot building is in a very busy location in the

heart of Bon Air and is on a bus line. Because the store is open both to the public and designed for SVDP's friends in need for shopping, Kearns believes it is important that people are able to get there by bus.

It is also important to him that people who come into the store feel warm and welcome.

The walls are painted a soft SVDP blue and white. New lighting provides a bright environment. Furniture groupings are evocative of home settings. Large signs with testimonials from people who have been helped by the society over the years adorn the walls.

Clothing, furniture, household goods, and kids' and seasonal items are among the store's offerings. Bedroom furniture and new mattresses are available in a special section, and higher-end items are available in a store boutique.

The store operates with a top-of-the-line Point of Sale inventory control system endorsed by SVDP.

The store is volunteer-dependent, so sustaining enough volunteers for its smooth operation is critical. The hope is that volunteers will come from other conferences and from those Catholic parishes in close proximity to the store that don't have conferences: St. Joseph, St. Edward the Confessor, and Epiphany.

Kearns thinks about opening more stores eventually, but he is cautiously optimistic.

"That would be a nice long-term goal," he said, but he would first like to see how this one goes.

# A 'normalized' culture needs a 'normalized' Christianity

## GUEST COMMENTARY

SISTER HOSEA RUPPRECHT  
DAUGHTERS OF ST. PAUL

Do you ever air quote the word “normal” in a conversation? I do, because what is “normal” seems to be something different for everyone. The definition of the word changes with shifts in society. Prevailing attitudes toward gender identity, casual sex, abortion and same-sex marriage are among those things that have become more “normalized” – more culturally acceptable – in recent years.

These attitudes often filter into society through film, television, music and social media. Because they’re “normal,” right? Well, maybe for some, but not for everyone.

Does the entertainment media’s presentation of what is “normal” match your experience? There’s a saying in media literacy education: “Media normalize behavior.” In other words, media stories can influence the way we perceive what is or is not socially acceptable, or what is or is not considered “normal.”

For example, in many shows or films, when a couple goes out on a date they end up in bed together. If life were like TV, that would be considered “normal” and acceptable. Presenting this kind of behavior constantly in shows could influence how kids and teens, but also adults, think of sexuality in real-life relationships.

For Catholics, though, the Church teaches that the gift of intimacy through sexual relations is exclusive to marriage (between one man and one woman). Do casual attitudes toward sex depicted in film, TV and on social media make it

seem more acceptable? Yes. Does that mean it “is” acceptable? Indeed, no.

When a good friend of mine was engaged, both she and her fiancé – as practicing Catholics – were following the teachings of the Church. She shared some frustration she was experiencing, saying, “Why does everyone assume we’re either living together or sleeping together already? We’re not.”

Cohabitation and sex before marriage happen a lot in entertainment media but that doesn’t mean everyone’s doing it or that it’s acceptable for followers of Christ.

There’s a psychological term that has been getting attention recently: “social contagion.” It means that people can pick up on behaviors or emotions from crowds or networks of people around them, sometimes all-unawares.

For example, laughing at a movie might be an emotional response, just because the people around you are laughing. An example of behavioral contagion had store shelves devoid of toilet paper at the beginning of the pandemic.

If the influences around us are “socially contagious,” can we become “contaminated” by the ideas and messages we let into our minds through the media we experience? Sadly, yes, and young people are particularly susceptible.

Have no doubt about it: social influences are strong. I know of a Catholic school that experienced a group of seventh-grade girls who considered transitioning genders together, which resulted in the pastor and principal talking with the girls and their families.

A February 2022 article by Anastasia Hanonick in “The University News” out of St. Louis

University confirms that 60-80% of American college students have experienced a “hook-up” (sex without emotional connection) in some way. There’s no denying that social influence contributes to these troubling statistics.

Some influences are good. Parents influencing children in learning to live their faith is a good thing, as is the Church, influencing Christians to develop and deepen relationships with God. The question is: how can we counteract influences that are contrary to our faith, especially the influence of media stories? Here are a few tips:

— Learn, share, and live your faith. Know what the Church teaches, share it and model it in your life. Influence society for the good by living an authentic relationship with God.

— Talk about media stories with children and teens. Ask them what they think of characters and their behavior. If characters exhibit problematic behavior, ask what a better way would be. If virtuous behavior is on display, ask how that could translate into real life.

— Be courageous. It’s not easy to embrace values and beliefs that are counter-cultural. Pray and ask God for the strength to witness to your faith, even when it’s not popular.

Yes, we need to acknowledge the “normalizing” effects of media messages and the influences of social contagion but without fear. Just remember that, as Christians, we are called to “normalize” Gospel behavior in all our personal, faith, social and media interactions.

*Sister Hosea Rupprecht is the associate director of the Pauline Center for Media Studies, a ministry of the Daughters of St. Paul.*

### Modern culture diverging from truth

I am writing concerning the “Be compassionate, yet firm” (Catholic Virginian, March 20). Thank you for your comprehensive coverage of Mary Hasson’s presentations on gender ideology.

I attended one of those presentations and found it to be among the best talks I have ever heard on any subject. It seems to me the gender-ideology issue is only one aspect of the larger problem of our Western culture diverging ever more rapidly from objective truth.

This is perhaps best represented by an excerpt from the 1992 opinion in *Planned Parenthood v. Casey*: “At the heart of liberty is the right to define one’s own concept of existence, of meaning, of the universe, and of the mystery of human life.”

That, of course, is simply not true. But it represents the position of the most influential elements of our secular society.

Mary Rice Hasson’s presentation was excellent, but only a small percentage of our Catholic faithful attended. At Sunday Mass we need to hear more from the pulpit about how to address the problems that result from the assault on truth.

— Tom Strassburg  
Earlsville

### Young, single Catholics need to connect

As a young adult Catholic (millennial) struggling in the dating world to find another Catholic with the same values, I enjoyed reading

the article titled “Dating crisis fuels freefall of Catholic marriages” (Catholic Virginian, March 6). I agreed with all of it — every aspect from each person in the article. For a long time, I thought I was the only one struggling to meet other young adult Catholics.

So, what is a solution which could lead to a rise in Catholic marriages? Here are a few ideas:

maybe a diocese could host a Single Young Adult Retreat with different religious topics like prayer, the meaning of Mass, etc. and activities like cooking class, taking a tour of a local area (to help us meet people with the same interests. Maybe even a class on how to get over the fear of socializing (LOL)).

I would like to see parishes connect more with each other. My home parish is in the suburbs (I absolutely love my home parish), but I think I’m the only young single adult that attends almost year-round. So, I started going to other parishes to seek and find other young adults.

How about a Catholic league for a sport? At least some kind of young adult activities that can last a few weeks instead of a day or just a weekend.

More parishes could offer more men’s and women’s groups for the younger generations, e.g., Bible study, and religious groups where we have different topics on our faith.

I wish there could be one app on which all parishes could post their events; that would be nice!

— Katie Lemza  
Midlothian

### Gun ownership not in Gospel

I disagree with the author of Feb. 20’s Letter to the Editor, who stated that through Luke, God is giving a nod of approval for gun ownership. I disagree on historical and theological bases.

Remember that the Gospels were written between 20 and 50 years after Jesus’ death. It was several hundred years later that the Gospels we read today were accepted as, well, gospel.

Originally the Gospels were written in Greek, a language Jesus himself never spoke. Over centuries they have been translated into many languages. In the art of translation, the translator must first determine what the original text and context is portraying, and then select the closest equivalent in the second language. This is a subjective process.

Luke is the only author to cite these words from Jesus. John, Mark,

and Matthew do not, nor do the Gospel of Thomas or the Q source documents.

Theologically, Jesus proclaimed that the Kingdom of God had already arrived. He advised his followers to live each day in the Kingdom.

When confronted in the Garden of Gethsemane by a crowd armed with swords and clubs, one of Jesus’ group drew his sword and committed a violent act. Jesus did not advise Peter to lock and load his AR 15. Rather he told Peter to put away his sword because violence is not part of the Kingdom of God.

If Luke 22:36 is a call to gun ownership, is Luke 24:38 (“So they said, ‘Look, Lord, here are two swords.’ Then he told them, ‘It is enough.’”) a call that owning two guns is all that is allowed?

