TODAY'S CATHOLIC

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100 YEARS OF SERVING THE DIOCESE OF FORT WAYNE-SOUTH BEND

TODAYSCATHOLIC.org

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Catholics, Protestants, Orthodox Gather for Ecumenical Prayer Service in Fort Wayne

Scott Warden

Bishop Rhoades is joined by, from left, Pastor Anthony Opliger, Father Emmanuel Abuh, and Pastor Chris Norman during an ecumenical prayer service to begin the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity at St. Jude Catholic Church in Fort Wayne on Sunday, January 18.

BY SCOTT WARDEN

Despite the freezing temperatures outside, hundreds of Christians of various denominations flocked to St. Jude Catholic Church in Fort Wayne on Sunday, January 18, to participate in an ecumenical prayer service marking the beginning of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity.

Held annually from January 18 (the traditional date of the feast of the Chair of St. Peter) through January 25 (the feast of the Conversion of St. Paul), the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity dates to 1909, when it was founded as the Octave of Christian Unity by Servant of God Paul Wattson. For nearly 60 years, the week has been organized through a collaboration between the World Council of Churches and what is now the Vatican's Dicastery for Promoting Christian Unity. Leaders of these groups selecting scriptural themes. This year's theme is taken from St. Paul's Letter to the Ephesians, "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to the one hope of your calling" (4:4).

At the beginning of the prayer service, Bishop Rhoades welcomed those who braved the cold to gather in prayer.

"Christians throughout the world celebrate this special week, praying for greater unity – and hopefully, one day, full unity – as members of the Body

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Bishop Luers Principal, Students Receive Sacraments

BY GEORGIA LIEB

Silence filled the gymnasium as Bishop Rhoades spoke the words over Bishop Luers Principal Seth Coffing: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit." This was a special moment for the entire Bishop Luers community as they witnessed their principal receiving the sacrament of baptism, followed by confirmation and holy Communion.

In his homily, Bishop Rhoades said: "This will be the first time in all my years as a priest and as a bishop that I will be baptizing a Catholic school principal. When I met with Mr. Coffing to interview him before I appointed him principal, I learned that here at Bishop Luers he had really grown in his faith and was planning to become Catholic, thanks to you, the Bishop Luers community, and your example of faith, your witness to the truth and joy of following Christ."

Along with Coffing, five students and a teacher received sacraments during Bishop Rhoades' annual pastoral visit on Wednesday, January 14. Theology Department Chair Ann Isch served as their catechist this fall.

"I felt privileged to take this journey with them as they grew deeper in their faith and ultimately received their sacraments," Isch told Today's Catholic.

Bishop Rhoades said: "Today is a beautiful day in the life of the Christian community of Bishop Luers High School. It is a day of joy not only for those who will receive the sacraments of initiation at this Mass and for their sponsors and families but also

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The
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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

St. Pius X Pastor Receives Biblical Scholar Award

BY KASIA BALSBAUGH

Photos by Kasia Balsbaugh

Scott Hahn, left, the founder of the St. Paul Center, presents Monsignor Michael Heintz, pastor of St. Pius X Parish, with the Letter and Spirit Award, the center's highest honor, during a ceremony in Granger on Saturday, January 17.

When Monsignor Michael Heintz was sent to continue his scholarly studies as a younger priest, he remembers then-Bishop John M. D'Arcy telling him, "It's not for you, it's for the Church."

Monsignor Heintz took this to heart. In fact, his deep service to the Church through his studies and priesthood was recognized on Saturday, January 17, with the Letter and Spirit Award, the highest honor given by the St. Paul Center, which is led by lay theologian and author Scott Hahn. The award is given to biblical scholars who "renew the Church through biblical scholarship that is both rigorously academic and ardently pastoral," according to the online statement about the award.

Monsignor Heintz, now pastor of St. Pius X Parish in Granger, has built a formidable scholarly career, with a focus on patristics studies. He has translated many of early Christian thinker Origen's works, particularly those on the psalms, and has studied the Ressourcement, a movement in Catholic theology that advocates a "return to the source" for Scripture and early Christian studies. Monsignor Heintz previously served as a teacher and dean at Mount St. Mary's Seminary in Maryland and now serves as visiting director of the University of Notre Dame's Marten Program in Homiletics and Liturgics.

Scott Hahn emphasized the integrated work of Monsignor Heintz, calling him a man "who refuses to separate the academy from the ambo, who reads the Fathers not as museum pieces but as living mentors, as spiritual guides."

While accepting the award, Monsignor Heintz reiterated his gratitude for his parishioners and students – and also his devotion to his priestly vocation.

"The center of gravity of my life is this altar and that ambo at St. Pius," Monsignor Heintz said. "That is the center of my life."

Lisa Marino went to grade school with Monsignor Heintz, worked with him for years at St. Matthew Cathedral, and now works with him at St. Pius X Catholic Church as the parish's director of evangelization. She said she would never leave a job where she works alongside him, as she learns so much by watching him. She praised the pastor's humility and priorities.

"When people meet Monsignor, they don't always realize everything he's involved in, because he doesn't care about all that; he's concerned about the person in front of him," Marino told Today's Catholic. "He's concerned about, how am I going to get that person in front of me to Jesus? How am I going to be Jesus for him or her?"

Marino gave examples of Monsignor Heintz's care for his parishioners, such as how he expanded Mass and confession times to better serve the parish, or when he mailed one of Marino's kids a handwritten note congratulating them for winning an award. "This is how he operates," Marino said.

"The people who know him from important circles might be surprised that so many regular people know him, because he's regular with us," Marino said. "He's literally a pastor with us. He's totally one of us."

Many more parishioners and friends of Monsignor Heintz attended the awards ceremony as well as Scott Hahn's subsequent reflection on the transformative power of Scripture.

"The word of God accomplishes whatever it conveys," Hahn said during the event at St. Pius. "It doesn't just signify; it describes reality, but it also changes it." As he further explained later in the lecture, "The word of God is not like our words. Our words generally describe reality, but more often than not, they describe our moods, our responses to the experiences we have, whereas God's word creates reality and redeems it as well."

Hahn also spoke about particular ways in which this happens and how the Old and New Testaments inform each other – how, for example, the Passover was transformed by Christ in the Eucharist.

Monsignor Michael Heintz expresses his gratitude while accepting the St. Paul Center's Letter and Spirit Award.

The St. Paul Center's primary mission is to provide opportunity for such transformation through Scripture encounter, to promote "biblical literacy and fluency," especially for clergy. One practical way it achieves this is through annual conferences for priests. In addition, its publishing house, Emmaus Publishing, offers many informative books, including the Ignatius Catholic Study Bible, a project that took Hahn and his co-workers almost 30 years to complete.

Hahn gave a recent statistic that 42 percent of Catholics didn't know what the first book of the Bible was. It is this sort of ignorance he said that Catholics need to remedy. "This is our history, this is our story," Hahn said of the Bible.

"We are the disciples on the road to Emmaus, and that road is longer than seven miles – it represents a lifetime," Hahn said. "And may the same thing happen to us that happened to them. May our hearts burn within us more and more as we hear the word of God, and may our eyes be opened to see Him, to receive Him, to celebrate Him, and to go forth and share Him as missionary disciples, as faithful lay apostles. This is the Gospel according to the Catholic Church. This is the Eucharist."

Eileen Bond

Young adults gather at The Public House in Mishawaka for the opening session of Theology on Tap on Thursday, January 15.

Theology on Tap Opens with Discussion of Mental Health

BY EILEEN BOND

The Public House in Mishawaka could barely fit all the 20- and 30-somethings who came out to the first winter session of Theology on Tap in South Bend on Thursday, January 15. After moving downstairs in order to accommodate the large crowd, Dr. Melanie Williams, director of Diocesan Mental Health Ministries for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, spoke about the importance of mental health while drawing upon St. Catherine of Siena's strong mentality and love of self, which ultimately came from one thing: her love of God. The theme of the series is "Doctors of the Church."

"There is a mental health crisis going on in our country and in our world," Williams began. A serious topic today, particularly among young people, Williams told the crowd that mental health can be influenced by several things, including biology, trauma, and environmental, social, and psychological factors.

But as described in her talk, Williams also believes spiritual factors influence mental health as well. For example, habitual sin can leave us feeling heavy and burdened, lessening our capacity to choose virtue over sin.

"Mental illness is not a moral failure, but when we engage in habitual sin, it can inhibit our ability to choose the good," Williams said. This is the same approach Williams uses in her work. "I approach counseling from the perspective of our Catholic faith, that each person has inherent dignity and worth."

During St. Catherine of Siena's life, in the mid-14th century, when the Black Plague was thriving, there was little understanding of one's mental health. It was more about the "psychology of the soul" according to Williams. Without the same resources we have today, St. Catherine used her faith and spirituality as her strength. "She really had to lean upon God and others, and God provided the grace for what she needed," Williams told Today's Catholic.

Calling St. Catherine a role model in holiness and maintaining mental health, Williams stressed that "in her life of penance, she had very good mental health." Even though she outwardly appeared to be suffering, she internally wrote and spoke of peace and was grounded in her love of God. Known for her role in bringing the papacy back to Rome from Avignon, France, St. Catherine is one of only four women recognized as a Doctor of the Church. Devoting herself to Christ at an early age, she refused her parents' wishes to marry her off and instead consecrated her virginity to God. Later she became known for her many visions and her reception of the stigmata.

In more recent years, St. Catherine has come under scrutiny for her extended fasting, with some scholars debating whether she may have had an eating disorder. While addressing the controversial topic, Williams wanted to be clear: "We do not go back into history and diagnose the saints based on modern terms," she said. Drawing upon her own experience working with patients who have eating disorders, Williams said the root of the issue is usually dissatisfaction with self. But that's not what you see in Catherine. Reading from St. Catherine's writings, Williams stressed that the saint "loved the Lord and had a proper love of self."

Joseph Patus, 23, who attended the session in Mishawaka, was inspired to read more of St. Catherine's writing after hearing Williams speak as well as hearing excerpts from St. Catherine's writings.

"It was really interesting for her to talk about her life and how it relates to mental health," Patus said. Calling it a great community event, Patus said he's been coming to Theology on Tap for a couple years now. "It's great meeting a lot of good people and seeing familiar faces while getting food and hearing great talks," he said. "I've never heard mental health talked about in that way."

There's a lot we can do to care for our spirituality and our mental health, Williams told the audience. Besides taking care of ourselves emotionally and physically, other things that can help are staying connected with other people and finding ways to give of ourselves through acts of service.

"If someone is experiencing mental or emotional distress today, the Church says you should use the resources that God has provided for us in our day and age," Williams said about mental health care, "We have a call to use it if we are in distress."

If you are experiencing a mental health issue or crisis, you can explore diocesan resources through Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend. Learn more at ccfwsb.org/catholic-mental-health-ministries.

