Serving the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend

November 30, 2025

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

Volume 99, No. 40

TODAYSCATHOLIC.org

The Young Church Rises Up

Teens from Across the Diocese Join 16,000 from Around the U.S. at NCYC in Indianapolis

BY SCOTT WARDEN

In the first chapter of the Book of Jeremiah, the prophet recounts how he was called by God to bring the people of Judah back to the Lord amid a rise in idolatry and unfaithfulness. But Jeremiah, the son of a priest, saw himself as unfit to preach to the People of God.

"'Ah, Lord God!' I said, 'I do not know how to speak. I am too young!'" Jeremiah says. "But the Lord answered me, 'Do not say, "I am too young." To whomever I send you, you shall go; whatever I command you, you shall speak.

NCYC, page 8

See Also
Pope Leo answers questions from America's youth during a digital encounter at the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis.
PAGE 7

Scott Warden

Teens look on during an interactive live digital experience with Pope Leo XIV during the National Catholic Youth Conference at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Friday, November 21.

More Vigilance, Less Distraction This Advent

BY FATHER ZANE LANGENBRUNNER

"Therefore, stay awake! For you do not know on which day your Lord will come."

– Matthew 24:42

The words of Jesus in this week's Gospel take the form of an "end times" exhortation. As He does in other places, the Lord urges His disciples to "stay awake" (grēgoreō in Greek), to remain vigilant as they await His Second Coming at the end of the age. Indeed, the entire exercise of the Advent season could be described as one of vigilance, of "staying awake" or "keeping watch" for Christ to come.

Vigilance is no easy task. From a psychological perspective, it can be defined as "a state of extreme awareness and watchfulness directed by one or more members of a group toward the environment … characterized by an ability to attend and respond to stimulus changes for uninterrupted periods of time," according to the American Psychological Association's Dictionary of Psychology. Staying vigilant demands sustained, focused attention. And this is difficult, as any air traffic controller, night shift worker, or grade school student could tell you!

Contrary to popular belief, however, staying vigilant is not just difficult because it is boring. Rather, as one psychological review put it, "vigilance tasks are exacting, capacity-draining assignments that are resource demanding, as revealed by both behavioral and neural measures." We have a hard time keeping watch not because we are understimulated but because we have limited attentional resources.

This psychological fact has great relevance for our spiritual lives, as well. How many times have I struggled to stay awake during a late-night hour of Eucharistic adoration? How often have I failed in my vigilance during holy Mass, allowing my attention to drift toward thoughts about practical concerns? How half-heartedly have I kept watch against the temptations that tend to lead me into familiar patterns of sin? These things happen not because spiritual things are boring but because we have used up our finite attentional capacity on lesser things.

Let us turn back to this week's Gospel. Jesus criticizes the people who, in the days of Noah, were too busy "eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage" to recognize that the flood was about to carry them away. Likewise, the Lord draws a distinction between the two workers in the field and the two women grinding at the mill: "one will be taken, and one will be left." The one who is "left" has fixated his or her attention entirely on the task at hand, while the one who is "taken" has one eye on the work and the other on the Lord who is coming. Eating, drinking, marrying, and working are all important, noble

ADVENT, page 3

TODAY'S CATHOLIC

(ISSN 0891-1533)
(USPS 403630)

Official newspaper of the
Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend
P.O. Box 11169
Fort Wayne, IN 46856

PUBLISHER: Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

EDITORIAL DEPARTMENT
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Scott Warden
PAGE DESIGNER: Chelsea Alt

BUSINESS DEPARTMENT
BOOKKEEPING/CIRCULATION:
circulation@diocesefwsb.org

ADVERTISING ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE:
Erika Barron:
ebarron@diocesefwsb.org

Website: todayscatholic.org
260-456-2824

Published weekly, except for the last Sunday in December and every other week from the fourth Sunday in May through the last Sunday in August by the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, 915 S. Clinton St., P.O. Box 390, Fort Wayne, IN 46802. Periodicals postage paid at Fort Wayne, IN, and additional mailing office.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Today's Catholic, P.O. Box 11169, Fort Wayne, IN 46856-1169 or email: circulation@diocesefwsb.org

MAIN OFFICE: 915 S. Clinton St., Fort Wayne, IN 46802. Telephone 260-456-2824. Fax: 260-744-1473.

BUREAU OFFICE: 1328 Dragoon Trail, Mishawaka, IN 46544. Telephone 260- 456-2824. Fax 260-744-1473.

News deadline is 10 days prior to publication date. Advertising deadline is nine days before publication date.

Today's Catholic may be reached at :
Today's Catholic
P.O. Box 11169, Fort Wayne, IN 46856-1169; or email:
editor@diocesefwsb.org

The Diocese of
Fort Wayne-South Bend

All Christians are earnest to speak the truth in charity and join with all peace-loving people in pleading for peace and trying to bring it about.
— Gaudiem et Spes, 78

Find us on Facebook
facebook.com/todayscatholicFWSB

Follow us on X (formerly Twitter)
@diocesefwsb

Follow us on Instagram
@diocesefwsb

Bishop Talks Immigration, Religious Liberty at Notre Dame Law School

BY KASIA BALSBAUGH

Photos by Kasia Balsbaugh

John Meiser, director of the University of Notre Dame's Lindsay and Matt Moroun Religious Liberty Clinic, and Bishop Rhoades respond to audience questions after the bishop's talk on religious liberty and immigration on Monday, November 17.

Bishop Rhoades spoke to law students and faculty at the University of Notre Dame about current issues of religious liberty in the country, especially pertaining to immigration. The main issues he discussed were infringements on the right to worship as well as the withholding of basic human needs (food, shelter, water).

"We were honored to host Bishop Rhoades because these questions are of such great urgency both to us as a country and to the Catholic Church or people of faith more generally," said John Meiser, director of the Lindsay and Matt Moroun Religious Liberty Clinic, which hosted the talk on Monday, November 17. "Immigration policy is a morass and a vastly complicated political matter," Meiser said, "but the human needs of those who enter our country, including their fundamental right to religious exercise, should not be."

Meiser added: "It is inspiring to hear the bishop remind all of us that, as citizens and lawyers, there is much we can and ought to do to help serve those needs and protect those rights."

Bishop Rhoades was chair of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee for Religious Liberty for the past two years, though his recent election as secretary of the conference means his term as committee chair was shortened.

Bishop Rhoades opened his remarks by mentioning the USCCB's special message released on November 12, which dealt with "addressing the evolving situation impacting immigrants in the United States," Bishop Rhoades said. To put the message's importance in context, he noted that it has been 12 years since the USCCB released a special message – and in that case, it also involved a religious liberty issue, condemning the federal government's HHS mandate that required employers to provide insurance coverage for contraception.

This most recent message of the USCCB called for meaningful reform of immigration law and condemned certain human dignity violations toward immigrants while recognizing the country's need to regulate borders. The special message, as well as the Committee for Religious Liberty's recent annual reports, points to immigration issues as of top priority of the bishops of the United States.

Some religious liberty issues surround Catholic organizations such as Catholic Charities being targeted for providing humanitarian aid to migrants or other vulnerable groups. Bishop Rhoades said "misinformation and partisan rhetoric" contributed to calls for cutting funding of such organizations.

"Ministry to migrants is not peripheral to the work of the Church," Bishop Rhoades said. "It's part of Christian discipleship." He added that bishops have "tried to advocate with Congress that merely serving vulnerable persons does not constitute harboring."

One example Bishop Rhoades brought up was the legal battle between the state of Texas and Annunciation House, a network of houses in El Paso that provides shelter to migrants. When the attorney general of Texas demanded to see Annunciation House's records and accused them of harboring undocumented immigrants, Annunciation House sought a court order, the attorney general countersued, and a legal battle began that is still going on today.

Another concern Bishop Rhoades raised was in regard to the recent difficulty Catholic clergy have had in administering the sacraments to immigrants in some federal detention centers. In some situations, such as at the controversial "Alligator Alcatraz" detention center in Florida, these issues have been resolved successfully. However, in at least one instance, an auxiliary bishop of Chicago and other archdiocesan priests were denied entry to a detention center even after following proper protocol.

Meiser gave his take on the situation, saying: "One thing that remains true is that in the prison context we have federal law … that ensures the right to free exercise of your religion, even while you've committed a crime and you're incarcerated. So, it doesn't make sense to me that when you're detained at the border that we wouldn't see fit to give you the same access to this exercise that we do to jails all across the country."

It is not only detention centers that are affected. With the recent abolishment of nonenforcement areas, some churches, Catholic and otherwise, have resorted to measures such as locking their doors during services. The USCCB filed an amicus brief in one legal case with such a church, referring to "conscience injuries." A couple dioceses on the West Coast have even gone so far as to dispense the faithful of their Sunday obligation if parishioners fear church attendance increases risk of detention.

Bishop Rhoades pointed to Dignitatis Humanae, the Second Vatican Council's Declaration on Religious Freedom, and its promoted "right of the human person to be free from coercion in religious matters."

Bishop Rhoades said: "This is a right rooted in human dignity that includes the freedom to practice one's religion privately, publicly, and to share it with others, provided that the just public order is observed. So, the exercise of this right can be limited to protect the common good, including public safety, public peace, and public morality, but these limitations must be justly applied."

Bishop Rhoades recognized the complexities at play regarding immigration in the country today. He particularly bemoaned the way the issue has become so partisan, noting that this was not the case even just 20 years ago. He also stressed the apolitical stance of the bishops as a whole, clarifying that their concern is with moral, not political, issues, which can vary depending on the country's administration. The bishop warned Catholics of the dangers of putting politics first.

"There are some that are so taken by the ideology of the left or the right that what the Church says is secondary to their ideology," Bishop Rhoades said. "That's very troubling, because I always say, be Catholic first. Be a disciple of Jesus first – before being a Democrat or being a Republican."

Students and faculty at the University of Notre Dame's law school listen to Bishop Rhoades speak on issues of religious liberty in immigration areas.

Father Paul McCarthy Dies at 73

BY TODAY'S CATHOLIC

Father Paul McCarthy passed away unexpectedly on Monday, November 10, at Covenant Healthcare Cooper in Saginaw, Michigan, at the age of 73.

Father McCarthy was born in South Bend on April 26,1952, the son of late James and Frieda (Nagy) McCarthy. After graduating from Douglas MacArthur High School in 1970, he spent three years in the U.S. Navy and then went on to graduate from Indiana University.

After a number of years, Father McCarthy felt God's calling to become a priest and enter Sacred Heart Seminary in Hales Corner, Wisconsin. He was ordained a priest of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend on September 8, 1984. Father Paul served the communities of St. Matthew Cathedral, South Bend; Corpus Christi Parish, South Bend; St. Vincent de Paul Society, South Bend; St. Mary Parish, Huntington; St. Patrick Parish, Lagro; St. Joseph High School, South Bend; St. John the Baptist, New Haven; and St. Stanislaus Kostka Parish, New Carlisle. Father McCarthy retired from active ministry in 2020 and relocated to the Diocese of Saginaw where he served as a confessor for several parishes.

Father McCarthy is survived by his siblings, Patrick McCarthy, Maureen McCarthy, Tim (Janet) McCarthy, Kevin (Jackie) McCarthy, Philip (Melissa) McCarthy, and Ted (Kimberly) McCarthy, sister in-law Bethellen McCarthy, and many nieces, nephews, and dear friends. Father McCarthy was preceded in death by two brothers, Daniel and Thomas McCarthy.

Father Paul McCarthy

The funeral liturgy took place at 11 a.m. on Monday, November 17, at the Cathedral of Mary of the Assumption, 615 Hoyt Ave, Saginaw. Father Mark Gurtner, vicar general of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, officiated, while Father Prentice Tipton was the homilist.

Visitation took place at the cathedral on November 17 from 10:00 a.m. until the time of service. Interment followed in St. Andrew Cemetery. In lieu of flowers, those planning a memorial contribution are asked to consider the Retirement Fund for Religious, P.O. Box 96988, Washington, D.C. 20090-6988.

ADVENT, from page 1

things; they are some of the best things in life! But Christ warns us that if we spend all our attention on them, we will not be able to pay attention to Him.

In today's culture, I think the Lord might have told this parable differently: "Two men will be in the office on their laptops; one will be taken, and one will be left. Two women will be scrolling on their iPhones; one will be taken, and one will be left." We live in what multiple authors have called the "Age of Distraction" in which digital technologies almost constantly compete for our limited attentional resources. A recent survey found that Americans spent an average of 5 hours and 16 minutes per day on their phones in 2024 (not including time spent on other screens and devices). Over half of those surveyed wanted to cut down on their smartphone usage, and 49 percent reported feeling "addicted" to their phones. If we find ourselves among the phone-addicted, we may be in danger of "being left" when the Son of Man comes.