— George Shaboltnik  
Midlothian

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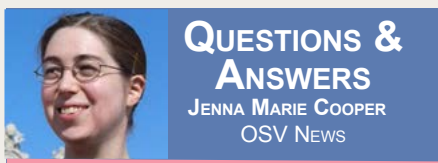
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# Jesus raised the dead. Where were their souls?



**QUESTIONS & ANSWERS**  
 JENNA MARIE COOPER  
 OSV NEWS

**Q. Regarding the people Jesus raised from the dead, where were their souls while they were dead? (Location withheld)**

**A.** Among the many miracles Jesus performed as part of his public ministry, some of the most remarkable include his raising several recently-deceased people from the dead.

In the Gospels we read of the raising of Jairus' young daughter, (see Mt 9:18-26; Mk 5:21-43; and Lk 8:40-56), as well as the only son of a widow in the city of Nain (Lk 7:11-17). Perhaps most famously, chapter 11 of John's Gospel recounts the raising of Jesus' friend Lazarus, brother of Martha and Mary.

While each of them were indeed truly raised from the dead in a miraculous way, it would be more appropriate to speak of their "revival" rather than their "resurrection." That is, Jairus' daughter, the widow's son, and Lazarus would all eventually die a second time, and definitively.

In contrast to this, when Jesus was "resurrected" in the proper sense of the term, he moved totally beyond death and could never die again (see the Catechism of the Catholic Church, 646).

To your question, it's notable that in accounts of Jesus raising these people from the dead, the

Gospels give us plenty of what we might call "human interest" details; Jesus tells Jairus to give his newly-raised daughter something to eat (Lk 8:55), and Jesus wept upon hearing of his friend Lazarus' death (Jn 11:35).

But they do not tell us clearly where these people's spirits went or what was experienced in death. Likewise, as far as I have been able to find, the Church doesn't give us a direct, specific answer to the question.

But we may take into account the Church's traditional understanding of what happened on Holy Saturday, namely that Jesus descended into "hell" (understood in this sense as simply the underworld or the realm of the dead, rather than a freely-chosen state of separation from God), in order to triumphantly open the gates of heaven to all of God's faithful who were awaiting their redemption from his sacrifice on the cross.

The Office of Readings from the Liturgy of the Hours for Holy Saturday includes an ancient homily which contains an imaginative meditation on Jesus' descent to the underworld during the time between his death and resurrection:

"He has gone to search for our first parent, as for a lost sheep. ... At the sight of him Adam, the first man he had created, struck his breast in terror and cried out to everyone: 'My Lord be with you all.' Christ answered him: 'And with your spirit.' He took him by the hand and raised him up, saying: 'Awake, O sleeper, and rise from the dead, and Christ will give you light.' ... Rise, let us

leave this place, for you are in me and I am in you; together we form only one person and we cannot be separated."

So, if we wish to speculate a little, my own guess is that Lazarus and the others would have – for however brief a time – shared in the hope and longing of all the other souls of the dead who were awaiting their salvation in Christ.

**Q. I'm reading the Catechism of the Catholic Church and have a question about CCC 460. Can you please fully explain the lines: "For the son of God became man so that we might become God" and "... might make men gods." I am to become GOD? That doesn't seem right.**

**A.** No, Catholics do not believe we literally "become" God in the sense of becoming beings with the capacity to create universes out of nothing, by means of pure will; or that we become radically all-powerful or all-knowing; or that we ourselves become worthy of the worship due to God alone.

There is and can only ever be one God. And even in the heavenly life of the world to come, we retain our human nature. We can't even change our nature to become angels, as is sometimes popularly supposed.

So, how should we understand this line in the catechism? There is helpful clarity by looking at the opening of the very paragraph you cite. CCC 460 begins by telling us that "The Word became flesh to make us 'partakers of the divine nature.'"

That is, because we are united to Jesus and become like him through baptism, we "partake" i.e., share in Jesus' own life as the son of God. Sharing in this divine nature means, among other things, that we are able to enjoy eternal life and that we become God's children by adoption.

It might also be helpful to note some overall context. Paragraph 460 is situated in the middle of a discussion on the mystery of Jesus' Incarnation – that is, how the "Word became flesh" (Jn 1:14), or how Jesus remained fully God while being born in our human nature.

The specific passage in question here was not actually written by the drafters of the catechism, but is rather a quote from a Church Father, St. Athanasius, from his book "On the Incarnation of the Word."

This idea that Jesus, the Word of God, took on our human nature in order that humanity might be enabled to have some share in his divine nature is a theme that actually runs throughout our faith tradition.

Even during the Mass, when the priest mixes a drop of water into the wine which is soon to be consecrated, he prays quietly to himself: "By the mystery of this water in wine, may we come to share in the divinity of Christ, who humbled himself to share in our humanity."

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



**Zachary Macera and Connor Schilz of the Young Vincentians of St. Benedict, Chesapeake, load a wheelbarrow to help build a community garden in Norfolk's Ghent on March 11.** (Photo/Wendy Klesch)

## Planting

*Continued from Page 4*

house, a group of older teens set up an assembly-line process, shoveling dirt into wheelbarrows for the younger volunteers to distribute.

"I just wanted to help the community," eighth-grader Zachary Macera said. "I thought it would be a good way to give back."

"It just felt right," tenth-grader Jayden Schilz agreed. "I like the hard work. It's fun. But then, I do a lot of

yard work."

Fick said that CCEVA was happy to sponsor the project, a team effort by which the youth of St. Benedict, CCEVA and GAM all benefited.

"It makes sense to pool our resources and to partner with other agencies," Fick said. "We can do so much more together."

"These kids are phenomenal," Von Tersch said. "They did really well. The youth decided that they wanted to do this, and they made it happen."

## Celebrating Life

*Supporting Those Experiencing Unplanned Pregnancy*

*Respect Life Ministry of St. Gabriel Catholic Church invites you to a panel discussion about resources and support available to expectant parents experiencing an unplanned pregnancy.*

*Sunday, May 21, 2023 at 1:00 pm*

*The speakers have made it their purpose to protect and support life, especially in times of unexpected pregnancy.*

*Maureen Nwoye - Executive Director, Mary's Choice RVA  
 Kim Southerland - Executive Director, Pregnancy Resource Center of Metro Richmond  
 Tami Hudson - Pregnancy and Adoption Social Worker, Commonwealth Catholic Charities*

*Email [RespectLifeEvent@gmail.com](mailto:RespectLifeEvent@gmail.com) to reserve your seat.*

*St. Gabriel Catholic Church, 8901 Winterpock Road, Chesterfield, VA*

# Dominicans' rosary novena underway



Dominican Sister Anna Joseph, principal of Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, Newport News, prays the rosary with first graders Clare Favret and Kayla Eacho (left), March 28, in the school's Our Lady of Victory chapel as part of the Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage. (Photo submitted by Our Lady of Mount Carmel School)

KATIE YODER  
OSV News

WASHINGTON (OSV News) – The Dominicans are in the middle of a nine-month novena that will culminate with a day-long rosary pilgrimage this fall in the nation's capital.

“The purpose of the Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage and nine-month novena prayer is to gather Catholics in the U.S. together to draw close to Jesus through Mary in the Holy Rosary, so that we may be set on fire with a burning love for God and zeal for the salvation of souls,” Dominican Father John Paul Kern told Our Sunday Visitor (the newspaper of OSV, the parent company of OSV News).

“This is something I think people are really hungry for and which we need today,” added Father Kern, a Dominican friar of the Province of St. Joseph and the director of the Rosary Shrine of St. Jude and Dominican Friars Foundation.



Students at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, Newport News, pray a decade of the rosary on March 28, in the school's Our Lady of Victory chapel. (Photo submitted by Our Lady of Mount Carmel School)

To participate in the novena, Catholics are asked to recite a prayer nine times over the course of nine months – on the 30th of each month, from Jan. 30 to Sept. 30. People can say the prayer more frequently if they wish, and pray the rosary too.