PUBLIC SCHEDULE OF

Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades

Veritatem In Caritate

(Truth in Charity)

- **Tuesday, January 27, at 9:30 a.m.** – Mass and Pastoral Visit, Bishop Dwenger High School, Fort Wayne
- **Thursday, January 29, at 8 a.m.** – Mass and Pastoral Visit, St. Joseph Hessen Cassel School, Fort Wayne
- **Saturday, January 31, at 4:30 p.m.** – Mass at Seven Sisters Retreat, St. Felix Catholic Center, Huntington

Homelessness, Housing in Spotlight at Statehouse

BY VICTORIA ARTHUR

Scott Warden

MISFITS Ministries holds an event in downtown Fort Wayne to help the city's homeless population in January of 2024.

The Indiana Statehouse is again the center of debate over how to provide adequate housing for the most vulnerable Hoosiers, including the chronically homeless.

Advocates including the Indiana Catholic Conference (ICC) are tracking two bills that take contrasting approaches to the issue – from cracking down on street camping in public places to building affordable housing on property owned by religious institutions.

"Legislators are coming from the perspective that it is not charitable to let people live on the street," said Roarke LaCoursiere, associate director of the ICC, the public policy voice of the Catholic Church in Indiana. "There are people who remain on the streets who refuse services or for whatever reason [and] cannot muster up what it takes to do what others believe is the right thing for them to do. So how can we engage with these people? How can we try to help them better their lives and restore their dignity?"

"That is the goal of these types of bills, but how to meet that goal is something that people strongly disagree about," LaCoursiere added.

Senate Bill 285, which brings back language from a failed attempt last year to prohibit street encampments for the homeless, has passed the first hurdle in this year's General Assembly.

Under the bill, law enforcement officials first encountering individuals sleeping or camping on public property would issue a warning and offer to connect them with local shelters and other resources. Repeat violations could result in a Class C misdemeanor, which carries a standard fine of $500 or up to 60 days in jail.

But its author, Senator Cyndi Carrasco (R-Indianapolis), emphasized to lawmakers that the primary intent of the legislation is to offer homeless people viable alternatives to living on the street.

"The goal of Senate Bill 285 is not to criminalize homelessness," Carrasco said during a January 14 hearing on the bill in the Senate Judiciary Committee. "This bill is structured so that initial interactions are focused on intervention rather than punishment."

Carrasco described the misdemeanor provision of the bill as means to "create a moment where outreach, diversion, and connection to services can occur, and to move individuals to a healthier and more stable life through a clear, multi-step process that prioritizes services before enforcement."

"For individuals struggling with serious mental health or substance abuse issues who are unable or unwilling to seek help on their own, this bill creates a pathway to connect them with health care, housing resources, treatment, and support systems that can help begin to stabilize their lives," Carrasco said. "To be clear, it is not compassionate to allow our neighbors to die on the streets. This is a solvable problem, and I believe this bill is part of that solution."

But the majority of those testifying at the hearing spoke in opposition to the bill, arguing that the legislation would indeed criminalize homelessness and place more barriers to self-sufficiency for the most vulnerable people in Indiana. The ICC stopped short of taking an official position, praising the bill's author for her good faith effort on a serious issue while maintaining that there is more work to be done on the bill.

"This is obviously a multi-layered, complex issue," said Alexander Mingus, executive director of the ICC, in his most recent podcast with LaCoursiere. "And this is certainly a complex bill, and we're certain there will be changes as the legislation moves through the process. We will continue to ask questions about when trying to get someone off the streets, what is the most holistic solution that's feasible (beyond) putting someone in jail or giving them a fine."

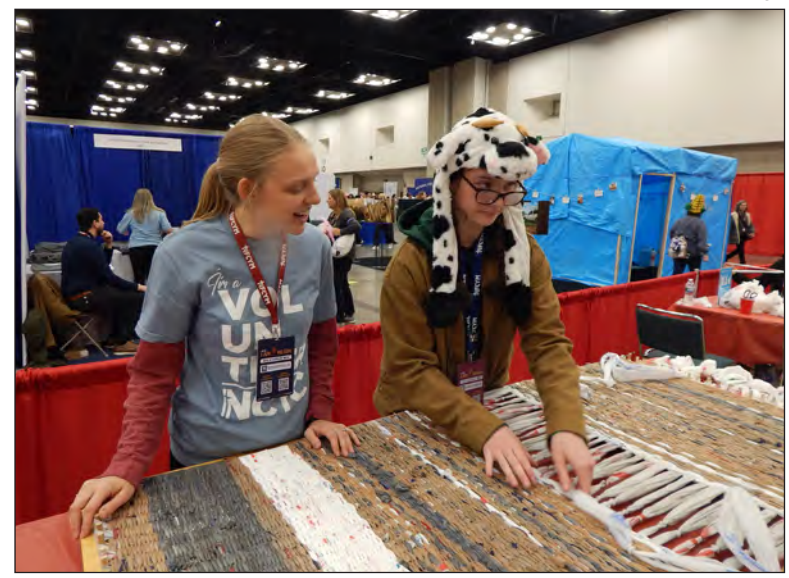
Senate Bill 285 passed the committee on an 8-2 vote and now awaits further action in the Senate.

Its most vocal support came from representatives of the Cicero Institute, a Texas-based think tank that is behind similar legislation passed in Florida, Georgia, and Texas banning homeless encampments. The Cicero Institute backed a measure almost identical to Senate Bill 285 in last year's General Assembly.

The ICC, however, points to another policy source closer to home for additional perspective. The University of Notre Dame's Wilson Sheehan Lab for Economic Opportunities (LEO) conducts research and aims to identify innovative and effective programs nationwide that help move people out of poverty for good.

In an op-ed addressing last year's homelessness legislation in Indiana, a LEO professor argued that criminalizing those living on the street would only exacerbate a serious problem.

"The root causes of homelessness – unaffordable housing, untreated mental illness, or substance use disorder, an unforeseen financial crisis such as a health scare or loss of a loved one – are not mysteries," said David Phillips, research professor of economics at the University of Notre Dame. "Criminalization does not address these problems. In the absence of strong evidence, we should be skeptical that its primary effect will be anything other than sweeping real problems under the rug, pushing vulnerable people from one community in Indiana to the next."



OSV News photo/Mike Krokos, The Criterion

Volunteer Kelli Reutman, left, of Catalyst Catholic in the Archdiocese of Indianapolis supervises Sela Kubiak of the Archdiocese of Detroit as she helps make a mat for the homeless on November 21, 2025, by taking plastic bags and weaving them together during a visit to the interactive exhibit hall in the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis during last year's National Catholic Youth Conference.

Another program at Notre Dame – the Church Properties Initiative at the university's Fitzgerald Institute for Real Estate – could hold the key to one type of innovative solution that lawmakers are seeking in another major bill.

One element of House Bill 1001, a significant housing affordability measure under consideration at the General Assembly, proposes streamlined zoning to allow religious entities to build affordable housing on church property. The ICC supports this effort, which falls under the growing "Yes in God's Backyard" (YIGBY) movement nationwide.

YIGBY efforts encourage churches and other faith-based institutions to use their underutilized land or current structures to create dignified, attainable housing for low- and moderate-income households. They are a counterpoint to more restrictive zoning practices that are often categorized as "Not in My Backyard" (NIMBY).

House Bill 1001 has been referred to the House Committee on Local Government, where it awaits further review. LaCoursiere and Mingus said they would continue to monitor developments on the housing affordability measure, particularly as it relates to the potential use of church property.

"We believe this is a good idea – certainly one small piece in a much broader, complex puzzle," Mingus said.

To follow priority legislation of the ICC, visit indianacc.org. This website includes access to ICAN, the Indiana Catholic Action Network, which offers the Church's position on key issues. Those who sign up for ICAN receive alerts on legislation moving forward and ways to contact their elected representatives.

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.

Bishop Dwenger Fosters Heart of Service in Students

BY CASEN WIRGES

As a high school that embraces its Catholic identity, Bishop Dwenger is built on four pillars: Academic Life, Spiritual Life, Active Life, and Life of Service. While academics, spirituality, and activity may seem like the most integral pillars for a high school community, a life of service is something that makes Bishop Dwenger different.

As Catholics, we are all called to be Jesus to others; we do this through the corporal works of mercy and the spiritual works of mercy.

Corporal works of mercy are ways to physically serve those in need. Some examples of the corporal works of mercy are feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, and visiting the sick. The spiritual works of mercy are acts that help others with their emotional and spiritual needs. Examples of the spiritual works are instructing the ignorant and counseling the doubtful.

While both types of works of mercy are important as Catholics, students and staff at Bishop Dwenger focus more on the corporal works of mercy.

While some students at Bishop Dwenger complain about having to do acts of service, it might be because they don't fully understand the meaning of the service they are doing.

As Christians, we are called to be like Jesus to others, especially those who have less than we do. One way we can do this is through acts of service. Just like Jesus humbled himself to wash the feet of the poor, we are also called to humble ourselves by giving up our time and helping others.

Kingston Schenkel, a member of the Key Club at Bishop Dwenger, shared his love for service and how it helps him grow in his relationship with the Lord.

"Service hours have allowed me to see God throughout my day in the community," said Schenkel, who noted that it feels good to help the community. He shared that he loves being Jesus to others.

Provided by Bishop Dwenger High School

Elizabeth Bundy, a senior at Bishop Dwenger High School in Fort Wayne, loads water bottles onto a cart while volunteering for Edge, the middle school youth group at St. Vincent de Paul Parish.

Schenkel said some of his favorite memories are doing service at the Fort Wayne Zoo during Halloween.

"I loved handing candy to kids and seeing them in their adorable costumes. The smiles on the kids' faces when I gave them candy were priceless. It was a very memorable moment," Schenkel said.

Schenkel said he will definitely be volunteering at the zoo next Halloween.

Schenkel said his other favorite place to serve was that he did service was Turnstone Center for Children and Adults with Disabilities. Similar to the Zoo Halloween, he helped with another trunk-or-treat that Turnstone called a Track-or-Treat, where he handed out candy to kids and put smiles on their faces.

> "Service hours have allowed me to see God throughout my day in the community."
>
> **KINGSTON SCHENKEL**

Maggie Keefer, a sophomore at Bishop Dwenger, said that her service has been an unforgettable experience.

"I met so many nice people with great faith in God while helping out at Towne House Retirement Community."

Keefer said that the residents at Towne House have influenced her to go deeper in her relationship with God. She said the preacher at Towne House was also a very influential person. One thing the preacher said that has stuck with her is "live every day for Jesus because you don't know what day will be your last."

Another thing Keefer loved about volunteering at Towne House was talking to the residents. She loves hearing stories and learning about their lives – both in the present and in the past.