> "If we find ourselves among the phone-addicted, we may be in danger of 'being left' when the Son of Man comes."

How do we exercise Advent vigilance in the Age of Distraction? A good first step would be to check our daily screen time on our smartphones. This act requires great courage; we are often horrified to find how much time we have sunk into social media, YouTube, or half-conscious scrolling on the internet! Confronting this reality, however, is an essential prerequisite to a fruitful observance of Advent. If I am regularly spending too much time on my phone, then I cannot devote the "extreme awareness and watchfulness" that vigilant prayer requires.

Every smartphone keeps track of screen time data; mine even has a "Digital Wellbeing" app that allows me to set a daily goal (2 hours, in my case). I do not always reach this goal – this past week, I succeeded five out of seven days – but it has forced me to become more aware and conscious of my phone usage.

As we begin our Advent vigilance, perhaps we all could prayerfully consider what a realistic Advent screen time goal might be. How much can I limit the digital distractions in my life and make more time for silence, study, and prayer? If we do this, then we will be better prepared to recognize the Lord Jesus when He comes, in both expected and unexpected moments.

Father Zane Langenbrunner is parochial vicar at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church in Fort Wayne.

PUBLIC SCHEDULE OF
Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Veritatem In Caritate
(Truth in Charity)

- **Tuesday, December 2, at 3:30 p.m.** – Meeting of Bishops of Indiana, Archbishop O'Meara Catholic Center, Indianapolis
- **Wednesday, December 3, at 9 a.m.** – Meeting of Indiana Catholic Conference, Indianapolis
- **Thursday, December 4, at 10:30 a.m.** – Advent Day of Recollection, St. Martin de Porres Church, Syracuse
- **Friday, December 5, at 7:30 p.m.** – Confirmation Mass, Corpus Christi Church, South Bend
- **Saturday, December 6, at 10 a.m.** – Confirmation Mass, St. Joseph Church, Mishawaka
- **Sunday, December 7, at noon** – Confirmation Mass with Rite of Full Communion, Basilica of the Sacred Heart, University of Notre Dame

TWO HOLY DAYS, TWO OBLIGATIONS

This year, the Second Sunday of Advent (Dec. 7) and the Solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8) each carry their own distinct Mass obligation.

Both must be fulfilled separately.

Your Sunday obligation can be met from Saturday, Dec. 6 (4 PM) through Sunday, Dec. 7, while the Immaculate Conception obligation can be met from Sunday, Dec. 7 (4 PM) through Monday, Dec. 8.

Attending a Sunday evening Mass after 4 PM may fulfill either obligation, but not both. For example, one might attend a morning Mass on Dec 7 for the Second Sunday of Advent, and then attend another Mass Sunday evening or on Dec 8 for the Immaculate Conception.

HOW TO FULFILL BOTH OBLIGATIONS

SUNDAY OBLIGATION:
FROM SAT, DEC 6 (4 PM)
THROUGH SUN, DEC 7 (ALL DAY)

IMMACULATE CONCEPTION OBLIGATION
FROM SUN, DEC 7 (4 PM)
THROUGH MON, DEC 8 (ALL DAY)

A SUNDAY EVENING MASS (DEC 7 AFTER 4 PM) CAN COUNT FOR EITHER, **BUT NOT BOTH.**

Deacons Gather for Fellowship, Formation

BY DEACON MAX ORTEGA

For most people, the month of November brings images of gatherings with friends and family reunions, as Thanksgiving is around the corner. However, every year, for me, there is a special gathering that always takes place before those reunions: the annual retreat for the deacons of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

This retreat, which was held at Lindenwood Retreat Center in Donaldson in mid-November, offers a chance to reconnect with those who shared the same formation cohort. For some of us, this is the only time we've gotten a chance to see one another since the previous year. There are always stories to share – wonders we witnessed while visiting hospitals, exposing the Blessed Sacrament for adoration, taking Communion to the sick, and simply sharing the day-to-day life of our parishes.

> "Our faith is so rich that there is always something new to learn."

But this is also a time to keep silent and listen to the voice of God, Our Lord, who is always waiting to speak from the depths of our hearts – yet I often fail to stop and simply listen. There, in the silence of the afternoon, in the sound of the wind moving through the leaves, in the reflections of the sunset on the lake, or even in the stillness of my room, God waits for me. It is important for me to remember that I should never speak about God without first speaking to God.

As we promised on the day of our ordination, we prayed together the Divine Office – the Liturgy of the Hours – twice a day. This is the "official" prayer of the Church, second only in liturgical importance to the Eucharist. During formation, we began our days together with morning prayer and ended every evening with evening prayer. Now, we pray these alone most days, so having the chance to pray together again brought back good memories and allowed us to bond once more, just like when we were in formation.

Besides the time spent with our brother deacons and with the Lord, the retreat always includes time for ongoing formation. Our faith is so rich that there is always something new to learn – and this year was no exception. Formation was offered by Father Hildebrand Garceau, a Norbertine priest and the rector of the Shrine of Our Lady of Guadalupe in La Crosse, Wisconsin. He opened his first talk by asking, "How do you approach your people to evangelize them?" That question alone could have provided enough material for reflection for the entire retreat. His answer was simple yet profound: "You have to start where they are and find a way to bridge the gap."

He quoted Pope Benedict XVI: "Reason does not always act alone in our search for God. Sometimes the heart has to unite with our intellect to move us." It is important to go beyond reason, because the heart moves us to action. Father Garceau provided several examples from the history of the Church, starting with the Acts of the Apostles, where evangelizers found ways to "bridge the gap." But he went even deeper with the example of Our Lady of Guadalupe. He introduced us to new ideas presented in the book "Guadalupe and the Flower World Prophecy: How God Prepared the Americas for Conversion Before the Lady Appeared" by Joseph and Monique Gonzalez.

Father Hildebrand explained how these authors shed new light on the astounding events of Our Lady's appearance. The image on the tilma spoke to the Indigenous peoples in ways we are only now beginning to understand. Even though the Franciscan friars made heroic efforts to share the Gospel, their success was limited. But with the help of Mary – the greatest evangelizer – they achieved what is considered the single largest Christian conversion event in history: close to 10 million Indigenous conversions took place after the Blessed Mother's apparition.

After the final talk on Sunday, everyone prepared to close the retreat. What better way to conclude those three days than by taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the "fount and apex of the whole Christian life" (Lumen Gentium, No. 11). At this Mass, we all vested as a reminder that we are part of something greater than ourselves. The presence among us of one of the successors of the apostles, Bishop Rhoades, reminded us that we are part of the universal Church.

Driving back home after having our final meal together – this time, joined by our bishop – I must admit that a feeling of nostalgia came over me. I returned feeling that the sun was a little brighter and the road a little shorter. I had witnessed once again that the Lord still walks among us, giving us hope and guiding us. I felt uplifted and strengthened by the certainty that the Holy Spirit continues to move our Church forward.

Deacon Max Ortega serves at St. Therese Catholic Church in Fort Wayne.

Photos by Deacon Mel Tardy

Deacons of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend gather for Mass during their retreat in Donaldson.

Bishop Rhoades celebrates Mass during the retreat for permanent deacons at Lindenwood Retreat Center.

From left, Deacon Bill Gallagher, Deacon Jim Kitchens, and Deaon Jim Fuchs pose for a photo.

School Spirit

Your Schools, Your Stories

This academic year, Today's Catholic is partnering with the student media programs at all four Catholic high schools in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. Each week, student writers, editors, and photographers from Bishop Luers and Bishop Dwenger in Fort Wayne, Saint Joseph in South Bend, and Marian in Mishawaka will share their work on this new page, School Spirit, dedicated to telling the stories of their school communities.

'Once a Knight, Always a Knight'

Bishop Luers Alumni Return as Teachers, Mentors to Help Current Students Thrive at Their Alma Mater

BY RILEY HEARD

Photos by Riley Heard

Clancy Shank, left, bookstore manager at Bishop Luers High School, and Greggory Smith-Causey, the school's dean of students, are Luers graduates.

Kyle Lindsay, left, head football coach and gym teacher at Bishop Luers, and Kris Andorfer, the school's choir director, are both alumni of the school.

While there's a common saying that goes, "You can never go home," there are several teachers who are alumni of Bishop Luers High School who have done just that.

These teachers have experienced Bishop Luers firsthand; they know how we feel because they all went through the same things. These teachers who were once in our shoes make our time here fun and useful. High school is a time to make memories, find out who we are, and learn from our mistakes. Our teachers are here teaching us new things while also bringing us closer to God. We have many alumni who work at Bishop Luers who help us do just that, but how do they feel about working at their alma mater?

Adam Hanke, Class of 2011, who teaches instrumental music in the fine arts program, offered some advice to current students by remembering his time at Bishop Luers, saying: "The thing that made me most successful in high school was my involvement in extracurricular events, such as soccer, band, show choir, and the plays. They helped me establish relationships with teachers and classmates, which gave me a good group of people to rely on when things got tough, whether there were personal or academic troubles. I would also encourage students … to push yourself out of your comfort zone … by challenging yourself. I feel these are incredibly effective ways to grow as a person. It also helps you find things you like that you may have never expected to enjoy."

Kate Sturm, an English teacher who also graduated from Bishop Luers in 2011, was asked what skill she developed in high school that she still uses today. Sturm said it was having "high expectations for myself." She continued: "My teachers had high standards for me, and so I had high standards for myself. This has served me well in every aspect of my life!"

Sturm said it was important for current students at Bishop Luers "to make friends with those who will help them become better versions of themselves. It sounds cliché, but you are the company you keep! I made life-long friends at Luers who helped me do just that!"

Mayson Whitman, Class of 2013, who teaches English, said she "never thought I would teach English at Luers. I was/am a very sensitive person, so naturally, high school was difficult for me. In fact, English was my least favorite subject. It was not until I went through the trials and tribulations of adulthood that I realized the importance of English class and the things discussed in English class."

Whitman continued, saying: "Reading did not come naturally to me, but writing did – apart from all the rules! I use the struggles I faced to help struggling readers and writers. Language forms one's reality. It is my job to give them the skills to manipulate English to get the most out of their lives. These skills we develop as a class in English are very important and give students the ability to think critically about their own lives and the world around us."

When asked about where she thought she'd be after graduating from Bishop Luers, Whitman said: "The Lord works in mysterious ways. – I know this to be true. I was first a criminal justice major with the hopes of joining the police force. Then, I became an elementary education major because I knew teaching was a vocation that would fit my goals as a woman. My job matters. I felt a call to improve the culture of my home. I chose high school because I was exceptionally moved by literature and its positive effects on my life. I also felt a calling to teach adolescents as I know it can be a very confusing, difficult time of change for some. Teenagers are exceptionally smart and clever, but they still have a lot of growing and learning to do. Being back at Luers helps me be the adult I wish I had growing up. I know and love the community to my core. I use my connections and empathy to help students in any way possible. I cannot imagine working anywhere else."

From left, Emily VanFossen, Mayson Whitman, and Kate Sturm – all English teachers at Bishop Luers who graduated from the school – pose for a photo in the hallway at Bishop Luers.

Whitman gives credit to God for bringing her back to her alma mater.

"Everything comes back to God," she said. "I cannot even imagine trying to explain the purpose of things and events without relating it back to God. God gives us purpose. I feel blessed every day to be able to encourage kids to turn to the cross. The kids strengthen my own faith and bring me closer to God daily. I love Bishop Luers forever and ever."

Our teachers guide and shape us into the people we're meant to be. They motivate us to be the best we can, especially at a young age. When they were walking these same halls years ago, these alums of Bishop Luers might not have imagined that they would be back making in imprint on each of our lives – and best of all, bringing us closer to God – but they certainly live the Luers motto of "Once a Knight always a Knight."

Riley Heard is a junior at Bishop Luers High School.

News Briefs

Archdiocese of Washington Remembers Enslaved Catholics

Washington Auxiliary Bishop Roy E. Campbell Jr. blesses the cemetery at Sacred Heart Catholic Church in Bowie, Maryland, on Saturday, November 15. Recent archaeological research using ground penetrating radar found hundreds of unmarked and unidentified graves and burial sites throughout the church's 33-acre property that possibly contain the remains of men, women, and children enslaved by Maryland Jesuits in the 1700s and 1800s. The blessing and a Mass were part of an archdiocesan Pilgrimage of Remembrance to celebrate Black Catholic History Month and launch an archdiocesan initiative to honor those who were enslaved.