The Dominican sisters who teach at Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, Newport News, are participating with their students. Dominican Sister Anna Joseph, the principal, said instead of praying the entire rosary on the 30th of the month, the students pray one decade of the rosary each day during the last week of the month.

Some of the students at Saint Mary Star of the Sea School, Hampton, are also taking part since Dominican sisters are among their teachers. Dominican Sister Mary Cecilia, the principal, says each student received the card with the novena prayer, and some of the classes are participating in the nine-month effort.

While the novena began on January 30, the faithful can join at any time.

At the end of the nine months, a pilgrimage will take place to the Basilica of the National Shrine of the Immaculate Conception in Washington on Sept. 30, the vigil of Rosary Sunday. The free event includes talks, adoration, confession, Mass, and, of course, praying the rosary.

Those who are unable to travel to Washington that day can watch a livestream on the Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage website.

While the pilgrimage physically takes place on Sept. 30, it begins now, spiritually, with the novena, Father Kern said. He explained why this novena lasts for nine months, rather than the typical nine days.

“Just as Jesus was conceived and Mary pondered him in her heart for nine months before he was born, we turn to Jesus and ponder him in prayer together with Mary during the nine-month novena,” he said, “to prepare for a beautiful manifestation of the mystical body of Christ, the church, gathered together with Our Lady in the Rosary and united in the Eucharistic Body of Christ at the event in D.C.”

He described the event as a new initiative led by the Dominican Friars of the Province of St. Joseph together with Dominican friars, nuns, sisters, and laity throughout the U.S. The Dominicans have a special relationship with the

rosary: according to tradition, the Blessed Virgin Mary appeared to St. Dominic, entrusting the rosary's promotion to the order's founder.

For this event, Father Kern said, they took their inspiration from the annual Rosary Pilgrimage in Lourdes, France, that has continued for more than 100 years.

“We hope that the Lord will pour out similar graces through Our Lady, the Rosary, and this pilgrimage here in our country,” he said.

Catholics can find out more about the event on the pilgrimage website, where they can sign up to have the novena prayer card – with the prayer's text – mailed and emailed to them. If they sign up, they will also receive updates, videos, and articles about the rosary.

Father Kern said that parishes and other ministries can also request a box of prayer cards for their community to join in the novena.

The prayer, composed by a Dominican friar, “expresses our hopes regarding the fruits of the Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage, which we ask for God to graciously grant us,” Father Kern said.

He revealed that it has already changed at least one person's life.

“We have already heard of at least one man who has experienced a reversion to practicing his faith after reciting the novena prayer, and we hope that the novena and pilgrimage in D.C. strengthen the faith of many people and set our souls on fire,” he said.

*Editor's note: For more information on the Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage, visit this story at [catholicvirginian.org](http://catholicvirginian.org).*

## Novena prayer

**God our Father, we thank you  
for the gift of your Son,  
our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we  
are adopted as your beloved sons and  
daughters.**

**At Pentecost you poured out the Holy Spirit  
upon Our Lady and the Apostles  
while they were at prayer.**

**Pour out that same Holy Spirit upon us  
as we meditate upon the mysteries of  
Christ contained in the Most Holy Rosary.**

**Enlighten our faith, strengthen our hope,  
and set us ablaze with love  
for you and our neighbor.**

**Graciously grant us St. Dominic's  
own zeal for the salvation of souls.**

**Bless the Dominican Rosary Pilgrimage.  
May it lead many souls to  
Jesus through Mary,  
so that we may know you and your saving  
power now and for all eternity.**

**We ask this through Christ our Lord. Amen.**

**Our Lady of the Rosary, pray for us!  
St. Dominic, pray for us!**





## Efforts to build a safeguarding culture in Curia

CAROL GLATZ  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – The heads of the Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors and a section of the Dicastery for Evangelization have signed a memorandum of understanding aimed at improving assistance to victims of abuse, bishops, and local churches both in mission countries and emerging communities.

U.S. Cardinal Seán P. O'Malley of Boston, president of the commission, and Cardinal Luis Antonio Tagle, pro-prefect for “the first evangelization and the new particular churches” section of the dicastery signed the agreement of collaboration at the Vatican April 21.

The enhanced collaboration will include sharing resources, information and formation, and “promoting concrete structural change to build a culture of safeguarding,” according to Vatican News April 21.

Cardinal O'Malley, who spent many years as “a missionary bishop” when he ministered in the U.S. Virgin Islands, told Vatican News he understands what it is like to run a diocese with very limited resources.

The commission, he said, hopes to work with the dioceses that are under the dicastery's purview and “help them to be able to develop programs, to be able to receive victims” in ways that also offer needed pastoral outreach and care, not just the correct “juridical practices,” and to help them in safeguarding and prevention so that “our churches and schools and communities will be safe places for children and young people.”

The Dicastery for Evangelization has contact with so many dioceses, he said. “I think half of the ecclesiastical jurisdictions in the world come under the pastoral care of this dicastery.”

And the dicastery has “a very broad mandate” that includes overseeing seminaries and religious men and women, “so we would help them with that” and many other things, he said.

“We also will be working with the bishops' conferences when they do their ‘ad limina’ visits to make sure that part of the quinquennial report will be about safeguarding and what have been the challenges and the successes, and give them an opportunity to come and talk about that here” at the Vatican, Cardinal O'Malley said.

Cardinal Tagle told Vatican News that the new collaboration is “a welcome development.”

In the spirit of synodality and reform of the Roman Curia, he said, the different offices in the Curia “are asked to work together in an interdicasterial manner so that we could learn from each other. We could provide information and then also support each other.”

“The other thing is we can offer, we can open to the commission the many so-called ecclesial spaces that the dicastery has been handling,” Cardinal Tagle said, “especially in the area of formation” of bishops, clergy, seminarians and religious.

“At the same time,” he added, the papal commission “could assist the dicastery and the episcopal conferences in understanding better ... the impact on human lives and on communities of abuse, abusive behavior.”

Cardinal O'Malley said, according to Pope Francis' new mandate, the papal commission's new role is “to promote a culture of safeguarding in all the dicasteries of the Curia. The agreement with the Dicastery for Evangelization is just the first step of building that culture and we'll be working with other dicasteries in a similar fashion.”

## Vatican sends relic of true cross to Britain's King Charles

CINDY WOODEN  
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – As Britain's King Charles III walks into Westminster Abbey for his coronation, he will walk behind a processional cross containing a relic of Christ's cross given to the king by Pope Francis.

“The fragments of the relic of the true cross were donated by the Holy See in early April, through the apostolic nunciature, to His Majesty King Charles III, supreme governor of the Church of England, as an ecumenical gesture on the occasion of the centenary of the Anglican Church in Wales,” Matteo Bruni, director of the Vatican press office said April 20.

A Vatican official said the two fragments in the coronation cross came from a relic preserved in the Lipsanoteca Room of the Vatican Museums.

The fragments now are under glass in the center of the coronation cross, which is made of recycled silver bullion.

Anglican Archbishop Andrew John of Wales blessed the cross during a service April 19.

The Anglican Church in Wales, which refers to the cross as the Cross of Wales, said it is inscribed on the back with words, in Welsh, from the last sermon of St. David, a sixth-century bishop and patron saint of Wales: “Be joyful. Keep the faith. Do the little things.”

King Charles has given the cross to the Christians of Wales, and after the coronation it will be shared by the Anglican and Catholic churches there.

“With a sense of deep joy, we embrace this cross, kindly given by King Charles, and containing a relic of the true cross, generously gifted by the Holy See,” said Catholic Archbishop Mark O'Toole of Cardiff in a



The top of the processional cross that will be used at the coronation of King Charles III in May is seen on the altar of an Anglican parish in Llandudno, Wales, April 19, 2023. Relics of the Christ's cross, a gift from Pope Francis, are under glass in the center of the processional cross. (CNS photo/Dave Custance, courtesy of the Church in Wales)

statement published on the Church in Wales website.

The cross “is not only a sign of the deep Christian roots of our nation but will, I am sure, encourage us all to model our lives on the love given by our savior, Jesus Christ,” Archbishop O'Toole said.

Chris Trott, the British ambassador to the Holy See, said on Twitter that “we are deeply moved and grateful to Pope Francis for this extraordinary gift.”

