March for Life still on this year in Washington

By Kurt Jensen
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — The 49th annual national March for Life — with a rally on the National Mall and march to the Supreme Court Jan. 21 — will go on as scheduled this year amid a surge in the omicron variant in the nation’s capital.

Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton celebrated a March for Life Mass, Jan. 21, at Christ the King Chapel, Franciscan University of Steubenville.

Hundreds of Franciscan University of Steubenville students, alumni, faculty and staff, including Third Order Regular Franciscan Father Dave Pivonka, president, are taking part in the March for Life.

A busload of students from Bishop John King Mussio Central Junior High School and Catholic Central High School, Steubenville, also are attending the march.

“Along with thousands of other pro-lifers, our presence at the march will show the Supreme Court justices that the people of this country will stand by a court decision to correct a wrong judgment in Roe v. Wade,” said Niklas Koehler, president of Franciscan University’s Students for Life club.

“We come to Washington, D.C., with a plea for elected officials to put aside political divisions and support unborn children and their mothers,” Koehler said.

Franciscan University student involvement in the March for Life dates back to Jan. 22, 1974, when four freshmen at the then-College of Steubenville joined a group of parishioners from St. Joseph the Worker Church in Weirton, West Virginia, at the very first anniversary march held in Washington, D.C.

Outdoor events are not affected by the District of Columbia’s vaccine mandate for indoor gatherings, but participants are asked to wear face masks.

The national Pro-Life Summit, sponsored by Students for Life, is also scheduled to take place Jan. 22 at Washington’s Omni Shoreham Hotel. The event will feature former Vice President Mike Pence as its keynote speaker. Pence has been
March for Life

From Page 1

a frequent March for Life speaker.

The March for Life has canceled its three-day Pro-Life Expo and is combin- ing two planned Capitol Hill 101 panel discussions Jan. 20 into a single event. The organization is still holding its annual Rose Dinner Gala.

Participants who are 12 and older attending the panel discussion or dinner had to provide proof of receiving one COVID-19 vaccination, or, if they sought a medical or religious exemption, they had to have proof of a negative COVID-19 test within 24 hours of the event.

The Pro-Life summit is also requiring proof of COVID-19 vaccination following the city’s regulations. The summit, which in previous years has drawn more than 2,000 high school and college students, notes on its website that it is accepting vaccine exemptions “for a strongly (or sincerely) held religious belief ... in writing or orally” and it is also requiring masks at all events.

March for Life never projects attendance figures, but an informal survey by Catholic News Service of a few groups planning to attend this year’s march indicates that the turnout may approach pre-pandemic levels.

Last year’s march was turned into a virtual event due to the pandemic and the violence at the Capitol on Jan. 6. Only an invited group of 80, joined midway by more than 100 others, marched from the nearby Museum of the Bible to just behind the Supreme Court. It was the first outdoor event in Washington since the Capitol violence, with both the Capitol and Supreme Court surrounded by high fences.

In previous years, total attendance for the rally and march up Constitution Avenue was estimated to be as high as 100,000.

We have nearly 250 students and faculty headed to D.C.,” said Ed Konieczka, assistant director of university ministry at the University of Mary in Bismarck, North Dakota. “That is five full buses – our largest contingent since leading the march in 2017.”

A similar number was estimated by organizers of the bus caravan for the Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend, Indiana. However, the Diocese of Manchester, New Hampshire, decided in December 2021 that the COVID-19 risk was too high to sponsor a bus caravan.

Bevin Kennedy, diocesan secretary for communications, cited “the difficulty of monitoring and mitigating the COVID risk with a group of over 100 participants.”

The march is held annually on a date nearest the anniversary of the Supreme Court’s Roe v. Wade decision, which legal- ized abortion.

The first march was held Jan. 22, 1974, organized by Nellie Gray, a government lawyer, and the Knights of Columbus. The idea was to form a “circle of life” around the Capitol and the Supreme Court. Jeanne Mancini assumed leadership of the March for Life Education and Defense Fund after Gray died in 2012.

This year’s theme is “Equality Begins in the Womb.”

There is considerable anticipation that this year’s march could be the last one with the Roe decision hanging in the balance.

Later this year, the Supreme Court will announce its decision in the Dobbs v. Jackson Women’s Health Organization, an appeal by Mississippi to remove a lower court’s injunction on its law banning most abortions after the 15th week of pregnancy.

If the court rules in favor of the state law, it will effectively overturn Roe v. Wade and send abortion laws back to the states.

New Jersey Catholic bishops decry passage of expansive new abortion law

By EmmaLee Italia

Catholic News Service

TRENTON, N.J. — New Jersey’s Cath- olic bishops unequivocally condemned the Freedom of Reproductive Choice Act, an expansive abortion bill they said was passed with extraordinary haste by the state Senate and General Assembly a day earlier.

Democratic Gov. Phil Murphy, who is Catholic, has publicly committed to signing the bill into law.

A replacement for the rejected Reproductive Freedom Act of October 2020, the new measure was passed by the Senate 23-15 and by the Assembly 46-22 with eight abstentions.

Although abortion has long been legal and accessible in New Jersey, the bill codifies it as constitutionally protected law, making any proposed law to limit or outlaw abortions null. The bill’s proponents have argued that it protects a legal right to abor- tion in the state if the Supreme Court were to overturn its 1973 ruling in Roe v. Wade that legal abortion was constitutional.

“Any law, rule, regulation, ordinance, or order, in effect on or adopted after the effec- tive date of this act, that is determined to have the effect of limiting the constitutional right to freedom of reproductive choice and that does not conform with the provisions and the express or implied purposes of this act, shall be deemed invalid and shall have no force or effect,” the bill states.

In their letter, the bishops expressed their

profound disappointment and deep con- cern about the passage of (the bill), which codifies into state law an individual’s right to an abortion, including late-term abortions. This law departs from the fun- damental Catholic teaching that all life is sacred from conception to natural death.

“Even more distressing is that the legal and ethical calculus that underlies this new legislation absolutely and forthrightly extinguishes the human and moral identity of the unborn child,” the bishops’ statement continued.

“Perhaps the legislators who rushed through this Act in the waning moments of their terms did not want citizens to understand fully its inhuman and lethal consequences.”

In the Diocese of Trenton, Bishop David M. O’Connell responded to the bill’s pas- sage by immediately writing to Murphy urging him not to sign the bill.

“We are not talking about choice or even freedom here,” the bishop wrote. “Abortion is the direct and intentional taking of innocent human life. You and I both know that as the sponsors of this legislation.”

Only five days had passed between the introduction of the companion bills in the Senate and Assembly, known as S. 49/A. 6260, and their passage – and yet the re- sponse of constituents was substantial.

Upon learning of the bill’s release out of com- mittees, the New Jersey Catholic Con- ference, the public policy arm of the state’s bishops, immediately issued an action alert

and information for parish announcements over the Jan. 8-9 weekend urging recipients to contact their legislative representatives to ask for a “no” vote.

The efforts prompted some 11,000 messages to legislators sent through the conference’s web portal. The bishops lent their voices to the outcry via an earlier joint statement posted Jan. 7.

While some changes were made from the original Reproductive Freedom Act, James J. King, executive director of the New Jersey Catholic Conference, emphasized that the new measure “differs little from the RFA and includes provisions that remove all barriers to abortion services.”

He also expressed concern over bill’s introduction and speed, saying: “We were left with little time to offer our input and feedback.”