Pope Urges 'Immediate Return' of More than 300 Children Kidnapped in Nigeria

During the November 23 Angelus prayer, Pope Leo XIV appealed for the release of more than 300 children and teachers abducted from a Catholic school in central Nigeria. "I make a heartfelt appeal for the immediate release of the hostages and urge the competent authorities to take appropriate and timely decisions to ensure their release,' Pope Leo said. The number of children abducted from a Nigerian Catholic school on Friday, November 21, has been updated to 303 schoolchildren, officials with the Christian Association of Nigeria said on Saturday, November 22. Twelve teachers also have been taken by gunmen. Earlier reports indicated that 215 schoolchildren had been abducted. The abducted students were both male and female and ranged in age from 10 to 18. A Catholic diocese in central Nigeria is appealing for prayer and calm after gunmen stormed St. Mary's Catholic Primary and Secondary School in Papiri, Niger State. The Diocese of Kontagora said the attack happened between 1 and 3 a.m. local time, leaving security personnel seriously wounded. Bishop Bulus Yohanna said the Church is working closely with security agencies and community leaders as rescue operations continue.

Pope Leo Says Treatment of Migrants in U.S. Is 'Extremely Disrespectful'

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Insisting that the dignity of all people, including immigrants, must be respected, Pope Leo XIV asked U.S. Catholics and "people of goodwill" to read and listen to the U.S. bishops' recent pastoral message on the topic. "When people are living good lives – and many of them (in the United States) for 10, 15, 20 years – to treat them in a way that is extremely disrespectful, to say the least," is not acceptable, the pope said on November 18. Meeting reporters outside his villa in Castel Gandolfo, Pope Leo was asked what he thought of the "special pastoral message on immigration" approved overwhelmingly by members of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops during their fall assembly on November 12. The pastoral message is "a very important statement. I would invite especially all Catholics, but people of goodwill, to listen carefully to what they said," he said. In enforcing immigration policy "we have to look for ways of treating people humanely, treating people with the dignity that they have."

U.S. Bishops Name Head of Racial Justice Committee

WASHINGTON, D.C. (OSV News) – The U.S. bishops have named Bishop Daniel E. Garcia of Austin, Texas, as the first chairman of their now-permanent Subcommittee for the Promotion of Racial Justice and Reconciliation. The news was announced by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops in a November 20 news release. Bishop Garcia was appointed by Archbishop Shelton J. Fabre, chairman of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Domestic Justice and Human Development. That committee – the scope of which includes Catholic social teaching on issues such as poverty, housing, criminal justice, and the environment – oversees the subcommittee, since such challenges typically have a disproportionate effect on communities of color. In an interview with OSV News, Bishop Garcia explained how he saw segregation at work in his small town, which even extended to the Church, said Bishop Garcia, who recalled an African American friend being discouraged from attending a Catholic school by its pastor, while also seeing Mass attendees withhold the kiss of peace during the liturgy from families of color. Rather than being innate, "racism is taught," said Bishop Garcia – and it can be unlearned. "I think it's when we get to know people that we break down those kinds of injustices and realize how much alike we are," he said.

Vatican OKs Cause for Massachusetts Pro-Life Activist, Wife, Mother

WORCESTER, Massachusetts (OSV News) – This fall, the Vatican paved the way for the Diocese of Worcester, Massachusetts, to begin the cause for the potential canonization of local Catholic Ruth V. K. Pakaluk. Pakaluk, a wife and mother from the diocese's St. Paul Cathedral, was known as an energetic, effective pro-life activist. She died at age 41 in 1998 after a long battle with cancer. Cardinal Marcello Semeraro, prefect of the Vatican Dicastery for the Causes of Saints, sent a letter in Latin to Bishop Robert J. McManus, dated September 29, stating that nothing stands in the way of the Worcester diocese moving forward on the cause. Ruth can now be called a Servant of God, a title given to a sainthood candidate when a cause is formally established. Michael Pakaluk, currently a professor at The Catholic University of America in Washington, married Ruth when they were college students, and they had seven children. He said he had prayed for the cause for her canonization to open, adding, "I've always been happy to cooperate" with anyone pursuing it. He said he views it in relationship to the Second Vatican Council, which set forth a pattern of holiness for laypeople. Ruth corresponded to that as a wife, mother, friend, and citizen, he said.

Detroit Archdiocese Announces Two-Year Restructuring Process

DETROIT (OSV News) – The Archdiocese of Detroit is embarking upon a two-year process of restructuring that will involve every Catholic parish in southeast Michigan, aligning parishes, clergy, and communities to flourish for generations to come, Archbishop Edward J. Weisenburger said in a message read during Masses the weekend of November 15-16. Like many dioceses around the country, the Archdiocese of Detroit has seen declines in the number of Mass-attending Catholics, ordained priests, and participation in the sacraments in recent decades. Many of the Archdiocese of Detroit's more than 200 parishes were established "during a time of tremendous growth," the archbishop said, but today, "we have been struggling to maintain buildings, ministries, and structures that were designed for a much larger Church." Once home to 1.5 million Catholics, the archdiocese today has closer to 900,000, with fewer than half of baptized Catholics attending Mass on a regular basis, the archbishop said.

Mass Attendance Plumets During Border Patrol Activity in Charlotte

CHARLOTTE, North Carolina (OSV News) – At Charlotte's largest Hispanic parish, Our Lady of Guadalupe, Sunday Mass usually means packed pews and standing room only. But on Sunday, November 16, attendance dropped by more than half – a visible sign of rising fear following a wave of immigration-related arrests across the city. Between November 15 and 17, U.S. Border Patrol agents arrested more than 200 people in a federal operation called "Charlotte's Web." Officials say they were targeting unauthorized migrants with criminal records. But many Hispanic Catholics said they fear being caught up in the sweep regardless of their status. Regarding the Border Patrol's activity in Charlotte, Bishop Michael T. Martin said, "I see through the lens of Jesus. ... How would Jesus be calling me to value the human dignity of the person that's in front of me, regardless of their citizenship status?"

Pope Leo Offers Wisdom, Encouragement to U.S. Teens

BY CINDY WOODEN

CNS photos/Vatican Media

Pope Leo XIV waves at 16,000 young people gathered at the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis as he holds a livestreamed question-and-answer session with them from the Vatican on Friday, November 21.

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – Pope Leo XIV encouraged American youth in a unique digital discussion on Friday, November 21, telling them, "You are not only the future of the Church, you are the present," adding, "your voices, your ideas, your faith matter right now."

Pope Leo spoke in response to questions from students in a 45-minute virtual dialogue at the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis with an estimated crowd of 16,000 young people ages 14-18.

Katie Prejean McGrady, host of the "Katie McGrady Show" on SiriusXM's The Catholic Channel, moderated the discussion at Lucas Oil Stadium in which Pope Leo fielded questions from five high school students: Mia Smothers from the Archdiocese of Baltimore; Ezequiel Ponce from the Archdiocese of Los Angeles; Christopher Pantelakis from the Archdiocese of Las Vegas; Micah Alcisto from the Diocese of Honolulu; and Elise Wing from the Archdiocese of Dubuque, Iowa.

The questions touched on themes of technology use, artificial intelligence, forgiveness, hope and the church's future. The students developed them in meetings with other students and organizers, and they were sent to the pope in advance.

Pope Leo urged the high school students to be "intentional" with their screen time, their prayer time, and their involvement in their local parish.

"One of my own personal heroes, one of my favorite saints, is St. Augustine of Hippo," the pope told 16,000 young Catholics meeting in Indianapolis. "He searched everywhere for happiness, but nothing satisfied him until he opened his heart to God. That is why he wrote, 'You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our heart is restless until it rests in you."

The questions were developed in meetings with other students and adults and were sent to the pope in advance.

Pope Leo did respond to a question and comment posed by McGrady, who mentioned that she had given the pope a pair of socks some time ago and said she wanted to know what he used as an opening word when he played Wordle each day.

"I just want to say I only wear white socks," the pope joked in reference to his favor baseball team, the Chicago White Sox. He added, "And I use a different word for Wordle every day, so there's no set starting word," the pope said, before turning to the young people's questions.

Pantelakis asked for the pope's advice on balancing the use of smartphones and social media with "making faith connections outside of technology."

Pope Leo, using technology to address the students, listed many good things technology does. For example, "it lets us stay connected with people who are far away," he said, and there are "amazing tools for prayer, for reading the Bible, for learning more about what we believe, and it allows us to share the Gospel with people we may never meet in person."

"But even with all that, technology can never replace real, in-person relationships; simple things (like) a hug, a handshake, a smile – all those things are essential to being human and to have those things in a real way, not through a screen," is important.

Pope Leo encouraged the students to follow the example of St. Carlo Acutis, who used technology to spread devotion to the Eucharistic but limited his time online and made sure he went to Mass, spent time in Eucharistic adoration, and served the poor.

"Be intentional with your screen time," the pope told the young people. "Make sure technology serves your life and not the other way around."

Alciso asked for advice about using ChatGPT and other forms of artificial intelligence.

While Pope Leo has continued to push AI developers and governments to formulate ethical guidelines and include controls to protect young people, he told the high school students that "safety is not only about rules; it is about education, and it is about personal responsibility. Filters and guidelines can help you, but they cannot make choices for you; only you can do that."

He continued by saying: "Using AI responsibly means using it in ways that help you grow, never in ways that distract you from your dignity or your call to holiness. AI can process information quickly, but it cannot replace human intelligence – and don't ask it to do your homework for you."

AI, he said, "will not judge between what is truly right and wrong. And it won't stand in wonder, in authentic wonder, before the beauty of God's creation. So be prudent. Be wise. Be careful that your use of AI does not limit your true human growth."

"Use it in such a way that if it disappeared tomorrow, you would still know how to think how to create, how to act on your own, how to form authentic friendships," the pope said. And "remember, AI can never replace the unique gift that you are to the world."

Pope Leo XIV laughs during the livestreamed meeting.

Responding to Wing, who asked about the future of the Church, Pope Leo told the young people they are an important part of its present. "Your voices, your ideas, your faith matter right now, and the Church needs you," he said.

But, looking ahead, he asked them to ask themselves: "What can I offer the Church for the future? How can I help others come to know Christ? How can I build peace and friendship around me?"

Smothers asked the pope if he ever finds it difficult to accept God's mercy.

"All of us struggle with this at times," the pope said. "The truth is that none of us is perfect."

But, he added, it also is true that God always forgives.

"We may struggle to forgive, but God's heart is different," Pope Leo told the teens. "God never stops inviting us back. We experience this mercy of God in a special way in the Sacrament of Reconciliation; in confession, Jesus meets us through the priest. When we honestly confess our sins and accept our penance, the priest gives absolution, and we know with certainty that we are forgiven."

"Do not focus only on your sins. Look to Jesus, trust his mercy and go to him with confidence; he will always welcome you home," the pope said to applause.

Photos by Scott Warden

Students from Marian High School in Mishawaka cheer during the opening session of NCYC in Indianapolis on November 20.

Bishop Rhoades speaks to teens during a dinner for NCYC participants from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend in Indianapolis on Saturday, November 22.

NCYC, from page 1

Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you'" (Jer 1:6-8).

Jeremiah, Scripture scholars believe, was just a teenager when he was summoned, scared and uncertain, but by trusting in God, he found his voice, and over the course of decades, he urged the Judahites to turn away from their sins and worship the Lord.

From November 20-22 during the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis, nearly 130 young people from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend and 16,000 of their peers from across the United States were told that, like Jeremiah, their voices and their leadership are vital to building up God's kingdom on earth.

'A Desire to Give Their Lives to Him'

In the early 1980s, the U.S. bishops encouraged the creation of the National Federation for Catholic Youth Ministry (NFCYM) to advance the field of pastoral ministry to young people in the United States. NCYC – the key initiative that came out of this effort – has been held every other year since its launch in 1983. Initially, the events were held in two different cities, but in 1991, these regional conferences converged into one national conference. It has been hosted in Indianapolis since 2011. Both Lucas Oil Stadium and the Indiana Convention Center are used to host Masses, Eucharistic adoration, praise and worship music, and keynote addresses and breakout sessions led by top Catholic speakers and clergy.

Officials in the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend's Office of Youth and Young Adult Formation encouraged parishes throughout the diocese to register groups for NCYC.

