



Grow in love of God and others with Cursillo

By Paula Wright

A new year brings attention to many aspects of one's life, including our relationships. What better way to deepen and appreciate our relationship with God than to take time apart from our daily routine for reflection, prayer, and resting in the Lord.

Have you heard of Cursillo?

"The Cursillo® Movement pursues two purposes or objectives. The immediate purpose is to provide a conduit for living what is fundamental for being a Christian, namely, the on-going and total conversion of the person. The end purpose is to vertebrae Christianity in society by means of these persons who live what is fundamental for being Christian in their daily lives (the love of God and neighbor). Simply explained, the purpose of the Cursillo Movement is that we become the Good News, and that our actions naturally turn out to be evangelical in our daily lives."

This is a quote found on the diocesan Website about Cursillo. And we're in luck: there are upcoming retreats for both men and women. The next Men's Retreat weekend occurs Feb. 23 -26, in Fredericktown, MO. And the Women's Retreat weekend occurs March 23 -26, in Fredericktown, MO. The weekends will be held again in April: A Women's Retreat Weekend on April 27-30, 2023, in Carthage, MO, and a Men's Weekend retreat on April 20-23, Carthage.

What is Cursillo?

Founded by Eduardo Bonnín Aguiló, the Cursillos in Christianity held their first Cursillo in 1944 in Mallorca, Spain. Today, the movement has become international. Our own diocese has an active Cursillo network.

"The term 'Cursillo' means 'a short course in what is essential to being Christian.' More than an organization or an accomplishment, Cursillo is the learning of a practical method for making Christianity more effective within us, our small group, and Ultreya," said Fr. Bill Hodgson, Spiritual Advisor for Cursillo in the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau.

"From there, both individually, and as groups, our goal is to affect our environment to 'make disciples of all nations.' On the individual basis, this mission is summed up in the phrase, 'Make a friend, be a friend, bring a friend to Christ.'"

According to the founder, Bonnín Aguiló, the vision of the Cursillo is to, "find the best possible method of bringing about this conversion — of moving a person from where they are to where they could be; from human to fully human; from alive to fully alive in recognition, acknowledgement, and acceptance of their true identity and dignity as beloved children of God."

"Cursillo came at the right time in my life. It gave me all the tools necessary to live a life as a Catholic Christian, all I have to do is make use of them," said Dan Williams, Saint Mary of the Annunciation Cathedral, Cape Girardeau. "Cursillo has given me a group of men that help to hold me responsible. They encourage me in my growth in prayer, my study of the Catholic faith, and in my responsibilities to others. They are real friends."

To be a "Cursillita" is to learn and then live the Cursillo method within a Cursillo community, by gathering in local small groups that often meet weekly, and participating in the monthly Ultreyas. Weekend retreats are held throughout the year for both men and women and are held on both "sides" of the diocese, in



MEN'S CURSILLO #118—Participants and leaders from a recent Cursillo Men's Weekend retreat. Sign up now for an upcoming Men's Weekend in February or April. (*The Mirror*)



WOMEN'S CURSILLO #117—Participants and leaders from a recent Cursillo Women's Weekend retreat. Sign up now for an upcoming Women's Weekend in March or April. (*The Mirror*)

Fredericktown and in Carthage.

"Cursillo helps me focus on elements of my religion, to talk about many things that help my faith. It helps me stay on track in my life to become closer to God," Steven Harter, said, from Our Lady of the Lake Parish, in Branson.

"The Cursillo has ongoing programs, the small groups are really good for men to share with one another, it creates a comradery," Harter said. "I remember my first Cursillo retreat. I had been active in church and attended other programs, so I was not expecting much. I was blown away. It was amazing! Cursillo helps deepen everyday faith in God. It's hard to explain, you have to just go and live it."

Betsy Mell, of St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Fredericktown, MO, was raised Catholic and attended Mass weekly, raising her children to do the same. She admits she was a "lukewarm" Catholic.

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The next issue of **The Mirror** will be **February 3, 2023**. Sign up to receive the diocesan newspaper via Email in digital format: Contact Debbie Thompson at (417) 866-0841, or Email: dthompson@dioscg.org.