Although service hours can seem like a hassle, they are something students should enjoy because in giving to others, we are doing the work of God. It is a sacrifice for God.

Other Bishop Dwenger students sacrifice their time by going on a mission trip during their Christmas break with the high school youth group at St. Vincent de Paul Parish. Through this, they were able to serve the homeless of downtown Pittsburgh by providing food, clothing, and prayer for them.

Senior Elizabeth Bundy was one of several Bishop Dwenger students who went to Pittsburgh.

"I sacrificed what I wanted to do by being more in the background of the things we did on the mission trip," said Bundy, who added that while she wasn't front and center with her service, she realized her intersessions were just as important as the work being done by others.

Bundy said she offered up her aching back for the people who needed physical healing on the mission trip.

One way Bundy said she serves her community is through the St. Vincent de Paul Parrish middle school youth group, Edge.

"Leading a small group at Edge is something that allows me to be a spiritual leader to others," Bundy said. She also expressed the fun and joy of playing games, leading a small group, and teaching others about God.

For students at Bishop Dwenger, serving others means more than just acquiring service hours. It means being Christ to others and showing them His unconditional love. Being able to help others while modeling Christ is something that makes Bishop Dwenger the special place that it is.

Casen Wirges is a sophomore at Bishop Dwenger High School.

NEWS BRIEFS

WASHINGTON, D.C., MASS HONORS MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.

OSV News photo/Mihoko Owada, Catholic Standard

Washington, D.C., Cardinal Robert W. McElroy speaks during a January 18 Mass at the Shrine of St. Jude Catholic Church in Rockville, Maryland, that was offered in remembrance of the legacy of Martin Luther King Jr. More than 500 people attended the annual celebration of the legacy of the late civil rights leader. Cardinal McElroy said King led a "revolution of conscience" and sought "the conversion of hearts." Cardinal McElroy added, "Dr. King was truly a dreamer and a prophet," the cardinal said. "He came to echo the message of Jesus Christ that we are all truly brothers and sisters."

Pope Leo Warns Against Chasing Approval

VATICAN CITY (OSV News) – Pope Leo XIV warned against the modern obsession with approval, public consensus, and visibility during his January 18 Angelus address, saying those pursuits often replace authentic happiness and leave people divided, disappointed, and spiritually restless. Speaking to the faithful, the pope said the constant search for success or recognition can shape how people think and live – but ultimately leads to fragile relationships and personal suffering. True fulfillment, he said, comes not from fame or achievements but from knowing each person is loved and wanted by God. Pointing to Jesus and St. John the Baptist, Pope Leo emphasized a God who does not seek attention through spectacle but instead enters human struggles and shares people's burdens, revealing every person's dignity. The pope urged believers to resist superficial goals and cultivate simplicity, sincerity, and prayerful silence, making time each day to "withdraw into the desert" to encounter the Lord. After the Angelus, he marked the start of the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity and called for peace and justice worldwide, offering prayers for those displaced by violence in Congo and the region.

U.S. Bishops Praise DHS Policy Change on Religious Worker Visas

WASHINGTON, D.C. (OSV News) – The Department of Homeland Security said on Wednesday, January 14, it issued an interim final rule reducing wait times for religious worker visas. Catholic advocates were among those who pushed the Trump administration to address the backlog in their visa category. DHS officials said its regulation change would eliminate the one-year minimum wait time applicants are required to remain outside the U.S. before reapplying for the nonimmigrant religious worker R-1 visa. A spokesperson for DHS said in a statement the department "is committed to protecting and preserving freedom and expression of religion" and was taking the necessary steps to ensure religious organizations can continue their mission that is "essential to the social and moral fabric of this country." Archbishop Paul S. Coakley of Oklahoma City, president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, and Bishop Brendan J. Cahill of Victoria, Texas, chairman of the USCCB's migration committee, said they "are tremendously grateful for the administration's work to address certain challenges facing foreign-born religious workers, their employers, and the American communities they serve." It's a "significant step" that will "help facilitate essential religious services for Catholics and other people of faith" in the U.S.

Vatican Foreign Minister Says Surrogacy Reduces Children to Products for Sale

ROME (OSV News) – The Vatican's top diplomat is renewing calls for a global ban on surrogacy, warning that the practice violates human dignity by turning children and women into commodities. Speaking on Tuesday, January 13, at an event hosted by the Italian Embassy to the Holy See, Archbishop Paul R. Gallagher said surrogacy "translates into the sale of a child" and exploits women by reducing pregnancy to a negotiable service. Archbishop Gallagher said the Church's opposition centers on what he called the commodification of the human person, noting that some surrogacy contracts even specify conditions if a child is not healthy. He cited international law defining the sale of children, arguing surrogacy fits that description. The archbishop recalled recent condemnations by Pope Leo XIV and Pope Francis, stressing continuity in Church teaching. In his speech, Archbishop Gallagher recalled Pope Leo's January 9 address to diplomats accredited to the Holy See, in which the pope said: "By transforming gestation into a negotiable service, this violates the dignity both of the child, who is reduced to a 'product,' and of the mother, exploiting her body and the generative process, and distorting the original relational calling of the family."

Report: More than 388 Million Christians Face 'High Levels' of Persecution

SANTA ANA, California (OSV News) – More than 388 million Christians – or 1 in 7 believers worldwide – face "high levels of persecution and discrimination for their faith," according to a new report. Open Doors International, a global advocacy organization for persecuted Christians, released the figure as part of its "World Watch List 2026" report, an annual overview that measures the severity of Christian persecution in some 50 countries. For the 24th consecutive year, North Korea remains the harshest country in which to practice the Christian faith, due to a national policy that bans worship of any other entity beside the ruling Kim regime, said the report. Somalia, Yemen, Sudan, Eritrea, Syria, Nigeria, Pakistan, Libya, and Iran also have "extreme" levels of Christian persecution, said Open Doors. A number of factors – including conflict, lawlessness, criminality, authoritarianism, and nationalism – drive persecution, said organization officials. Yet "perhaps the most potent and powerful reason for persecution is the faith of the church itself," said Open Doors in its report, adding that in all of the countries it surveyed, "the church is still present and alive," and "even growing" in some places.

Planned Parenthood Sees Title X Funding Restored

WASHINGTON, D.C. (OSV News) – The Trump administration "quietly released" Title X family planning funds to Planned Parenthood, the nation's largest abortion provider, prompting the American Civil Liberties Union to drop its lawsuit that sought to restore the funds, Politico reported on Tuesday, January 13. The Trump administration previously froze about $27.5 million in federal family planning grants to groups including Planned Parenthood as part of its probe into diversity, equity, and inclusion programs, sometimes referred to as DEI, within federal agencies. But those Title X funds were just a fraction of the taxpayer funds Planned Parenthood receives annually. The group's 2023-24 annual report showed it received more than $700 million in taxpayer funds for the fiscal year that ended on June 30, 2024. Planned Parenthood affiliates in states including Utah saw their Title X funds cut in response to the freeze. But on Monday, January 12, the Planned Parenthood Association of Utah announced it was once again able to resume its participation in the program.

U.S. Cardinals Call for 'Genuinely Moral Foreign Policy for Our Nation'

NEWARK, New Jersey (OSV News) – Three U.S. cardinals have issued a joint statement urging the creation of a "genuinely moral foreign policy for our nation," as the U.S. faces "the most profound and searing debate about the moral foundation for America's actions in the world since the end of the Cold War." Cardinal Blase J. Cupich of Chicago, Cardinal Robert W. McElroy of Washington, D.C., and Cardinal Joseph W. Tobin of Newark released the statement on Monday, January 19, focusing on the "enduring ethical compass" for foreign policy that Pope Leo XIV provided in his January 9 address to members of the diplomatic corps accredited the Holy See. In their statement, the cardinals pointed to "events in Venezuela, Ukraine, and Greenland" that "have raised basic questions about the use of military force and the meaning of peace." They stressed that Pope Leo's address to diplomats "has given us the prism through which to raise" U.S. foreign policy "to a much higher level," they said. "We will preach, teach, and advocate in the coming months to make that higher level possible."

Eucharistic Revival Sparked Faith; Challenges Remain

BY GINA CHRISTIAN

(OSV News) – The National Eucharistic Revival – a three-year initiative to renew belief in the Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Eucharist, following a marked decline in belief among U.S. Catholics – has rekindled both faith and outreach, according to a new study. Still, several challenges remain in extending those results to people not already in the pews.

The findings were released on Thursday, January 15, in "Share Your Perspective" ("Comparte tu perspectiva"), a national survey of the impact of the National Eucharistic Revival conducted by the Catholic market research firm Vinea Research, which had been engaged by revival organizers and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops.

"The bishops decided to take time to hear from Catholics in the United States about their experiences of the fruits of the Eucharistic Revival, to recognize ongoing needs within the Church, and to identify areas for potential growth in the future," wrote Archbishop Charles C. Thompson of Indianapolis, chair of the USCCB's Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, in a January 15 letter announcing the data's release.

He explained the survey had been developed in two phases, with one-on-one interviews shaping the questions ultimately provided to just under 2,500 respondents.

The second phase's online data collection took place during the summer and fall of 2025 – one year after the 10th National Eucharistic Congress, held in July of 2024 in Indianapolis and preceded by the first National Eucharistic Pilgrimage, the four routes of which converged at the congress.

Of the online sample, 2,058 were lay Catholics who had not been involved in the revival's organization, with 1,758 coming from lists provided by the USCCB. The other 300 – lay Catholics who attended Mass at least monthly – were drawn from Vinea's general population panel. The firm noted in its report that "lay Catholic respondents were not made aware of the purpose of the survey."

Lay Catholics were classified in the survey as national participants (50 percent), meaning they participated in either the National Eucharistic Congress or National Eucharistic Pilgrimage; as local participants (24 percent), meaning they joined in a local Eucharistic Revival activity but not in a national event; or were non-participants (26 percent) in revival activities.

The remaining sample, which the report described as "ecclesial," represented 414 respondents who were priests, deacons, or revival point persons, drawn from USCCB (294) and Vinea (120) lists. Of those, 60 percent were ordained clergy, 41 percent of whom were pastors; 20 percent were a combination of diocesan (15 percent) or parish (5 percent) staff; and 20 percent were non-staff and non-ordained "point person" parishioners.

On balance, the survey data showed both the "lay" and "ecclesial" groups benefited from the National Eucharistic Revival, reporting enhanced faith and spirituality as well as community outreach.

However, the report also discovered several challenges to be addressed, including reaching beyond already engaged Catholics, while providing more parish-level support for such initiatives.

In his letter, Archbishop Thompson noted that "much of the data in the survey pertains to observations from the general laity segment or about them by the ecclesial segment," since "the bishops hoped to inspire a grassroots initiative among Catholics" with the revival.

