



THE MAGAZINE OF THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF PITTSBURGH

Pittsburgh Catholic

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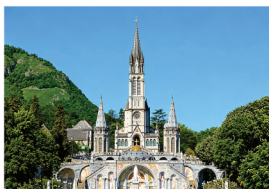
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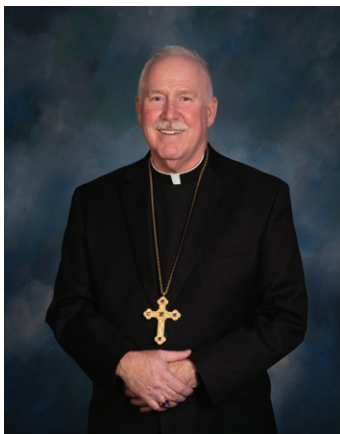
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Serving in Faith and Charity

BISHOP MARK ECKMAN

One question has come up in many different ways during my visits to parishes throughout the Diocese of Pittsburgh: *Who are we missing?*

At each parish I have sought to listen and learn how they are carrying out the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. I hear about food pantries and community meals, visits to the sick and homebound, prison ministry, bereavement support, outreach to mothers and children, care for people with disabilities and many other ways that Catholics are serving their neighbors.

I also ask where they see opportunities to do more. That is often when the conversation turns to people they wish they could reach.

Who is home alone and rarely sees another person? Who stopped coming to Mass and hasn't returned? Who is grieving? Who is caring for someone and could use some care themselves? Which young adults have lost their connection to the Church? Which families have children with special needs and are looking for a place to belong? Who is struggling financially and quietly trying to get by?

At one parish, someone put it very simply: "There has to be a lot of people that need something that we don't know about."

I think he was right.

The needs we know about are often the easiest ones to address. The harder part is finding the people who may never ask for help. They may be embarrassed, unsure where to turn or simply accustomed to handling things on their own. That is why knowing our neighbors and knowing one another in our parishes matters.

So much of carrying out the works of mercy begins with paying attention. We have to notice the people around us and take the time to learn what they may need.

I have heard some wonderful examples of that during my parish visits.

At one parish, a table at their fish fry was set aside for

anyone who arrived alone. Someone was there to welcome them and help them find a seat. Some people returned throughout Lent because they knew they would have someone to eat with.

At another parish, I heard about the importance of bringing Holy Communion to people who are homebound. Sometimes the extraordinary minister of Holy Communion is the only person someone sees all week. A visit may reveal a need for groceries, transportation, household repairs or simply someone to talk to.

At another, parishioners helped clean up an elderly woman's yard. Neighbors saw what they were doing and told them about other people who could use help. The parishioners responded by offering their assistance throughout the neighborhood.

It can be that simple. Someone notices another person and reaches out.

November is a good time to think about all of this.

On All Saints Day, we celebrate the saints who have gone before us in faith. On All Souls Day, we pray for those who have died. We remember people we love, people who helped form us in our faith and people whose absence we still feel.

All of that remembering can help us pay closer attention to the people who are part of our lives right now.

Look around your parish. Think about your neighborhood, your workplace and your family. Who haven't you seen for a while? Who usually sits alone? Who might appreciate a phone call or an invitation to lunch? Is there someone who might come to Mass if you invited them and offered to sit with them?

Our parishes have tremendous ministries carrying out the works of mercy every day. Each of us can be part of that same work in the moments God gives us.

Start simply with one person.

Ask the Lord to help you see someone you may have been missing.

And then say hello. †

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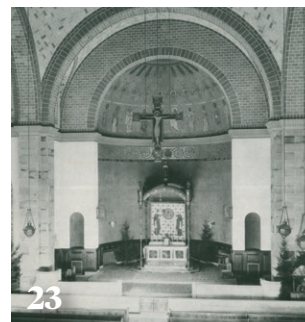
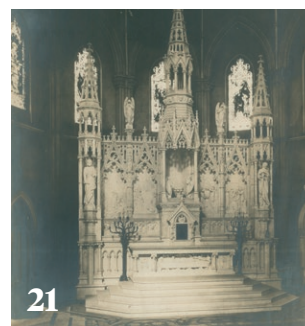


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FROM THE EDITOR

Dear Reader,

For months FestPGH, a music and arts festival at F.N.B. Stadium, existed only in planning spreadsheets.

There were schedules, maps, meetings, media lists, volunteer assignments, vendor details and countless conversations about how to welcome thousands of people to F.N.B. Stadium for a day centered on faith.

Then the gates opened.

Families arrived. Friends found one another. Children played. People discovered ministries serving neighbors throughout our region. Music filled the stadium. The faithful gathered for Mass. The band Switchfoot took the stage beneath the Pittsburgh skyline. An idea became something joyful and real.

This is part of the power of mission. It begins with prayer, planning and a willingness to say “yes.” Then people step in and bring it to life.

Our theme for this October/November issue of Pittsburgh Catholic is “Live the Mission.” Throughout these pages, you will meet people who do that in many ways.

Our FestPGH photo spread captures the smiles, music, prayer and celebration that filled the stadium. From behind the scenes over many months, I saw the care that made those moments possible. Staff members, volunteers, sponsors, performers, vendors, service organizations, clergy and religious each contributed their talents. Every assignment and every welcome mattered. Together, they created an experience that belonged to our whole diocesan family.

Mission also unfolds through formation.

As this issue went to press, five seminarians were preparing to be ordained to the transitional diaconate on October 3. Antonino “Nino” Castellano, Colin Kulmoski, Peter Mallampalli, Thach Ngoc Nguyen and Thanh Tung Nguyen have followed different paths toward this moment. Their formation has included years of prayer, study, discernment and service in our parishes.

Their story explains how parishioners help prepare future priests. Through conversations, liturgies, ministry



and everyday parish life, the people of the Church help form the men who may one day serve them.

This issue celebrates several important milestones in the Church’s missionary life. World Mission Sunday marks its 100th anniversary. The World Mission Rosary and MISSION Magazine each celebrate 75 years. Here in Pittsburgh, we recognize 60 years of Maternidad de María, the maternity hospital that launched our diocesan mission in Chimbote, Peru.

These anniversaries show how one act of generosity can continue bearing fruit across decades and continents. Prayer, sacrifice and faithful support connect us with people we may never meet and allow us to share in the work of the Church around the world.

You will also find more anniversaries in these pages. We celebrate religious sisters, priests and a brother marking 50 and 75 years of ministry. We visit Saint Paul Cathedral as it marks 120 years in Oakland and St. Boniface Church as it celebrates its centennial. Their stories are examples of how faith is carried forward by generations of people who worship, serve, sacrifice and build for those who come after them.

Mission begins closer to home, too.

Catholic at Home considers the welcome we can offer at an ordinary front door. Across the Diocese introduces us to parishioners repairing neighbors’ homes, a church helping people with hearing loss participate more fully in worship and a parish pet food pantry serving local families. And an Oakland Catholic student uses her artistic gifts to help a resident of the Little Sisters of the Poor realize her lifelong dream of publishing a children’s book.

Each story offers a different view of the same invitation.

God has given every one of us a place in His mission. We live it through the people we welcome, the gifts we share, the faith we pass on and the next faithful step we take.