The bill’s attempt to invalidate laws that would restrict a legal right to abortion – both laws in place and those that might be proposed – make its wide-sweeping reach of great concern to pro-life advocates.

Its restrictions include any future at- tempts to pass laws on parental notifica- tion, bans on late-term abortion and even laws currently upheld as valid by the U.S. Supreme Court.

The bishops pointed to abortion alterna- tives already in place, through the support of Catholic and other social service agen- cies for all stages of life.

“For our part,” they said, “the Catholic Church is committed to broadening and increasing awareness about the abundant resources and programs we offer that include life-affirming health and prenatal care, emotional support, assistance (to a mother) in bearing and raising her child, and basic needs such as housing, food, and clothing to pregnant mothers seeking or considering alternatives to abortion.”

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“A Funeral Service For A Life Remembered”
Bishop blesses columbarium at Mount Calvary

Diocese of Steubenville Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton blesses the columbarium at Mount Calvary Cemetery, Steubenville, Jan. 5. The bishop is shown in the upper photo with Lou DiGregory, superintendent of Mount Calvary Cemetery. The space for 72 cremains was added in the St. Elizabeth section of the cemetery. Scott Yarman, director, Diocese of Steubenville Office of Facilities and Property, said memorial benches will be placed around the columbarium in the spring. (Photos by Orsatti)

Bishop Monforton’s Schedule

January
22 Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 4 p.m., livestreamed and recorded (Triumph of the Cross Parish and diocesan Facebook pages)
23 Mass, Holy Family Church, Steubenville, 9 a.m.
24 Presbyteral Council virtual meeting, 1:30 p.m.
25 Bosco Night, Holy Hour with Eucharistic adoration, Blessed Sacrament Church, Wintersville, 6:30 p.m.
26 USCBB Subcommittee on Aid to Central and Eastern Europe international virtual meeting, 6 a.m.
27 Mass, Franciscan Sisters Third Order Regular of Penance of the Sorrowful Mother motherhouse, Toronto, 7:15 a.m.
28 Mass, Lanman Hall, Bishop John King Mussio Central Elementary students, Steubenville, 9:45 a.m.
29 Mass, St. Lawrence O’Toole Church, Ironton, 5:15 p.m.
30 Mass, St. Ann Church, Chesapeake, 9:30 a.m.
31 Lunch, Ste. Joseph Central High School, Ironton, noon

February
1 Mass, St. John the Baptist Church, Churchtown, 8:30 a.m.
Mass, Holy Family Church, Steubenville, 9:30 a.m.
Mass, Basilica of St. Mary of the Assumption, Marietta, 12:05 p.m.
Mass, St. Mary School, Marietta, 1 p.m.
2 Mass, St. Sylvester Church, Woodfield, 8:30 a.m.
Visit St. Sylvester Central School, Woodfield, 9:15 a.m.
Lunch, St. Benedict School, Cambridge, noon
Mass, St. Mary School, Marietta, 1 p.m.
Mass, St. Mary Church, Martins Ferry, 8:30 a.m.
Visit St. Mary Central School, Martins Ferry, 9:30 a.m.
Mass, St. Mary School, St. Clairsville, noon
Mass, St. Mary Central School, St. Clairsville, 1 p.m.
4 Visit Catholic Central High School and Bishop John King Mussio Central Junior High School, Steubenville, 8 a.m.
Mass, Lanman Hall, Catholic Central High School and Bishop John King Mussio Central Junior High School students, Steubenville, 9:30 a.m.
Continue visit at Catholic Central High and Bishop John King Mussio Central Junior High schools, Steubenville, 10:30 a.m.
Lunch, Catholic Central High School, Steubenville, 11:15 a.m.
Mass, Holy Rosary Church, Steubenville, 4 p.m., livestreamed and recorded (Triumph of the Cross Parish and diocesan Facebook pages)
Demolition reveals a time capsule from former Holy Name High School

By Matthew A. DiCenzo
Staff writer

STEUBENVILLE — A downtown Steubenville building that has served in multiple capacities, owned by the Diocese of Steubenville, has been demolished. Evidence of the property’s beginnings, found in a time capsule, was recovered from the building’s cornerstone.

Prior to the demolition by Vance Vukelic, the property, located at 416 S. Fifth St., served as the Cathedral Apartments, but it was originally built for Holy Name High School.

According to school history, Holy Name High School was founded in 1889 in connection to Holy Name Grade School by Father James J. Hartley, the first pastor of Holy Name Parish, who later became the bishop of Columbus, Ohio. As the school continued to grow, a separate building for the high school became necessary. Property was obtained to build the high school across the street from the elementary school, kitty-corner from Holy Name Church (Cathedral). Father Joseph A. Weigand, later named a monsignor, was pastor at the time.

On March 25, 1924, ground was broken for Holy Name High School. The cornerstone was laid July 13, 1924.

The school was opened in the fall of 1925. Father Edward A. Gilbert, later named a monsignor, became administrator of Holy Name Parish before the school’s opening. He became pastor and was named superintendent of the school. The building was originally built as a one-story, four-room structure. According to school history, Father Gilbert oversaw an expansion of the school, which added several classrooms. The building became a two-story structure.

By 1930, Holy Name High School became a centralized school for the parishes in Steubenville, Mingo Junction and Toronto. The name was changed to Catholic Central High School.

In 1947, plans were made for a new high school in the city’s West End. Construction began for a new school in 1949. On Sept. 10, 1950, the new Catholic Central High School, which continues to serve as the school today, was dedicated. History from the dedication book reads: “In 1931, the total enrollment in Catholic Central was 134; in 1950, the graduating class numbered 171. The registration for the 1950-51 school year is almost 800. As these figures indicate, the need for a new school has been apparent for almost 10 years.”

After the high school left downtown Steubenville, the building became Holy Name Grade School. In 1972, Bishop John King Mussio, Steubenville’s first bishop, closed the grade school because of low enrollment. Students were expected to attend All Saints, Steubenville.

Several years after the grade school closed, Jefferson County Christian School occupied the property until they moved to another location.

In 1994, Jefferson County Community Action Council leased the building from the diocese. The former school became the Cathedral Apartments and people lived there until October 2021, when the building was deemed unsafe for inhabitants.

Demolition began in December 2021 and was completed this month. While demolishing the building, a time capsule was found in the cornerstone.

Items in the time capsule included:
• a yearbook from Holy Name High School, “The Companion Annual 1924”;
• a list of the church committee;
• a booklet written by Father Weigand, titled: “A Simple Course of Religion for Little Ones Preparing for Their First Holy Communion”;
• prayer cards, included by Sister Adelaide, from Holy Name Convent (dated June 25, 1924);
• a church bulletin from July 13, 1924 (the same day the cornerstone was laid);
• a vase in which some of the paper items were kept while in the capsule; and
• a wooden box which included a Holy Name Church souvenir medal, as well as medals with images of Mary, saints, Pope Pius XI and a Jerusalem Pilgrim’s Cross medal.

Items found in a time capsule from 1924 (the box pictured above at right) are displayed after being discovered following the demolition of the former Holy Name High School, 416 S. Fifth St., Steubenville. The property recently served as the Cathedral Apartments and was leased by Jefferson County Community Action Council from 1994-2021. (Photo by DiCenzo)

Among other items, various Catholic medals were found in a time capsule from the demolition of the former Holy Name High School. The medals outside of the box have images of Holy Name Church and Pope Pius XI. (Photo by DiCenzo)
Denying dignity of work is an ‘injustice,’ pope says during audience

By Junno Arocho Esteves
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — St. Joseph’s work as a humble carpenter serves as an example of the dignity of hard work that today is often denied to those in need, Pope Francis said.