Specifically, the survey measured the frequency of participation in various faith activities, the personal importance of such activities, the level of conviction in Catholic beliefs as well as comfort in evangelizing, and the extent of respondents' understanding of beliefs.

Participants in the lay segment compared their present experiences with those in post-COVID 2021, ranking them along five-point scales from "never" to "very often."

Photos by Scott Warden

Nearly 60,000 people flocked to Indianapolis for the National Eucharistic Congress in July of 2024.

Members of the faithful sing worship and praise music at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis during the 2024 National Eucharistic Congress.

And, according to Vinea, "the greatest growth in importance" for the lay segment "was observed in volunteering and spending time in Eucharistic adoration," with faith-related activities – especially volunteering – all showing "significant increases since 2021."

Notably, belief in the Real Presence among all three segments edged to 90 percent and above, with the greatest increase detected among national participants (92 percent, up from 73 percent in 2021). Local participants saw an 11-point jump (93 percent, up from 82 percent), while belief among the general Catholic segment rose by 12 points (90 percent, up from 78 percent).

National participants (60 percent) reported a 17-point increase in Eucharistic adoration since 2021 (up from 43 percent), with local participants (64 percent, up from 49 percent) and Vinea's general Catholic population segment (43 percent, up from 37 percent) also spending more time before the Blessed Sacrament over the same four-year timeframe.

Other increases among the survey's national, local and general segments over this timeframe included:

- Scripture or spiritual reading, with national at 83 percent (up from 66 percent), local at 88 percent (up from 78 percent) and general at 80 percent (up from 71 percent).
- Attending Mass beyond the Sunday obligation, with national and local both at 74 percent (up from 55 percent and 64 percent, respectively) and the general segment at 50 percent (up from 46 percent).
- Going to confession, with national at 61 percent (up from 43 percent), local at 58 percent (up from 41 percent) and the general group at 43 percent (up from 30 percent).

Among the ecclesial segment, the survey found that "leadership enthusiasm for the Revival was strong at every level, with 92 percent of bishops and 92 percent of pastors described as supportive."

Vinea found the revival overall "refocused clergy on the Eucharist, with a majority reporting substantive changes to their pastoral approach since 2021."

At the parish level, clergy reported that the "most fruitful" revival activities were Holy Hours and Eucharistic adoration events (53 percent), Eucharistic catechesis and teaching (41 percent), and local Eucharistic processions (39 percent).

Roughly one-quarter of clergy described the National Eucharistic Congress (26 percent) and the National Eucharistic Pilgrimage (23 percent) as fruitful, although the numbers were significantly higher for clergy who had attended the congress (64 percent) or pilgrimage (63 percent).

A total of 70 percent of ordained revival point persons said the initiative had been able to reach less engaged or lapsed Catholics. But most of that success was categorized as "slightly successful."

Challenges for revival activities reported by point persons, along with priests and deacons, centered around "two key obstacles: external barriers and internal constraints," said the report.

"Staff cited resource limitations and time constraints at higher rates (63 percent and 58 percent), while parishioners more often mentioned lack of awareness among target audiences (51 percent)," the report said.

In addition, "the burden of local implementation fell heavily on volunteers and part-time staff, who often felt they lacked institutional support for sustainable programming," the report noted.

Reaching beyond engaged Catholics, lack of awareness and "apathy among some target audiences," as well as the risk of leadership burnout without more organizational support, were also cited in the report.

Still, the report concluded, the revival fostered both personal and parish renewal – and "the evidence suggests that a future revival could bear similar fruit and, with clear support and capacity, potentially expand its reach further."

From Classrooms to Communities

To Mark Catholic Schools Week, Today's Catholic Shares How Catholic Elementary Students Are Putting Faith into Action

BY TIM JOHNSON

As Catholic Schools Week is celebrated across the Diocese of Fort Wayne–South Bend, students in Catholic elementary schools are learning an essential lesson that extends far beyond the classroom: faith comes alive through service. From caring for neighbors in need to reaching out to the elderly and the poor, these schools are helping children understand that following Christ begins with love in action.

Throughout the diocese, Catholic elementary schools intentionally weave service into daily school life, helping students connect Gospel values with real-world needs. Whether through food drives, outreach to the homeless, visits with seniors, or hands-on acts of charity, these experiences teach students that service is not an occasional activity but a core part of Catholic identity – one that shapes how they see others and their place in the world.

A School United in Service

At St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School in Fort Wayne, service is a schoolwide commitment that brings students of all ages together. Each October, every student – from pre-K 3-year-olds through middle school – participates in a comprehensive service project benefiting St. Henry's Ministries, an outreach in southeast Fort Wayne that includes a community garden, thrift store, and vital support for individuals and families in need.

Younger students create hundreds of Christmas and greeting cards that are distributed through St. Henry's Christmas boxes. Students in grades 2 through 5 organize and manage a collection drive for essential items, including hygiene products and food, while middle school students load donations and travel to St. Henry's to assist with cleaning, greenhouse work, food distribution, painting, and yard projects. Eighth-grade students spend the day serving at Community Harvest Food Bank.

Beyond the annual project, Elizabeth Ann Seton's National Junior Honor Society and Student Council regularly organize dress-down fundraisers supporting organizations such as the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation and the National Association for Deaf Awareness.

"For those of us on staff, along with our wonderful teachers and administrators, it was a great sight to see," said Jean Vandegriff, marketing and development coordinator at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton. "We felt united as a school community and very grateful and blessed."

Provided by St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School

Students at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Catholic School in Fort Wayne have made St. Henry's Ministries a service partner for the past 10 years. Every student in the school – from pre-K 3-year-olds through middle school – participates in some way, assisting with painting, window washing, and gardening tasks.

Provided by Sacred Heart Catholic School

Students from Sacred Heart School in Warsaw ring bells to collect money for the Salvation Army at a local grocery store last December.

Cultivating Hope for Others

Another example of how Catholic schools use service to teach the Gospels to their students comes from St. Joseph Grade School in South Bend, where sixth-grade language arts teacher Jenny Greenlee helps lead student service at HOPE Ministries. Over the years, students have participated in a variety of service efforts, including supporting the school lunch program at Mary Immaculate School in Haiti, assisting at St. Margaret's House, and serving veterans at the Robert L. Miller Veterans Center.

Sixth graders also serve lunch at HOPE Ministries twice each school year. Greenlee said students begin the experience by learning about the complex circumstances that can lead to homelessness, including job loss, illness, lack of affordable housing, or limited access to transportation or job training.

"The first time the students attend, they are just getting the lay of the land," Greenlee said. "The second time, they are able to fully understand and develop that love of helping others in need. All of the other opportunities continue to build their joy for serving others."

That joy often extends beyond the school year. When students reflect on the legacy they hope to leave at St. Joseph Grade School, many point to their experiences at HOPE Ministries and express a desire to continue serving into the summer months.

Serving Neighbors Close to Home

While Elizabeth Ann Seton School's anniversary project highlights the impact of a school united in service, similar lessons are taking shape throughout the diocese – including at Sacred Heart School in Warsaw, in the heart of the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend.

At Sacred Heart, students learn that service often begins by noticing everyday needs in their own community. Earlier this year, second graders created baby wipes for Our Father's House, an outreach of the St. Vincent de Paul Society. In December, students rang bells at a local grocery store to support the Salvation Army. A United Way grant later helped fund hygiene kits assembled for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Encountering Faith Across Generations

At St. Joseph Grade School, South Bend, service emphasizes encounter and relationship. Fourth-grade teacher Beth Badics leads an outreach that connects students with retired Sisters of the Holy Cross through conversation, prayer, and shared time.

Through visits and storytelling, students come to see the sisters not simply as figures from Church history but as living witnesses – women who once taught children just like them, served the poor, and continue to support the Church through prayer and joyful example. Badics has seen the effects extend well beyond the visits themselves, as students return to school more attentive to others, more willing to help at home, and more mindful of classmates who feel left out.

"They start to see service as something joyful," Badics said, "not a chore – something that

Students from Christ the King Catholic School in So their years at at the school, gradually assuming gr wide range of populations. That journey of service immersion trip to Indianapolis, a defining capston

Provided by St. Jude Catholic School, Fort Wayne

Students at St. Jude Catholic School in Fort Wayne hold a schoolwide collection for Just Neighbors, a neighborhood homeless shelter supporting families in need. Items collected include diapers, wipes, and other basic necessities.

Catholic Schools Week: United in Faith and Community

"Catholic Schools: United in Faith and Community" is the theme for this year's Catholic Schools Week, observed January 25-31. Catholic schools across the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend – from grade schools and high schools to Catholic colleges and universities – mark the week with Masses, faith-based events, assemblies, open houses, and activities that highlight the unique mission of integrating faith and learning.

Catholic Schools Week is coordinated nationally by the National Catholic Education Association, which notes that Catholic education is rooted in forming the whole person – body, mind, and spirit. "The fact that all members of a Catholic school community share the Christian vision of faith that Christ is the foundation of Catholic education is what unites the school as a faith-filled community," the association states.

continues quietly, just as the sisters have lived it."

Another service ministry at St. Joseph, overseen by sixth-grade teacher Jenny Greenlee, brings students into regular contact with HOPE Ministries, where they serve meals and assist with outreach to individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Rooted in the Holy Cross tradition of forming minds and hearts, the experience helps students grow in empathy as they learn how easily circumstances such as job loss, illness, or lack of affordable housing can lead to homelessness. Through repeated visits and reflection, students begin to see service as part of their faith in action and as a legacy they hope to carry forward.

Provided by Christ the King Catholic School

uth Bend partner with local agencies throughout eater responsibility as they mature and serving a culminates in the eighth-grade, three-day service e experience of a Christ the King education.

Service as Formation

Service is also central at Christ the King Catholic School, where students are formed academically and spiritually. Inspired by Blessed Basil Moreau's reminder that "how we cultivate the heart is and will remain timeless," Christ the King staff and students place service at the core of the community's Catholic identity.

Students partner with local agencies throughout their school years, serving the elderly, the poor, individuals with disabilities, and women facing unplanned pregnancies. In eighth grade, students participate in a three-day service immersion trip to Indianapolis, where they assist at organizations such as Gleaners Food Bank, women's shelters, veterans' homes, and a local Catholic school.

"The experience is intentionally paired with guided theological reflection," said Lindsay Jeffress, principal of Christ the King, "allowing students to connect their service directly to Gospel values and Church teaching."

Small Acts, Lasting Lessons

Across the diocese, schools large and small are also finding meaningful ways to instill hearts of service.

At St. Jude Catholic School in Fort Wayne, kindergarten students recently performed "The Friendly Beasts," a Nativity play told through the eyes of animals in the stable, for residents of Saint Anne Communities, a retirement and senior care facility across the street from the school. Organized by kindergarten teachers Cathy Zeigler and Elise Wappes, the performance offered students an early lesson in bringing joy to others.