The gift of the relic, he said, reflects the strength of the relationship between the Holy See and Great Britain, a “relationship that developed over the course of the reign of Her Late Majesty Queen Elizabeth, who met five popes!”

## Child and Youth Protection Conference



(left to right) Bishop Michael Warfel of the Diocese of Great Falls-Billings, Bishop Barry C. Knestout; Bishop Ramón Bejarano, auxiliary bishop of the Diocese of San Diego, and Bishop Alberto Rojas of the Diocese of San Bernardino concelebrate Mass, April 18, at Mission Basilica San Diego de Alcalá. The bishops celebrated Mass for those in attendance at the 17th annual Child and Youth Protection Catholic Leadership Conference held in San Diego. (Photo/Nazia Shafi)

# Famed Wisconsin shrine to Marian apparition gets new name

**SAM LUCERO**  
OSV News

CHAMPION, Wis. (OSV News) – A Marian shrine in rural northeast Wisconsin, the only shrine in the United States to be designated by the Catholic Church as an approved Marian apparition site, is changing its name.

During a press conference April 20, Green Bay Bishop David L. Ricken announced the National Shrine of Our Lady of Good Help will now be known as the National Shrine of Our Lady of Champion.

Bishop Ricken also announced that the national shrine will begin celebrating an annual Mass with the liturgical rank of solemnity every Oct. 9. Bishop Ricken will celebrate the inaugural Mass of the Solemnity of Our Lady of Champion on that day at 11 a.m.

Oct. 9 is the anniversary of Mary's second and third apparitions to Adele Brise in 1859. Brise was a young Belgian immigrant living in Kewaunee County, and the apparitions occurred some 18 miles northeast of Green Bay.

Bishop Ricken said the Vatican Dicastery for Divine Worship and the Discipline of the Sacraments approved the Oct. 9 solemnity on Dec. 15, 2022.

"Therefore, at the shrine of the Blessed Virgin Mary in Champion, the anniversary of her apparition will be celebrated as a high, holy day of solemnity each year on Oct. 9, thus nurturing the devotion to the Virgin Mary," he said.

"On Oct. 9, we will celebrate a special, beautiful Mass right here on the grounds, where we really thank the Blessed Mother for all she has done and all she is doing. From now on, that will be our central feast day celebration in honor of Our Lady of Champion," Bishop Ricken said.



"There are so many beautiful things that have happened here over the years, and this new stage of calling her by the title of Our Lady of Champion will make it more concrete," he added.

Bishop Ricken then unveiled a logo with the shrine's new name.

Prior to Bishop Ricken's declaration, Father John Girotti, vicar general of the Diocese of Green Bay, told reporters that the numbers of pilgrims to the shrine "have grown exponentially."

"This year alone, we have experienced 150,000 people who have come here," he said. "Already, this place is one of the most frequented locations in the state of Wisconsin, with people outside of our area coming to worship, to pray."

Today the shrine remains the first and only officially declared site of a Marian apparition in the United States," added Father Girotti. "It remains what it always has been: a place of healing, a place of peace, a place of holiness, a place where we can take the challenges of life to God and ask God to bless us and help us."

Bishop Ricken said the shrine's name change and solemnity celebration are significant to Catholics around the country because it "might attract more pilgrims."

"Why would we be interested in more pilgrims? Because this is a great message, and when people come here, they feel the sense of the Blessed Mother's presence and she always leads us to Jesus," he added. "Her whole mission in life was to lead people to Jesus and she constantly does that right here. We want to share that good news with people from throughout the country, so they know this is a refuge, it's a wonderful place to come to find peace and to be able to pray with a lot of other Christians and people of even no faith."

Bishop Ricken, who declared on Dec. 8, 2010, that the Marian apparitions to Brise were worthy of belief, told OSV News he was humbled to be part of the shrine's history.

"I realize the longer I'm here, the more blessed I am to be a part of this and to serve in the role of bishop and to help others to get to know about this place," he said. "People just say it's a huge place of consolation and peace for them, so to be able to do this with little things from my perch really is humbling."

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# Who Is Jesus for you?



During Jesus' public ministry, the disciples may have thought they knew who Jesus was, but in the aftermath of his death and resurrection, only wonderment and questions remained.

Although the evangelists didn't offer identical accounts of the post-resurrection stories, the accounts contain hidden nuances that purposefully take us deeper into their meaning.

Matthew and Mark begin the story with the women who came to the tomb Sunday morning and, according to these evangelists, the women received a similar message.

Matthew states, "But the angel said to the women, 'Do not be afraid; I know that you are looking for Jesus who was crucified. He is not here; for he has been raised, as he said. Come, see the place where he lay. Then go quickly and tell his disciples, "He has been raised from the dead, and indeed he is going ahead of you to Galilee; there you will see him"'" (Mt 28:5-7).

Mark's account is similar, and both offer significant insights into who Jesus is. The first is: Jesus always goes before us. It is through his initiative that we are able to respond to the grace of God and enter heaven.

The second is that the women were told Jesus was returning to Galilee, which draws their attention (and ours) to the place where Jesus' ministry began.

Luke's Gospel takes a different approach and has the angel referencing Jesus' words: "Remember how he told you, while he was still in Galilee, that the Son of Man must be handed over to sinners, and be crucified, and on the third day rise again. Then they remembered his words" (Lk 24:68).

Luke's account, though slightly different, brings the past into the present. More than a geographical location, the mention of Galilee invites the women to reconsider what they missed when they thought they knew Jesus, and the same holds true for us.

We're all familiar with the story of Jesus' first miracle. John's Gospel says, "In Cana of Galilee, Jesus revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him (Jn 2:11). What the early disciples didn't comprehend was that Jesus did more than turn water into wine. He revealed himself as Bridegroom.

According to Jewish custom, it was the responsibility of the bridegroom to ensure there was enough wine for wedding guests. In taking on the role of the bridegroom, Jesus was anticipating his spiritual marriage to humanity that would

be consummated on the marriage bed of the cross.

At the time, the disciples recognized only the miracle that Jesus had performed because their knowledge was imperfect, and so it is with us. The post-resurrection appearances of Jesus are not a random collection of events; they have a sequential dimension that can be likened to the deepening experiences of prayer.

When we first begin the journey toward Jesus through prayer, we may experience, on an emotional level, consolations that reassure us that God is present. We think we know him and are willing to invest greater time in prayer because of what we receive.

However, the real test comes when the consolations disappear, and prayer becomes difficult. Previous notions about the primacy of Jesus in our life and consolations are often replaced by questions and doubt, yet such uncertainties are often the vehicles Jesus uses to reveal himself to us in new and nuanced ways.

To understand what is taking place within the depths of the soul during periods of trial, we turn to the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus for clarity. Luke placed the first appearance of Jesus in Jerusalem, which symbolizes the continuity between the time of Jesus and the time of the Church.

It's understandable that the apostles would return to Galilee, where they would be far away from the Sanhedrin, whom they feared. Jesus' appearance to them on the shores after they had spent the night fishing with little to show for it, was not unlike the occasion when Jesus first called Peter, James, and John to follow him, telling them they would become fishers of men.

The message to them and to Jesus' followers today is that we are to remember how and where the journey to Jesus began and deepen our understanding of earlier graces. What eluded us in the past is often revealed in the present. Only in retrospect can we appreciate the graces hidden in the trials and tribulations in life.

Thomas struggled for eight days before Jesus appeared to prove he had risen. Unlike Thomas we cannot touch the hands and side of the Master and yet we cry, "My Lord and My God."

We sing "Alleluia" because the Adam who died in the Garden of Eden has been redeemed in the person of Jesus the Christ.

*Barbara Hughes is an author, retreat facilitator and spiritual guide. She lives in Virginia Beach and can be reached at brhughes16@gmail.com.*



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## Educators

*Continued from Page 1*

each one of them, it makes it all worthwhile," Pitton said.

### Profound impact

Bender is in her 26th year at OLMC, and said, "As a first grade teacher, building faith formation in my students is a top priority."

She recalls one of the greatest moments in her career was meeting a student who said she did not believe in God. That student had a conversion while in Bender's class. One day, the student announced she was going to be baptized and asked Bender to be her godmother.