“Many young people, many fathers and mothers experience the ordeal of not having a job that allows them to live peacefully; they just live day by day. And how often the search for work becomes so desperate that it drives them to the point of losing all hope and the desire to live,” the pope said Jan. 12 during his weekly general audience.

The value of hard work, he added, is also exploited in today’s world where many people, including undocumented workers, are forced to do grueling tasks for unfair wages, and children, “who should be playing,” instead are “forced to work like an adult.”

“They are our brothers and sisters, those who earn their living this way, with jobs that do not recognize their dignity. Let us think about this; this is happening today in the world!” he said.

Pope Francis was continuing his series of audience talks about St. Joseph, reflecting on his work as a carpenter.

The work of a carpenter or woodworker at that time, the pope explained, involved not only crafting tools or furniture but also building houses. From an economic point of view, “it did not ensure great earnings.”

Pope Francis said the fact that St. Joseph, as well as Jesus, practiced carpentry reminded him “of all the workers in the world, especially those who do grueling work in mines and factories” as well as “those who are exploited through undocumented work” and the “victims of labor,” who are injured or die on the job because of unsafe working conditions.

He also called on Christians to remember those who are without work and who return home every day, unsuccessful in their efforts to “earn their bread.”

“Earning bread is what gives you dignity and if we do not give our people, our men and women, the ability to earn bread, this is a social injustice in that place, in that nation, in that continent,” the pope said. “Leaders must give everyone the ability to earn bread, because this earning gives them dignity.”

Departing from his prepared remarks, the pope called for a moment of silent prayer for those who lost their jobs during the pandemic and for those who, “crushed by an unbearable burden, reached the point of taking their own lives.”

“I would like to remember each of them and their families today. Let us take a moment of silence, remembering these men, these women, who are desperate because they cannot find work,” the pope said before bowing his head in prayer.

Pope Francis called on those present to think about what they can do “to recover the value of work” and what the church can do “so that work can be redeemed from the logic of mere profit and can be experienced as a fundamental right and duty of the person, which expresses and increases his or her dignity.”

He concluded his talk with a prayer to St. Joseph recited by St. Paul VI in 1969, asking for the saint’s intercession to “protect workers in their hard, daily existence” and to defend “them from discouragement.”

Pope Francis holds a record under his arm as he leaves the Stereo Sound record shop in Rome Jan. 11. The pope made a surprise visit to the music store he used to go to as a cardinal, receiving a record of classical music as a gift from the thrilled shop owner. (CNS photo/Javier Martinez-Brocal, Rome Reports)
The Writings of Pope John Paul II

By Diocese of Steubenville
Bishop Emeritus Gilbert I. Sheldon

Note: This article was originally published in the Dec. 31, 2004, edition of The Steubenville Register.

Pope John Paul II is without question one of the most prolific of papal writers. He produced nearly 40 major documents, including apostolic constitutions, encyclicals and apostolic exhortations. This is not to mention his numerous letters. Generally speaking, the apostolic constitution (or papal bull) is the most authoritative. Next comes the encyclical, which is a circular letter intended to make the rounds within the church, and therefore is universal in its address. Apostolic letters, on the other hand, are addressed to specific persons or groups, such as the annual letter that he sent to priests on Holy Thursday.

The pope can, we know, use a document such as an apostolic constitution or papal bull to issue an “ex cathedra” statement. This is one issued under his supreme teaching authority and which bears the charism of infallibility. The last such document to be issued was the “Apostolic Constitution of Pope Pius XII” on Nov. 1, 1950, “Munificentissimus Deus,” which proclaimed the dogma of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. An “ex cathedra” statement is indicated by the words that the pope uses, showing his intent to speak “ex cathedra.” After giving the historical, scriptural and theological reasons for the doctrine, Pius XII declared in the closing paragraphs of “Munificentissimus Deus” “...by the authority of Our Lord Jesus Christ, of the blessed apostles Peter and Paul, and by our own authority, we pronounce, declare and define...”

Note that he did not say explicitly that the Blessed Mother actually died, but that she “completed the course of her earthly life, was assumed body and soul into heavenly glory.”

Such infallible declarations are rare. One obvious reason is that the doctrine of papal infallibility was not promulgated until the First Vatican Council (1869-70). That does not mean that, prior to Vatican I, popes were not infallible. They always were. But, until that fact was proclaimed as official church doctrine, we can assume that most popes would hesitate to exercise it in so explicit a way. An exception is Pope Pius IX, who, on Dec. 8, 1854, proclaimed the dogma of the Immaculate Conception in his papal bull, “Ineffabilis Deus.” This was more than 20 years before the promulgation of the doctrine of papal infallibility. That document set the pattern for future exercises of papal infallibility in this form by invoking the name of Our Lord, the apostles Peter and Paul (reform the pope succeeds as bishop of Rome), and his own authority.

COMING BACK to Pope John Paul II, he did not exercise his “ex cathedra” teaching authority in this fashion. He reaffirmed and explained a great deal of Catholic doctrine that is already in possession as the constant and universal teaching of the church. As such, it is part of that body of doctrine that falls under the ordinary teaching authority of the church and also shares the charism of infallibility.

This is the case when a papal document speaks as one with the bishops of the world. This was proclaimed by the First Vatican Council and reiterated by Vatican II. The “Constitution On the Church” (“Lumen Gentium”) of Vatican II spells it out thus: “Although the individual bishops do not enjoy the prerogative of infallibility, they nevertheless proclaim Christ’s doctrine infallibly whenever, even though dispersed throughout the world, but still maintaining the bond of communion among themselves and with the successor of Peter, and authentically teaching matters of faith and morals, they are in agreement on one position as definitively to be held” (No. 25).

Note that several criteria are suggested for this expression of the ordinary magisterium of the church: The bishops are united both with each other and with their head, the pope; the subject is a matter of faith or morals; they are in agreement; and it is to be held definitively as such.

While this statement refers primarily to bishops in general, it applies also to the Holy Father when he speaks in a manner and on a subject that fulfills these criteria. All of his statements do not meet these criteria, nor are they so intended. Some papal documents are of a hortatory nature, urging a deepening of spirituality: some offer advice and opinions on matters that are not strictly those of faith or morals, e.g., social and economic matters, etc.

In such cases the pope nevertheless brings to the subject the 2,000-year-old wisdom of the church.

Some of the writings of John Paul II are substantial in size, attesting to the teaching character of most of his work. Whereas, in the past, the usual papal document was the size of a pamphlet, a number of the pope’s are the size of a small book. We might point specifically to “Pastores Dabo Vobis,” his apostolic exhortation “On the Formation of Priests” (1992), which runs to 224 pages in the Vatican Library Edition.

The First of John Paul II’s encyclicals was “Redemptor Hominis,” 1979, written within a year of his election to the papacy. He issued a continuous series of documents, most of which have become a major theological reference source.

Our next series of articles will dive into the writings of Pope John Paul II. We will begin not with a specific document, but with a series of talks he delivered as part of his general audiences between September 1979 and November 1984. These talks explored the theme of the meaning of marriage and human sexuality. They were collected and published under the title “Theology of the Body, Human Love in the Divine Plan” (St. Paul Books and Media, Boston, 1997).