At St. Pius X Catholic School in Granger, a Step-by-Step Stewardship program introduces service at every grade level. Seventh graders recently created fleece prayer blankets for patients at the Center for Hospice Care, while third graders held a food drive and made Christmas cards for families served by the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Students at St. Therese Catholic School in Fort Wayne coordinate a monthly food drive for the parish's St. Vincent de Paul Society and are working with Scouts to develop a Rosary trail and meditation area for the parish and community.

At St. Thomas the Apostle School in Elkhart, students participate in casual-dress fundraisers supporting organizations such as Women's Care Center, Holy Innocents, St. Jude Children's Research Hospital, and Riley Hospital for Children. Students in grades 4 through 8 also create cards for homebound parishioners.

In New Haven, students at St. Louis Academy recently collected more than 300 blankets, along with hats, gloves, and socks, for the St. Vincent de Paul Society and local first responders.

At Our Lady of Hungary School in South Bend, students in the upper grades volunteer at Cultivate Food Rescue preparing meals for children and families in need. All students engage in school-wide food drives to support a food pantry sponsored by the St. Vincent de Paul Society.

Living Faith Year-Round

Together, these efforts reflect a shared mission across Catholic elementary schools in the diocese: forming students who understand that faith is meant to be lived. Catholic Schools Week offers a moment to celebrate those efforts, but the lessons of service continue long after the banners come down.

Provided by St. Pius X Catholic School

As part of their yearlong focus on respecting life, seventh-grade students at St. Pius X Catholic School in Granger prepare fleece prayer blankets for patients at the Center for Hospice Care. The school's Step-by-Step Stewardship program offers students opportunities to serve the community throughout the year.

High School Students Serve with Purpose

Diocese's Catholic High Schools Foster a Heart for Service, Not Simply a Box to Check Off

BY TIM JOHNSON

On a weekday morning at Saint Joseph High School in South Bend, students form a human chain stretching down Notre Dame Avenue, passing boxes of donated diapers hand to hand toward the Women's Care Center, which is just blocks from campus. For many, it is one of dozens of service moments they will experience during their four years of Catholic high school – moments that are required, tracked, and expected.

But Catholic educators across the Diocese of Fort Wayne–South Bend insist that service is not meant to end with a checked box.

As Catholic Schools Week (January 25-31) highlights the mission of diocesan schools, the four Catholic high schools are working to ensure that required service hours become something more than obligation. Through Catholic Relief Services (CRS) Clubs, school service programs, and structured opportunities to serve both locally and globally, schools are intentionally forming students to recognize the dignity of others and to see service as an expression of their faith.

Catholic Relief Services is the international humanitarian agency of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, providing emergency relief, development assistance, and peacebuilding efforts around the world.

From large-scale food and diaper drives to schoolwide service days, these efforts aim to shape young people who do not simply complete service but carry a heart for service into adulthood.

Provided by Saint Joseph High School

Saint Joseph High School students and staff donated more than 43,000 diapers to the Women's Care Center in a single day on October 17. The entire student body formed a hand-to-hand line, passing boxes of diapers to the center just blocks from campus on Notre Dame Avenue in South Bend.

Saint Joseph High School

At Saint Joseph High School, service is woven into the rhythm of student life from freshman year through graduation. Each student completes at least 80 hours of Christian service over the course of their four years, serving with local nonprofit organizations committed to supporting those in need.

"Serving the community is part of the fabric of our school," said Saint Joseph High School Principal John Kennedy. "All of this forms our students in their faith and engenders a spirit of giving and serving that lasts into adulthood."

That formation takes many forms. Through its Catholic Relief Services Club, Saint Joseph High School students participate in the annual CRS Rice Bowl during Lent, connecting classroom learning with the Church's global outreach. Locally, students support hunger relief efforts through a longstanding Hunger Bowl competition with Marian High School, together donating more than 25,000 pounds of food this year to the St. Vincent de Paul Food Bank.

Other signature efforts, coordinated by various clubs, include a schoolwide diaper drive benefiting the Women's Care Center – during which students pass thousands of donated diapers hand to hand to the nearby facility – and a Thanksgiving food drive that provides hundreds of meal baskets to families in the community.

In addition to CRS Club, other student-led clubs at Saint Joseph support service efforts throughout the year, helping extend the school's culture of giving across athletics and extracurricular activities.

While service hours are tracked through a digital platform, Kennedy emphasized that the goal goes beyond compliance. Faculty members and club moderators encourage reflection on why students serve, helping them connect acts of charity to Gospel values and Catholic social teaching.

The hope, Kennedy said, is that students leave Saint Joseph not only having served but understanding service as a lifelong response to faith.

Ellen Andrews, a science teacher and Catholic Relief Services Club moderator at Saint Joseph, said reflection is key to helping service take root beyond a checklist.

"I've seen a real growth in awareness and a greater sense of purpose in students who were involved in CRS leadership," she said. Teaching some of the same students as freshmen, sophomores, and seniors has allowed Andrews to see that change over time. She pointed to former CRS leader Suzie Alcantar as one example of a student who developed a deeper commitment to serving others through organizing and volunteering with the club. Andrews said that structured discussions before and after service activities – using resources provided by CRS – help students connect their local efforts, such as food and diaper drives, to the Church's global mission and Catholic social teaching.

"I hope that reflection helps these values move from something students do into something they carry in their hearts," Andrews said.

Marian High School

At Marian High School in Mishawaka, service is central to the school's identity – captured in its long-standing motto: Learn, Serve, and Lead.

"Our goal is to serve the community just as Jesus showed us how to serve others," said Nick Kaczynski, assistant principal for student formation. Throughout the school year, Marian students participate in a wide range of service efforts, from Knights Service Day to food and fundraising initiatives that support local agencies.

That spirit of service extends not only outward but inward as well. Through Marian's Knights in Need program, students, faculty, and families come together to support members of the Marian community who are facing illness, disability, or the loss of a loved one. The program, which marked its 25th anniversary in 2024, reflects Marian's commitment to caring for one another as a faith community.

Another expression of that mission is the Bernadette Scholars program, which welcomes students with learning challenges into the Marian family. Students play an active role in supporting their peers, helping to foster a school culture rooted in dignity, inclusion, and compassion.

Marian's Catholic Relief Services Club, led by theology teacher Kathy Kershner, adds a global and educational dimension to that mission. One signature initiative this year was a pop-up CRS ethically sourced Christmas gift store, designed to help students recognize the moral dimension of economic choices. By purchasing gifts made by artisans in developing countries, students and staff were invited to reflect on how everyday decisions can promote human dignity and the common good.

Reflection is central to Mar-

Provided by Marian High School

One of the projects sponsored by Marian High School's Catholic Relief Services Club is a CRS Conscientious Christmas gift sale, offering ethically traded gifts that support artisans in developing countries.

ian's approach. Following the school's annual Day of Service, students read Matthew 25:31-46 and write about service as an essential part of Christian life.

For junior William Pairitz, the experience reshaped how he views service. "One action affects one person, and they can then affect others," he said. "This encourages everyone to be kinder and to help serve others – and furthers their own journey to heaven."

Bishop Luers High School

At Bishop Luers High School in Fort Wayne, service is one of the main pillars.

"Every sport and club serves the community in different capacities," said Bishop Luers Principal Seth Coffing. "Throughout the entire school, Sodalitas is a service-driven initiative that Bishop Luers High School plans and utilizes a fall and spring service day for students to get out in the community."

A newly established Catholic Relief Services Club is giving students a new way to respond to suffering they see far beyond their own community.

Formed just six months ago, the CRS Club reflects both student initiative and a growing emphasis on connecting local faith life with the Church's global mission.

"I'm on social media a lot and kept seeing terrible things happening in the world," said Marlene Chavez, a Bishop Luers student and CRS Club member. "Being young, it's hard to know how to help, but when I learned Bishop Luers was starting a CRS Club, I took that opportunity in hopes that together we could make a difference – and we have."

Through teamwork and prayer, students have already led a schoolwide dress-down day to raise money to support Catholic Relief Services' relief efforts in Ghana. Club members also designed and distributed a holy card featuring the Prayer of St. Francis, encouraging the Bishop Luers community to pray for those affected by war, famine, natural disasters, and poverty around the world.

Jan Serrani, campus minister and co-moderator of the CRS Club, said the group complements existing service efforts at Bishop Luers, including the long-standing Sodalitas service program, which focuses primarily on local outreach.

"CRS helps our students lift their eyes beyond our own community," she said. "It connects what we believe as Catholics with real needs in the wider world."

Though still small in number, the CRS Club is helping students learn that service rooted in faith can begin locally – and reach globally.

Provided by Bishop Luers High School

All Bishop Luers High School students participate in Sodalitas, a service organization that supports the Fort Wayne community. During service days, students learn about the needs of others and take part in projects such as creating animal blankets for Fort Wayne Animal Care and Control.

Bishop Dwenger High School

At Bishop Dwenger High School in Fort Wayne, service is approached with the same intentional focus on formation – both locally and globally. Through involvement with Catholic Relief Services, students learn how Catholic social teaching is lived out beyond their own community. The Student Service Program at Bishop Dwenger helps students learn to live out their faith as disciples of Jesus Christ by loving God and their neighbor.

Led by chemistry teacher Andrea Hill, the school's CRS program helps students understand how faith-filled service can bring hope to people around the world, particularly through initiatives such as the CRS Rice Bowl. During Lent, every classroom is challenged to raise money while also learning how those resources are used to provide life-changing support in some of the world's most vulnerable regions.

Principal Jason Schiffli said the program reflects the Church's call to active engagement with the wider world. Quoting Pope Francis, Schiffli said Catholic schools are called "to influence and lead society, not to be isolated from it," adding that the goal is to help students "see beyond our community and understand how other people of God are living – and how we can bring very real and sustaining help, joy, and hope to those who need it most."

While service hours are required, Catholic Relief Services Club activities help students experience service as something personal and relational. One of the club's most visible efforts is its annual Christmas giving tree, coordinated with Catholic Charities. CRS members create gift tags and help organize donations, while the wider school community – students, faculty, and staff – purchases gifts for 10 children in need. The tree is in a public space, and many students and teachers help purchase gifts. "Every year I am amazed at the generosity of our students," said Hill.

For CRS students, however, one experience stands out. Each year on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving, club members volunteer at the Franciscan Center Food Pantry's annual turkey distribution. In just two hours, hundreds of families receive turkeys, and Dwenger students are there to help make it happen.

"My students are outside, in the cold," Hill said, "and it is their favorite day!" She added that the opportunity to interact face to face with those being served leaves a lasting impression on students.

Provided by Bishop Dwenger High School

Students from Bishop Dwenger High School volunteer at a Fort Wayne food pantry, collecting and sorting items to help serve neighbors in need.