I hope this issue helps you recognize the mission already unfolding around you and inspires you to live it with renewed joy. †

With gratitude,
Jennifer Antkowiak
Editor-in-Chief
Pittsburgh Catholic



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ALLEGHENY COUNTY

After the U.S. bishops consecrated the United States to the Sacred Heart of Jesus, Most Sacred Heart of Jesus Parish celebrated a special Mass for the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart at St. Margaret Mary Church. “We thought this was a wonderful spiritual opportunity for our parish to celebrate, since we have both the church and parish names sharing in the national consecration by the U.S. bishops,” said Father Mark L. Thomas, administrator for the parish. “The shrine in Paray-le-Monial has indicated they hope dioceses will take advantage of St. Margaret Mary Alacoque relics’ pilgrimage to the U.S. and invite the relics to their churches. We would welcome that opportunity here.”



▲ Parishioners filled St. Margaret Mary Church for the celebration of the Solemnity of the Most Sacred Heart of Jesus

BEAVER COUNTY

A *Lourdes Virtual Pilgrimage Experience*® will be held Saturday, November 14, at St. Blaise Church of St. Augustine Parish, 772 Ohio Ave., Midland. The pilgrimage begins at 1:30 p.m. The interactive experience will bring participants to Lourdes through projected imagery, an in-person guide, pieces of Grotto rock, Lourdes water and a candlelight rosary procession. “Pilgrims” will have the opportunity to experience the message, peace and healing associated with Lourdes without international travel. A plenary indulgence is available to participants. The afternoon begins with confessions at noon, followed by a reception in the church hall at 12:30 p.m. The pilgrimage experience begins in the church at 1:30 p.m. and concludes with the 4:30 p.m. Vigil Mass.



▲ A participant prays with a Grotto rock during a Lourdes Virtual Pilgrimage Experience®

BUTLER COUNTY

Divine Grace parishioners became the hands and heart of Jesus, joining members of other churches in the Ellwood City area to repair homes for elderly residents. For 25 years, The Carpenter’s Project has helped rebuild stairs, railings, porches and decks, while also painting, pressure washing and trimming bushes. During a single week, more than 220 volunteers completed 60 projects. “It’s really good for your heart to help out,” said Hank Glogowski, a member of the carpentry crew. “Some [residents] want to hug you. They have us in tears.” A total of 22 churches participate in this Christian mission.



▲ Divine Grace parishioners Ron Hassen, left, and Anthony DiBuono, center, install new decking

GREENE COUNTY

For 26 years teens, college students and adults from St. Mathias Parish have traveled to the Father Beiting Appalachian Mission Center in Louisa, Ky., to help those in need. “Mission Possible” brings construction leaders, coordinators and volunteers back year after year for service, ministry and daily Mass. “I find it an honor to celebrate Mass on Father Beiting’s parish altar,” said Father Tom Lewandowski, pastor of St. Matthias Parish. “We are there to serve and help the ‘kinfolk of Appalachia in Jesus,’ as Father Beiting would say.”



▲ St. Matthias mission workers construct an access ramp for a trailer home in Louisa, Kentucky

LAWRENCE COUNTY

To better serve the hard-of-hearing, Holy Spirit Parish launched Auracast®, a system that broadcasts a building’s sound directly to Auracast®-enabled hearing aids through Bluetooth technology. Donated by HearingLife’s New Castle office, the system can be moved easily into any space served by the parish sound system. Parishioners quickly noticed the difference. “I left Mass yesterday with such satisfaction, knowing that I had at last heard the Word of God completely,” said



▲ Schon Slagle of HearingLife’s New Castle office demonstrates the Auracast® system for Holy Spirit Parish employee Cathy Frank

Beverly DeRobertis.

Scan the QR code to watch a video of a Holy Spirit parishioner with severe hearing loss returning to in-person worship for the first time in years.



WASHINGTON COUNTY

At St. Andrew the Apostle Parish, a pet food pantry accompanies the human food pantry to which many Mon Valley residents turn for help. The pet supplies are especially meaningful around the Feast of St. Francis, when the parish holds a pet blessing, but are available year-round.

“Our Pet Food Pantry ensures families never have to choose between feeding themselves and their beloved animals,” said Joe Caruso, the business manager.

All of the food and pet supplies are donated by the Washington Area Humane Society, Mon Valley Paws and Carmela Cares.

“Together, these efforts reflect our parish’s commitment to compassion, community and the Gospel call to serve,” he said.



▲ Adult and youth volunteers gather with pet food and supplies distributed on the second Wednesday of each month to families in Charleroi, Donora and Monongahela



A Ministry at the Door

BY JENNIFER ANTKOWIAK

By October, the area just inside our front door starts working overtime. Jackets appear. Bags are dropped. Someone is usually coming in carrying too many things and asking where everyone else is.

And then there are the shoes.

For years, our doorway held what sometimes seemed like enough shoes for the whole neighborhood. Now that our children are grown and some have moved into homes of their own, there are fewer shoes by the door.

I miss them.

Those shoes were evidence of a full house. They meant someone was home, someone had brought a friend, or someone would soon be calling from another room asking what we had to eat.

The doorway may be one of the busiest spaces in our homes. It can also hold the story of who lives there, who has grown there and who is welcomed there.

When someone walks through the

door, we have an opportunity to help that person feel seen, welcomed and safe. It takes only a few seconds to look up, say a name, offer a smile, help with what is being carried or ask, "How did it go?"

These small gestures become a ministry at the door.

Throughout Scripture, people open their homes, share their food and make space for others. Jesus enters homes to teach, heal, forgive, eat and spend time with people. Again and again, an ordinary doorway becomes the entrance to an encounter with God.

Some of our most important opportunities happen with the people who enter our homes every day.

A spouse comes home carrying the weight of a difficult day. A child walks in after school hoping someone will notice a disappointment. A family member arrives tired from an appointment. An aging parent moves a little more slowly through the doorway. A friend stops by with news to share. Every arrival carries a story.

Our welcome can say, "I'm glad you're here. You matter in this home."

Fall offers a natural time to pay attention to this. More coats and shoes gather near the door. Holiday visits begin filling the calendar. Home becomes the setting for more of our daily life.

Take a look at your entrance. Does

it help people come in easily? Is there a place to set down a bag, hang a coat or sit for a moment? A small amount of order can create a sense of peace. A lamp left on can make an evening arrival feel warmer. A seasonal touch, a family photograph or a favorite prayer near the door can communicate love and belonging.

The most important part of the welcome is us.

We can pause what we are doing. We can lift our eyes from a screen. We can allow someone to arrive fully before moving into dinner, homework, errands or tomorrow's schedule.

We can also think about who has not come through our door lately. Is there a neighbor who lives alone? A friend who is grieving? A relative who would appreciate an invitation for coffee or Sunday dinner? Someone new to the parish or neighborhood who may be waiting for a sign that there is room for them?

A welcoming home grows through attention. It begins when we recognize the person in front of us as a beloved child of God and receive that person with care.

This season, as people come and go carrying backpacks, groceries, worries, hopes and plenty of wet umbrellas, we can make the doorway a place of grace.

And when the people we love leave their shoes there, perhaps we can be grateful for those, too. †

A Prayer for Your Ministry at the Door

Loving God, bless all who enter our home. Help us welcome each person with warmth, attention and care. May our doorway lead to a place of peace, belonging and love, and may everyone who enters feel the grace of Your presence. AMEN.