This topic has been selected because of the influence of the so-called sexual revolution in our time and its prevailing influence in such areas of life as education, entertainment, advertising and the news media.

As we begin this new series after the first of the year, may I wish all of you a blessed and prosperous new year.

Give’em Heck

By Father Jonas A. Shell

One of the more disagreeable doctrines of the church is the reality of eternal damnation. It is obviously scary to think that one’s immortal soul can be forever separated from the vision of God and subject to what the Scriptures call the fires of hell. The place where there is wailing, weeping and gnashing of teeth. The place where the worm does not die. The place where the devil and his fallen angels dwell in opposition to God and his holy ones. No one should want to go there. And, why would God consign anyone to this literally God-forsaken place? Many Catholics and non-Catholics cannot comprehend nor want to believe in this place until you speak of Hitler or someone else they may know who has done something that seems so hideous and deserving of punishment that they then think for certain that the wicked person must be consigned to that God-forsaken place. For each person personally and for their loved ones, the reality of hell is so disagreeable that we’d rather it not be true, but for those we may despise because of their actions in life, it seems a just reward.

Whether it be agreeable to us or not, it is a doctrine of the church that must be believed. It is a subject that is strongly asserted in the later books of the Old Testament such as Daniel, Isaiah, Judith and Wisdom. It is a subject to which Our Lord turns to in the Gospels quite often with vivid and frightening language. It is found in the writings of Sts. Peter, Paul and John. This is to say that it is clearly the teaching of divine revelation. It is threatening and scary, but it is meant to awaken us to the horrible reality that we can freely choose by our actions to separate ourselves from the love of God in an irrevocable manner. The first paragraph on hell in the Catechism of the Catholic Church says the following: “We cannot be united with God unless we freely choose to love him. But, we cannot love God if we sin gravely against him, against our neighbor or against ourselves. ‘He who does not love remains in death. Anyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him’ (1 Jn 3:14-15).

Our Lord warns us that we shall be separated from him if we fail to meet the serious needs of the poor and the little ones who are his brethren (see, Matthew, Chapter 25, Verses 31-46). To die in mortal sin without repenting and accepting God’s merciful love means remaining in —
To Respect Human Life

By Diocese of Steubenville
Bishop Jeffrey M. Monforton

“And the king said to them in reply, ‘Amen I say to you, whatever you did for one of these least brothers of mine you did for me’” (Mt 25:40).

A Call to Action

The above quote from Jesus defines who we are as brothers and sisters created in God’s image and likeness. God has entrusted us with one another, all of us, and we share the common dignity as fellow members of the human family. Acts of mercy shape our very ability to share the common dignity as fellow members of the God has entrusted us with one another, all of us, and

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God’s mercy defines who we are and, in fact, we are to live out that very mercy with all whom we encounter. As fellow believers, we are charged to address the contemporary issues of abortion, concern for persons with disabilities, end of life issues and the death penalty, to name a few. Pope Francis warns us of being seduced by a “throwaway culture” and he underscores the fact this is not limited to material resources, but to human beings as well. We cannot permit ourselves to be governed by a utilitarian mindset in which one’s dignity is defined by one’s usefulness.

This mercy extends to all without prejudice: from the couple suffering after an abortion, to a couple hoping to conceive a child, to all who find themselves in deep despair or on the peripheries of our culture. Our compassion and love extend to each and every one of our sisters and brothers. As we approach the sad anniversary of Roe v. Wade, we can be protagonists in this story through prayer. A truly progressive and civilized society is one that shares mercy and compassion to all. Our nation’s integrity is measured by how it protects the most vulnerable.

National Vigil and March for Life

While not physically being able to attend the annual March for Life in Washington, D.C., I will closely follow the prayer vigil and the march at our nation’s capitol Jan. 20-21. For my part, I am grateful to Franciscan University of Steubenville for having me celebrate Mass on campus on the 21st at 12:05 p.m.

Of course, we are all too aware of the troubling news concerning certain “so-called” healthcare organizations which promote the abortion of our unborn, aided by federal funds. Nevertheless, you and I must remain undaunted in promoting the culture of life, even in the midst of this culture of death. Only through our common effort may we successfully reorientate our nation’s moral GPS to a consistent life ethic that respects no one.

A Question of Justice and Mercy

Please join me in prayer as we support our various local pro-life organizations, both locally and nationally. May you and I, through both word and action, promote the dignity of all human life in order that our beloved nation can truly be a progressive and civilized society is one that shares mercy and compassion to all. Our nation’s integrity is measured by how it protects the most vulnerable.

our hope in God’s mercy is the very foundation by which

we live our lives as a people worthy of forgiveness and redemption in Jesus’ eyes. No one should be excluded from the mercy of God. You and I are instruments not just of peace, but of mercy as well. Our Lord is perfectly clear in his words that we are to imitate God’s mercy for us in our conduct toward others. You and I can be instruments of his justice, mercy and peace as we respect all human life.

Stay holy; stay healthy; stay safe.

The Ten Commandments’ and Our Pathetic Attention Span

By Bishop Robert Barron

I like to watch old movies. Over the past several months, I’ve watched (or re-visited) a number of Alfred Hitchcock thrillers, some screwball comedies from the 30s and 40s, and a couple of film-noir classics. Last week, over the course of three evenings, I managed to get through the three hours and 40 minutes (yes, you read that correctly) of the Charlton Heston version of “The Ten Commandments” from 1956. With delight, I took in the still marvelous technicolor, the over-the-top costumes, the wonderfully corny faux-Shakespearean dialogue and the hammy acting that is, one might say, so bad that it’s good. But, what especially struck me was the sheer length of the film. Knowing that it required a rather extraordinary act of attention on the part of its audience, it is astonishing to remember that it was wildly popular, easily the most successful movie of its time. It is estimated that, adjusted for inflation, it earned a box office of roughly two billion dollars. Would moviegoers today, I wondered, ever be able to muster the patience required to make a film like “The Ten Commandments” equally popular today? I think the question answers itself.

The coming together of daunting length and popularity then put me in mind of a number of other examples of this combination from cultural history. In the 19th-century, the novels of Charles Dickens were so sought after that ordinary Londoners waited in long lines for chapters as they were published in serial form. And, let’s face it: not a lot happens in Dickens novels, by which I mean very few things blow up, there are no alien invasions; no snappy one-liners uttered by the heroes before they blow away the bad guys. For the most part, they consist of lengthy conversations among fascinating and quirky characters. Much the same can be said of the novels and stories of (Fyodor) Dostoevsky. Though there is indeed a murder and a police investigation at the heart of the plot of “The Brothers Karamazov,” for the vast majority of that famous novel, Dostoevsky arranges various characters in drawing rooms for pages and pages and pages of dialogue on matters political, cultural and religious. During that same period, Abraham Lincoln and Stephen Douglas engaged in a series of debates on the vexed issue of slavery in America. They spoke for hours at a time – and in an intellectually elevated manner. If you doubt me, look up the texts online. Their audiences were not cultural elites or students of political philosophy, but rather ordinary Illinois farmers, who stood in the mud, gave their full attention and strained to hear the orators’ unamplified voices. Could you ever begin to imagine an American crowd today willing to stand for a comparable length of time and listen to complex presentations on public policy – and for that matter, could you imagine any American politician willing or able to speak at Lincolnian length and depth? Once again, the questions answer themselves.