'Service Will Always Be Part of My Life'

"When I first started high school and learned about service hours, I treated it like homework – just another task to be done. But since joining the Catholic Relief Services Club, I've realized how much impact even the smallest gestures can have on people who are less fortunate.

"Through CRS, I learned how many people rely on these services and how deeply they're affected when support is cut. That experience changed how I see service.

"I know service will always be part of my life. It's not optional for Catholics. Jesus made it clear that caring for the stranger, the sick, and the hungry is essential – and if we want to follow His example, we must do the same."

– Magdalen Fairleigh, junior, Marian High School

Cyndi Wolf, Bishop Dwenger's service coordinator and a theology teacher, said the school's approach to service is rooted in forming disciples.

"We're building up students to be Christ to one another and to see Christ in other people," she said, noting that service opportunities are guided by the corporal and spiritual works of mercy.

While students are required to complete service hours, Wolf said many grow beyond obligation as they encounter new experiences.

"Some students start because it's required," Wolf said, "but they're often surprised by how meaningful it becomes." Through outreach ranging from tutoring and food pantries to supporting neighbors and family members, Wolf said service helps students recognize faith as something lived daily.

When Service Becomes a Way of Life

For many students, service hours begin as an obligation. But through opportunities to serve locally and respond to global needs, those hours often become moments of encounter – with people, with faith, and with a deeper understanding of the Church's mission. As Catholic Schools Week celebrates the role of Catholic education, diocesan high schools continue the work of forming students not only for academic success but for lives marked by compassion, responsibility, and service rooted in Christ.

Visuals, Rituals, Traditions: How Catholic Schools Stand Out

GUEST COMMENTARY

JOSEPH D. WHITE

Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend

Most of the growth we have seen across Christian denominations in recent years has been in Christian communities that teach sure norms that are relatively stable as society changes. The coming generation of Catholic parents are likely to look for a strong sense of Catholic identity in Catholic schools. As resources become scarcer, why would parents choose a Catholic school for their children if they do not perceive that Catholic school offers something that public school, or another private school, cannot?

Promoting a uniquely Catholic culture in our schools is both a necessary task and a challenging one. In rising to this challenge, it is helpful to examine what variables make cultural identity survive and thrive.

One important characteristic is a common language. How do we understand, and talk about, Catholic education? What do we mean by "Catholic"? And more broadly, what language do we share when we talk about our faith? Sharing a common language will mean a well-articulated mission, one that is communicated effectively to parents such that it attracts families to our schools.

A second characteristic of cultural identity is the use of symbols. What symbols do we see of Catholicism in our schools? When parents stop by to visit, does the Catholic school look different to them than the local public school or a Baptist school would?

Children, especially those of elementary age, are very concrete thinkers and learners. The visible symbols around them, such as icons, statues, crucifixes, and pictures of faith in action, help tell them about where they are and what they are learning. What unique ideas, values, and beliefs do we promote in our Catholic schools, and how are they made visible in concrete ways?

The identity-building power of rituals and traditions make them important characteristics of most academic institutions that have longevity. Current students want to remain because of the shared rituals that have built community and become an important part of their lives, and former students continue to support the school – and encourage their children to attend it – because of their fond memories of these traditions.

In our Catholic tradition, we need not look far for ideas that can build the sense of collective identity in our Catholic schools. The liturgical calendar provides occasions for many types of celebrations and traditions, not to mention the day-to-day experiences of Catholic prayer and the sacraments.

Shared cultural norms, even ones that pose challenges to the individual, also build the sense of cultural identity. Catholic schools should not be afraid to promote an authentically Catholic, often countercultural, morality that includes respect for life at all ages and stages, promotion of chastity as a response to our understanding of the dignity of the body and sacredness of marriage, the necessity of social action, including solidarity with the poor, and countless other ways in which we as Catholics are called to be witnesses in society today.

While needs and talents can vary greatly, we must also remember that children cannot rise to standards we do not set, and we must not be afraid to call them to rise to high standards of behavior and academic achievement, all the while assisting them in meeting the challenge.

Dr. Joseph D. White is a child and family psychologist and associate publisher of Catechetical Resources for OSV.

The Temptation to Sin is No Match for Those Who Serve God

THE SUNDAY GOSPEL

MONSIGNOR OWEN F. CAMPION

The Book of Isaiah supplies this weekend's first reading. It offers us a powerful lesson.

When this part of Isaiah was written, God's people were skating on thin ice. They still had their independence, as Hebrew kings still reigned in the kingdoms of Judah and Israel. The religious, social, and political structures all still gave lip service to the ancient religion and to the holy covenant between God and the Chosen People.

Everything, however, was at risk because devotion to the covenant, and obedience to God's Law, were at low ebb. Isaiah loudly warned that disaster was just around the corner, but, he said, the people could rescue themselves by returning to religious faithfulness and by obeying God, as the prophets had taught. They had this potential, this ability within themselves.

They did not sin because they were helpless in the face of temptation. Rather, they were weak because they ignored God. If they were determined, they could be strong and virtuous.

For its second reading, the Church has selected a section from St. Paul's First Epistle to the Corinthians.

Paul obviously loved the Corinthian Christians. He yearned to see them saintly and eternally with the Lord, but just as obviously they troubled him, because they seemed so attracted to the many vices of their great, worldly, and wealthy city. They seemed to be vulnerable to the feelings of competitiveness and insecurity that vex all humans if not checked.

Never willing to accept passivity or indifference, he loudly called the Christians in Corinth to be true to Christ.

He taught a basic message. Earthly reward will pass more quickly than many might realize. Earthly wisdom is unreliable. True wisdom is to understand the meaning of the cross, and this understanding requires grace, available only to those who earnestly follow the Lord.

St. Matthew's Gospel supplies the last reading. It is situated in Capernaum, the fishing village located at the northern tip of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus is there, having left Nazareth. His public ministry has begun.

As a center of commerce, albeit very modest commerce, Capernaum saw people come and go. Jesus used this coincidence as an opportunity to encounter many people. He called them to fidelity to God. He repeated for them the admonitions of the ancient Hebrew prophets.

In this place, Jesus met Andrew, and then Jesus met Simon, whom He renamed Peter. These brothers became the first of the apostles in the sequence of calling. In time, Christianity was to grow from, and build upon, the apostles.

It is interesting that the Gospels, such as the case in this reading, refer to these apostles so specifically by giving their names. The Gospel leaves no doubt whatsoever about their identity since it was vital in the early Church that the teachings of the genuine apostles be known and be kept intact.

Reflection

These readings remind us of how blind we humans can be and of how powerful humans can be.

In the first reading, Isaiah criticized the people for their religious listlessness, but he reminded them that, if they wished, they could reverse their wayward paths. God would supply the insight and the strength, if requested.

The same message can be found in the second reading. St. Paul boldly denounced the Corinthians' sins and quarrels, calling them to genuine conversion, insisting that they could withstand temptation.

While we are sinners, we can break away from sin by willfully turning to God and by allowing divine grace to empower us. The impulse to sin, while real, is no match for God or for anyone truly determined to be with God.

The teachings of the apostles guide us to our own empowerment given us by the Lord if we honestly seek it.

READINGS

Sunday: Isaiah 8:23-9:3; Psalms 27:1, 4, 13-14; 1 Corinthians 1:10-13, 17; Matthew 4:12-23

Monday: 2 Timothy 1:1-8 or Titus 1:1-5; Psalms 96:1-2a, 2b-3, 7-8a, 10; Mark 3:22-30

Tuesday: 2 Samuel 6:12b-15, 17-19; Psalms 24:7-10; Mark 3:31-35

Wednesday: 2 Samuel 7:4-17; Psalms 89:4-5, 27-28, 29-30; Mark 4:1-20

Thursday: 2 Samuel 7:18-19, 24-29; Psalms 132:1-2, 3-5, 11-14; Mark 4:21-25

Friday: 2 Samuel 11:1-4a, 5-10a, 13-17; Psalms 51:3-4, 5-6a, 6bcd-7, 10-11; Mark 4:26-34

Saturday: 2 Samuel 12:1-7a, 10-17; Psalms 51:12-13, 14-15, 16-17; Mark 4:35-41

Pope Leo's Extraordinary Consistory

PAPAL WORDS

MICHAEL R. HEINLEIN

OSV News photo/Simone Risoluti, Vatican Media

In the discussions leading up to the conclave last May, members of the College of Cardinals shared that they wished for more collegiality between themselves and the pope.

So, from the earliest days of his pontificate, Pope Leo XIV indicated that he wanted gatherings of the cardinals to not be as "extraordinary" (or, out of the norm) as its name suggests, but rather ordinary events in the life of the Church.

As a result, the first consistory in many years took place in early January. But after so few of such gatherings in the last decade-plus, it seems that many observers had hoped for the gathering to bring extraordinary results (usually regarding pet concerns).

Alas, they were disappointed.

But should they be? By all appearances, January's consistory was a first step to returning to a more collegial sense of governance that has largely marked the exercise of papal ministry since the Second Vatican Council. A fraternal body such as the College of Cardinals inherently needs such occasions to be together – to pray, think, and discern – for the pope to be effective in animating ecclesial life and to model for the Church what it means to be a leaven in the world.

In some ways, the extraordinary character of this particular extraordinary consistory was the fact that the cardinals met as a body, aside from seeing new members created or electing a new pope, for the first time in a long time. It illustrates the kind of leadership we might expect now with Pope Leo at the helm of Peter's barque – a leadership intent upon uniting the ship's crew amid the kinds of threats found in the storms that make up so much of ecclesial life today.

As I read Pope Leo's homily from January 8, I thought of how the return of this ordinary gathering was indeed extraordinary – particularly for the kind of leadership that it models to humanity. Pope Leo's description of the event offers a powerful witness for all of us blessed with the task of leadership, and which resonated as especially true as a leader in a family.

I couldn't help but think that what Pope Leo is effecting within the college of his closest collaborators is also a model for marriage and family life.

In his homily, Pope Leo observed that the word "consistory" comes from the Latin verb "consistere," which means "to stand still." He had me hooked already. Of course it is important in marriage to find such opportunities, especially if blessed with children and all the busyness they often bring. Truly, such an opportunity to "pause" is, in Pope Leo's words, "a highly significant and prophetic gesture, particularly in the context of the frenetic society in which we live."

He continued, "(Pausing) reminds us of the importance, in every aspect of life, of stopping to pray, listen, and reflect." This is important because this permits us to "refocus our attention ever more clearly on our goal, directing every effort and resource toward it, lest we risk running blindly or 'beating the air' in vain, as the apostle Paul warns" in 1 Corinthians 9:26.

And Pope Leo remarked that the consistory's "pausing" – and by the time I got to these lines I was fully committed to thinking the same about my wife and me – "is first and foremost a profound act of love for God, for the Church, and for the men and women of the whole world."