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COME, AND
YOU WILL SEE

Bp. Edward M. Rice

NEW EVANGELIZATION IN THE NEW YEAR

I'd like to go back prior to the Synod, prior to the Eucharistic Revival, and prior to the pandemic, to that time when I shared with everyone the statistics for our diocese regarding the decline in sacramental practice. Although there were some bright spots, one of my major concerns was the decline in baptisms and the consequences that would have down the road for the diocese. The other major concern was the drastic decline in couples entering into the sacrament of Marriage. In the midst of the Eucharistic Revival and discerning the local parish concerns we learned from the Synod results, we must continue to discover how we, as a diocese, can reverse these trends.

In one sense, we are fighting the culture. More and more people are disaffiliating with organizations, whether it be the Church, the government, or educational institutions. At the same time, we still combat the rise of the "none generation," those who claim no religious affiliation at all. Add to that the scandal and other factors and you can see how these issues have all come together to create the perfect storm. In the meantime, we have continued our day-to-day life in the parish and the diocese without seeing the larger picture. Amid all this change and in large part, we remain "business as usual," which

is not moving us from "maintenance to mission."

APOSTOLIC MISSION

I came across a little 90-page paperback book, *From Christendom to Apostolic Mission, Pastoral Strategies for an Apostolic Age*, University of Mary Press, 2020, by Msgr. James P. Shea. In my mind, this is the best articulation of what has transpired in our culture over the last couple of decades, and I

recommend everyone to read it. The basic premise of his writing is that the Church that we grew up in and what the Church stood for and wanted to accomplish was often complemented and supported by the culture or governments. That is what Monsignor Shea refers to as "Christendom." The culture of today has pretty much rejected Christianity and the Church now finds

herself alone, without support, and oftentimes directly attacked as she tries to proclaim the Gospel. In a sense, we find ourselves in a situation similar to the early Church. And if the Church is going to grow, it must be fully, actively embracing its "Apostolic Mission."

Some quotes for your consideration:

"In an age of change, the Church needs to pay attention to the modes by which she carries on her graced battle to be sure that she is not 'fighting yesterday's war,' using

strategies that for whatever reason are outmoded and have become ineffective."

"We are dealing with the first culture and history that was once deeply Christian but that, by a slow and thorough process, has been consciously ridding itself of its Christian basis."

These two quotes highlight the call of Pope St. John Paul II when he wrote in his document on evangelization, "The mission of evangelization today calls for a new program which can be defined overall as a new evangelization." I think it is our task, in our day, to discover what new modes and new programs are needed in light of our current culture. In one sense it can be overwhelming. However, in another sense: it can be very exciting, which brings me to another point. Our priests are hard workers! But, we should also ask ourselves if what we are doing is effective for the local church and her apostolic mission? This also applies to those involved in our PSR programs, our Catholic schools, RCIA, adult faith formation, youth ministry, and sacramental preparation. Are there best practices that we could incorporate? Can religious formation be more effective? How enriching are our small group gatherings?

To that end, some 20 of the clergy of our diocese will be attending a conference Jan. 24-26 entitled, "Priests for an Apostolic Age," with the keynote speaker being the author I mentioned above, Msgr. Shea. Please pray that the Holy Spirit will show us the way to move forward in our ministry! In future columns, I will continue to highlight some of the principles outlined in the book so that all of us can be pondering

how our diocese can grow in the years to come. ©TM



*From Christendom
to Apostolic Mission*

Pastoral Strategies for an Apostolic Age

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ANOTHER WALK THROUGH: 'WALKING TOGETHER' by Bishop Emeritus John J. Leibrecht

Before his retirement in 2008 as the Fifth Bishop of the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, Bishop John Leibrecht wrote a standing column in *The Mirror* entitled, "Walking Together." At the end of each article, Bp. Leibrecht would normally share a funny story referencing his travels to the schools, or time with friends, family, or other bishops. *The Mirror* has decided to share a few of these in an ongoing series entitled, "Another walk through: 'Walking Together.'" We hope you enjoy them.