JENNIFER ANTKOWIAK

is the executive director of communications and diocesan spokesperson



► St. Francis of Assisi (1181? - 1226) was a wealthy young man and knight who was taken prisoner of war and later experienced what today might be described as post-traumatic stress, helping lead to his conversion. After his release, he responded to God's call to preach the Gospel, promote peace and help renew the Church.

Pope Leo XIV has proclaimed a special Year of St. Francis, marking the 800th anniversary of the saint's death.

“If we do not forgive perfectly, Lord, make us forgive perfectly, so that we may really love our enemies for love of you, and pray fervently to you for them, returning no one evil for evil, anxious only to serve everybody in you.” – St. Francis of Assisi

DISCOVER CATHOLIC SCHOOLS WEEK NOVEMBER 15 - 21, 2026

Discover all that's happening in our Catholic schools and learn more about the good news we have to share. From strong academics and vibrant faith to increased enrollment and financial support, something special is happening in Catholic schools across the Diocese of Pittsburgh. Scan the QR code to learn more.



FIRE UP YOUR FAITH

ADDICTION RECOVERY MINISTRY

If you or a loved one is suffering from addiction, find hope and spiritual support at a Mass for Healing from Addiction: Oct. 5, 2026, at 7 p.m. at St. Hugh Church of St. Matthias Parish, Carmichaels, Greene County; and Nov. 18, 2026, at 7 p.m. at St. Andrew the Apostle Parish, Monongahela, Washington County.

LATINO MINISTRY

St. Paul Cathedral will host a Mass for the Lord of Miracles on Oct. 5, 2026, at noon. This Peruvian devotion grew from the survival of a mural of Christ, painted by an enslaved artist, through repeated devastating earthquakes and from miracles later attributed to the image.

The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius will be offered in Spanish during a weekend retreat Oct. 9-11, 2026, at the Spiritan Center in Bethel Park. For information about the retreat and cost, contact Jorge Vela at 412-337-7268.

A Mass and procession honoring Our Lady of Aparecida will take place Oct. 12 at 6 p.m. at St. Catherine of Siena Church of St. Teresa of Kolkata Parish in Beechview. Workers are especially devoted to Our Lady of Aparecida, patroness of Brazil. According to the devotion's tradition, three discouraged fishermen pulled her statue from a river and then caught an overwhelming number of fish.

SPIRIT OF ASSISI SPEAKER SERIES

In honor of the Year of St. Francis, the Diocese of Pittsburgh is offering a Franciscan-themed fall speaker series. Each presentation is offered twice on the same day at the Diocesan Pastoral Center, from noon-3 p.m. and 7-9 p.m. On Oct. 19, Capuchin Father Anuel Aviles will present “What Was Bitter Became Sweetness,” with the afternoon session in English and the evening session in Spanish. On Nov. 2, Franciscan Father Jonathan St. Andre will present “Let the Fire Fall: St. Francis and the Holy Spirit.” To register, contact agaughn@diopitt.com.

ANNUAL PERU MISSION DINNER

The 61st annual Peru Mission Dinner will be held Oct. 15 from 6-9 p.m. at the Sheraton Hotel at Station Square. Proceeds support the Diocese of Pittsburgh's medical mission to the poorest of the poor in Chimbote, Peru. For more information, call (412) 456-3065.



Together at FestPGH

Thousands gathered for a day of music, art, service and worship

BY JENNIFER ANTKOWIAK

AT NOON ON SEPTEMBER 19, THE GATES AT F.N.B. STADIUM OPENED, AND FESTPGH WAS UNDERWAY.

People streamed in, visiting activity areas and taking in the view of the Pittsburgh skyline.

The free music and arts festival welcomed nearly 3,000 people from across the region. Hosted by the Diocese of Pittsburgh and presented by F.N.B. Corporation, the day invited guests of all ages to connect, serve and celebrate.

There was plenty to explore.

Children stopped for crafts and games and played on giant inflatables. Guests visited the Faith in Action Village, where ministries, nonprofit organizations and religious communities shared how they serve people throughout the region, and local and regional artists displayed their original work.

Music continued throughout the day on two stages. Local bands The Branches and Ad Astra performed on the local stage, while The Arcadian Wild, Josh Blakesley Band, The Scally Brothers and Jervis Campbell took the main stage. Performance artist Mike Debus created works of art live before the crowd.

Priests heard confessions during the

afternoon, and eucharistic adoration offered another place for prayer and reflection alongside the activity. At 4 p.m., Bishop Mark Eckman celebrated Mass in the stadium.

Behind every part of the festival were sponsors, volunteers, performers, artists, vendors, service organizations, clergy, religious sisters and brothers, and staff members who welcomed guests and kept the day moving.

As evening settled over the Pittsburgh skyline, Switchfoot took the stage, and the crowd was ready. Fans danced and sang along through the Grammy Award-winning band's headlining set.

DJ Code kept the music going for an after-party in the parking lot, as FestPGH came to a close. †

▶
WATCH THE HIGHLIGHTS







GOOD SHEPHERDS

Three Schools, One Team, One Blessing

BY JENNIFER ANTKOWIAK

A shepherd's influence often reaches far beyond the walls of a church. For Father G. Malcolm McDonald, a relationship that began in a parish decades ago now extends onto the football field, where a new generation is learning about faith, unity and belonging.

Nick Militzer has known Father Malcolm since he was four years old, when Father Malcolm served at his family's parish, Ss. Simon and Jude. Now, as an adult coaching student athletes, Nick relies on Father Malcolm to influence a new generation and draw them to Christ.

"He's part of our family now," Nick said. "We introduce him to people as our uncle a lot. He's done every sacrament for our family and is just a wonderful blessing to us."

Nick works in risk management for PNC Bank and coaches at Our Lady of the Sacred Heart High School. He is both assistant head coach for the boys football team and head coach of the girls flag football team.

The boys team brings together students from OLSH, Eden Christian Academy and Propel Montour. When Nick joined the program five years ago, he invited Father Malcolm to bless the players. The visit has become a tradition the team anticipates.

Father Malcolm uses the team's distinctive makeup to help the players understand the Holy Trinity.

"He talks about how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit become one, and how our OLSH football team becomes three in one to love and serve each other and God," Nick said.

When Nick became head coach of the girls flag football team two years ago, he invited Father Malcolm to bless those athletes as well. He encourages them to be trailblazers in a growing sport and reminds them to serve each other and God.

Nick believes that Father Malcolm's presence gives both teams something more meaningful than the season's wins and losses.

"He always makes people feel they belong," Nick said. "His involvement in our young men's and women's journeys is extremely important to their growth and development." †



► **Has a priest or deacon made a difference in your life? Share your Good Shepherds story with us at communications@diopitt.org.**

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QUESTION:

November 1 and November 2 seem to be important dates for Catholics. But what exactly are we celebrating on these days?

ANSWER:

The fundamental reality we are celebrating is our Catholic belief that all baptized Christians have a continuing relationship with each other, through Christ, which lasts for eternity. We call this the Mystical Body of Christ. This traditional belief was presented in the modern era by Pope Pius XII in his June 29, 1943, encyclical on the Mystical Body of Christ, *Mystici Corporis Christi*. There, the pope emphasized the consistent teaching on the essential unity of all the baptized into the Body of Christ. This Body includes all the baptized of every era.