"I never imagined touching the life of a child in such a profound way," Bender recalled.

The faculty who nominated Bender said the "resounding word to describe Miss Bender was dedicated."

In addition to her work in the classroom, Bender mentors new teachers, coaches, and serves on many committees.

School administrators said Bender's joy and commitment were evident when the teacher was asked to move classrooms twice in the last two years. Bender had been in the same classroom for 24 years.

"Anyone who has been teaching for years knows what a chore this can be!" said her colleagues. "She packed and unpacked joyfully...twice!"

"What a gift to have such a dedicated teacher who can see when there is a need for the good of the school and is happy to make sacrifices along the way," they wrote in her nomination letter.

Bender said she was "surprised" when her name was called for the diocesan award and calls it a "true blessing."

The best part of her job is "seeing the growth of the children spiritually and academically."

### 'Something to live up to'

"Now I feel like I have something to live up to," said Korka, another diocesan winner. "I was just shocked – and feel very honored."

The second grade teacher has been teaching at St. Gregory the Great for nine years. Her colleagues say Korka has "proven herself to be an extraordinary teacher."

Korka's classroom time is a mix of independent work time, partner time, and small groups so the students can be engaged with their peers. She says another important aspect of her class

is student-directed learning, which teaches the children responsibility, hard work, self-control, and kindness.

"Beatrice lives her faith openly, quietly, and without question is a light for all to see," the faculty wrote in her nomination letter.

Korka said she grew up in a military family who moved a lot and found comfort and stability in her Catholic education.

"In my classroom, I am Jesus' hands. I am bringing the faith and love of Christ directly to my students," she said.

"My goal is for all of my students to know that our

faith is a lifestyle, not something we practice only at church or during religion class," she added.

"I am humbled by the role I am called to play in their lives and in their faith formation."

### 'Always faithful'

Tears could be seen in White's eyes after she was called to receive her diocesan award.

"I was amazed – it was truly phenomenal to know they care that much," she said at the end of the night.

According to her school administrators, "Always faithful" is the motto that Janet has followed her whole life, first as a career Marine and then for the past 13 years as an educator at Star of the Sea.

As a P.E. teacher, her colleagues say she "shares

her spirit and energy with faculty, staff, parents, and also keeps in contact with numerous alumni which continues to strengthen the fabric of our school."

Catholic education is a family affair for White. Her parents attended Catholic schools.

She is the eighth of ten children; she and all her siblings "reaped the rewards of Catholic education."

White says all five of her children also attended Catholic schools. She says becoming a Catholic educator has been "by far the most rewarding experience I have ever had."

"Watching my students grow, knowing that God is working through me, I am the vessel chosen to help them grow in their faith is profound," White added.

*Editor's note: Check out the April 17 issue of catholicvirginian.org to see Bishop Barry C. Knestout's "Christ Our Hope" column titled "Three Components Key to Sustaining Catholic Schools."*



Susan Bender



Beatrice Korka



Janet White

## Excellence in Catholic Education Award Winners

**Maureen Detrick**, All Saints

**Terry Clapper**, Blessed Sacrament Huguenot

**Carol Stapanowich**, Catholic High School

**Megan Jones Pearing**, Charlottesville Catholic

**Mariel Meccico**, Christ the King

**Carolyn Picard**, Our Lady of Lourdes

**Susan Bender**, Our Lady of Mount Carmel

**David Penrod**, Peninsula Catholic

**Jennifer Grimm**, Portsmouth Catholic Regional

**Sara Plante**, Roanoke Catholic

**Courtney Eileen Nicholas**, Sacred Heart

**Leigh Anne Bracher**, St. Anne

**Dini Howell**, St. Benedict

**Sarah McEwen Calhoun**, St. Bridget

**Shannon Eanes**, St. Edward-Epiphany

**Beatrice Korka**, St. Gregory the Great

**Gina Signorello**, St. John the Apostle

**Leary Davis**, St. Joseph

**Beth Murray**, Saint Mary's

**Karen Covert**, Saint Mary Star of the Sea

**Lucinda Fencil**, St. Matthew's

**Patricia Pitton**, St. Pius X

**Janet White**, Star of the Sea

## 'What should I let my kids read?'

CHRISTINA EBERLE  
OSV News

When people discover I have a master's degree in children's literature, they tend to corner me with one impossible question: "What books should I let my kids read?"

These are primarily loving, caring parents with the best of intentions.

They've been hearing, however, that most of today's popular Young Adult (YA) novels include immoral characters, inappropriate situations or gratuitous vice, and they are looking for some Catholic literary guru to pronounce the "safe" YA titles that won't corrupt young readers through subtle seductions.

As a parent and an author, I do sympathize, and I am quick to point out that some Catholic-specific YA literature resources do exist.

The Catholic Writer's Guild has its YA "seal of

approval" list; more than a dozen curated blogs (such as Catholic Teen Books) likewise have indie titles to recommend; and, of course, Our Sunday Visitor has options for young readers, too.

Parents should be warned, however, that – without discrediting those resources – such exclusively Catholic options will never fully address their concerns, nor best serve the children who will, inevitably, become adults.

Preventing them from choosing books on their own may then prove to have been a grave disservice to their growth, maturity and judgment.

Instead of asking which books we should PERMIT our children to read, parents would do well to wonder: "How can I help my kids better discern what to read, themselves?"

When I was a teenager, one of the best things my dad ever did for me was to read the same books I'd brought home and then discuss them with me.

He'd listen to my thoughts and share his own, casually pointing out what he found good and bad, positive and pernicious.

He was curious before he was critical and, in this way, he subtly validated my ability to choose books while also teaching me to hone my standards.

My dad would never disparage my preferences outright, only critiquing stories after he'd read them and never belittling my own thoughts.

As a prolific and more experienced reader, he helped me to interpret the subtler elements that I didn't yet have the maturity to decipher on my own. I knew how to read, of course – but my father taught me how to see what I was reading, in fullness.

When parents are too quick to negatively judge a book based solely on form, not content,

*See Kids, Page 14*

# Kids need parents to be their online gaming partners

## 'Now a game opens up a child to the whole world, where anybody ... has access'

GINA CHRISTIAN  
OSV News

Online gaming presents unprecedented risks to kids' safety, but parents remain the best defense against child exploitation – even if they're not tech savvy, experts told OSV News.

"The more we have healthy parental involvement, and the more parents are engaged in their kids' lives in a thorough, educated way, we can set kids up for success and limit the opportunity for harm," Detective Mark Povolny of the Washington County Sheriff Office in Oregon told OSV News.

Povolny and his team routinely conduct online undercover operations to catch predators, using an array of social media platforms including Discord and Roblox, both popular with online gamers. A recent sting by Povolny's office led to the April 13 arrest of six suspects, including Sean Baba, 29, who had been the music director at St. Pius X Parish in Portland, Oregon.

Online gaming has soared in recent years, representing a \$60.4 billion dollar industry in 2021 according to a report from the Entertainment Software Association (ESA) in Washington, which cited data from the NPD Group market research firm.

ESA's report indicated the trend was accelerated by COVID-19 lockdowns, with averages for gaming time rising from 12 to 13 hours per week between 2021 and 2022.

The evolution of the internet has

shifted out-of-the-box gaming into "games as an online service," said Adele Chapline Smith, gaming reviewer for OSV News. "When I was growing up, games were single player or maybe 'co-op,' which meant you had to be in the same location with multiple game controllers. But now a lot of games are multiplayer and online, where you just need an internet connection."

"In the past, gaming was usually a solitary experience – you played by yourself, or a friend came over and played right next to you," said Callahan Walsh, a child advocate with the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) in Washington and co-host with his father of "In Pursuit with John Walsh" on the ID Discovery channel. "Now a game opens up a child to the whole world, where anybody on that platform now has access to a child."

### Players pretending

Games that feature text and voice chat "can expose you to the behaviors of other online players," said Smith. "I've encountered children who pretend to be adults, and adults who pretend to be children."

Determining the difference is "tricky" even with voice chat functionality, she said, since voice-changing technology – such as VoiceMod, which is compatible with most popular games – enables players to further mask their identities.