Jessica Tillinghast, associate director of the Office of Youth and Young Adult Formation, said their goal "was to provide support for the priests, youth ministers, and chaperones who are the ones doing the real work of walking with the youth through their high and low moments. We pray that each youth encountered Our Lord during this conference and comes away with a desire to continue to give their lives to Him."

An Inspiring Experience

Alexis Duffy, director of youth ministry at St. Pius X Catholic Church in Granger, which had 27 teens attend the conference, said her previous experience at NCYC had a profound impact on her faith – and her life.

"I remember sitting in one of the main sessions when I came as a senior in high school and looking up at the keynote speaker and leaning over to my youth minister and saying, 'I'm going to do this one day.' So, NCYC absolutely was the place where I felt called to ministry."

For Father Andy Barnes, who serves as a parochial vicar at St. Pius and as a chaplain at Marian High School in Mishawaka, this was his first experience attending NCYC. After concelebrating daily Mass at St. John the Evangelist Parish, located directly across the street from the convention center in downtown Indianapolis, Father Barnes told Today's Catholic that while the conference is a bit chaotic, "It's good chaos," Father Barnes said.

"It's really edifying just to see so many people on fire and in love with the Lord," Father Barnes said. "We just came out of daily Mass, and seeing how full it was in there with young people who are desirous of the Lord and the Eucharist, it's encouraging."

This year's conference was the second for Ava Alvarado, a junior at Bishop Dwenger High School who came with more than a dozen other teens from St. Joseph Catholic Church in Fort Wayne.

"I first came my freshman year of high school," Alvarado said. "It was a lot of fun, and I'd say that I definitely grew my faith during that first conference. This year, how I'd put it is that I've been able to kindle that fire."

The Universality of the Church

Several youth leaders who spoke to Today's Catholic noted that they hoped the teens from the diocese realize that they aren't alone in their faith – that there are kids from across the country who are yearning to grow in relationship with Christ.

Father Barnes said it's important for young people to get outside of their parish bubble and see that the Church is "bigger than simply themselves and that we're not in this alone and that we can really draw on one another and build ourselves up like the Body of Christ that St. Paul talks about."

Alivia Wheeler from St. Jude Parish in Fort Wayne said it's been eye-opening to see "that there are this many Catholic youths in our country."

Omar Nunez, who helped to chaperone a group from St. Patrick Catholic Church in Ligonier, said after experiencing NYCY, he wants to "encourage the Latino community to send our young people to these types of events … which will encourage them in their faith and make them stronger in spirit."

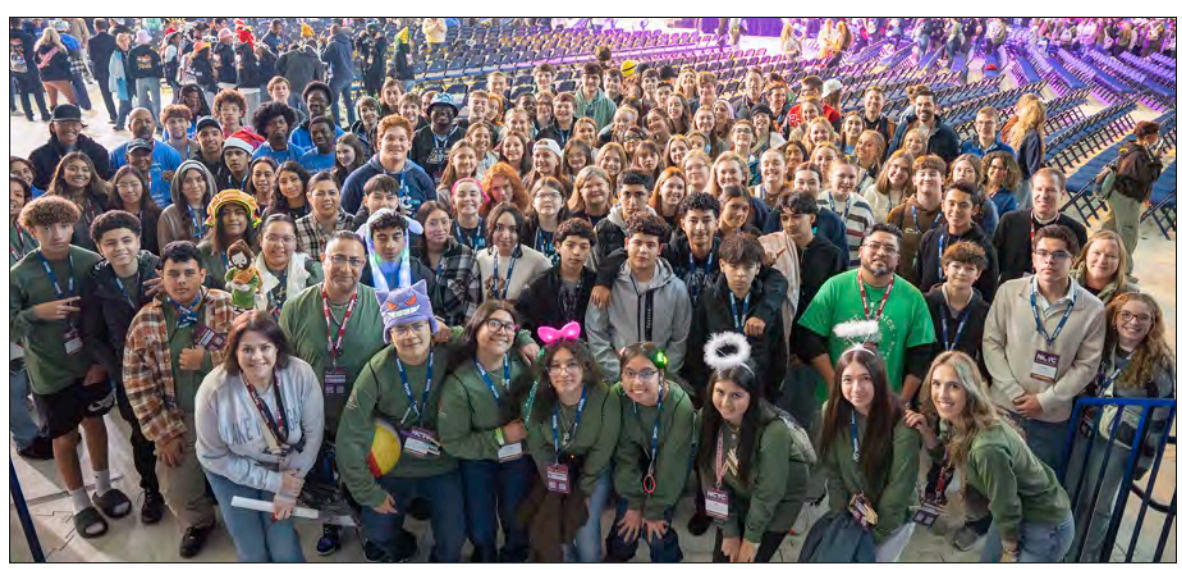
Duffy said that "it's important for them to have a sense of the universal Church, and seeing all these Catholic people here helps them to know that they're not alone and that faith is a thing that can be lifelong."

Bishop Rhoades, who joined the diocesan pilgrims for dinner before concelebrating the conference's closing Mass, told Today's Catholic that NCYC is "very impactful on the young people who attend. First of all, their experience of the Church is often in their school or their parish, but here they see young people like themselves from all over the country. And there are quality talks, they're praying together, and the enthusiasm for the Faith – I think it really does impact them a lot. As a matter of fact, our young people who are here, I was asking them as I was going around talking to them at the dinner, and each of them shared how happy they were and that their faith was strengthened."

An Encounter with Pope Leo

One of the foundational experiences at this year's event was a live encounter with Pope Leo XIV, who joined via video confer-

Father Michael Ammer and students from St. Joseph – Hessen Cassel Parish in Fort Wayne look on during the opening session of the National Catholic Youth Conference at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Thursday, November 20.



More than 130 students, chaperones, and clergy from the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend pose for a photo inside Lucas Oil Stadium on Saturday, November 22, the final day of the National Catholic Youth Conference.

More than 16,000 teens, chaperones, and clergy gather in Lucas Oil Stadium during the opening session of the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis on Thursday, November 20.

ence during the event's morning session on Friday, November 21. Pope Leo interacted with the crowd for nearly an hour as he answered questions from five teenage attendees. He touched on topics including friendship, technology, prayer life, and more, and told the young people in the audience, "You are not only the future of the Church, you are the present," adding, "your voices, your ideas, your faith matter right now."

While his presence alone touched the hearts of the attendees, they were also struck by the wisdom of his answers.

"I really liked how he was so able to relate the Faith to our world now," Wheeler said. "He knows what he's talking about with technology and AI. … Him being able to relate to the youth, I thought that was really cool, and then he specifically said that politics is not our faith and that our politics are not our label, which I really liked."

Josephine Hilger, a student at Bishop Dwenger who attends St. Jude Parish in Fort Wayne, said: "I really liked how Pope Leo used the examples of Sts. Pier Giorgio Frassati and Carlo Acutis, especially with St. Carlo and how he balanced his technology with his life, because I think that's really relevant today. I just found it so cool that he took the time to talk with us."

Alvarado said she appreciated the questions the students came up with to ask Pope Leo because they "showed how similarly we think as teenagers. We all have the same questions about life and Catholicism. … He touched on different aspects of friendships, how to be a young person in the Church today, and how we don't always have to look to the future because we should be living in the moment because we're a part of the Church today. That matters a lot to me, because I teach religious education to young children, and even they should feel like they're a part of the Church. Hearing the pope speak about that meant a lot to me."

Caitie Cataldo, who serves as an associate pastoral minister at Marian High School, said it's important for the students to understand that "not a lot of people get to experience the pope in their lifetime. … These kids feel a closeness to Pope Leo that is so endearing, and I think in some ways, it seems like they feel arm in arm with him. They are ready to rise up in the Church, to rise up to fight for the Faith, to rise up to serve. To have an American pope, I think they feel a closeness to him that is really endearing."

Father Barnes told Today's Catholic that it was "a really great blessing" to be a part of Pope Leo's first live encounter with a group in the United States. Father Barnes said what struck him was the "intentionality of his answers and the true genuine care that he displayed toward young people. It wasn't something where he was just trying to answer and put on a show, but there was this real genuine care for not only the young people of the U.S. but I think for the Church as a whole. And he really sees that those of us who are here – and every part of the Church – are essential to building up the Body of Christ."

Bishop Rhoades processes into Lucas Oil Stadium with other bishops at the beginning of the closing Mass for the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis on Saturday, November 22.

'I'm Filled with Hope'

Father Barnes said throughout the conference, there was an emphasis "on the call to sanctity, the call to be saints … and that we're called to transform the world around us. I hope that's kind of motivating and energizing to the teens who are here and that they're empowered in realizing, 'I can be a saint. God is calling me to sainthood.'"

Cataldo told Today's Catholic that this was the sixth time she has come to NCYC. She said it's hard to explain to people who have never attended just how powerful the experience is.

"If you haven't been there, even if you've watched the livestreams, it doesn't do it justice. The faith of the youth is so palpable. Walking into Lucas Oil Stadium and seeing 16,000 kids on fire for faith, it feels like you're getting a little glimpse of what heaven will be like."

Bishop Rhoades said he was impressed with how deeply the conference had impacted the teens he spoke with.

"Three of the young men talked to me about thinking about the priesthood, and I thought, wow, this has really helped them in their discernment," Bishop Rhoades said. "I'm sure with the young women, too, because there are women religious here who they see, which they may not experience in their own parishes. So, they start thinking, oh, that's a possibility. God might be calling them to the religious life."

At the dinner on Saturday night, Bishop said, "I loved going around and talking to the kids. I just see their goodness, and when they speak to me and ask me questions or share their experiences, it's just really beautiful. I feel like the Lord has touched them, and I just hope they continue to grow in their faith and stay close to the Church. I'm filled with hope when I talk to our young people."

Scott Warden is editor-in-chief of Today's Catholic.

Teens Inspired to Pursue Teaching at Saint Francis

BY TIM JOHNSON

Photos provided by the University of Saint Francis

Attendees of Teacher Cadet Day at the University of Saint Francie pose for photos at the school's North Campus Auditorium on Friday, November 14.

The University of Saint Francis welcomed about 131 Catholic and public high school students from the Fort Wayne area on Friday, November 14, for Teacher Cadet Day. During the event, Saint Francis alumna and longtime Catholic school teacher Kathy Schnurr awarded the second annual Teacher-to-Teacher Scholarship, a $1,000 tuition award created to encourage future educators.

Speaking with Today's Catholic before the assembly, Schnurr, who taught at St. Mary School in Huntington, St. Therese School and Queen of Angels School in Fort Wayne, said that when she learned about Teacher Cadet Day, "I thought, that's the project we want to support."

"My husband and I are both alums of Saint Francis," she said. "We both studied elementary education, and we both taught in Catholic schools with Franciscan sisters. We've been connected to Saint Francis forever, and we wanted to give back something that would encourage future teachers."

"In recognition of the many years my husband and I taught, I decided to name the scholarship Teacher-to-Teacher – from one teacher to another," Schnurr said.

The University of Saint Francis offers the Pathway to Educator Preparation Program, known as PEPP. Brittany Straub, director of special education at the university, explained, "Right now we have agreements with two schools, Bishop Luers and, starting next year, Bishop Dwenger."

The PEPP students leave their high school building and "come here for our intro courses," Straub said. They also gain field experience in Catholic elementary schools in Fort Wayne. The goal is for these students to enter the university as freshmen.

Juanita Oberley, director of teacher education at Saint Francis, discussed what distinguishes the university's education students.

"We don't think of teaching only as a career," Oberley said. "At Saint Francis, we look at it as a calling and a vocation. It's more than teaching math and reading. We're teaching students how to be good citizens. We're teaching them how to be servants for Jesus Christ, taking our mission as an institution and integrating it into the curriculum so they can go out and be citizens in the world."

Oberley added, "It's creating a pipeline not only for us but also for the Catholic schools. They come to us, we train them, and the goal is to send them back as high-quality, mission-driven teachers."

Abigail Dutcher, assistant professor of education in the division of teacher education, who coordinated Teacher Cadet Day, said: "One thing I hope the students take away is relationships with each other. These are going to be their colleagues in the future. These are the teachers who will be in Allen County classrooms in five or six years."

But Dutcher noted that the education pipeline serves more than Catholic schools.

"We have students who come to Saint Francis determined to teach in public schools, especially in our high-need, low-income schools in Fort Wayne."

"I see students who are very focused on making a difference," Dutcher said. "To enter the profession now and say, 'This is what I want,' shows how driven they are. They go above and beyond. If they're asked to do 50 field hours, they volunteer extra service hours."