On November 1, Catholics celebrate the Solemnity of All Saints. On this day we remember not only the men and women who have been formally canonized by the Church, but all those who have gone before us in faith and now share in the glory of heaven. This unity of all the baptized also prompts us to remember all those who have gone before us and who we believe are with the Lord in glory. They are important to us as both examples and intercessors.

On November 2, All Souls' Day, the reality of the Mystical Body is also our guide. On that day we recall those members of the Mystical Body of Christ who have not yet attained eternal glory in heaven. We believe that they are destined to eternal life with Christ but are undergoing the purification of purgatory until that day of glory arrives. Our unity with them impels us to pray for them as they endure the longing for the unity, peace and happiness of heaven.

Much of our prayer on those days occurs at the Eucharist. When we attend Mass on those days and participate in the perfect prayer of the Eucharist, we do so as

members of the Mystical Body of Christ, adding our personal prayers to those of the entire Church for all our brothers and sisters united in baptismal faith.

Perhaps our Catholic prayer can best be expressed as a reflection of our commitment to remember. As members of the Mystical Body of Christ, we can never forget those who walk with us in this life and await us in the next. We remember not only our loved ones but also Jesus, the Beloved of the Father, and we long for the day when his promise will be fulfilled and we will enjoy eternal unity in heaven. †



FATHER CHARLES BOBER

is the former pastor of Saint Mark the Evangelist Parish. He has written his column for the *Pittsburgh Catholic* newspaper and online since 1983.



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Formed Among the People

FIVE SEMINARIANS, TRAINED IN OUR PARISHES, PREPARE FOR ORDINATION AS TRANSITIONAL DEACONS

BY NATHAN SUDIE

As this issue went to press, Antonino “Nino” Castellano, Colin Kulmoski, Peter Mallampalli, Thach Ngoc Nguyen and Thanh Tung Nguyen were preparing for ordination to the transitional diaconate during an October 3 Mass at St. Thomas More Church, part of Resurrection Parish.

All five men have spent years in prayer, study, discernment and pastoral

formation preparing for this moment. Their ordination will begin a new ministry

of service as deacons in the final stage of preparation for their anticipated priestly ordination in 2027.

This ordination comes at a time of significant development in the way the Catholic Church forms men for priestly ministry. In the sixth edition of the Program of Priestly Formation the U.S. Bishops have reorganized the major components of the journey toward priesthood in a new way.

“Priestly formation has always included various dimensions of human, spiritual, intellectual and pastoral formation,” said Father Tom Sparacino, director of pre-ordination

formation and rector of St. Paul Seminary in the Diocese of Pittsburgh. While academic study is extremely important, he said, in the new Program of Priestly Formation “the way in which a man journeys from the initial thought of priesthood to ordination has changed.”

Rather than looking primarily at formation according to academic years or degrees, the new program identifies four stages: propaedeutic, discipleship, configuration and vocational synthesis.

The Latin word ‘propaedeutic’ refers to the earliest stage of priestly formation, in which the new

seminarian focuses primarily on prayer, self-knowledge and his relationship with God. Father Tom describes it as a time for a man to grow in his understanding of being a son of God while continuing to discern both discipleship and priesthood.

During the discipleship stage, a seminarian works intently on learning how to better follow Jesus, usually while he is also completing courses in philosophy and preparing to study theology.

In the configuration stage, the man moves from primarily discerning whether he is called to priesthood to preparing for it through the study of theology, Scripture, canon law, ecclesiology, pastoral theology and other areas important to priestly ministry.

Finally, the vocational synthesis stage gives a newly ordained transitional deacon the opportunity to put his years of formation into practice in parish life.

Another important part of priestly formation takes place in parishes.

Each man spends close to 22 months in parish ministry, including through summer pastoral practicums, Father Tom said. The experience is intended to resemble the rhythm and responsibilities of a future priestly assignment.

Over those years, each seminarian learns to serve, practices the spiritual works of mercy, gives reflections and gains experience in the daily life of a parish.

During these parish assignments the pastor, priests and people provide spiritual and practical formation for men who may become the next generation of priests, "helping the seminarian grow in confidence in ministry and



▲ Antonino Castellano



▲ Colin Kulmoski



▲ Peter Mallampalli



▲ Thach Nguyen



▲ Tung Nguyen

learning skills to preach, teach and sanctify," Father Tom said.

Through ordinary conversations, parish activities, liturgies, service and the joys and struggles of daily parish life, seminarians come to know more deeply the people they may someday be called to serve.

The five men preparing for ordination this October reflect the many different paths by which God calls men to priesthood.

Nino, whose home parish is St. Jude, graduated from Central Catholic High School and earned a degree in theology and catechetics from Franciscan University of Steubenville.

Before entering seminary in 2021, he served as coordinator of catechetical ministries at St. Jude. He later continued theological studies at Theological College and The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., and participated in the summer pastoral practicum with St. Isidore the Farmer Parish.

Colin, from Regina Coeli Parish, also graduated from Central Catholic and studied mechanical engineering at Hofstra University before entering priestly formation in 2021. He continued theological studies at St. Mary's Seminary in Baltimore and spent the summer in pastoral formation at Triumph of the Holy Cross Parish.

Peter, of St. Teresa of Kolkata Parish, attended Aquinas Academy and North Allegheny High School

before studying philosophy at Duquesne University. He entered formation in 2020 and later began theological studies at Theological College. His formation has included an extended pastoral year and additional pastoral experience at St. Teresa of Kolkata Parish.

Thach was born in Ha Tinh, Vietnam, and earned a degree in mechanical technology there before entering priestly formation for Pittsburgh in

2020. Following his initial studies at St. Paul Seminary and Franciscan University, he continued at Theological College and The Catholic University of America. His most recent pastoral practicum

was at St. Catherine Labouré Parish.

Tung, also born in Ha Tinh, studied building engineering and taught religion to children in his parish before entering formation in 2020. He later began theological studies at St. Vincent Seminary in Latrobe and most recently served in pastoral formation at Resurrection Parish.

Their ordination to the transitional diaconate will be a major milestone, but it will not mark the end of their formation.

Once they have been ordained transitional deacons, their experience of parish life changes.

"Preparing for ordained life and living the ordained life are two different things," Father Tom said. "This time allows the man to try, fail and succeed." †

The five men preparing for ordination this October reflect the many different paths by which God calls men to priesthood.

CELEBRATING JUBILARIAN RELIGIOUS S

75TH JUBILEE



▲ Sister Jean Anthony Alexandrunas, CDP



▲ Sister Kathleen Delaney, SC



▲ Sister Margaret Ebin, HM



▲ Sister Louise Grundish, SC



▲ Sister Marlene Luffy, CDP



▲ Sister Francine McDonald, OSF

SISTERS AND PRIESTS

Many religious who serve in our diocese are celebrating milestone anniversaries this year. Please say a prayer for these sisters, priests, and brothers as they observe their 50th, and 75th anniversaries, and thank God for them and their ministry.