Mobile gaming has surged, the ESA report noted, and Walsh said in his experience smartphone games are

particularly popular among females, while "boys tend to be the majority of players on consoles."

Regardless of the device, predators lurk on "any gaming platform, any social media application," said Povolny. "All of those are places where somebody could try to find a child and talk to them."

### Red flags

Red flags include attempts to extract "specific information about your family, where you live, where you go to school, things about your siblings," he said.

Walsh said predators are often very adept at a given game, and might pose as fellow kids and teens to approach unsuspecting underage players in an apparent effort to mentor them.

"They might say, 'I'll level boost you,' or 'we'll go on this quest together,' or 'I'll send you in-game currency,'" he told OSV News.

### Blackmail, sextortion

The price exacted is devastating, with children coerced into providing sexually explicit images of themselves in a practice called "sextortion," which Walsh said has "skyrocketed."

Perpetrators then blackmail children, particularly girls, into providing more images, said Walsh.

In contrast, boys have increasingly become targets of "financial exploitation," said Walsh, with perpetrators demanding money, gift cards and credit or debit card information after obtaining an initial explicit image from the victim.

Walsh said he was aware of "over a dozen suicides" last year among otherwise well-adjusted boys due to such scams, which are often coordinated by criminal groups working outside of the U.S.

NCMEC, which operates the Cyber Tipline (1-800-THE-LOST), received 30 million reports in 2022, mostly from

companies such as Google, Microsoft and Facebook, regarding sexploitation, said Walsh. He added that NCMEC analysts review and then direct the reports to local, state and federal law enforcement agencies.

### Parents: front line of defense

While industry self-reporting and built-in parental controls are essential tools in minimizing the risks of online gaming, parents are kids' front line of defense, explained Smith, Povolny and Walsh.

Kids who have already found themselves ensnared by online predators need to know "they can come to their parents" amid the crisis, said Walsh.

If exploitation has occurred, "end all communications with the predator, but do not delete any communications that have happened so far," he said. "Report it to the (gaming) platform and to law enforcement, as well as to the Cyber Tipline."

Walsh also recommended parents try to familiarize themselves with gaming platforms at a basic level, while "setting ground rules (about gaming) and sticking to them."

All three experts stressed the need for regular conversations between parents and kids about gaming and internet use in general.

"It's similar to the conversations that parents should be having with their kids about their general safety when they're younger – the sort of classic 'stranger danger' type conversations that parents need to have," said Povolny. "We also want parents to set this up as hopefully a positive sort of responsibility."

He said, "The end goal is always that the children are able to do this on their own as they grow up. They need to be able to successfully learn how to navigate the world on their own."

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\*Can't travel in October 2023? Winners will be issued a voucher in the amount of \$9,036 to be used towards any Tour Plan International planned travel until 5/31/24.

## WHAT WE'VE HEARD



**STEM program at St. Anne's School, Bristol,** was awarded a \$5,000 grant from the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) on April 25. The grant was for a project where the students will be growing plants outside and indoors. The project was intended to teach them more about where we get our food. Outside there are raised beds, a compost bin, and a container to collect rainwater. STEM teacher Lynn Anderson applied for the grant.

**The Ryan Club,** a Catholic social and charitable group in Hampton Roads, held its School Night Dinner on April 19 at the Norfolk Yacht and Country Club. Catholic school principals or representatives from Virginia Beach, Norfolk, and Portsmouth were guests. Each school received a \$1,000 donation from the Ryan Club Trust Fund. Margaret Keightley, executive director of the McMahon Parater Scholarship Foundation was the guest speaker.

**Inaugural Dr. Michael Riley Scholarship** presented to Megan Heuschel on April 18 at Charlottesville Catholic School (CCS). Heuschel graduated from eighth grade at CCS and is now a senior at Bishop Denis O'Connell High School, where she is captain of the soccer team. Dr. Riley was the principal of CCS from 2012-2022 and is now the Associate Superintendent for the diocesan Office of Catholic Schools. The scholarship was created to show Dr. Riley's continued commitment to CCS.



## OPPORTUNITIES

**Director of Development and Marketing:** Catholic Charities of Eastern Virginia is seeking a proven fundraiser to lead its Development Department in expanding our resources, bringing on other interested philanthropists, and marketing the agency. We are ready for a committed, motivated individual to market our services and take our agency to new heights. If you are interested in working with a great group of individuals committed to moving families out of poverty and are an experienced fundraiser, please send résumé and cover letter to: [hr@cceva.org](mailto:hr@cceva.org).

**Cristo Rey Richmond High School** has the following positions open: teaching positions, enrollment services, campus ministry coordinator, and marketing/communications coordinator. People passionate about our mission to transform Richmond one student at a time as part of this dynamic and innovative ministry should visit our website for details: [www.cristoreyrichmond.org](http://www.cristoreyrichmond.org). Cristo Rey is an independent Catholic college and career preparatory program exclusively serving students of limited economic means in the region as a part of the national Cristo Rey Network and Bon Secours Mercy Ministries.

**Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, Newport News,** needs a full-time Spanish teacher, grades K-8 with a high school Spanish endorsement for the 2023-2024 school year. Candidates must desire to work in a Christ-centered environment and be thoroughly pre-

pared to enthusiastically educate students in faith and content knowledge. A current Virginia teaching certification is required. To apply, please send a cover letter, résumé and application (<https://bit.ly/36ndEsX>) to Sister Anna Joseph, O.P., at [sajoseph@olmc-school.com](mailto:sajoseph@olmc-school.com) at 757-596-2754.

**The Cluster Parishes of Portsmouth and Chesapeake** are seeking an engaging, enthusiastic and disciplined person for the job of Religious Education Coordinator for Children. This person would work with children Pre-K through fifth grade, be responsible for first sacraments, RCIA for children, Vacation Bible School and children's formation. Experience preferred, but not necessary. Bilingual a plus. Submit résumés to Father Anthony Morris at [passtor@clusterparishes.com](mailto:passtor@clusterparishes.com).

**The Hope 4 Life Medical Mobile Pregnancy Resource Center** is hiring ultrasound technicians to work flexible part-time hours at a competitive salary. Since the Catholic non-profit in Tidewater was founded in 2014, we have helped mothers welcome 1,047 babies into the world by providing medical, moral and material support to expectant moms outside of the three abortion facilities in our area. Offering free pregnancy tests, ultrasounds and baby supplies, Hope 4 Life needs more volunteers to assist families in the community as sidewalk advocates and administrative staff. Please call Louantha Kerr at 757-810-1653 for more information about this special ministry or send an email to [ourhope4life@gmail.com](mailto:ourhope4life@gmail.com).

## SHORTTAKES

**St. John Catholic Church,** 813 W. Nine Mile Road, Highland Springs, will hold its annual Yard and Bake Sale, Friday, May 19, 3-8 p.m. and Saturday, May 20, 7:30 a.m.-3 p.m. in the Social Hall and School of Religion building.

We will have furniture, infant/children's clothes, household items and more. In addition, we will have some very delicious baked goods. We look forward to seeing you there! Questions, email [newkentkid@yahoo.com](mailto:newkentkid@yahoo.com).

## Kids

*Continued from Page 12*

children aren't being taught to judge rightly or well.

Worse, when we dismiss our reader's preferences outright, we too may miss out on something that shines with the beauty, goodness and truth we want them to encounter.

I know a parent who rejected Kelly Barnhill's fantasy novel, "The Girl Who Drank the Moon," because the back cover copy mentioned magic and therefore could only be a gateway to the occult. (Tolkien and Lewis sob from their graves!)

Another parent frowned upon Gene Luen Yang's graphic novels, "Boxers and Saints," believing them to be "low art" that mocked the Catholic Church – the tragic irony being that Barnhill and Lang are both faithful Catholics and award-winning authors.

They're quite brilliant at presenting timeless Gospel truths in richly poetic ways, but – much like Jesus' parables – the truth is folded within the storytelling: you must unwrap the prose before you can receive it.

So, my advice to concerned parents is to take a breath, and then take a page out of my dad's book: read along with your young readers. If you haven't the time for that, you can still encourage them to discuss what they're reading.