Why this look back at modes and styles of communication from another age? Because by contrast, ours seem so impoverished! I certainly understand the value of social media and I readily use them in my evangelical work, but at the same time, I am acutely aware of how they have lessened our attention span and capacity for sophisticated conversation and real advance toward the truth. Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and especially Twitter specialize in flashy headlines, misleading titles, simplistic characterizations of an opponent’s position, sound bites in place of arguments and mean-spirited rhetoric. Just dip into the comment boxes on any of these sites, and you’ll immediately see what I mean. A favorite technique on social media is to take a phrase or even a single word of a person’s argument, wrench it out of context, give it the worst possible interpretation and then splash one’s outrage all over the internet. Everything has to be fast, easily digested, simple to understand, black and white – because we have to get clicks on our site, and it’s a dog-eat-dog world. What worries me is that an entire generation has come of age conditioned by this mode of communication and hence is largely incapable of summoning the patience and attention required for intelligent engagement of complex issues. I noticed this, by the way, in my nearly 20 years of teaching in the seminary. Over those two decades, it became increasingly difficult to get my students to read, say, a hundred pages of St. Augustine’s “Confessions” or of Plato’s “Republic.” Especially in more recent years, they would say, “Father, I just can’t concentrate that long.” Well, the auditors of the Lincoln-Douglas debates could, and so could the readers of Dickens, and so even could those who sat through “The Ten Commandments” 60-some years ago.

So, as not to end on a down note, permit me to draw your attention to what I consider a real sign of hope. In just the last couple of years, there has been a trend in the direction of long-form podcasts that are attracting huge audiences of young people. Joe Rogan, who hosts one of the most...
The Common Thread

By Third Order Regular Franciscan Father Dave Pivonka

I love baseball and the film “Field of Dreams” (1989). My favorite scene may be where James Earl Jones’ character says, “The one constant through all the years, Ray, has been baseball. America ... has been erased like a blackboard, rebuilt and erased again. But, baseball has marked the time ... Oh, people will come, Ray. (If you build it) people will most definitely come.”

My thoughts have turned to this film and this scene as I’ve read the history of Franciscan University of Steubenville, which marked 75 years since its founding on Dec. 10.

“Will anyone come?” had to be a big question for the founders of the College of Steubenville in 1946. After all, it’s one thing to build a fictional ballpark in the middle of an Iowa cornfield, but quite another to build a Catholic college in an Ohio steel town 18 months after the end of World War II – with no money, no classrooms, no professors.

But, people did come – 258 students and 10 professors who doubled as administrators at the start. Today, they still come, in numbers larger than ever, to the now internationally well-known Franciscan University of Steubenville. The secret to this ongoing success comes from one constant, one common thread, through all the ups and downs of the past 75 years.

The priests and brothers of the Franciscan Third Order Regular who founded the college believed the school would flourish if they focused on what really mattered (not baseball, though I was happy to learn the College did have a baseball team by 1946). For them, that one essential thing was care for the student’s soul.

Yes, they wanted to create an institution that would equip young men and women for the growing workforce post-WWII.

Give’em Heck

From Page 6

separated from him for ever by our own free choice. This state of definitive self-exclusion from communion with God and the blessed is called ‘hell’” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraph 1033).

Being consigned to hell is not something Our Lord wishes for any of us, but human freedom allows for us to make the radical choice to be separated from God by our actions. Even amidst the bad decisions we make, the Lord gives us hope until the last hour of life as is exemplified by Jesus’ interactions with the “good thief” on the cross. And, as the catechism says, “for this (to go to hell), a wilful turning away from God (a mortal sin) is necessary, and persistence in it until the end” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Paragraph 1037).

Hell is not God’s desire for us, but it is a radical choice that any of us can make by denying the Lord access to our hearts. Considering this radical choice we can all make, it is important to warn others of the possibility, but we must also beware not to take upon ourselves the yoke of the eternal judge. We can judge another’s actions to be a grave moral offense, but we are not the omnipotent judge that determines someone’s eternal outcome. “There is but one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and destroy. But, who are you that you judge your neighbor?” (Jas 4:12).

Hell is not the full Gospel message, nor the end to which we are called, but it is an important warning to each of us. The fear of damnation can be salvific, but it is not the fullness to which Our Lord calls us. “Perfect love drives out all fear” (see, 1 John, Chapter 4, Verse 18). This doubly motivating aspect is noted every time we sin, we are always making ourselves the center of the universe, a place that is proper to God alone. To do something for the sake of avoiding suffering is not a pure and perfect motivation, but the Lord does not ask us to be pure and perfect before he loves and helps us. He allows our fearful selfish motivations to lead us toward him. We should certainly have a greater focus on the reality of God’s love, but even the sound bites and superficial pseudo-intellectualism. To encourage this trend, I would like to invite all of you to use much less social media – and maybe pick up “The Brothers Karamazov.”

From Page 7

popular shows in the country, speaks to his guests for upwards of three hours, and he gets millions of views. In the past year, I have appeared on two podcasts with Jordan Peterson, each one in excess of two hours and featuring pretty high-level discourse. The first one has reached just shy of one million views, and the second, published three weeks ago, has already surpassed five hundred thousand views.

Perhaps we’re turning a corner. Perhaps young people have tired of vituperative reality of hell must be made known for mercy’s sake. So every so often, it’s a good thing to give’em heck.

Father Shell is a Diocese of Steubenville priest and the pastor of Our Lady of Mercy Parish, Carrollton, and St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception Parish, Morges.

The Ten Commandments’ —

Bishop Barron is an auxiliary bishop of the Archdiocese of Los Angeles. He is the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries, headquartered in Des Plaines, Illinois. A nonprofit global media apostolate, additional information is available at www.wordonfire.org.
Humility and trust: Finding the keys and path to the synodal journey

By Cindy Wooden
Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — As many Catholics try to understand what Pope Francis might mean by a “synodal church,” he highlighted some of the essential characteristics — especially humility and trust — in homilies and speeches over Christmas and early in the new year.

Preaching on the feast of the Epiphany, Jan. 6, for example, he told Catholics that they need to learn from the Magi not to be afraid to take a new path when the Holy Spirit inspires them to do so.

“This is also one of the tasks of the synod: to journey together and to listen to one another, so that the Spirit can suggest to us new ways and paths to bring the Gospel to the hearts of those who are distant, indifferent or without hope, yet continue to seek what the Magi found: ‘a great joy.’”

Xaviere Missionary Sister Nathalie Becquart, undersecretary of the Synod of Bishops, told Catholic News Service Jan. 5, “I see seeds of synodality everywhere growing.”

Her shorthand explanation of synodality is “coming from the ‘I’ to the ‘us.’”

Synodality means recognizing that being a Christian is being part of a community with shared gifts and responsibilities, called to listen to the way the Holy Spirit is inspiring each of the baptized and collaborating to find even more effective means of sharing the Gospel, she said. “It is to highlight that what we have in common through baptism is more important than all our differences of status, age, vocation or roles.”

That recognition, though, is impossible without the virtue of humility, as Pope Francis emphasized in his speech to leaders of the Roman Curia Dec. 23.

“Humility alone can enable us to encounter and listen, to dialogue and discern, to pray together,” the pope told them. “If we remain enclosed in our own convictions and experiences, the hard shell of our own thoughts and feelings, it will be difficult to be open to that experience of the Spirit, which, as the Apostle (Paul) says, is born of the conviction that we are all children of ‘one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.’”