What might a consistory with my spouse look like, I began to wonder.

Pope Leo's words – recalled from the fifth century and originating from the first pope to bear his name, St. Leo the Great – seem like a great place to start for any "consistory" for the cardinals or at home: "It is a great and very precious thing in the sight of the Lord when the whole people of Christ apply themselves together to the same duties, and all ranks and orders … cooperate with one and the same Spirit."

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.

SAINT OF THE WEEK

Francis de Sales

FEAST DAY: JANUARY 24

Born in the Duchy of Savoy (now France), Francis studied at Annecy, Paris, and Padua, and was ordained in 1593. He spent four years reconverting Catholics who had become Calvinists, writing many tracts to explain basic tenets of the faith. In 1602 he became bishop of Geneva, which he reorganized and reformed. He also famously preached in Paris and wrote two devotional books that are still widely read. A 20-year friendship with St. Jane Frances de Chantal led to their founding the Order of the Visitation. Canonized in 1665 and declared a Doctor of the Church in 1877, St. Francis is the patron saint of journalists, authors, and the deaf.

SCRIPTURE SEARCH®

Gospel for January 25, 2026

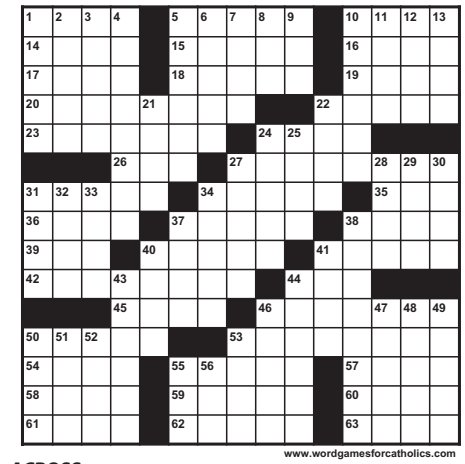
Matthew 4:12-23

Following is a word search based on the Gospel reading for the Third Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle A: After John the Baptist's arrest. The words can be found in all directions in the puzzle.

HEARD	JOHN	ARRESTED
NAZARETH	BY THE SEA	ZEBULON
NAPHTHALI	JORDAN	PEOPLE
DARKNESS	DEATH	REPENT
KINGDOM	HEAVEN	SIMON
ANDREW	A NET	JAMES
ZEBEDEE	BOAT	FOLLOWED

FIRST CALLED

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



www.wordgamesforcatholics.com

ACROSS

1 "…from now on will all ___ call me blessed." (Lk 1:48)
5 W.C. Handy street of song
10 La Santa ___
14 One of the divisions of a window
15 A feint in fencing
16 Knighted Catholic actor
17 Scheme
18 Sea of ___
19 Vex
20 Read at Mass
22 The Archdiocese of Bologna is here
23 Ways in
24 Actor and convert Cooper
26 Unwell
27 Not hourly
31 An epistle
34 Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf? playwright
35 Narrow beam of light
36 Amo, ___, amat
37 Nimble
38 California diocese named for Saint Joseph (with "San")
39 Animation frame
40 "One does not live by bread ___" (Mt 4:4)
41 Makes money
42 Mixing dough
44 The Solemnity of Mary is celebrated this month (abbr.)
45 June 6, 1944
46 Biggest
50 "…of my ___ and flesh of my flesh…" (Gen 2:23)
53 Exodus event
54 Large flightless birds
55 Acute
57 Very small quantity
58 Scratch and ___ sale
59 Red cosmetic
60 Slip
61 Scottish Gaelic
62 Convert from agnosticism, Mortimer J. ___
63 Word on a biblical wall

DOWN

1 Eden fruit?
2 Ancient Greek physician
3 Make real
4 Guards
5 Roll one out and we'll have fun
6 They're in hand when 15A is performed
7 Mimicked
8 Took charge
9 High trains
10 One who dies for the faith
11 Hip bones
12 Do an eBay transaction
13 ___ deucy
21 Some ambry contents
22 Second word of a Latin hymn
24 Catholic actor of Gone with the Wind fame
25 On the sheltered side
27 David used this to kill Goliath
28 In I Kings, the false prophet Zedekiah made himself two horns out of this
29 The Wise Men came from here
30 Stains
31 Catholic movie star Lemmon
32 Last word
33 One of every type of animal on the ark
34 ___ in the Garden
37 Inter ___
38 Bellicose chauvinism
40 Increases
41 Roman god of war
43 First word of a Latin hymn
44 Variety of quartz
46 Where a criminal may be "at"
47 Call forth
48 Start to have an effect
49 Commerce
50 Monk called "The Father of English History"
51 Biblical dry measure
52 They take solemn vows
53 Major character of Acts
55 Mme., across the Pyrenees
56 Coal scuttle

Answer key on page 15.

BISHOP LUERS, from page 1

for all of us."

Coffing chose St. Joseph of Cupertino, the patron saint of basketball players, as his confirmation saint. Along with his duties as principal, Coffing is the head coach for the varsity boys' basketball team at Bishop Luers. Many of the students know him as Coach Coffing, and the basketball team sat in the front to support him during Mass.

"Becoming Catholic has been something that I have thought about for quite a while," Coffing told Today's Catholic. "My wife and I were married at St. Joseph on Brooklyn in 2018, and since being a part of the Bishop Luers family from 2021 to present, my faith has grown, and my knowledge of Catholicism has obviously expanded. I am excited to continue to get closer to God."

Students Harvest Green and Aeslin McCormick were baptized along with their principal. Both Green and McCormick became Catholic through the experiences they had in their Bishop Luers theology classes and encountering Luers Spirit – the feeling of family and community within the school. Students Diana Rodriguez, America Salinas, and Ellie Wilchar were already Catholic but received the Sacrament of Confirmation.

Ashanti Ditaway, a special education paraprofessional at Bishop Luers, also entered the Catholic Church during Bishop Rhoades' visit. Coming from a Protestant background, Ditaway said she was intrigued by the Sacrament of Holy Communion. She said, "I wanted to be a part of this thing that is so special."

Ditaway began asking her Bishop Luers peers many questions about the Catholic Church. She learned about Church history while assisting a student in one of Isch's theology courses. And when she received the Sacrament of Confirmation from Bishop Rhoades, former Special Education Department Chair Esther Baird was her sponsor. Ditaway said, "I love the fact that it happened in front of the Bishop Luers community because they've been so supportive and so kind to me."

Father Paolo Degasperi, chaplain at Bishop Luers, said this past fall semester was a time of spiritual growth.

"Objectively, this year compared to previous ones, I have seen an uptick in students availing themselves of the Sacrament of Confession, both during the weekly opportunities we offer for this sacrament and the all-school penance service in preparation for Christmas. I think this is wonderful, knowing how crucial it is for us all to experience God's merciful love poured out on us personally and be reconciled to Him."

Photos by Georgia Lieb

Posing with Bishop Rhoades, from left, are Ellie Wilchar, Harvest Green, Aeslin McCormick, special education paraprofessional Ashanti Ditaway, America Salinas, Diana Rodriguez, and principal Seth Coffing, who all received sacraments during Bishop Rhoades' pastoral visit to Bishop Luers on Wednesday, January 14.

Father Degasperi added: "Being a chaplain at Luers is a tremendous joy and privilege. It's hard to pick my favorite part of being a chaplain there, because, in truth, being with the youth is the best part. So, whether it is being with them behind the stage before the Christmas play, or on the sideline of Lucas Oil Stadium during the football state championship, or teaching a theology class … as long as I am with them, I am loving it. If I need to pick one thing among them all, I would say that nothing brings me more joy than when a student comes devoutly to receive holy Communion full of love for Our Lord Jesus in the Eucharist. That is priceless."

Reflecting on the school year so far, Coffing told Today's Catholic: "Bishop Luers' career readiness and internship programs have grown tremendously this year, with 55 students currently participating and an estimated 80-90 students next year. We have partnered with the University of Saint Francis with their education and nursing programs. Students are attending ABC for trades, Anthis and Amp Lab for a multitude of different areas as well as several individual internships."

Coffing continued: "Programs within the school continue to thrive! We have had several championships already this year in fall sports. Boys tennis won the Summit Athletic Conference. Boys soccer won the Summit Athletic Conference and advanced to regionals. Our Knights football team made another historical run to the state championship at Lucas Oil Stadium, and students continue to thrive at amazing levels in our performing arts program. The list goes on and on. Our students are gaining lifelong experiences and being directed by amazing teachers and staff."

Along with the successes of the past semester, the Bishop Luers community is looking forward to some major updates.

"Bishop Luers is in the midst of a capital campaign that will change the future of this school forever," Coffing said. "The addition of an auxiliary gym/performance art stage and dressing rooms, new weight room, locker rooms, training room, team room, concession stand, restrooms, offices, and storage will not only allow more opportunities for our current and future students but also allow for growth of the overall population in years to come. We are gaining serious traction toward potentially breaking ground during the summer of 2026. It truly is a great time to be a Knight."

You can learn more about the capital campaign by visiting bishopluers.org.

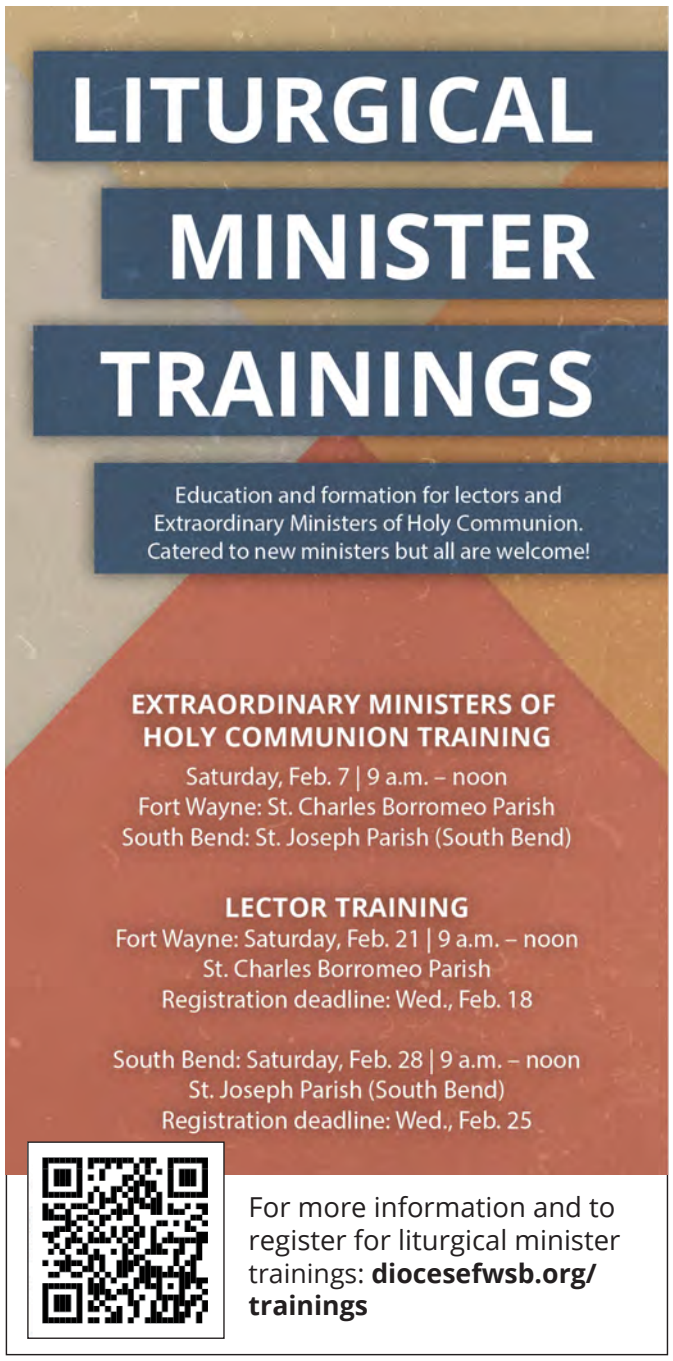
Looking to the future, Bishop Luers is excited to welcome the incoming freshman class in the fall of 2026. New freshman registration recently opened online.