What's it about? Who's their favorite character and why? How do they think the story will end?

A parent's genuine interest will mean the world to them, and their passion and questions will be met with insight and guidance.

This is how we leave the door open for future conversations where, over time, our young readers will know how to recognize wheat from chaff.

## SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for May 7, 2023

John 14:1-12

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the fifth Sunday of Easter, Cycle A: a promise for the future. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

YOUR HEARTS	TROUBLED	FATHER'S
HOUSE	MANY	PREPARE
PLACE	TO MYSELF	WHERE I AM
MAY BE	THE WAY	THOMAS
HOW CAN	WE KNOW	JESUS
THE LIFE	NO ONE	COMES
EXCEPT	THROUGH ME	KNOW ME

### THE PLACE AND WAY

```

W O N K E W K N O W M E
T H R O U G H M E C Y S
O P E X C E P T J O A U
M R C R D J R K U M W O
Y E A K E O I R E E H
S P L W U I H N A S H S
E A P B S E A N A L T N
L R L U A I L M G B X N
F E S R M Y A M A N Y O
D E T H O W C A N Y O O
J S V T H E L I F E B N
J K F A T H E R S B C E
    
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# El Papa: Nosotros, ¿dónde buscamos al Resucitado?

El Papa Francisco en su alocución previa al Regina Coeli, recuerda el Evangelio de hoy, domingo de la Divina Misericordia, que narra dos apariciones de Jesús resucitado a los discípulos y en particular a Tomás, el “apóstol incrédulo”. Tomás pide una señal extraordinaria y Jesús le muestra sus llagas, yendo delante de todos, en la comunidad.

PATRICIA YNESTROZA-CIUDAD DEL VATICANO

En su alocución previa al Regina Coeli, de hoy 16 de abril 2023, Domingo de la Divina Misericordia, Francisco reflexionó sobre las dos apariciones de Jesús resucitado a los discípulos y a Tomás, quien para creer, pide una “señal extraordinaria: tocar las llagas”. Jesús se las muestra, pero de forma ordinaria, yendo delante de todos, en la comunidad. Como diciéndole, afirma el Papa, “si quieres encontrarme no busques lejos, quédate en la comunidad, con los otros; no te vayas, reza con ellos, parte con ellos el pan”.

## Le muestra sus llagas. Las pruebas de su amor

Jesús complace a Tomás, aparece de nuevo en medio de sus discípulos y le muestra sus llagas, las pruebas de su amor, los canales siempre abiertos de su misericordia. En la comunidad, porque es allí donde se le encuentra a Jesús, señaló el Papa.

Es en la comunidad donde Tomás descubrirá su rostro, mientras con los hermanos Tomás comparte momentos de oscuridad y de miedo.

## Nosotros, ¿dónde buscamos al Resucitado?

“Queridos hermanos y hermanas, la invitación hecha a Tomás es válida también para nosotros. Nosotros, ¿dónde buscamos al Resucitado? ¿En algún evento especial, en alguna manifestación religiosa espectacular o sorprendente, únicamente en nuestras emociones o sensaciones?”

¿O en la comunidad, en la Iglesia, aceptando el desafío de quedarnos, aunque no sea perfecta? Pregunta Francisco, una comunidad donde, no obstante, todos sus límites y sus caídas, que son nuestros límites y nuestras caídas, dijo.

“Nuestra Madre Iglesia es el Cuerpo de Cristo; y está ahí, en el Cuerpo de Cristo, que se encuentran impresas, todavía y para siempre, las señales más grandes de su amor”.

Luego, nos pregunta el Pontífice, si cada uno de nosotros, en nombre de este amor, en nombre de las llagas de Jesús, estamos dispuestos a abrir los brazos a quien está herido por la vida, sin excluir a nadie de la misericordia de Dios, sino acogiendo a todos, señaló, cada uno como un hermano, como una hermana.

## No siempre es fácil creer

En su alocución, el Santo Padre, afirma que, como Tomás, también cada uno de nosotros, siente la dificultad en creer.

“De hecho, no siempre es fácil creer, especialmente cuando, como en su caso, se ha sufrido una gran decepción. Tomás ha seguido a Jesús durante años, corriendo riesgos y soportando penalidades, pero el Maestro fue crucificado como un delincuente y nadie lo ha liberado, ¡nadie ha hecho nada! Ha muerto y todos tienen miedo. ¿Cómo fiarse todavía?”

Cuando Tomás se aleja, Jesús se aparece por primera vez a los discípulos la noche de Pascua, y puede recuperar esa ocasión volviendo con los otros, volviendo allí, afirmó Francisco, en esa familia que ha dejado asustada y triste. Cuando lo hace, cuando vuelve, le dicen que Jesús ha venido, pero a él le cuesta creer; quisiera ver sus llagas. Y Jesús le complace.

## Sus llagas, canales abiertos de su misericordia

En la comunidad, podemos encontrar a Jesús, es ahí, dijo el Papa, que Jesús nos muestra, “impresas en su cuerpo, las señales de las llagas: las señales del Amor que vence el odio, del Perdón que desarma la venganza, de la Vida que derrota la muerte”.

# Francisco: Anuncia al Señor y lo encontrarás, siempre en camino

En su alocución antes de rezar el Regina Coeli en el lunes de la Octava de Pascua, el Papa reflexionó sobre la importancia de no desanimarse, de superar los miedos y las angustias, como las mujeres que encontraron el sepulcro vacío cuando fueron a honrar el cuerpo de Jesús, y luego se encontraron con el Señor cuando lo anunciaron. En sus saludos posteriores a la oración, el Santo Padre agradeció los augurios pascuales que ha recibido en estos días.

Las mujeres fueron las primeras en ver y encontrar a Jesús resucitado en la mañana de Pascua. Lo recuerda el Evangelio (Mt. 28, 8-15) que la Iglesia proclama este lunes 10 de abril, de la Octava de Pascua, también conocido como Lunes del Ángel. El texto está al centro de la reflexión del Santo Padre, quien se asomó a la ventana de su estudio en el Palacio Apostólico para rezar la oración mariana del Regina Coeli con miles de fieles y peregrinos congregados en el Vaticano.

“Podríamos preguntarnos: ¿por qué ellas?”, expresó Francisco, quien alegó una razón muy sencilla: fueron las primeras en ir al sepulcro. El Papa reconoció que también ellas sufrían por el modo en que parecía haber terminado la historia de Jesús. No obstante, a diferencia de los demás, no se quedaron en casa paralizadas por la tristeza y el miedo. Más bien “por la mañana temprano, al salir el sol, fueron a honrar el cuerpo de Jesús llevando ungüentos aromáticos. El sepulcro había sido sellado y se preguntan quién pudo quitar la piedra (cf. Mc 16,1-3)”.

“Pero su voluntad de realizar aquel gesto de amor prevalece por encima de todo”, observó el Sucesor de Pedro. Las discípulas “no se desaniman, salen de sus miedos y de sus angustias. Este es el camino para encontrar al Resucitado”, enseñó Bergoglio.

## Compartir la alegría

El Pontífice argentino invitó a recorrer la escena descrita en el Evangelio, animando a fijarse en un detalle: Jesús sale al encuentro de las discípulas cuando ellas van a anunciarlo.



El Papa Francisco da la oración de apertura durante la misa Pascual en la Plaza de San Pedro en el Vaticano el 9 de abril de 2023. (Foto de CNS/Chris Warde-Jones)

“Esto es hermoso: cuando anunciamos al Señor, el Señor viene a nosotros. A veces pensamos que la manera de estar cerca de Dios es tenerlo estrechamente junto a nosotros; porque después, si nos exponemos y hablamos de esto, llegan los juicios, las críticas, tal vez no sabemos responder a ciertas preguntas o provocaciones, y entonces es mejor no hablar de esto. En cambio, el Señor viene cuando lo anunciamos. Tú siempre encuentras al Señor en el camino del anuncio. Anuncia al Señor y lo encontrarás. Busca al Señor y lo encontrarás. Siempre en camino. Esto es lo que nos enseñan las mujeres: a Jesús se le encuentra dando testimonio de Él. Pongamos esto en el corazón: Jesús se encuentra testimoniándolo”.

Como ocurre con el nacimiento de un hijo, “una de las primeras cosas que hacemos es compartir este feliz anuncio con los amigos. Y al contárselo, también nos lo repetimos a nosotros mismos y, de alguna manera, hacemos que cobre aún más vida en nosotros”. Hay que procurar, sin embargo, que esta proclamación se realice “no con propaganda o proselitismo”, sino “con respeto y amor, como el don más hermoso para compartir”.

## Ningún obstáculo para el anuncio

“Pensemos de nuevo en las mujeres del

Evangelio, continuó el Santo Padre, la piedra del sepulcro estaba sellada, toda la ciudad había visto a Jesús en la cruz y, no obstante eso, ellas van a la ciudad a anunciarlo. “Cuando se encuentra a Jesús, ningún obstáculo puede impedirnos anunciarlo”, dijo Francisco. “En cambio, si nos guardamos solo para nosotros su alegría, tal vez sea porque todavía no lo hemos encontrado de verdad”, añadió.