75TH JUBILEE (CONTINUED)



▲ Sister Patricia Ann Moffett, CDP



▲ Sister Florence Pawlicki, CSFN



▲ Sister Rosalyn Soller, OSB

50TH JUBILEE



▲ Father Thomas P. Acklin, OSB



▲ Sister Diane Dunn, CDP

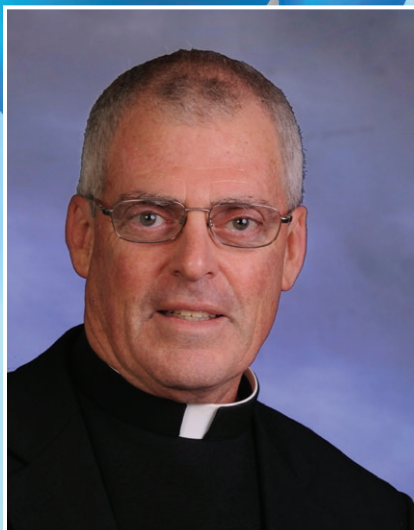


▲ Sister Linda Kaman, RSM

50TH JUBILEE (CONTINUED)



▲ Sister Margaret Marszal, HM



▲ Father Donald McEachin, CSSp



▲ Sister Mary Meyers, CSJ



▲ Father John Petrikovic, OFM Cap



▲ Father George Spangenberg, CSSp

SAINT PAUL CATHEDRAL MARKS 120 YEARS

BY PAM SURANO

For 120 years, St. Paul Cathedral has stood high above Fifth Avenue in Oakland, its spires rising 247 feet above what is now a thriving university and medical community.

Inside its massive doors, the soaring pointed arches, rich stained glass and a monumental marble altar takes its inspiration from 14th-century Gothic cathedrals. The majestic tones of the great pipe organ – the first of its kind in any North American cathedral – can be heard throughout the neighborhood.

Dedicated in 1906, it is the third cathedral to serve the Diocese of Pittsburgh. The first was built as a church at the corner of Grant Street and Fifth Avenue in 1834 and designated the cathedral in 1843. After it burned in 1851, the diocese rebuilt on the same spot, where the Union Trust Building stands now. By the turn of the century the cathedral was in the middle of a business district. The diocese sold the property to Henry Clay Frick and moved three-and-a-half miles down Fifth Avenue to what was then the bucolic Oakland neighborhood.

As the Mother Church of the diocese, the cathedral is also the spiritual home of generations of Catholics, a place where the faithful have gathered in celebration and sorrow for some of the most significant moments in the life of the Church of Pittsburgh.

“For 120 years, this magnificent cathedral has served as the spiritual home for the faithful throughout our diocese, as well as a vibrant parish community,” said Father Kris Stubna, pastor and rector of Saint Paul Cathedral Parish. “We celebrate all those over these 120 years, past and present, who have been an integral part of the life of Saint Paul Cathedral.”

The cathedral sits in the center of one of Pittsburgh’s busiest areas, surrounded by universities, hospitals, museums, businesses, and homes. Hundreds of people walk through the cathedral’s doors daily.

They come for Mass, to light candles, or to slip into the pews and pray. College students stop between classes. Doctors and nurses come before or after their shifts. Families with loved ones in nearby hospitals find refuge there.

Two daily Masses offer moments of prayer and peace, while livestreamed Masses extend to the infirm and homebound. Its mission also reaches beyond the cathedral doors, with parishioners serving neighbors in need through a variety of social outreach ministries.

The cathedral describes itself as ‘everybody’s parish,’ welcoming Catholics from throughout the



diocese and people from across the region. For generations, its walls have held moments that reach beyond the parish itself.

The cathedral is the setting for ordinations and major diocesan celebrations and has also been a place where Pittsburgh gathers in moments of public joy and sorrow.

The community gathered there to mourn after the unexpected deaths of Mayor Richard Caligiuri and Mayor Bob O’Connor. Firefighters from across the nation arrived in procession to mourn two of their own killed in the collapse of the tower at a Baptist Church. Funeral Masses for Steelers greats. An interfaith service marking five years since the Tree of Life synagogue massacre brought people of different faiths together in prayer for peace, healing and unity.

St. Paul Cathedral has also welcomed future saints, including Cardinal Karol Wojtyla (later Pope John Paul II), Mother Teresa (now St. Teresa of Kolkata), and Archbishop (now Blessed) Fulton J. Sheen.

In its 120th year, the cathedral has begun a new phase

of its history following the installation of Bishop Mark Eckman in July 2025. He has moved into the cathedral rectory, becoming the first sitting bishop in 76 years to live at the Mother Church.

His presence is “making this a very special anniversary celebration.” Father Kris said. †



Daily Masses at Saint Paul Cathedral are celebrated Monday through Saturday at 8:15 a.m. and 12:05 p.m.

For the complete Mass schedule, cathedral information and livestreamed Masses, visit:

- <https://saintpaulcathedral.org/>
- <https://saintpaulcathedral.org/tv-ministry>

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A CENTURY OF FAITH: St. Boniface Church Marks 100 Years

BY PAM SURANO

For generations, many German immigrant families built their lives around St. Boniface Church on Pittsburgh's North Side. A century ago, homes and businesses filled the area, creating what Monsignor Larry DiNardo described as a bustling community shaped by family, faith and parish life.

Built by Benedictine monks in the historic Deutschtown area to serve the growing German population, the church became a spiritual and social hub, with a school and close-knit community centered on faith.

"There's a lot of history, a lot of blood, sweat and tears, a lot of work that people put into it," Monsignor Larry said. "It was the center of their life."

This November, the landmark church celebrates 100 years – a century of faith that remained strong even as the neighborhood around it changed. Following an earlier merger to become Holy Wisdom Parish, St. Boniface is now part of Christ Our Savior Parish.

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, St. Boniface was built in a Byzantine-influenced style rarely found in this part of the country. Its massive dome rises above the congregation instead of over the altar.

Monsignor Larry, who came to St. Boniface Church as pastor of Holy Wisdom Parish in 1994, said the design carries deep spiritual meaning. The structure signifies that the faithful do not simply attend Mass, Monsignor Larry said, but are active

participants in the celebration of the Eucharist.

In the 1980s, construction of I-279 connected Pittsburgh to the growing North Hills but dramatically changed the neighborhood. Homes were demolished for the freeway construction, scattering families farther north to communities including West View, Ross Township and McCandless. While homes remained in nearby Spring Hill, much of the community that had once surrounded St. Boniface was gone.

The church itself was threatened by the highway project, but the parishioners fought to save it. They may have lost their neighborhood, but they never lost their strong connection to St. Boniface Church, Monsignor Larry said.

Today, generations of families travel from throughout the North Hills and beyond to worship where their parents and great-grandparents once did. "It's like the weekly time when the family comes together." Monsignor Larry said. †

St.
Boniface
Church is
named for
St. Boniface,
a missionary
known

for bringing Christianity
to the German people. He
is also the patron saint of
Boniface Wimmer, the German
Benedictine monk who
established Saint Vincent in
Latrobe.

St. Boniface Church will
celebrate its 100th anniversary
with a 4 p.m. Mass Nov. 21
celebrated by Bishop Mark
Eckman, followed by dinner at
Shannopin Country Club.



A Celebration of Mission

BY JENNIFER ANTKOWIAK

This fall Catholics locally, nationally and worldwide will mark multiple historic anniversaries.

The year 2026 is a milestone for several important missions, all of them connected at least tangentially to World Mission Sunday, founded a century ago by Pope Pius XI unite all Catholics in support for global missions.