Two Bishop Luers students who attended the event are participating in PEPP. Senior Gertie Andersen, the recipient of the Teacher-to-Teacher Scholarship, hopes to become an elementary teacher.

"I take education classes at the University of Saint Francis a couple of days a week," Andersen said. "My second-grade teacher, Mrs. Lewis at St. John the Baptist (in Fort Wayne), has always been my favorite teacher," Andersen said. "I remember things from her class that helped me come alive as a learner and made me think that maybe I wanted to be a teacher, too."

The keynote speaker, Graciela Miranda, a teacher at Pike High School in Indianapolis and the 2025 Indiana Teacher of the Year, offered an inspiring talk about overcoming learning struggles. Miranda challenged the future educators to see teaching not simply as instruction but as a vocation to "stand in the gap," recognizing what students lack and helping create a path to success. She told students that new teachers bring essential value, fresh ideas, and cultural understanding, and she said that a sustainable career requires space for rest, celebration, and community.

After hearing the keynote, Andersen said: "I learned about all the opportunities you can have as a teacher, the different experiences, and the number of people you'll meet through the profession. It was encouraging to hear that it's OK to move around, to teach multiple grades or at multiple schools. That's all part of the profession."

Galilea Chavez, a Bishop Luers senior in PEPP, said, "Everything today has been really good, but I was especially surprised by the keynote speaker."

Ellie Wilcher, a Bishop Luers ninth grader, told Today's Catholic, "I've started to grow closer to teaching, and I've wanted to be a teacher since eighth grade."

The scholarship competition included a lesson plan session. Students submitted their plans to the University of Saint Francis education faculty, who judged the entries. At the end of the day, Schnurr presented the Teacher-to-Teacher Scholarship certificates to Andersen, who plans to attend Saint Francis, and to Alivia Webb, a student from Carroll High School in Fort Wayne.

High school students listen to a keynote talk by Graciela Miranda during Teacher Cadet Day at the University of Saint Francis.

2025 FINANCIAL REPORT

DIOCESE OF FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND

Dear friends in Christ:

Once again, we are publishing an accounting of the financial operations of the diocese for the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2025. As we have done in past years, we have also included a consolidated financial report of our high schools and parishes. This is done in the spirit of accountability and transparency.

For the fiscal year that ended June 30, 2025, our total gain was $8,094,876 (from our audited financial statements), which you see here with a comparison to 2024. This is a detailed breakdown of our financial picture. Investment performance was the key driver for the gain as it exceeded budgeted investment income by $8.6 million. This is only for the central operations of the diocese. It does not include the activity of the parishes, schools, or missions in the diocese.

Respectfully submitted,
Joseph G. Ryan, Chief Financial Officer

DIOCESAN FINANCE COUNCIL
Most Rev. Kevin C. Rhoades
Very Rev. Mark Gurtner, JCD
Deacon James Fitzpatrick, Business Owner
Mr. Thomas Skiba, CPA
Mr. George Witwer, Business Owner
Mr. Michael Hammes, Retired Banker
Ms. Linda Teeters, CPA
Mr. Christopher Murphy, Bank Chairman/President/CEO
Mr. Timothy Dolezal, CFA
Ms. Meg Distler, Executive Director, Community Foundation
Mr. Bob Doelling, Attorney
Mr. Tom Schuerman, Parish Business Manager
Mr. James Schindler, II, Business Owner
Ms. Donna Lamberti, Christian Brothers Services
Mr. Jacob Benedict, CFA
Deacon Mike Plenzler
Mr. Joseph Ryan, CFO, Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend

DIOCESE OF
FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND

DIOCESE OF FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND FINANCIAL REPORT

SUPPORT AND REVENUE

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total Funds 6/30/25	Total Funds 6/30/24
Parish Quotas	2,896,734		2,896,734	2,772, 967
Donations and Bequests	2,126,469	104,904	2,231,373	2,183,293
Contributions of nonfinancial assets	826,810		826,810	
Net Investment Income	296,755	44	296,799	386,995
Unrealized Investment Gain	12,515,565	158,377	12,673,942	11,518,149
Fundraising - Annual Bishop's Appeal	5,345,833		5,345,833	5,130,593
Insurance Premiums	24,745,835		24,745,835	23,300,139
Interest - Loans	119,769		119,769	161,667
Collections	243,915		243,915	246,342
Advertising	112,791		112,791	132,010
Sale of Merchandise	452,493		452,493	437,115
Fees, Rentals/Workshops	1,254,739		1,254,739	1,137,009
Subscriptions	61,874		61,874	71,344
Miscellaneous	73,086		73,086	141,740
Loss on sale of assets	(4,960)		(4,960)	(35,224)
Net Assets Released from Restriction	269,142	(269,142)	-	-
Total Revenue, Gains, and Other Support and Net Assets Released from Restrictions	**$51,336,850**	**($5,817)**	**$51,331,033**	**$47,584,139**

EXPENSES

	Without Donor Restrictions	With Donor Restrictions	Total Funds 6/30/25	Total Funds 6/30/24
Ministry Services	2,946,521		2,946,521	2,940,505
Educational Services	5,228,088		5,228,088	5,338,911
Communications	805,099		805,099	793,957
Fundraising	311,765		311,765	284,096
*Other Services	27,781,126		27,781,126	24,354,690
Administrative	6,163,558		6,163,558	5,410,369
TOTAL EXPENSES	**$43,236,157**		**$43,236,157**	**$39,122,518**
Change in Net Assets	8,100,693	(5,817)	8,094,876	8,461,621
Net Assets at Beginning of Year	32,564,504	6,994,840	39,559,344	31,097,723
Net Assets at End of Year	40,665,197	$6,989,023	47,654,220	39,559,344

*Note on insurance premiums and other services

The diocese is self-insured for medical benefits, unemployment compensation, automotive losses and property and liability losses as described below. Various religious organizations, parishes and schools participate with the diocese in the self-insurance plans. Premiums paid to the diocese by these organizations are included in the insurance revenue.

The diocese administers a self-insured pool to fund medical benefits on claims up to $500,000 per covered employee. An independent administrator processes all claims, Claims amounted to $21,226,081 and $18,270,717 for the years ended June 30, 2025 and 2024 respectively.

The diocese is self-insured with respect to unemployment compensation. Claims and benefits paid amounted to $5,870 and $22,231 for the years ended June 30, 2025 and 2024.

The diocese's worker's compensation coverage is insured by Church Mutual Insurance Company with Catholic Mutual Group as the broker.

The diocese is self-insured for individual automotive losses of $100,000 or less, and has purchased excess loss policies covering individual losses exceeding $100,000 and aggregate losses exceeding $400,000 per policy year. In connection with the automotive self-insurance, the diocese has issued a letter of credit in the amount of $1,000,000 to provide proof of financial responsibility in accordance with Indiana code.

The diocese is self-insured for individual property and liability losses of $100,000 or less, and has purchased excess loss policies covering individual losses exceeding $100,000 and aggregate losses exceeding $750,000 per policy year. The diocese has excess liability in the amount of $30,000,000 per occurance and $60,000,000 annual aggregate per location. Claims and premiums totalled $3,857,639 and $2,803,056 for the years ended June 30, 2025 and 2024 respectively.

CENTRAL DEPARTMENTS

	June 30, 2025	June 30, 2024
Salary-Religious	742,033	573,002
Salary-Lay	3,129,221	3,088,204
Commissions	16,919	21,021
FICA	230,705	224,885
Unemployment Claims	5,870	22,231
Health and Accident Insurance	928,546	930,759
Pension and Benefits	314,657	332,048
Education, Seminars and Conferences	173,177	120,066
Postage	45,029	50,368
Telephone	82,291	77,777
Office Supplies	25,765	32,589
Printing	132,849	118,434
Equipment and Furniture	14,645	4,533
Travel	151,782	178,393
Auto	71,889	61,622
Depreciation	373,898	378,180
Legal and Professional	613,674	243,319
Public Relations	10,470	10,831
Employee Search	0	327
Donations and Ministry Support	1,416,118	1,354,805
Miscellaneous	25,256	50,820
Repairs, Maintenance and Utilities	854,626	663,134
Bank Charges	69,615	63,569
Property and Liability-Self Insurance	4,756,252	4,585,886
Student Insurance	414,667	403,448
Memberships and Subscriptions	85,289	111,817
Advertising and Promotion	55,996	26,202
Program Expense (Religious Ed., Catechesis, Evangelization)	1,298,796	1,141,436
Paper Distribution	171,522	180,695
Freelance and News Service	44,015	40,431
Assessments (USCCB, ICC, Canon 1271)	152,943	149,507
Interest	1,575,826	1,463,340
Funding-Ministry, Education, P.I.N.	170,310	235,163
High School Subsidy	1,132,000	1,132,000
Insurance Claims	22,010,840	19,043,083
High School Scholarships	150,000	150,000
Tuition and Allowances	807,253	929,286
Catholic Charities Subsidy	325,000	325,000
High School Endowment Fund Distribution	280,000	280,000
Rent	34,541	7,200
Provision for Uncollectible Accounts	250,000	250,000
Total Expenses	**$43,236,157**	**$39,122,518**

GROUPS RECEIVING GRANTS FROM THE ANNUAL BISHOP'S APPEAL

St. Vincent de Paul Society,
Fort Wayne and South Bend
Vincent Village
Women's Care Center
Christ Child Society,
Fort Wayne and South Bend
St. Augustine Soup Kitchen
Little Flower Food Panty
Chiara Home
Franciscan Center
Sister Maura Brannick Health Center
Catholic Charities
Center for the Homeless
Logan Center
St. Martin's Health Clinic
Hannah's House
Life Athletes
St. Mary's Soup Kitchen
Dismas House of South Bend
Matthew 25

PARISHES RECEIVING GRANTS FROM THE ANNUAL BISHOP'S APPEAL

St. Anthony Angola
Queen of Angels
St. Joseph LaGrange
Our Lady of Hungary
St. John the Baptist - South Bend
St. Casimir
St. Therese Fort Wayne

DIOCESE OF
FORT WAYNE SOUTH BEND

Learn more about the work of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend
Visit diocesefwsb.org

Responsible stewardship serves Christ and His Church

DIOCESAN AUDIT

The diocese is audited every year by Leonard J. Andorfer & Company, a certified public accounting firm, and, as in the past, no exceptions were noted. This means that the diocesan books, records and accounting policies are conducted in accordance with generally accepted accounting principles. This audit, along with the management letter, is presented not only to the Audit Committee, but to the entire Diocesan Finance Council; and the council is given time alone with the auditor, without the presence of diocesan officials, to be sure that they were given full access to all appropriate financial records.

For the past several years, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has required that the Diocesan Finance Council sign a report indicating the following: 1) that the council has met quarterly; 2) that the audit and the management letter have been reviewed; 3) that the budget has been reviewed. This report and certification must then be sent to the Metropolitan Archbishop of the Province, which, in this case, is the Archbishop of Indianapolis. We require similar reporting from our parishes to the diocese.

PARISHES

It is also important that there be accountability and transparency in parishes. According to canon law, every parish must have a Parish Finance Council. We have an internal auditor who does a financial review of every parish every two years; in addition, every parish is audited at the time of a pastoral change. During the past 18 years, we have sent this financial report, done by our auditor, to each member of the Parish Finance Council. This enables the review to be discussed at a regular meeting. As indicated above, controls have now been established similar to the accountability of each diocese.

It is important to understand how the Annual Bishop's Appeal has sustained the parishes. It was the hope of our lay leadership prior to the institution of the appeal that the parishes would benefit. This has become a reality. The appeal has increased the incentive of parishes to seek funds. During the 38 years since the appeal began, our parishes have engaged in major capital fund drives. Since the appeal began, fund drives for parishes have brought in more than $200 million for new buildings and renovations approved by the Diocesan Finance Council. This includes parish initiatives linked to the Legacy of Faith. Also, more than $287 million, which would have been paid to the diocese under the previous system, now remains in the parishes. In addition, $6.6 million from the appeal has been given in grants to parishes in need throughout the 38 years of the appeal. The 38th Annual Bishop's Appeal attained $6,535,151 for the diocesan central office, with an additional $1,229,902 being returned to the parishes.