Pope Francis kicked off the process for the Synod of Bishops in October, and while dioceses around the world were asked to begin local listening sessions shortly thereafter, the process is expected to move into high gear in 2022.

While Catholic media in the United States, for example, have written much about the show start of the process in many dioceses, “more than 50% of the dioceses in the U.S. have named coordinators and are beginning the listening sessions, Sister Becquart said.

Those sessions, she said, are the heart of the synod, which is no longer an “event” celebrated when a representative group of bishops meet for three weeks in Rome but is a process that begins with local groups of Catholics praying, sharing and discerning together.

While it may be uncomfortable, listening to each other cannot be fruitful without an acknowledgment of one’s own limitations and biases — humility, she said.

Bishops, pastors and others with a leadership role in the church are called to have a broader vision, which requires even greater humility and patience in listening to all and being willing to consider other points of view and other experiences, Sister Becquart said.

“Humility isn’t about knowledge, it’s about living like Christ,” she said, which is why Pope Francis insists so much on listening to the poor and to the people who are on the “periphery” of social, economic and even ecclesial power structures.

Another thing the pope said Jan. 1, the feast of Mary, Mother of God, was that the church needs “mothers, women who look at the world not to exploit it, but so that it can have life. Women who, seeing with the heart, can combine dreams and aspirations with concrete reality, without drifting into abstraction and sterile pragmatism.”

Sister Becquart said she does not believe it is possible to say, “Women are like this; men are like that, so women can bring this to the church.”

“The challenge is to be the church with men and women together,” she said.

And, she said, it cannot be denied that in many parts of the world and the church, “the experience of women is mainly of being dominated by men,” but despite or because of that, they also tend to have “a capacity of resilience.”

In her personal experience and in her research, Sister Becquart said, “synodality is a path of reconciliation, of healing,” including between men and women or between clergy and laypeople.

The Xaviere Missionary knows the symbolic power of a woman having a vote at a Catholic Synod of Bishops, something she is expected to have as undersecretary of the synod, but she insisted “what is more important is to have the voices of women at every stage” of the process, and not just its final deliberations.

Pope, cardinal offer condolences to victims of Bronx fire that killed 17

By Mark Pattison
Catholic News Service

WASHINGTON — Pope Francis issued condolences to families of those killed in an Jan. 9 apartment building blaze in the Bronx that killed 17 people, including eight children.

In a Jan. 10 telegram to Cardinal Timothy M. Dolan of New York, the archdiocese where the apartment building is located, Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Pietro Parolin said: “His Holiness Pope Francis was saddened to learn of the recent devastating fire in the Bronx in which a number of children lost their lives.”

“In offering heartfelt condolences and the assurance of his spiritual closeness to those affected by this tragedy, he entrusts the victims and their families to the merciful love of almighty God and invokes upon all consolation and strength in the Lord,” the telegram said.

The five-alarm fire injured more than 60 others, with dozens going to hospitals in critical condition. More than 200 firefighters responded to the blaze in the 19-story building.

Cardinal Dolan visited the site Jan. 10 and tweeted: “It doesn’t get worse than what we witnessed in New York yesterday at that tragic fire in the Bronx. I’m visiting the scene with the fire companies that responded so that I might see how the church can assist. Thank God for the @FDNY.”

St. Simon Stock-St. Joseph Parish, which serves the Bronx neighborhood where the apartment building is located, was celebrating a special Mass the evening of Jan. 10 for the deceased and all affected by the tragedy.

Carmelite Father Michael Kissane, parish pastor, reported the church is located one block from the apartment building.

The apartment complex was home to a large number of Gambian immigrants, many of whom are Muslims. Only one registered family from the parish lived in the building — and that family was displaced because of the fire.

An early indication was that a space heater may have set off the fire in the 120-unit building. New York City Fire Commissioner Louis Nigro said victims were found “on every floor, in stairways.”

The building, Twin Parks North West, was built in 1972. One person who escaped the fire said it had interior stairways, but no exterior escape.

It was the second U.S. apartment fire in less than a week that claimed double-digit casualties. A dozen fatalities were reported from a Philadelphia apartment fire Jan. 5, eight of them children.
Postulant visits St. Benedict’s
Katie Logan, a postulant with the Franciscan Sisters of Christian Charity, Manitowoc, Wisconsin, pictured in the back row, at right, joins Franciscan Sister of Christian Charity Mariadele Jacobs, a religion teacher at St. Benedict School, Cambridge, back row, third from left, and second-grade students as they practice for Mass at St. Benedict Church, Cambridge. The sisters at St. Benedict Convent hosted Logan, a native of Colorado Springs, for a week. She participated in activities with the sisters at the convent, school and in parish ministry for Christ Our Light Parish. (Photo provided by Sister Sharon Paul)

Collection for Church in Latin America is set for Jan. 22-23 in diocese
WASHINGTON — On the weekend of Jan. 22-23, Catholics throughout the Diocese of Steubenville and the United States have an opportunity to help the church’s formation of missionary disciples in Central and South America and the Caribbean islands by giving to the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops’ annual Collection for the Church in Latin America.

“The Collection for the Church in Latin America makes a significant impact in the lives of our brothers and sisters in Latin America,” said Bishop Octavio Cisneros, auxiliary bishop emeritus of Brooklyn and chairman of the USCCB Subcommittee on Latin America.

Parishioners are invited to be part of this mission by supporting the collection at Mass or through parish online giving platforms. #GiveCatholicTogether also accepts funds in support of the Church in Latin America.

In 2020, in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Collection for the Church in Latin America distributed more than $5.6 million among 334 ministries in Mexico, Central and South America and the Caribbean. About $1.5 million provided formation for clergy, religious and lay leaders; and $3.9 million supported evangelization, catechesis, marriage and family ministry, pro-life work, youth ministry, prison ministry and other pastoral outreach. The collection also funds the creation and implementation of safe environment/child protection programs in the Latin American dioceses that are supported by the fund.

“Pope Francis has called us to share the love and the joy of the Gospel with those who are poor, suffering or marginalized. He knows first-hand that the Collection for the Church in Latin America accomplishes this. When he was archbishop of Buenos Aires, Argentina, contributions to this collection helped to support his ministry to the people in the city’s poorest neighborhoods,” Bishop Cisneros said.

“When that collection basket comes around, I know that it’s easy to think that a small gift won’t make a difference. But, even $5 can make a multi-million-dollar impact as it is combined with gifts of other Catholics. No matter how small the gift, God uses it to make a life-changing difference for those whom Jesus called ‘the least’ of his sisters and brothers.”

For more information, visit www.usccb.org/committees/church-latin-america.

Marriage preparation set for March 12
ST. CLAIRSVILLE — A marriage preparation workshop will take place from 9 a.m.-3:30 p.m., March 12, at St. Mary Church Marian Hall, St. Clairsville.

The workshop will cover the following topics: communication, marriage as a sacrament, finances, sexuality and natural family planning.

Couples’ engagements will be blessed at the end of the workshop and they will receive a certificate of completion.

The workshop fulfills the requirements for marriage in the Diocese of Steubenville.

For additional information, telephone St. Mary Parish Office at (740) 695-9993.