Through the grace of the sacraments celebrated this past week and the continued initiatives shaping the future, Bishop Luers High School affirms that the spiritual life and growth of its students remains at the heart of all it does. Bishop Luers remains steadfast in forming the whole person – spiritually and academically – as it fulfills its Catholic mission.

Bishop Rhoades baptizes Bishop Luers Principal Seth Coffing at an all-school Mass during his pastoral visit to the Fort Wayne high school on Wednesday, January 14.

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, call us at (260) 399-1449 to learn about space options.



For more information and to register for liturgical minister trainings: **diocesefwsb.org/trainings**

SUNDAY, JANUARY 25
St. Anthony de Padua Catholic School Open House
9 a.m. – 1 p.m.
SOUTH BEND – Learn more about St. Anthony de Padua Catholic School, 2310 E. Jefferson Blvd., at our open house. Tour the school, meet teachers, check out displayed student artwork and projects, and more!

Queen of Peace Catholic School Open House
11 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
MISHAWAKA – Queen of Peace Catholic School, 4508 Vistula Rd., is holding its annual open house, beginning with morning with Mass at 10 a.m. Tours of our school will be held from 11 a.m.-12:30 p.m. Come see our beautiful, one-hallway school. You will have the opportunity to tour classrooms, visit with teachers, and gather information from our HASA, school board, finance team, and athletics department.

Most Precious Blood School Open House Showcase
11:30 a.m. – 1 p.m.
FORT WAYNE – Join us for an exciting open house at Most Precious Blood Catholic School, 1529 Barthold St. Explore student exhibits, enjoy prizes, and see the amazing work of our dedicated staff and talented students. Parishioners, new families, and friends are all welcome!

WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 28
Ava's Grace Online Support Group
7:30 – 8:30 p.m.
If you have experienced miscarriage, stillbirth, or infant loss and would like to listen to, learn from, and pray with others who know this deep suffering, you are most welcome to join our drop-in, monthly online support group sponsored by ava's grace, the diocesan ministry that offers spiritual, emotional, and practical support to families who have lost a baby before or after birth. Please email Lisa Everett for the Zoom meeting link and password at leverett@diocesefwsb.org.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 29
6:30 – 8:30 p.m.
Theology on Tap
MISHAWAKA – Explore the pressing current topics channeled through the wisdom of the Doctors of the Church at The Public House, 330 Ironworks Ave. Young adults in their 20s and 30s, single or married, are welcome to share in food, fellowship, and faith!

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

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Padre Pio's Former Secretary Dies at 85

Capuchin Franciscan Father John Aurillia, former secretary to St. Padre Pio, leads the Rosary during his program "An Evening with Father John Aurillia" in Wilmington, Delaware, on July 22, 2025. Father Aurillia, one of last people who had direct ties to Padre Pio, died at age 85 on Tuesday, January 13. Father Aurilia worked for St. Padre Pio in 1967 when Padre Pio, the Italian Capuchin friar, priest, stigmatist, and mystic lived in San Giovanni Rotondo, Italy. Father Aurilia was born on December 8, 1940, in Montemarano, Italy, where he entered the Capuchin Franciscan order and was ordained a priest in 1966. After working with Padre Pio, he came to the United States to work with the Italian-speaking community in northern New Jersey.

OSV New photo/Don Blake, The Dialog

UNITY, from page 1

of Christ," Bishop Rhoades said. "We can celebrate the unity we already share by praying together."

Bishop Rhoades noted that each year a different Christian tradition is tasked with preparing the prayer service that is used throughout the world. This year's service, Bishop Rhoades said, was prepared by the Armenian Church. "It's a way to experience the diversity within the unity, and the universality, of the Church's spiritual tradition," Bishop Rhoades said.

"Thank you all for coming despite the very, very cold weather outside," Bishop Rhoades said, concluding his opening remarks. "Here though, inside this church, it is nice and warm. And in our prayer today, may we also be warmed by the love of Christ and the fire of the Holy Spirit as we pray together as brothers and sisters in Christ for Christian unity."

Bishop Rhoades was one of four presiders of the prayer service, as he was joined by Pastor Chris Norman of Grace Gathering Church, Pastor Anthony Opliger of Northeast Church, and Father Emmanuel Abuh, pastor of St. Jude.

The prayer service included the singing of several hymns that focused on unity, including "In Christ There Is No East or West," "Here I Am to Worship," "One Lord," and "Amazing Grace." Scripture passages were read, Psalms were recited, and, together, worshippers prayed the Lord's Prayer and proclaimed the Nicene Creed.

Pastor Norman gave the evening's sermon and stressed in his opening lines that "if there was ever a time for Christian unity, now is that time." He continued, saying: "In the world today, there are wars, and rumors of wars, and pain, and heartache, and disfunction, and brokenness, but Jesus is the light of the world. What hope would we have today without the hope of Jesus? Every Christian in our world, in our country, and in this community where we live should stand together in love, unified, and with one mind and heart to reflect the beauty of Jesus and the power of Jesus to impact a world that is in desperate need."

He read from Chapter 4 of Ephesians, from which the Week of Prayer for Christian Unity's theme was taken, telling the audience that while St. Paul's words "were profound to the first-century audience," they are "just as profound 2,000 years later."

Photos by Scott Warden

Attendees, including members of the Sisters of St. Francis of Perpetual Adoration, sing a hymn written by the 12th-century Armenian saint Nersess the Gracious. The singing centers around the word "looys," which is Armenian for "light."

He quoted: "Be complete, humble and gentle; be patient with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all."

> "In our prayer today, may we also be warmed by the love of Christ and the fire of the Holy Spirit as we pray together as brothers and sisters in Christ for Christian unity."
>
> **BISHOP RHOADES**

"Catholics, Protestants, and Orthodox all have different theological interpretations of many different doctrines of the faith, but there is only one faith, one baptism, one God who is over all things," Pastor Norman said. "… We don't worship a different Jesus; we worship the same Jesus, the same God, and because of this, we are brothers and sisters in Christ. … The foundation of our unity is that we worship the Risen Christ."

He added: "As God looks down on us this evening in this service, I think He is smiling from heaven, [saying], 'Ah, it's good to see my kids getting along and loving one another.'"

Pastor Norman has been active in ecumenical efforts with Catholics for the past several years, engaging in ministries with Shema Culture and with the Common Table Series at the University of Saint Francis, which aimed at fostering dialogue between Catholics and evangelical Christians.

"I feel like the last few years I've seen God move in various ways," Pastor Norman told Today's Catholic. "I think there's something unique going on in the last few years that has allowed opportunities to really see greater progress in the area of unity. I feel like it's just been a part of what God's been doing in our city and our community."

In his sermon, Pastor Norman joked that the prayer service was more of "a home game" for the Catholics in the audience, and while some of his Protestant brothers and sisters might have been uncomfortable in an unfamiliar setting, Pastor Norman noted that "growth always causes some discomfort, and that's healthy. It's been great that we've had ecumenical services in Catholic parishes and Protestant churches in our city. It's been kind of a mutual encouragement to be a part of one another's traditions and settings. I think part of what God's doing is very intentional: He's bringing us together."

Pastor Opliger of Northeast Church agreed that going outside of one's comfort zone is vital to living out the Gospel mission – "Going places that are uncomfortable in terms of God's mission in the city and in other nations. Going places that are uncomfortable in order to grow in Jesus. Going places that are uncomfortable in terms of unity in Jesus."

Pastor Opliger told Today's Catholic that his involvement in ecumenical events over the past couple of years has opened his eyes – specifically about Catholics.

"I had so many things that I thought I knew about Catholics that I didn't know, and so while I've learned about Catholicism, I've also learned about myself and the prejudices and assumptions in my head that I couldn't get my head around."

This spirit of listening and understanding is vital to the ecumenical movement, said Father Glenn Kohrman, pastor of St. Therese Catholic Church in Fort Wayne, who attended the prayer service at St. Jude.

"We need to heal the divisions, especially for the sake of the culture, and to fulfill the Scriptures. Isaiah says, 'All nations are called to Him,' and hopefully we can all come together and say, 'Behold the Lamb of God,' and work through our differences, and let ourselves be united by all that's true, good, and beautiful," Father Kohrman said.

"I love what Augustine said. He said, 'In essential things, unity; in nonessential things, liberty; and in all things, charity.' And these events help us forge bonds of charity, companionship, and getting to know people."

Father Abuh, pastor of St. Jude, which hosted the prayer service, told Today's Catholic that it's important for Catholics to participate in ecumenical efforts such as the prayer service "because it is Jesus Christ Himself who prayed, 'We may all be one.' So, in participating in this event, we are actually walking in the path of Jesus and answering His call for all of us to be one in faith and in love."

Father Abuh said he's hoping one of the fruits from hosting the ecumenical prayer service is that the St. Jude community will continue to be open "to accept all the people from different denominations, to respect them, to know that we can pray together, and that we have the same mission of becoming light to the world."

Prior to the prayer service, Bishop Rhoades told Today's Catholic that Christian unity "is integral to our faith."

"This is Christ's will," he said, "so we have to be committed to Christian unity. It's the clear teaching of the Second Vatican Council, and certainly the popes. It's really our duty to pray for Christian unity and to work toward the reunion of all Christians."

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Pastor Anthony Opliger of Northeast Church in Fort Wayne smiles while listening to Bishop Rhoades welcome visitors to the ecumenical prayer service.