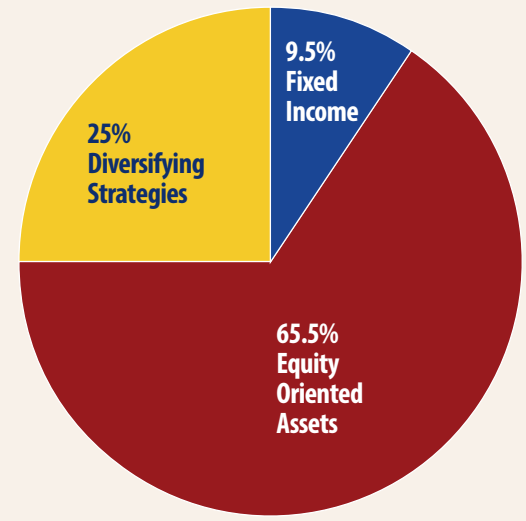
HIGH SCHOOLS

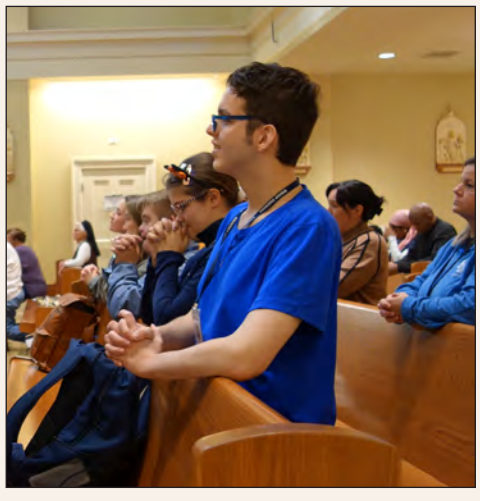
Over $98 million has been raised for building projects in our four high schools. The four high schools continue to flourish; but not without challenges. The Annual Bishop's Appeal gives $1.7 million to the high schools every year, which has created a sense of stability. Our high schools are audited every year by an independent CPA firm. Each high school has presented a balanced budget for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026. One high school has debts to the diocese and is paying on those debts.

INVESTMENTS

Our investments are overseen by Catholic Investment Services. Investments are placed carefully so as to avoid excessive risk. We have a very diversified portfolio, fully in keeping with Catholic moral teaching. CIS meets with our Investment Committee on a quarterly basis. In the fiscal year ending 6/30/25, investments gained 14.3%. The current asset allocation is detailed in the pie chart below. We expect continued volatility through the coming year.

CURRENT ASSET ALLOCATION





Learn more about the work of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend at **diocesefwsb.org**

De Nicola Conference at ND Discusses 'Living Tradition'

BY KEN HALLENIUS

The de Nicola Center for Ethics and Culture's 25th annual fall conference was an "extraordinary, fertile ground for real and deep conversation," according to JD Flynn, editor of The Pillar. More than 1,100 guests gathered at the University of Notre Dame on November 13-15 for the conference, which considered the idea of "living tradition" in theology, philosophy, law, creative arts, architecture, and education.

The de Nicola Center's fall conference brings together the world's leading Catholic thinkers, as well as those from other traditions, in fruitful discourse and exchange on the most pressing and vexed questions of ethics, culture, and public policy. Since the first conference in 2000, this annual event has become the most important academic forum for wide-ranging conversations that engage the Catholic moral and intellectual tradition from a variety of disciplinary points of departure.

The opening keynote address was presented by Philippe Villeneuve, the French architect who oversaw the five-year project to rebuild the Cathedral of Notre Dame in Paris following a tragic fire in 2019. His lecture traced the history of the iconic building's design, modifications over the centuries, and the challenges faced in restoring the structure to its pre-fire state.

As Villeneuve shared extensive photos from inside the restored roof, he spoke passionately about the enduring effect of the rebuilding project. "When I walk inside, I can't imagine that there was a fire that destroyed it all. You can even smell the wood like before, and after several years, this odor, this mélange, will be even more than it is today."

Bishop Daniel Flores of Brownsville, Texas, celebrated Mass for conference attendees in the Basilica of the Sacred Heart and delivered the Friday evening keynote lecture. His talk was a theological reflection on the work of translating the word of God.

"If we open the door to the issue of translation," the bishop said, "we step into the dramatic center of the mystery of salvation itself."

The incarnation of Jesus is the most important translation in history, Bishop Flores said.

"Theologically speaking, the first '*translatus*' that should occupy us is the movement of the Son/Word from His place to ours." Referring to the prologue of the Gospel of John, he said, "We could say, 'The Word translated Himself and dwelt among us.'"

> "If we open the door to the issue of translation, we step into the dramatic center of the mystery of salvation itself."
>
> **BISHOP DANIEL FLORES**

The closing keynote talk by Zena Hitz, author and tutor at St. John's College in Annapolis, Maryland, explored the shifting understandings of prudence in the Western intellectual tradition. Drawing upon Scripture, literature, and philosophical writings spanning 25 centuries, her presentation highlighted examples of practical wisdom, including in the stories of the Biblical patriarchs. "Abraham is our father in faith, but he is also a canny operator," she said. "And his abilities to be a canny operator drive stories."

In addition to panels presenting more than 100 papers drawn from nearly 400 submissions, conference sessions featured invited speakers including art historian Elizabeth Lev speaking on the painter Caravaggio, Dominican Father Paul Lawlor on archeological discoveries beneath the Basilica of San Clemente in Rome, Jennifer Frey of the University of Tulsa on the tradition of liberal education, and Cyril O'Regan of Notre Dame on the intellectual heritage shared between St. John Henry Newman and Alasdair MacIntyre.

Video recordings of conference presentations will soon be available at youtube.com/ndethics.

Who's Missing from Our Tables?

FAITH AT HOME

LAURA KELLY FANUCCI

The two women who taught me the most about hospitality know how to make more space at the table. My mother and my mother-in-law have a gift for making a warm home where there is always room for one more.

My favorite Thanksgiving memories come from the years when my older siblings were in college and brought friends home for the holidays, filling our house with laughter and energy. Looking back now as a mother, I'm floored at how easily my mom could change her holiday plans at a moment's notice, adding another chair (or four) to the table. She never made anyone feel like they were a burden: you belonged.

When I learned how my in-laws celebrated holidays, I was struck by two facts: My mother-in-law often insisted that everyone should sit at one long table (so no one felt left out), and she invited folks outside the family to join us for holidays.

Taken together, these two matriarchs taught me everything about hosting holidays. Cast a wide net, like Christ did. Trust there will always be enough – food, space, patience and laughter. Notice who's not there and make space for them.

In the thick of the holiday season, it's time to think about those who will join us for our feasts but also those who won't be at the table. In November, we pray for our beloved dead, so naturally our thoughts turn to those who are no longer with us physically. But in our communities, there are also folks whose circumstances have been dramatically ruptured – by divorce, diagnosis, or economic crisis. Can we make space in our prayers or at our table for those who are suffering?

In the Gospels, Jesus calls us to expand our circles of concern and compassion, not limiting our definition of neighbor to family and friends but to include others. Feed the hungry, welcome the stranger, care for the sick, visit the imprisoned: these are the terms by which we will be judged (Mt 25:31-46). Our children and grandchildren will also be formed and shaped by our own practices of Christian care and hospitality, both for those we love and those we barely know.

Once we notice who's missing from our tables, we can do one of two things. We can widen our welcome, or we can keep in mind those who aren't there.

First, we can pull up another chair up to the table to make more space. Is there a neighbor who doesn't have family nearby? Are there new immigrants in your parish or co-workers who might not have a place to celebrate the holidays? Take a Christ-like leap and reach out with an invitation. What a powerful example to set for the kids in your life – to show them that your family is always ready to welcome the stranger who might be Christ in disguise.

Second, we can make time and space within our holiday gatherings to remember those who are absent. A candle at the table for each loved one who has died. A phone call to a family member deployed overseas. A time during your mealtime grace to pray by name for all those who are missed or mourned at this joyful time.

Above all else, let us welcome strangers in our prayers as we start the season when we remember the Holy Family who were turned away in their hour of need: God, help us to see who's missing and help us to make more space for all those you call us to love.

LAURA KELLY FANUCCI is an author, speaker and founder of Mothering Spirit, an online gathering place on parenting and spirituality. She writes for OSV News.

Chores for the Kingdom

HUMOR IN THE MIX

KEN HALLENIUS

There is a clear division of labor at my house. I'm not entirely sure exactly when my bride and I first assigned these spheres of responsibility, but over the last 18 years, we have fallen into a comfortable chore routine. My primary role is to run the kitchen and facilitate all our eating and drinking. That includes grocery shopping, cooking the meals, and washing the dishes. Fortunately, these are tasks I enjoy. I like wandering around the grocery store, searching for deals, and comparing prices, while thinking about how tasty a particular ingredient will be when prepared.

I like experimenting in the kitchen. I read a lot of food blogs and newspaper cooking columns, and I enjoy watching the occasional episode of "Good Eats" or "Iron Chef," discovering new ways to smoke, braise, sauté, and sous vide. And even if a new-to-me recipe didn't turn out as good as I had hoped, at least I probably learned something in the process, and can console myself with the thought that tomorrow's another day, which will bring three more meals to erase the memory of my epic cooking failure. I haven't poisoned us yet, and I hope this streak continues.

Chores and household routines don't get a lot of attention in the sacred Scriptures. In Genesis Chapter 2, God tells Adam that he is to "cultivate and care for" the Garden of Eden, thereby assigning humankind the responsibility to maintain and keep proper order in His creation. Theologians such as St. John Paul II read this passage as also highlighting the dignity of work by faithfully fulfilling our daily tasks we cooperate with God's plan and serve in charity those with whom we live. This is especially true in a household, as we perform our chores in service to our family members out of love. My little domestic community is strengthened every time I unload the dishwasher, especially if I do it without to be reminded!

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus tells a parable about a woman who loses a coin, sweeps the house to find it, and then invites her friends to rejoice over her good fortune in recovering what was lost (Lk 15:8–10). I sometimes wonder how much it cost

HALLENIUS, page 17

Advent Reminds Us to Prepare for the Coming of Christ

THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MONSIGNOR OWEN F. CAMPION

First Sunday of Advent

With this weekend, the Church begins its new liturgical year. In so doing, it also begins to use Cycle A of readings at Sunday Masses.

This weekend's first reading is from the first section of the Book of Isaiah, one of the most important prophecies in the Hebrew Scriptures. Inevitably, it is eloquent and profound. It is also one of the longest books in the Old Testament, although in fact it is a collection of three distinct works.

As often is the case with other prophetic books, Isaiah at times warned the people that if they did not return to heartfelt religious fidelity, their doom was on the way. Certainly, this is a theme of this section of Isaiah.

No prophet, including Isaiah, spoke warnings without expressing a most hopeful and faith-filled thought that God, the Almighty and the merciful, would protect His people in the end.

Such was the great, exciting promise of the Covenant. God pledged to safeguard and secure the people, despite the stubbornness of the people and their fascination with sin, despite the catastrophe they bring upon themselves by sinning.

This weekend's reading, the first Scriptural proclamation for Advent of 2025, is a testament of this confidence and faith. God will judge the good and the bad. Such is the divine right. It is logical. Human behavior must be balanced against the justice and love that perfectly reside in God.

It is not a tale of gloom. Sin is to be feared, but, marvelously, human faithfulness to God brings peace and reward.

St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans is the source of the second reading.

Always, Paul called upon Christians to live as authentic followers of Jesus. While stressing their need to be faithful models of Christ in human living, the great apostle urged disciples to set their priorities by making eternal life with the Lord their uncompromised goal.

Paul also bluntly said that earthly life can end at any time for anyone.

The Gospel of Matthew provides the last reading this weekend. It predicts the final coming of Jesus. In reading this passage, it is important to remember that the Catholic Church teaches that proper reading of the Gospels requires realizing three perspectives: 1) The Gospel event in the actual time of Jesus; 2) The event as its implications came to be understood in the time when the Gospels were written, decades after Jesus; and 3) The place that the event occupies in the general literary structure of the individual Gospel.

This is important when considering this weekend's passage from Matthew. Composed generations after Jesus, Matthew was written for Christians who yearned to be relieved of the burden, and indeed peril, of living amid harshly antagonistic circumstances. They pined for the second triumphant coming of Jesus, recalling the Lord's own words. They earnestly believed that they would be vindicated when Jesus would come again in glory.

REFLECTION

Advent, begun with this weekend's liturgies, calls us to prepare for Christmas. Preparation is more than addressing Christmas cards and decorating Christmas trees. It means working to make the coming of Jesus real in our daily lives, a deeply personal event because we truly admit the Lord into our loving hearts.

Especially in Advent, the Church calls us to be good Christians, ridding ourselves of anything standing in the way. It calls us to set priorities.