Para concluir, Francisco estimuló a la multitud a preguntarse: “¿Cuándo fue la última vez que di testimonio de Jesús? Hoy, ¿qué hago para que las personas que encuentro reciban la alegría de su anuncio? Y de nuevo: ¿puede alguien, pensando en mí, decir: ¿esta persona está serena, es feliz, es buena porque ha encontrado a Jesús?”. El Papa pidió a la Virgen “que nos ayude a ser anunciadores alegres del Evangelio”.

## El Papa agradece los augurios pascuales recibidos

Francisco manifestó su gratitud a todos los que, en estos días, le han enviado expresiones de buenos deseos, agradeció las plegarias y pidió que Dios recompense a cada uno con sus dones.

Así mismo, deseó a todos “que pasen estos días de la Octava de Pascua, en los que se prolonga la celebración de la Resurrección de Cristo, en la alegría de la fe”.

# Ale-vangelizing in the community

Father Brian Capuano teaches Catholicism over crowlers of beer

KRISTEN L. BYRD  
Special to The Catholic Virginian

Father Brian Capuano has worn many hats during his tenure as a priest: pastor, mentor, director of worship, and vicar for vocations, just to name a few.

An unlikely hat for a priest to don is that of brewmaster, but Father Brian can count that among his collection as well.

Trapezium Brewing Co. in Petersburg just launched the second release of his signature “Father Brian’s Bourbon Barrel Brown Ale” on April 17, where hundreds of family, friends, and past parishioners toasted the beloved priest.

Father Brian served as pastor of St. Joseph, Petersburg, for nine years. When he first arrived, he wanted to learn more about the community, its people, and its culture.

He would walk the streets, often dressed in his full priest cassock, and interact with those he met along the way. He ventured to local restaurants and events, believing it was important to be seen outside of church, which eventually led him to Trapezium.

He felt comfortable in the burgeoning brewery. It provided food, drink, and a place for him to get some paperwork done in a relaxed setting.

It was also a great way to engage with the community; many people were intrigued by the priest’s presence there.

“Being present where people are is essential. Sharing a conversation over a beer can be an easy way to break barriers and meet people where they are,” said Father Brian.

## Celebrity in a cassock

His reputation in the area quickly grew, with Trapezium proclaiming him their “favorite customer” on their website.

At one point he even had a table with his name on it, and people would sit down and talk to him, regardless of their faith.

And though none of the owners of Trapezium are Catholic, they supported Father Brian’s way of living his faith and caring about his community.

“The folks who work at Trapezium have always been very warm and welcoming and have been good advocates for folks who misunderstand Catholicism and have been very interested in learning more about the Church,” he said.

Soon, with Trapezium’s support, he started “Theology on Tap” meetings on the second floor of the brewery. Dozens of people gathered regularly to learn about everything from saints and the liturgical calendar to priestly celibacy and bioethics.

“I find that folks really don’t understand Catholicism and that they are unfamiliar with our way of living and way of worship,” said Father Brian.

“Finding avenues where folks can be introduced to Catholicism and Catholics in person is key if we are going to be able to evangelize,” he added. “The Gospel is generally best communicated person-to-person, face-to-face.”

Over the years, Father Brian became something of a local celebrity.

The young priest invigorated his parish, starting various initiatives, spearheading renovation projects, connecting with students at the church’s affiliated St. Joseph School, and fully immersing himself in the community.



Father Brian Capuano

## Brewmaster is born

One day a few years ago, Trapezium held a lottery to tour the brewery and learn about the brewing process. Though Father Brian said he never wins anything, he entered anyway and ended up winning.

“I was taking a class in Rome at the time and got a voicemail from the whole wait staff screaming, ‘Father Brian, you won the raffle!’” he recalled with a smile.

The tour snowballed into an opportunity to make his very own ale. He collaborated with brewery staff to create “Father Brian’s Bourbon Barrel Brown Ale,” which was based on his go-to drink, Trapezium’s own brown ale.

He also had the chance to design the beverage’s glass and label. The label featured the beloved century-old stained glass windows of St. Joseph.

Father Brian and Trapezium turned the release of the ale into a community event, with a portion of the proceeds going to the restoration of the same church windows that adorned the bottles.

Seeing that the release party was such a success, Trapezium started offering more events in support of community initiatives.

## Mentor with mug in hand

After being appointed as the diocesan vicar for vocations in 2019, he still made time to visit Trapezium.



One of his former seminarians, Philip Decker, met with Father Brian several times at Trapezium.

“It did give us the time to recap where I was and what I needed to work on in my formation in a less formal setting,” he said.

“The benefit of this is that it helped me to understand and appreciate that my formation was not just a formal affair, something only to be discussed in his office, or over paperwork, but something that we could discuss at any time and in any place,” Decker added.

Herb Funk, who serves as a deacon at St. Joseph, trained under Father Brian. He and his wife Rosemary attended Theology on Tap sessions and said Father Brian helped Funk on his path to becoming a deacon.

“I’m indebted to him for that,” he stated. “Here I am an old man, and he’s a fairly young man, and as I think back on it, I couldn’t have had a better mentor.”

Decker echoed the sentiment, saying, “He was an excellent mentor. He challenged me in the many ways I needed to be challenged.”

“His spirituality strikes me as very quiet and humbled before God. It was a spirituality I had not really experienced before and one that still moves me today,” he added.

## Humble and hoppy

Recently, an extra barrel of “Father Brian’s Bourbon Barrel Brown Ale” was found. Another release party was planned – this time with the proceeds supporting St. Joseph School.

Since the ale was aged longer than the first batch, it was much stronger, but still with the same smooth notes of bourbon and rich vanilla.

People traveled from all over the diocese for a sample.

Two guests of honor were Father Brian’s parents. His father said, “We’re very proud of him. He’s done a great job with everything he does.”

His mother credits many of his achievements to his approachable and humble nature, saying, “He has quite the rapport. He can find a way to connect with anyone.”

Marianne Yavorsky, a longtime parishioner of St. Joseph, has seen Father Brian grow from a new priest to a well-known leader in the diocese.

He was ordained in 2011, and joined St. Joseph in 2012. Due to his youth, many of the older parishioners thought of him as a son.

“We all wanted to mother him. I still do. When I see him, I hug him to make sure he’s eating,” Yavorsky said.

“He has so much on his plate, his plate has become a platter,” she added. “I told him to make time to do something fun.”

Crafting his own ale seems to fit the bill.

Despite the vicar’s ever-busy schedule, he still plans to frequent his favorite haunt, Trapezium, and other venues.

He sees this as an important part of his mission and the greater mission of the Church.

“We can’t expect people to simply ‘come to church’ to be evangelized,” he said.

“From the beginning, the Lord sent the 12 and then the 72 to bring the good news to people who need salvation. That has to continue today; we cannot be limited as priests, and Catholics in general, to simply serving the needs of those who cross the threshold of our churches.”

*If you’d like to try “Father Brian’s Bourbon Barrel Brown Ale” and help support St. Joseph School, glasses and crowlers are available for purchase for a limited time at Trapezium Brewing Co. in Petersburg.*