In addition to the 100th anniversary of World Mission Sunday on October 18, this year is also the 75th anniversaries of the World Mission Rosary and *MISSION Magazine*, both connected to Blessed Fulton J. Sheen. Here in the Diocese of Pittsburgh, *Maternidad de María*, the maternity hospital that grew from Pittsburgh's mission in Chimbote, Peru, is celebrating 60 years of caring for mothers and babies.

Together, the anniversaries tell a story that stretches across time and continents, connected by prayer, generosity and a shared commitment to the mission of the Church.

100 years of World Mission Sunday

Pope Pius XI established World Mission Sunday in 1926 as an annual day of prayer and support for the Church's missionary work. Celebrated on the second-to-last day of October, it calls every parish and parishioner – including children – to give to Catholic ministries where the Church is young, poor or persecuted and does not yet have the personnel and resources to sustain itself.

Today, that support reaches 1,130 mission territories around the world.

"World Mission Sunday is simply a day to ask for prayers and financial support for missionaries near and far," said Gary Slifkey, director of the Missions Office for the Diocese of Pittsburgh. "It is an



▲ Members of the Diocese of Pittsburgh delegation join staff of the Center for Social Works, the bishop of Chimbote and the local pastor outside the chapel named for Monsignor Jules Roos during the 60th-anniversary celebration in Chimbote, Peru.



▲ HouseCelebration

invitation to participate in the Church's mission in a concrete way. Through prayer, sacrifice and financial assistance, we become co-workers in spreading the Gospel and building up the Church."

The support provided through World Mission Sunday helps missionary dioceses meet their day-to-day needs. Annual ordinary subsidies, typically ranging from \$20,000 to \$50,000, allow local bishops to provide essential pastoral ministry. Extraordinary subsidies help build churches, seminaries, convents and pastoral centers. In an average year, World Mission Sunday funds help support more than 900 infrastructure projects for the Church.

For Pope Leo XIV, the centennial has a

deeply personal connection.

Before his election as pope, Robert Prevost spent years serving the Church in Peru, first as an Augustinian missionary priest and later as a bishop. His experience



▲ Pope Leo XIV's years of missionary service in Peru give the World Mission Sunday centennial a personal significance for the Holy Father. Illustrations courtesy of The Pontifical Mission Societies.



▲ Blessed Fulton J. Sheen

gave him a firsthand view of the difference support for the missions can make.

“I saw firsthand how the faith, the prayer, and the generosity shown on World Mission Sunday can transform entire communities,” Pope Leo said in October 2025.

That experience makes celebrating this year’s anniversary with the Holy Father especially meaningful to Gary.

“I am thrilled to work with Pope Leo XIV on a project,” he said. “Not for Pope Leo, but with Pope Leo.”

Pope Leo has taken an active role in the centennial, writing his message for World Mission Sunday and recording a video to promote it. Speaking to the Pontifical Mission Societies in June, he expressed his gratitude to people throughout the world who help make the annual observance possible.

He also spoke about the importance of World Mission Sunday in encouraging Catholics in long-established churches to “join in the missionary spirit of the whole Church.”

Putting the world into our prayers

One of the ways Catholics can enter more deeply into World Mission Sunday is through the colorful beads of a World Mission Rosary, which is marking its 75th anniversary this year. Archbishop Sheen introduced it in 1951, while serving as national director for the Society for the Propagation of the Faith.

Each decade has a different color representing a region of the world: green for Africa, blue for the Pacific Islands, white for Europe, red for the Americas

and yellow for Asia. Praying the five decades invites Catholics to remember the needs of the Church and its people throughout the world.

That same year, Sheen launched *MISSION Magazine*, helping Catholics learn about missionaries, the communities they served and the growth of the Church around the world.

Seventy-five years later, the rosary and magazine continue to invite Catholics to learn about the universal Church, pray for its people and recognize their own place in its mission. For more information about the 100th anniversary of World Mission Sunday or the World Mission Rosary, or to sign up to receive *MISSION Magazine* visit www.pontificalmissions.org. To receive a World Mission Rosary, contact Gary at missions@diopitt.org.



A Pittsburgh mission celebrates 60 years

Those connections to global missions have special meaning in this diocese.

In the early 1960s, priests from the Diocese of Pittsburgh were serving in Chimbote, Peru, where Monsignor Jules Roos encountered an alarmingly high rate of infant mortality. Babies were often brought to him near death for

baptism, and he recognized the urgent need for safe maternity care.

Working with the Dominican Sisters of Grand Rapids, Mich., and local supporters, Monsignor Roos helped establish *Maternidad de María*, where women could receive maternity care and give birth in clean, safe surroundings.

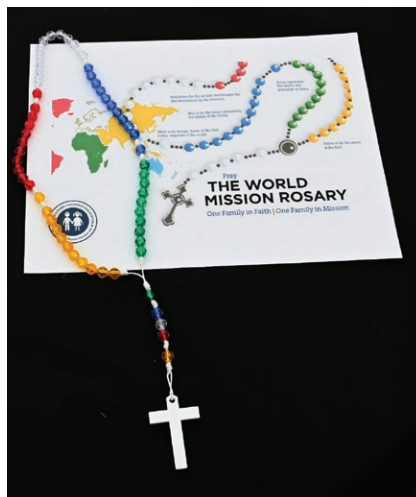
The first baby was born there on July 10, 1966. One week later, Bishop John Wright of Pittsburgh dedicated the completed maternity facility and pledged annual support for its work.

Sixty years later, more than 100,000 babies have been born at *Maternidad de María*. Parents receive education in prenatal care, hygiene and caring for their babies after delivery. The maternity hospital is part of a larger Center for Social Works that provides healthcare and other services to people who live in extreme poverty.

Its history reflects decades of commitment from people in Chimbote and Pittsburgh. After an earthquake destroyed the hospital in 1970, the missions supporters in Pittsburgh and Peru collaborated to rebuild. Their relationship – along with that of the sisters in Michigan – has continued to grow.

For Gary, who joined the Mission Office this year, that relationship strengthened when he traveled for the first time to Chimbote and saw *Maternidad de María*, the larger state-of-the-art healthcare center and related social ministries.

“The pictures I had seen over and over again came to life. Standing among our brothers and sisters who our diocese has supported for over 60 years was both humbling and deeply moving. I was able to see firsthand how the generosity of people here in Pittsburgh has transformed lives in Chimbote.” †



▲ The five colors of the World Mission Rosary represent different regions of the world: green for Africa, blue for the Pacific Islands, white for Europe, red for the Americas and yellow for Asia.



LEARN MORE

For more information on the mission, visit www.chimbotefoundation.org.



Faith for the Future

Pam and Steve Blanco reflect on the legacy they hope to leave.

“TELL ME ABOUT YOUR FAITH JOURNEY.”

Bishop Mark Eckman often asks that question when he meets someone. The answers usually include other people: a parent or grandparent who first taught them to pray, a priest who helped them through a difficult time, a teacher who made faith come alive, or a parish community that gave them a place to belong.

That question is at the heart of the Catholic Foundation for Greater Pittsburgh, established a year ago to raise support for ministry in the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh. It is especially a resource for Catholics who want to create a lasting legacy rooted in the people, places and experiences that have meant the most to them.