Obituaries
Ralph “Bennie” B. Blankenship, 85, Ironton, St. Joseph, Jan. 9.
John D. Corn Sr., 89, Ironton, St. Joseph, Nov. 5.
Rebecca S. Nunley Dalton, 62, Ironton, St. Lawrence O’Toole, Nov. 17.
Nick D’Annibale, 98, Steubenville, Holy Family, Jan. 15.
Filomena DiStefano, 86, Steubenville, Holy Family, Jan. 18.
Charles “Turk” V. Donohue, 81, Ironton, St. Joseph, Jan. 4.
Agnes M. Ferrelli, 96, Triumph of the Cross, Steubenville, Jan. 7.
MaryAnn Hagerty, 83, Triumph of the Cross, Steubenville, Dec. 28.
James A. Holmes, 59, Ironton, St. Joseph, Nov. 9.
Everett R. King Jr., 68, Gallipolis, St. Louis, Oct. 16.
Paul P. Kopolajo, 90, Triumph of the Cross, Steubenville, Jan. 11.
Margot F. Little, infant, Athens, Christ the King University Parish, Jan. 7.
Michael J. Marker Sr., 84, Steubenville, Holy Family, Dec. 31.
Anita K. Merry, 65, Bidwell, St. Louis, Oct. 20.
John G. Riley, 54, Ironton, St. Lawrence O’Toole, Nov. 11.
Alvera Robinson, 98, Gallipolis, St. Louis, Sept. 23.
Betty C. Ruggieri, 85, Triumph of the Cross, Steubenville, Jan. 3.
Catherine Sarsella, 75, Salineville, Ohio, Our Lady of Mercy, Carrollton, Jan. 11.
Helen E. Traversa, 84, Triumph of the Cross, Steubenville, Jan. 8.
William “Butch” L. Wilson, 75, Ironton, St. Mary, Pine Grove, Dec. 22.
Seminarians in Indiana chop wood to help rural neighbors stay warm

By Sean Gallagher
Catholic News Service

INDIANAPOLIS — What does a seminarian do to prepare for priestly ministry?


But, that’s exactly what happens at St. Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad. For more than 40 years, the seminarians have volunteered in what is now called Project Warm, which provides firewood to people in need in Indiana.

They collect wood from donors in the area, split it up on the grounds of the seminary and then deliver it to people who need it to keep their homes warm.

In the process, the seminarians build up fraternity among themselves, gain experience in serving those in need and learn about the often-hidden challenge of rural poverty – all things that will serve them well when they begin service as priests in their home dioceses. “It’s good pastoral formation,” said Seminarian Isaac Siefker, a member of St. John the Apostle Parish in Bloomington. “I would say I get almost as much out of this volunteer work as I do out of my assigned ministry. I’ve enjoyed the work, I love the manual labor. Even more than that, I love going to people’s houses when we deliver wood.”

Seminarian Tyler Huber, a member of St. Mary-of-the-Knobs Parish in Floyd Knobs, said he recognizes how much the project has helped him serve the deeper needs of those who ask for their help. “Yes, they’re struggling with poverty,” he said. “They’re needing resources, and we’re helping them in that way. But, so many of them can just use someone to be present to them. That’s one of my favorite pieces to it,” he told The Criterion, archdiocesan newspaper of Indianapolis.

Over the course of an academic year, typically more than half the seminarians volunteer for Project Warm in various ways either in collecting wood, chopping it, or delivering it. They receive training for their work and follow safety protocols.

The work is second nature for Eli Yandow, a seminarian for the Diocese of Burlington, Vermont, who grew up on a dairy farm just south of the Canadian border. “It felt like being at home out chopping wood,” said Yandow, the project’s general manager this year.

In overseeing all the work of the project, Yandow, in his fourth year of formation, can see how it benefits the seminarians, especially in what he calls the “brotherhood of the wood lot crew.”

In addition to spending time splitting wood, the seminarians also get together for fellowship during a monthly bonfire. They also are intentional about turning their work into prayer which includes praying that that person is going to have heat, “That is huge.”

That person is going to have heat, “That’s something Shephard knows. As she put it: “We’re so used to doing things for ourselves that it’s hard to ask for help. We’re country.”

Yandow appreciates this pride, but he also values the physical need the seminarians are meeting. “We dump a load of wood, and we know that that person is going to have heat,” he said, adding that he and fellow seminarians also see the connection between serving people’s physical and spiritual needs.

“We also need to be able, in every aspect of our life, to be the presence of Jesus Christ,” he said.

Newborn abandonment case prompts renewed emphasis on ‘safe havens’

By Tom Tracy
Catholic News Service

HOBBES, N.M. — In 20 years of community organizing, resulting in more than 300 cases of newborns saved from infant abandonment, Floridian Nick Silverio has never actually witnessed a criminal child abandonment in progress.

Until, that is, a group of people looking through a dumpster in New Mexico Jan. 7 discovered a newborn infant boy in Hobbes near the Texas border still alive and reportedly wrapped in a dirty blanket with its umbilical cord still attached.

Surveillance video taken outside near the dumpster and recently aired on national news led police to the arrest of a teen mother, showing the moments Alexis Avila, 18, allegedly tossed a black garbage bag into the dumpster.

Police have charged the woman, who has confessed to the crime, with attempted murder and child abuse.

Avila reportedly told police she gave birth to the boy in her parents’ bathroom earlier in the day and panicked. She allegedly stuffed the baby inside two plastic bags, one with other trash, and put it in the dumpster.

“She got out of the car very slowly and threw the baby in like you would throw out the trash – we have never seen that happen (on video),” said Silverio, a former business owner who is the founder of A Safe Haven For Newborns near Miami.

A network of volunteers, hospitals and fire departments in Florida works to save infants from the dangers of abandonment and an almost certain death, A Safe Haven for Newborns operates a 24/7 hotline that connects mothers in crisis around the U.S. with safe and legal options for placing their children in an adoptive home.

Many state laws allow mothers – or fathers – to take an unharmed newborn up to 7 days old to a designated safe haven drop-off location such as a local hospital instead of leaving them somewhere else or doing something they will later regret.

“It was horrific, it breaks your heart to see the callousness of someone abandon a life and destroying her own – her life is over now basically,” Silverio said of the New Mexico incident.

If the teen had known about a safe haven, “would she have exercised that option?” he wondered.

If she did know of it, hopefully she would have sought help, he added. “I don’t know what gets into the mind of someone like that; it seems they are not connected to society and do they know that there are options for such a situation.”

“I’ve talked to different people in the last few days who’ve said, ‘That’s horrible’ and ‘What a horrible person,’” he told Catholic News Service, “but the idea is to take something negative and say, ‘How are we going to fix this and what are going to do about it?’”

Silverio points out that in his home state of Florida, where there is now a strong safe haven network of community agencies, including state law enforcement, fire and rescue personnel, and hospitals ready to step in and prevent child abandonment, there hasn’t been a single illegal child abandonment in the past two years.

Like other states, New Mexico has a safe haven law, which allows parents to leave a baby younger than 90 days at a safe location without criminal consequences.

State legislatures around the nation began to pass these laws in the early 2000s in response to reports of gruesome baby killings and abandonments, which received copious media attention.

Avilla, the New Mexico mother, reportedly told detectives that she was not aware that she was pregnant until Jan. 6 when she sought medical attention for abdominal pain and the next day unexpectedly gave birth. “It is not like, ‘Oh, my gosh, we have had (hotline) calls from women as old as 41,” said Silverio, who is a member of Christ the King Parish in Perrine, Florida, as well as the Knights of Columbus and the Order of St. Lazarus of Jerusalem, known as the Lazarists.