Regardless of Christmas 2025, Jesus will come again to us at the moment of our earthly death. He will come as the triumphant Lord of life, the supreme standard of what is right. What appearance shall we make? Will we stand in the aftermath of having been wholeheartedly devoted to Christ in our lives, or just occasionally, or maybe never. The choice among these options belongs to us now.

READINGS

Sunday: Isaiah 2:1-5; Psalms 122:1-9; Romans 13:11-14; Matthew 24:37-44

Monday: Isaiah 4:2-6; Psalm 122:1-2, 3-4b, 4cd-5, 6-7, 8-9; Matthew 8:5-11

Tuesday: Isaiah 11:1-10; Psalm 72:1-2, 7-8, 12-13, 17; Luke 10:21-24

Wednesday: Isaiah 25:6-10a; Psalm 23:1-3a, 3b-4, 5, 6; Matthew 15:29-37

Thursday: Isaiah 26:1-6; Psalm 118:1 and 8-9, 19-21, 25-27a; Matthew 7:21, 24-27

Friday: Isaiah 29:17-24; Psalm 27:1, 4, 13-14; Matthew 9:27-31

Saturday: Isaiah 30:19-21, 23-26; Psalm 147:1-2, 3-4, 5-6; Matthew 9:35–10:1, 5a, 6-8

Vying for Pope Leo

GUEST COMMENTARY

MICHAEL R. HEINLEIN

Six months into his papacy, as Pope Leo's activities have increased, so has the scrutiny observing his every move. We parse every word, every audience, every movement, and in so doing, we betray our fractured existence.

The temptation to filter this information through a political framework, as if that's the definition of our lives, grows daily, too. Even as Pope Leo has made clear his desire for unity, division remains all too evident.

How many people today allow their thoughts on faith to be formed by the news outlet they visit, or personality they follow, as opposed to Scripture or doctrine? The responsibility to the truth that those of us in the media have is greater than ever, as Pope Leo himself reminded a group of media professionals in October.

"The world needs free, rigorous, and objective information," Pope Leo said, and he encouraged journalists to "act as a barrier against those who, through the ancient art of lying, seek to create divisions in order to rule by dividing. … You can also be a bulwark of civility against the quicksand of approximation and post-truth," Pope Leo added.

Without question, this is the ideal. But the opportunity for media to be a bulwark of civility is lost when the players are too busy constructing proofs that demonstrate that Pope Leo is on his or her "side" – a position defined all too often by politics or ideology rather than truth. (Pope Leo, though, has been careful not to pick a "side." His fidelity has been to the Gospel, which can be fully embraced by neither side nor party.)

Permit me two examples from recent weeks.

First, amid reports that Pope Leo has shown himself willing to help bridge the liturgical divide in the Church, some outlets were quick to emphasize that the pope has not abrogated his predecessor's legal restrictions on the celebration of Mass according to the 1962 Roman Missal. At the same time, these outlets ignored or made light of other signs that may indicate a shift in thinking on behalf of the Holy See regarding liturgical matters.

Too many Catholics seem eager to jump in "the quicksand of approximation" and define Pope Leo according to whatever judgments they made about his predecessor. Pope Leo is in "perfect continuity" with Pope Francis, Jesuit Cardinal Michael Czerny, a close Francis ally, told the Associated Press on November 7. Just a month earlier, regular Francis critic Cardinal Gerhard Müller cautioned against such a mindset, insisting: "We must not make comparisons with previous popes. Leo cannot imitate Francis, just as Francis could not imitate Benedict, and so on."

The same proclivity shaped reporting on the election of the new president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. Some prognosticators wondered if presidential frontrunner Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City was really the "Pope Leo candidate." Archbishop Coakley's win, claimed another analysis, meant that a candidate who would have advanced Leo's priorities did not win. What nonsense.

As I have been pondering this, one bishop drew my attention to a recent audience talk given by Pope Leo, in which he spoke about the medieval intellectual generalist Nicholas of Cusa. Pope Leo explained that Nicholas had hope amid so much fear on the part of his contemporaries who armed themselves for battle amid great uncertainties and opposition. "He believed in humanity," Pope Leo said, adding that Nicholas "understood that there are opposites to be held together, that God is a mystery in which what is in tension finds unity."

Given how those unflinching in their biases can't quite define him, could Leo be a Nicholas of Cusa for our time? It's to the great benefit of the Church and the world if he is.

MICHAEL R. HEINLEIN is author of "Glorifying Christ: The Life of Cardinal Francis E. George, O.M.I." and a promised member of the Association of Pauline Cooperators. He writes for OSV News.

HALLENIUS, from page 16

the woman to throw a party over that found coin, whether it was a financially prudent move – after all, the party probably cost more than the coin was worth. But as is usually true when I attempt to interpret the Scriptures on my own, that's not the real point of the parable.

Jesus' visit to the home of Martha and Mary, also told in the Gospel of Luke, is perhaps the most prominent New Testament appearance of household chores. While Mary sits at the foot of the visiting Jesus, attentively listening to His teaching, her sister, Martha, is scurrying about, cleaning and preparing the meal for Jesus and His disciples. When Martha complains that Mary is leaving her to do all the work by herself, Jesus tells her, "Martha, you are worried and upset about many things, but Mary has chosen the better part" (Lk 10:38-42).

What are we to take from this story? Is Jesus saying chores don't matter, that the work of showing hospitality is not important? I don't think that's what the Lord was trying to say to Martha at all. He was really talking about her interior disposition and encouraging her to not let the worries of daily life get in the way of her relationship with God – the very God who was standing right before her.

As I wash the dishes and wipe down the kitchen countertops each evening, I certainly would rather be sitting down in a comfy chair and reading the Bible or even the parish bulletin. But my chores have to be done, lest the dishes pile up and the counters get grimy. However, taking a cue from what Jesus told Martha, while my hands are occupied with menial tasks, I can be present to God. I can pray, whether spontaneously or by reciting the prayers I have memorized, such as the Our Father or Hail Mary. I can listen to edifying music (the Hillbilly Thomists, a bluegrass band formed of talented Dominican friars, are a favorite of mine), or perhaps to an audiobook version of the Bible, or a podcast that teaches me something about my Catholic faith. In these and countless other ways, I can sit and listen, even virtually, at the foot of Jesus even while I keep an eye on the roast in the oven and the pot on the stovetop.

As we come to the Advent season, which is the beginning of the Church's liturgical year, it's the perfect time to make a "new (liturgical) year's resolution," even if the rest of the world will wait until January 1 to do the same. How will you, in this new Year of Grace 2026, commit to deepening your relationship with Jesus Christ and with your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ? How will you choose the better part?

Sts. Martha and Mary, pray for us!

KEN HALLENIUS and his wife, Julie, are parishioners at St. Joseph Catholic Church in South Bend.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for November 30, 2025

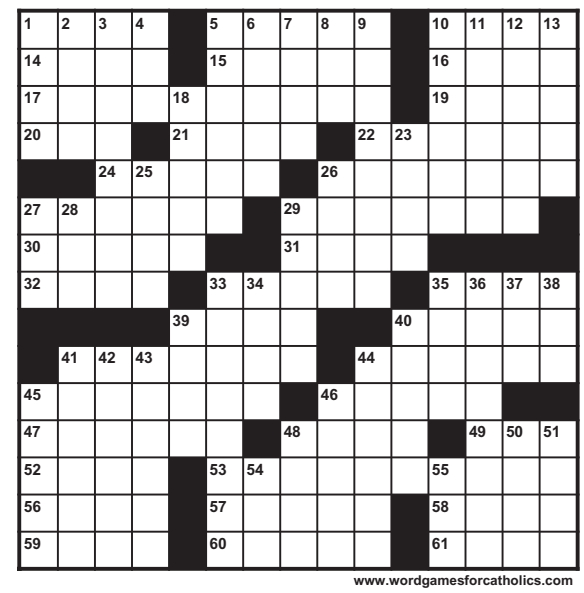
Matthew 24:37-44

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the First Sunday of Advent, Cycle A: a teaching about being vigilant. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

NOAH	BEFORE	FLOOD
EATING	MARRYING	MARRIAGE
ENTERED	THE ARK	ALL AWAY
TWO MEN	FIELD	TAKEN
TWO WOMEN	GRINDING	KNOW
LORD	NIGHT	THE THIEF
BROKEN INTO	AN HOUR	EXPECT

COMING DAYS

B R O K E N I N T O J Y
A B N Q E G A I R R A M
T H E T H I E F L W K O
C A M F C H O T A K E N
E O O L O K D L D N A M
P N W O J R L E E O N A
X I T O X A E D R W T R
E L G D N E I A E N H R
A Y R H T H F O T Y G Y
P O O F G T H N N I I I
L U T W O W O M E N N N
R L I L G N I D N I R G



www.wordgamesforcatholics.com

ACROSS

1 "Let the dead ___ their dead…" (Lk 9:60)
5 Trap
10 Whirl
14 On a cruise ship
15 Warble
16 Lawsuit
17 Opening pair?
19 Certain something
20 Resinous deposit
21 Departs
22 A priest wears a Roman one
24 Laying on of ___
26 Tries hard
27 Jesus healed his daughter in Mark 5
29 Cut short
30 Patron saint of young girls
31 Parisian friends
32 Prefix with watt
33 Ruin
35 Cyberauction site
39 St. Thomas' surname
40 Position
41 He is the patron saint of Poland
44 Drinking glass
45 Biblical territory
46 "Beloved, do not be surprised that a ___ by fire is occurring among you." (1 Pt 4:12)
47 Beast
48 Asian inland sea
49 Catholic Fawkes of the Gunpowder Plot
52 "…begotten not ___…"
53 The ___ Heart of Mary
56 Expose to warmth
57 Lyric poem
58 Last word
59 Nat'l song
60 Cut into small pieces
61 "Good" queen of England

DOWN

1 False god of the Old Testament
2 Amer. government agency
3 Attaining
4 Sweet potato
5 Meetings of bishops
6 Swellings
7 Summer drinks
8 Title for clergy (abbr.)
9 Dance slide
10 A Catholic United States Supreme Court justice
11 Pope during Vatican II
12 Another name for Jacob
13 Approaches
18 "___ Dei"
23 Scraps of food
25 Space
26 Sport for heavyweights
27 Cram
28 "His mercy is from ___ to…" (Lk 1:50)
29 Spelunker
33 Sunday talks
34 Diva's solo
35 "Able was I ere I saw ___"
36 Sport
37 Very skilled person
38 Nevertheless
39 Sorvino of "At First Sight"
40 French World War I soldier
41 Another name for the area of the Promised Land
42 Among
43 15th letter of the Hebrew alphabet
44 Favored
45 Brazilian ballroom dance
46 Commerce
48 Cupid
50 Southwestern Indians
51 Urges
54 Dashboard ltrs.
55 Science rm.

Answer key can be found on page 19.

Lai's 'Witness to Dignity' an 'Expression of His Faith'

BY PAULINA GUZIK

(OSV News) – As reports spread that U.S. President Donald Trump appealed directly to China's Xi Jinping to free jailed Hong Kong media tycoon Jimmy Lai when they met in South Korea at the end of October, American theologian George Weigel told OSV News that Lai "is a nonviolent, deeply committed defender of not simply his rights to free speech but to those of the people of Hong Kong" and that his "witness to human dignity and to basic human rights is an expression of his Catholic faith."

In a conversation with OSV News, Weigel said that what's at stake is that 77-year-old Lai "not die in prison."

According to Reuters, whose sources were "three people

However, after a year of pro-democracy protests in 2019, China imposed the national security law – under which Lai was arrested in August of 2020 and has been imprisoned since December of that year. He has pleaded not guilty to two charges of conspiring to collude with foreign forces and one count of conspiring to publish seditious materials. If he is found guilty, he could face life in prison.

"It would be a very important sign that something resembling due process still exists in Hong Kong," said Weigel, who authored St. John Paul II's biography "Witness to Hope" and dozens of other books.

"China made explicit promises about the rule of law in Hong Kong at the time of the transition of sovereignty in 1997," and the current national security law under which Lai is being charged

The Biden administration's State Department, United State senators, and Catholic bishops have since voiced support for Lai.

On November 1, 2023, 10 bishops from five continents wrote that "there is no place for such cruelty and oppression in a territory that claims to uphold the rule of law and respect the right to freedom of expression."

"In standing up for his beliefs and committing himself through his faith to challenge autocracy and repression, Jimmy Lai has lost his business, been cut off from his family. ... He must be freed now," the bishops, including Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York and Archbishop Anthony Fisher of Sydney, said.