The foundation helps individuals and families make lasting gifts that help fund the work of parishes, schools, charitable organizations, institutions and ministries throughout the six counties of the diocese. Supporting the foundation is an important way that Steve and Pam Blanco express their love and gratitude to God for all that He has given them.

“As you open yourself up to what the Holy Spirit asks you to do, you start recognizing that every person is loved by Christ,” Steve said. “It makes you think about what you’re doing to help others and how God might use you as a conduit for His work.”

Steve is now chair of the board of directors of the Catholic Foundation for Greater Pittsburgh. His position there reflects a spiritual journey that began about 15 years earlier when Pam started attending a Bible study.

Studying and discussing Scripture challenged her to grapple

more deeply with Catholic teaching. She turned to their parish for guidance and found a welcoming community that helped her grow closer to Christ. She and Steve began learning more about the Church together, which changed how they understood their faith, their lives and their responsibility to others. They were soon speaking openly with other people about Jesus, seeking God’s will more deliberately and placing Him at the center of their lives.

“You begin to recognize the depth and richness of what we have as Catholics,” Steve said. “The closer you grow to God, the more you realize He wants to come to us. We just have to accept the invitation.”

Steve became involved with Catholic Charities, where he saw the Church’s care for others put into action through ministries to those in need. They saw how much a parish or Catholic organization can impact another person’s life. They wondered how they could best sustain the places and people carrying out the work of the Church.

For Steve, the foundation is a response to Jesus’s call to carry out His mission in local communities.

“The foundation enables us to take what we know God is calling us to do as disciples and ensure that work continues,” Steve said. “Through the foundation, we have an opportunity to impact not just today, but well into the future.”

For Pam, the desire to make a lasting difference begins with recognizing that faith is meant to be shared.

“The closer we’ve grown to God, the more we’ve realized life isn’t just about ourselves,” she said. “It’s about asking how we can help others experience the love of Christ.”

Legacy gifts, which carry out Christ’s work on earth when the giver has gone to the next life, are crucial to the foundation’s work.

“The Church has been part of so many important moments in our lives,” Bishop Eckman said. “A legacy or outright gift is one way we can help make that same care, formation and sense of belonging possible for the people who will come after us.”

“The foundation is helping Catholics consider what they have received through their faith and what they hope to pass on. That discernment is personal. The answer will be different for every individual and every family”, said Tom O’Toole, executive director of the Catholic Foundation for Greater Pittsburgh.

“Every one of us has benefited from someone else’s faith, generosity and sacrifice,” he said. “It is our time to help pass those same blessings on to future generations.”

Perhaps that process begins with Bishop Eckman’s simple question: Tell me about your faith journey.

“Who helped you along the way? Where did you learn to trust God, experience the love of Christ or discover a community that welcomed you? What parish, school, charitable organization, institution or ministry would you like to help continue its work?” he asked. †

To begin a conversation, visit cfgpitt.org or contact info@cfgpitt.org.



▲ Illustrator Averie Stroh and author Cathy Vonderau celebrate *Bee & Cat* with a Little Sister of the Poor.



▲ Sister Georgia and Mother Loraine of the Little Sisters of the Poor enjoy reading *Bee & Cat*.

A Story of *Mission* and *Friendship*

A high school visit to the Little Sisters of the Poor produced a book

BY PAM SURANO

“CAN YOU DRAW A BEE AND A CAT?”

That was the question from Cathy Vonderau, who lives at the Little Sisters of the Poor retirement community in Brighton Heights, to Averie Stroh, a junior at Oakland Catholic High School who was visiting for a day of service.

Cathy had seen Averie, 17, sketching as the two created origami together. Averie picked up her pencil and began to fulfill Cathy’s lifelong dream of publishing an illustrated children’s book. She had arrived with classmates to do crafts with residents but left as the future illustrator of *Bee & Cat*.

When Cathy was in college more than 50 years earlier, she created two characters inspired by one of her closest friends (Bea) and herself (Cat). The story follows a bee and a cat who get into trouble and work together to solve a problem, apologizing when they make mistakes and choosing forgiveness.

Now 78, Cathy had lived in the Pittsburgh neighborhood of Knoxville, where she married, raised two sons, and taught theater, arts and history. All the while she waited for someone to make *Bee & Cat* come to life.

Averie’s early artistic gifts were nurtured by her parents and cultivated at St. Philip School in Crafton, Guardian Angel Academy in Greentree and Oakland Catholic. The high school taught her that art had meaning and to understand her artistry as a gift from God to be used for others.

After the two met, Cathy provided the manuscript, and Averie began creating the pictures. As they worked together, their partnership became a true friendship. Friendship was always the root of the book. Cathy remains close to many of her college friends.

“Your friends are a very, very important part of your life,” she said.

Not long before meeting Cathy, Averie had lost her grandmother. As the two spent months working together on *Bee & Cat*, Averie found herself drawn to Cathy’s warmth, encouragement and joyful spirit.

“God’s timing has always made sense to me,” Averie said. “Cathy is a reassurance that no matter what age, I’ll always be able to do something that I love. I see her as a friend, but I also see her as a role model.”

Cathy also feels blessed by their friendship.

“I have never felt like an instrument of God in my life, but this whole thing, I don’t know how else it could have happened,” Cathy said.

When *Bee & Cat* was published, Cathy sent a copy to her friend of 60 years, Bea. In real life, as in the book, “Cat’s the one who gets into trouble, and Bea’s the one who smooths things out,” Cathy said.

The unlikely way Cathy and Averie met during Averie’s day of service visit shows the importance of service to Catholic education, said Oakland Catholic president Kelly Lazzara.

“It moves education beyond the classroom and challenges students to recognize the needs of others, respond with compassion, and use their gifts for the greater good,” Kelly said.

Copies reached the Little Sisters of the Poor Motherhouse in Brittany, France, where sisters gathered as the book was translated and read aloud.

“That image of 50 sisters sitting in a circle listening to *Bee & Cat* tickles me,” Cathy said.

“This is a wonderful example of how God puts together the young and old to accomplish great things,” said Sister Loraine Marie Clare, Mother Superior of the Little Sisters of the Poor in Pittsburgh.