Following her wife’s death in 2000, Silverio saw a magazine article about child abandonment worldwide and discerned it was God suggesting a new purpose for the remainder of his life.

Silverio said A Safe Haven for Newborns has a strong presence on social media where teen mothers are likely to find them.

“We are reaching out in every way we can,” Silverio said.

“When a baby is left with a safe haven,” he added, “they grow up and discover there are mothers who loved them enough to provide a family for them.”
Bishop Conlon writes about his ‘humble, always faithful’ predecessor

By Bishop Emeritus R. Daniel Conlon

In the Jan. 7 issue of The Steubenville Register, Bishop Gilbert Sheldon announced that he was discontinuing his regular column in the paper. However, he is not giving up. The decision, he made clear, belongs to God, in the form of Adult Macular Degeneration. Bishop Sheldon’s sentiment is so much in keeping with members of the Greatest Generation: always striving, always faithful.

This development prompted me to put down a few words. He might as well see them, even through his impaired eyes, rather than have them wait until God makes the final decision in his regard.

Bishop Sheldon was my predecessor as bishop of Steubenville. When I came to Steubenville in 2002, he was 75 years old and had been a bishop for 26 years, 16 as an auxiliary in Cleveland and 10 as diocesan bishop in Steubenville. I was brand new. While I had some experience in diocesan administration and as a parish pastor, I felt like a toddler on rubbery legs.

As I found my way in a new job and a new diocese, Bishop Sheldon never interfered, never criticized, never raised his eyebrows as if to say, “Now what’s he up to?” We always had a friendly, easy relationship. I always felt supported by him. One immediate issue that arises with a change of bishops is where the new bishop will reside. Steubenville’s first bishop, John Mussio, purchased a home on the hill overlooking the Ohio River and the city’s downtown. Bishop Sheldon, when he chose to live with a small community of religious brothers, also up on the hill, but not in the Mussio house. So, there was no official episcopal residence. Bishop Sheldon offered me his place with the brothers, which was clearly a great sacrifice – one involving far more than physical space. As much as I was grateful, I also knew he did it out of perspective of reacting, of responding, of being the church to the local community, not a paternalistic ministry.

Bishop Sheldon’s faithfulness extends to the decisions he made when faced with difficulties and obstacles. Instead, he always places himself in the situation that limits his activities. At 95, he doesn’t get around much. I certainly look forward to seeing him when I occasionally make it back to Steubenville. He always has a big smile and a hearty, “Well, hello, Dan!” to offer me.

We had only nine years together in Steubenville. Our paths didn’t cross as often as they should have. I didn’t create enough opportunities for us to collaborate. Yet, I knew from the beginning that I was succeeding a bishop who was wise, steady and kind. If my ministry in southeastern Ohio bore any good fruit, it is partly because I sensed all the while that Bishop Sheldon was there behind me.

Gilbert I. Sheldon has been a priest and bishop for 60 years. He could not be able to write anymore. But, he still prays and celebrates Mass. He still has a mind focused on important issues and a heart filled with compassion. I can imagine him saying, “That’s pretty darn good.” It is.

Bishop F. Daniel Conlon and Bishop Gilbert I. Sheldon

The pope led a special year dedicated to St. Joseph from Jan. 1, 2020, to Dec. 8, 2021, and he is currently giving a series of talks on the saint at his weekly general audiences. His papal ministry officially began on March 19, the feast of St. Joseph, and his papal coat of arms includes symbols representing Joseph as well as Mary and Jesus.

“I have always nurtured a special devotion for St. Joseph because I believe that his person represents what Christian faith should be for each of us, in a beautiful and simple way,” he said. “In fact, Joseph is a normal man, and his holiness consists precisely in making himself a saint through the beautiful and ugly things he had to experience and face.”

Mary gave birth to the Word-made-flesh and Joseph is the one “who defended him, who protected him, who nourished him, who made him grow,” the pope said.

The Holy family experienced difficult events, but St. Joseph accepted his responsibilities and knew how to listen to God speaking to his heart, he said.

The lesson there, he said, is “only someone who prays, who has an intense spiritual life, can have the capacity to know how to distinguish God’s voice in the midst of many other voices that dwell in us.”

Another lesson, he said, is “Joseph is a concrete man, that is, a man who faces problems with great practicality, who never assumes the position of being a victim when faced with difficulties and obstacles. Instead, he always places himself in the perspective of reacting, of responding, of trusting God and finding a solution in a creative way.”

At a time when many young people “are often afraid to decide, to choose, to take a risk” in life, the church can help by modeling the parenthood of Joseph: not simply saying “yes or no” to certain choices, but by encouraging the young not to be afraid to make a choice.

Every choice carries consequences and some risks, he said, and “a true father does not tell you that everything will always go well, but rather that even if you may find yourself in a situation in which things are not going well, you will be able to face and live with dignity even those moments, those failures.

Fatherhood is facing a crisis in wiser society today, and the pope said “we should have the courage to say that the church should not only be maternal but also paternal. She is called to exercise a paternal, not a paternalistic ministry.”

The church is correctly thought of as a mother and she carries out that motherhood by being merciful with a “love that generates and regenerates life,” he said. Forgiveness and reconciliation, in fact, are how people get back on their feet again.

However, the church should rediscover its paternal aspect, the pope said, which is the ability to offer the right conditions for people to carry out their responsibilities, “to exercise their freedom, to make choices.”

“If, on the one hand, mercy heals us, cures us, comforts us, encourages us,” he said, “on the other, God’s love is not limited simply to forgiving and healing, but rather, God’s love spurs us to make decisions, to go out to sea.”

Pope Francis hails as heroes parents who risk everything for their kids

By Carol Glatz

Catholic News Service

VATICAN CITY — With so many problems and challenges in the world, especially worsened by the pandemic, people can find strength and guidance in St. Joseph, Pope Francis said.

“Precisely in this time that is so difficult, we needed someone who could encourage us, help us, inspire us, in order to understand which is the right way to know how to face these dark moments,” he said in a new interview.

“Joseph is the bright witness in dark times. This is why it was right to make room for him at this time, in order to find our way again,” he said in an interview with the Vatican’s media outlets published Jan. 13.

He said he was praying for all families that are suffering, and he understands how difficult it is to face “not being able to feed one’s children, feeling the responsibility for the life of others.”

So many families are forced to flee war, but are rejected at borders where “no one takes seriously or willingly ignores” their great need, he added. “I would like to say to these fathers, to these mothers, that for me they are heroes because I see in them the courage of those who sacrifice their lives for love of their children, for love of their family.”

“May these fathers turn with trust to St. Joseph, knowing that as a father, he too had the same experience, the same insecurity. And I would like to say to all of them and to their families, do not feel alone! The pope remembers them always and as far as it is possible, will continue
to give them a voice and will not forget them,” he said.

The interview, conducted in Italian and translated into five other languages, focused on the theme of “paternity” and how St. Joseph — with his strength, determination and tenderness — is an important example for fathers, the church and families.

Aida Mariela Unayche, 43, stands at the door of her home as she wears a face mask as a protection against the spread of COVID-19, in Manzanares, on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, Argentina, in this April 8, 2021, file photo. In a recent interview, Pope Francis said he was praying for all families who are suffering. (CNS photo/Augustin Marcarian, Reuters)