Weigel, who was a force behind the letter, said that it "caused an enormous fuss in Hong Kong" and that "the response from the government was about five times longer than the letter" and that the "propagandists for the government and the Hong Kong press, which is very much regime-controlled and influenced today, were set loose."

"These bishops were actually threatened with being arrested if they set foot in Hong Kong," Weigel said.

"This is the way regimes, that are nervous about their own legitimacy, behave" he said, hoping at the same time that "the interventions from the president have some effect."

Lai has been held in solitary confinement for around 1,800 days. "I don't want my father to die in jail," his son said.

The wife and daughter of the imprisoned media tycoon met Pope Leo XIV after the general audience on October 15 – ahead of the expected verdict in his case.

"I think it was very gracious of Pope Leo to meet Teresa Lai, Jimmy's wife, and Claire, his daughter, after an audience recently," Weigel said.

Asked whether the Vatican could lobby for Lai to be released, he said that "the Vatican at the moment is so committed to maintaining this arrangement it has with China that I very much doubt that they're inclined to add another item to the agenda; but, to be perfectly candid, they certainly ought to raise the question irrespective of whether it would make any difference. If the Vatican can't take up the cause of the world's most famous Catholic political prisoner, even quietly, something is wrong."

Weigel, who met Lai over a decade ago, said he "stayed in touch with the family since then."

He said Lai's perseverance in faith amid his imprisonment is a "really very striking" testimony.

"If you go to St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York, you will find a simple but very touching sketch of the crucifixion of Our Lord that Jimmy made in Stanley Prison in Hong Kong, on a piece of what we used to call copy paper in school – ruled paper where kids would learn how to write letters."

He said he had personally "received two of these over the years – one is another crucifixion scene, the other is a Magnificat scene of Our Lady simply with the word 'Fiat' – 'be it done unto me according to your word' written on it and signed by Jimmy and dated and identified as from Stanley Prison."

Lai's artwork was also installed at The Catholic University of America's Maloney Hall in February of 2024.

"This seems to be one of the ways he's expressing the depth of his Christian conviction and to express in a very simple and humble way the fact that he believes that what he is doing, what he has been suffering for over 1,700 days now of solitary confinement in a windowless cell, is a matter of vocation," Weigel said.

"This is not simply a stubborn guy who's taking on the government. This is a man who believes that his witness to human dignity and to basic human rights is an expression of his Catholic faith, and that he is suffering, for that is also an expression of that faith, and he accepts it in those terms."

OSV News photo/Tyrone Siu, Reuters

Jimmy Lai, a prominent Hong Kong Catholic, philanthropist, and media mogul, is pictured in Hong Kong on May 29, 2020. As reports spread that U.S. President Donald Trump appealed directly to China's Xi Jinping to free jailed Lai when they met in South Korea on October 30, 2025, American theologian George Weigel told OSV News that Lai's "witness to human dignity and to basic human rights is an expression of his Catholic faith."

OSV News photo/Paulina Guzik

A sketch of the crucifixion of the Lord that Jimmy Lai made in Stanley Prison is seen at St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York on July 5.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

WHAT'S HAPPENING? highlights upcoming events from around the diocese. Discover more Catholic events or share your own at todayscatholic.org/event. To feature your event and gain more exposure, contact our friendly advertising account executive at 260-399-1449 to learn about space options.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 28
Trivia Night
6-9 p.m.
SOUTH BEND – St. Adalbert's Centennial Committee is hosting a fun-filled trivia night at 519 S. Olive St. Food, drinks, and prizes will be available. The cost is $15 per person or $100 for a table of up to eight people.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 1
The New Advent Parish Mission
6-8 p.m.
AUBURN – Father David Gunter of the Marian Fathers of the Immaculate Conception is the featured speaker at 500 East Seventh St. Confessions begin at 6 p.m., with the Rosary at 6:30 p.m. and his presentation at 7 p.m.

FRIDAY, DECEMBER 5
Christmas at the Castle
4-6 p.m.
FORT WAYNE – Enjoy the beauty and history of Brookside mansion at University of Saint Francis, 2701 Spring St., with decorated Christmas trees and Nativity scenes on display. This is a self-guided tour with university volunteers present throughout to share historical information about our beautiful facility.

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 6
Breakfast with St. Nicholas
9-10:30 a.m.
FORT WAYNE – Learn about the legacy of St. Nicholas at the University of Saint Francis North Campus Gym, 2702 Spring St., while enjoying breakfast, story time, crafts and other activities with family and friends.

Advent Lessons and Carols
7-8 p.m.
FORT WAYNE – The Ecce Young Adult Choir presents "Advent Lessons and Carols" at St. Vincent de Paul Catholic Church, 1502 E. Wallen Rd. Ponder the wonder and beauty of the Incarnation through sacred music, Scripture, and prayer. Free and open to the public; no tickets or reservations needed. For more information, email Jessica Schuster, Director: jessica.schuster.155@gmail.com.

MONDAY, DECEMBER 8
7:30 p.m.
'Triumph of the Heart' Screening at Saint Francis
FORT WAYNE – The University of Saint Francis will hold a public screening of "Triumph of the Heart; The Passion of St. Maximilian Kolbe" on Monday, December 8, in the North Campus Auditorium, 2702 Spring St. Doors open at 7 p.m., and the film will begin at 7:30 p.m. Individual tickets are $12 in advance or $15 at the door. Tickets for groups of 10 or more are available for $10. Email mhabeeb@sf.edu for tickets or more information.

REST IN PEACE

Fort Wayne
Timothy R. Kearney, 73, Queen of Angels

Nicholas J. Krajewski, 69, Queen of angels

Diane Drahos, 69, St. Joseph

Christina Mae Johnson, 65, St. Joseph

Jesús Morales, 62, St. Joseph

Doris Bender, 89, St. Vincent de Paul

Shari Konger, 63, St. Vincet de Paul

Dorothy Olry, 95, St. Vincent de Paul

Bruce Stark, 65, St. Vincent de Paul

Mishawaka
Justin Kovatch, 26, Queen of Peace

New Haven
Emma A. Momper, 93, St. John the Baptist

Send obituaries to obituaries@diocesefwsb.org.

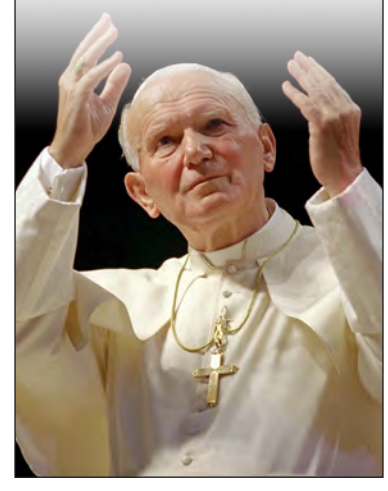
B	U	R	Y		S	N	A	R	E		S	P	I	N
A	S	E	A		Y	O	D	E	L		C	A	S	E
A	D	A	M	A	N	D	E	V	E		A	U	R	A
L	A	C		G	O	E	S		C	O	L	L	A	R
		H	A	N	D	S		S	T	R	I	V	E	S
J	A	I	R	U	S		C	U	R	T	A	I	L	
A	G	N	E	S			A	M	I	S				
M	E	G	A		H	A	V	O	C		E	B	A	Y
				M	O	R	E			P	L	A	C	E
	C	A	S	I	M	I	R		G	O	B	L	E	T
S	A	M	A	R	I	A		T	R	I	A	L		
A	N	I	M	A	L		A	R	A	L		G	U	Y
M	A	D	E		I	M	M	A	C	U	L	A	T	E
B	A	S	K		E	P	O	D	E		A	M	E	N
A	N	T	H		S	H	R	E	D		B	E	S	S

www.wordgamesforcatholics.com

POPE QUOTES

"The cross means there is no shipwreck without hope; there is no dark without dawn; nor storm without haven."

— Pope St. John Paul II



Pope Marks Anniversary of Creed with Apostolic Letter

BY CINDY WOODEN

CNS photo/Vatican Media

Pope Leo XIV gives his blessing to people attending Mass for the Jubilee of Choirs and the feast of Christ the King on Sunday, November 23, in St. Peter's Square. At the end of Mass, the pope announced the release of his apostolic letter, *In Unitate Fidei* ("In the Unity of Faith") on the Creed and the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea.

VATICAN CITY (CNS) – When Christians recite the Creed, it should prompt an examination of conscience about what they truly believe and what kind of example of faith in God they give to others, Pope Leo XIV wrote in a new apostolic letter to mark the 1,700th anniversary of the Council of Nicaea and its Creed.

"Wars have been fought, and people have been killed, persecuted, and discriminated against in the name of God," he wrote. "Instead of proclaiming a merciful God, a vengeful God has been presented who instills terror and punishes."

Publishing *In Unitate Fidei* ("In the Unity of Faith") on Sunday, November 23, Pope Leo said he wanted it released in anticipation of his visit to Turkey, which was scheduled to take place November 27-30 to celebrate with Orthodox and Protestant leaders the anniversary of the Creed that Christians share.

The bishops who had gathered in Nicaea in 325 had survived anti-Christian persecution, the pope said, but were facing the fracturing of their communities over disputes regarding "the essence of the Christian faith – namely, the answer to the decisive question that Jesus had asked his disciples at Caesarea Philippi: 'Who do you say that I am?'"

"Arius, a priest from Alexandria in Egypt, taught that Jesus was not truly the Son of God," the pope explained. Arius taught that "though more than a mere creature," Jesus was "an intermediate being between the inaccessible God and humanity. Moreover, there would have been a time when the Son 'did not exist.'"

The challenge facing the bishops, he said, was to affirm their faith in one God while making it clear that, as the Creed now says, Jesus is "the Only Begotten Son of God, born of the Father before all ages ... true God from true God, begotten, not made, consubstantial with the Father."

The bishops, he said, knew "no mortal being can, in fact, defeat death and save us; only God can do so. He has freed us through His Son made man so that we might be free."

In affirming monotheism and the true humanity and divinity of Christ, the pope said, "they wanted to reaffirm that the one true God is not inaccessibly distant from us but on the contrary has drawn near and has come to encounter us in Jesus Christ."

"This is the heart of our Christian life," Pope Leo wrote. "For this reason, we commit to follow Jesus as our master, companion, brother, and friend."

The version of the Creed recited by most Catholics at Mass each Sunday and shared with other mainline Christians is formally called the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed, because it includes an article of faith inserted by the bishops at the First Council of Constantinople in 381 about the Holy Spirit.

Western Christians say: "I believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is adored and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets."

A footnote in the pope's letter said that the phrase known as the "filioque" – and proceeds from the Father and the Son – "is not found in the text of Constantinople; it was inserted into the Latin Creed by Pope Benedict VIII in 1014 and is a subject of Orthodox-Catholic dialogue."

Recent popes, including Pope Benedict XVI, Pope Francis, and Pope Leo, have omitted the phrase at ecumenical prayer services.

In his letter, Pope Leo affirmed the Catholic Church's commitment to the search for Christian unity and said, "The Nicene Creed can be the basis and reference point for this journey."

He also prayed that the Holy Spirit would come to all Christians "to revive our faith, to enkindle us with hope, to inflame us with charity."

"The Nicene Creed does not depict a distant, inaccessible, and immovable God who rests in Himself, but a God who is close to us and accompanies us on our journey in the world, even in the darkest places on earth," Pope Leo wrote.

Reciting the Creed, he said, should prompt Christians to "examine our conscience."

The questions they should ask, he wrote, include: "What does God mean to me, and how do I bear witness to my faith in Him? Is the one and only God truly the Lord of my life, or do I have idols that I place before God and His commandments? Is God for me the living God, close to me in every situation, the Father to whom I turn with filial trust?"

He continued with more questions, encouraging the faithful to ask: "Is He the Creator to whom I owe everything I am and have, whose mark I can find in every creature? Am I willing to share the goods of the earth, which belong to everyone, in a just and equitable manner? How do I treat creation, the work of His hands? Do I exploit and destroy it, or do I use it with reverence and gratitude, caring for and cultivating it as the common home of humanity?"

Believing that God became human in Jesus means "that we now encounter the Lord in our brothers and sisters in need," the pope said. That is why Jesus said, "As you did it to one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did it to me."

The Creed "does not formulate a philosophical theory," Pope Leo wrote. "It professes faith in the God who redeemed us through Jesus Christ. It is about the living God who wants us to have life and to have it in abundance."

The full text is available at vatican.va.