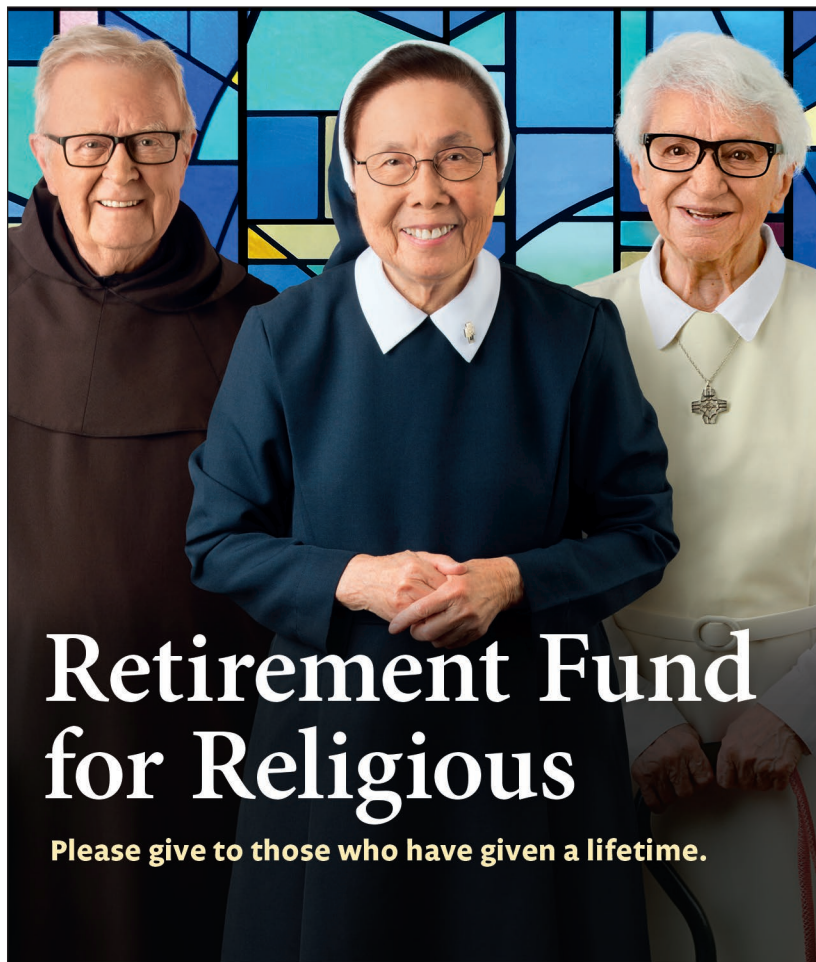
As she applies to colleges, Averie hopes to study mechanical and biomedical engineering and pursue a career in prosthetics. Inspired by another school mission trip to Jamaica, she wants to help those who have lost limbs regain mobility.

“If God gives you the ability to help people, you should,” she said.

Bee & Cat may not be finished yet. Cathy is writing a new story featuring the two characters as they encounter a giraffe who doesn’t seem to fit in.

“I can’t have too many years between this next book, so I better step it up,” Cathy said.

This time she knows what artist to ask: Averie. †



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HUMAN FIRST:

What Pope Leo's AI Encyclical Means for Catholic Education

BY PAM SURANO

A **S PART OF** an effort to craft a policy for the use of artificial intelligence in schools of the Catholic Diocese of Pittsburgh, the Schools Office held a symposium for Catholic educators, diocesan and parish leaders, parents, and interested persons of our broader community, to hear from experts in theology, computer science, technology, ethics, and education.

Organized before Pope Leo XIV released his groundbreaking new encyclical, *Magnifica Humanitas*, the symposium was driven by requests from school administrators, said Judene Indovina, director of Catholic school catechesis.

"Students are starting to engage with AI for the completion of their work, which of course, when done to replace their own thinking, is extremely concerning for educators," she said.

Superintendent Lauren Martin asked her to organize a symposium on the topic. The result was "Artificial Intelligence, the Human Person and the Love that Surpasses Knowledge". It providentially coincided in timing and theme with the release of Pope Leo's *Magnifica Humanitas: On Safeguarding the Human Person in the Time of Artificial Intelligence*.

Technology, Pope Leo wrote, has the power to "heal, connect, educate and protect our common home," but it can also divide, exclude and generate new forms of injustice. He warned that the speed and ease of getting answers through AI can

weaken the desire to ask questions. Education, he wrote, takes time and engagement with ideas and experiences.

Human beings must understand AI in relation to God, said Stacy A. Trasancos, an expert on the ethical implications of AI, and professor of Catholic studies at Seton Hall University.

"Before we can ask what AI can do, we must remember who we are," she said. "We are made in God's image and likeness."

On the other hand, "AI is made in our image, for good or ill."

Confusing the two could lead people to assume that because humans are made in God's image, everything created through AI must therefore be good. AI is a human creation, not made in God's image, she said.

While AI can analyze enormous quantities of data and mimic human language, that should never be confused with human capabilities, Stacy said. AI systems calculate probabilities, but human beings understand, choose, pray and love. Unlike AI systems, human beings are capable of moral choices, relationships and communion



▲ Presenters, from left: Lauren Martin, Stacy Trasancos, Paul Chutikorn, John Brahier, Megan Levis Scheirer and Judene Indovina.

with God.

"AI systems don't have powers of the soul. AI is a tool, but technology is not what's going to convert our heart. It's not what's going to elevate us into the life of Christ," she said.

The Church has faced revolutionary technical challenges throughout history, including the printing press and the internet, said John Brahier, director of partnerships and educational engagement at Longbeard, a Catholic technology company behind Magisterium IA. It digitizes Catholic theological sources and makes previously obscure teachings accessible through AI.

"The question here is, how can it advance human flourishing?" he asked of AI.

He raised questions about the time that AI promises to save. If AI saves someone 30 minutes, he said, what happens to that time? Does the person simply work more, or can some of that time be reclaimed for family, prayer, leisure, Mass and relationships?

"There are many aspects of the human person that are not meant to be optimized," he said.

Speakers raised concerns

about the information used to train AI, human bias, intellectual property, the workers involved in labeling data, and the enormous energy required to operate data centers.

AI often contains errors, and makes answers appear deceptively simple and objective, said Megan Levis Scheirer, an assistant professor at the University of Notre Dame's Institute for Social Concerns who studies the ethics of technology.

Skipping the time and struggle inherent to learning can be detrimental to students, she said. It is also dangerous to mistake an AI-simulated conversation for a human relationship.

"True empathy requires the ability to listen," she said.

The gathering gave participants a Catholic framework for AI technology, and the opportunity to share their concerns with diocesan leaders, Judene said.

"The Schools Office gained tremendous insight to help us craft a policy on AI for use in our schools which is research based, grounded in Catholic teaching, and reflective of the real needs of our teachers and students," she said. †



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What gives you ***HOPE*** for the future of the Church?



"Seeing more young people attend Mass."
– Vinny Jackson, St. Mark the Evangelist Parish



"The perpetual adoration chapel at St. Oscar Romero Parish."
– Heather Breerwood, Most Precious Blood of Jesus Parish and St. Oscar Romero Parish



"Children being brought up strong in their faith for Christ and his beautiful church."
– Elizabeth Condon, Sts. Martha and Mary Parish



"We have wonderful young seminarians and deacons that love Jesus and love sharing that love with the parishioners in classes and especially the school kids. We are blessed."
– Carrie Magiera, St. Thomas the Apostle Parish



"I love when Deacon Xavier gives his homily at St. Thomas the Apostle parish, I can listen to him for a long time. He is very personable and really grabs my attention, leaves me thinking and spiritually satisfied. So wonderful to have a young deacon to lead us all to the right path."
– Dee Merritt, St. Thomas the Apostle Parish



"Very much HOPE for the young priests, who through their love of God, their devotion and discernment have committed to the teachings of the gospel. More young and old are coming back to Mass and confession. The future is looking great for the Catholic Church through God's never-ending LOVE."
– Gayle Streib, Archangel Gabriel Parish



"The increasing number of people who are joining OCIA. The Spirit is at work. We need to continue to pray for Holy Mother Church."
– Mike Anitori, Mary, Mother of God Parish



"The return to tradition and reverence across a variety of parishes. My Christian Mothers group at Precious Blood - it is vibrant and has moms from all ages and has created a community for us young moms to connect and lift each other up while passing on the faith and a clear Catholic identity to our children."
– Clare Heintz, Most Precious Blood of Jesus Parish



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