April 2, 1988 This Sunday, May 1, is DDF Sunday. Please pray that all of our good people will again be sacrificial in their generosity. So that the works of the Church in southern Missouri may continue and reach even more people, I ask that you please increase your DDF gifts and pledges over last year. I know you will do your very best! A few weeks ago, a little girl broke away from her mother during Mass at St. Agnes Cathedral in Springfield, and headed down the main aisle into the sanctuary past the altar. She reached her destination by climbing up into my empty bishop's chair, happy as could be. I recently had a (day) dream about that little girl in my chair: I thought I could hear her saying to all the people at Mass: "Please be generous to the Diocesan Development Fund!"

May 6, 1988 I have enjoyed watching the forests and hillsides bloom this Spring as I traveled from parish to parish. I was reminded of some old words: "If Spring came but once a century instead of once a year, or burst forth with the sound of an earthquake and not in silence, what wonder and expectation there would be in all hearts to behold the miraculous change."

May 13, 1988 Phoning the hospital after learning that one of our priests had been taken there, I was shocked when I was put through the maternity unit. However, I was quickly put at ease when I was told Father was in the unit simply to have some privacy.



VEN Y VERÁS

Obispo Edward M. Rice

NUEVA EVANGELIZACIÓN EN EL NUEVO AÑO

Me gustaría remontarme a antes del Sínodo, antes del Avivamiento Eucarístico, y antes de la pandemia, a aquel momento en que compartía con todos las estadísticas de nuestra diócesis sobre el descenso de la práctica sacramental. Aunque había algunos puntos positivos, una de mis mayores preocupaciones era la disminución de los bautismos y las consecuencias que esto tendría en el futuro de la diócesis. La otra gran preocupación era la drástica disminución del número de parejas que accedían al sacramento del matrimonio. En medio del Avivamiento Eucarístico y discerniendo las preocupaciones parroquiales locales que aprendimos de los resultados del Sínodo, debemos continuar descubriendo cómo nosotros, como diócesis, podemos invertir estas tendencias.

En cierto sentido, estamos luchando contra la cultura. Cada vez más personas dejan de formar parte de organizaciones, ya sea la Iglesia, el gobierno o las instituciones educativas. Al mismo tiempo, seguimos luchando contra el auge de la “*generación ninguna*”, aquellos que afirman no tener ninguna afiliación religiosa. Si a esto añadimos la vergüenza y otros factores, podemos ver cómo todos estos problemas se han

unido para crear la tormenta perfecta. Mientras tanto, hemos continuado nuestro día a día en la parroquia y en la diócesis sin ver el panorama más amplio. En medio de todo este cambio y en gran parte, seguimos “como siempre”, lo que nos mantiene “cuidando la misión”.

MISIÓN APOSTÓLICA

Me encontré con un pequeño libro de bolsillo de 90 páginas, *De la cristiandad a la misión apostólica, Estrategias pastorales para una edad apostólica* (University of Mary Press, 2020), de Monseñor James P. Shea. En mi opinión, es la mejor expresión de lo que ha ocurrido en nuestra cultura en las dos últimas décadas, y recomiendo su lectura a todo el mundo. La premisa básica de su escrito es que la Iglesia en la que crecimos y lo que la Iglesia defendía y quería conseguir a menudo era complementado y apoyado por la cultura o los gobiernos. Eso es a lo que Monseñor Shea se refiere como “cristiandad”. La cultura actual ha rechazado prácticamente el cristianismo y la Iglesia ahora se encuentra sola, sin apoyo y, a menudo, directamente atacada cuando intenta proclamar el Evangelio. En cierto sentido, nos encontramos en una situación similar a la de la Iglesia primitiva. Y si la Iglesia va a crecer, debe

abrazar plena y activamente su “misión apostólica”.

Algunas citas para su consideración:

“En una época de cambios, la Iglesia necesita prestar atención a los modos con los que lleva a cabo su batalla agraciada para estar segura de que no está ‘luchando en la guerra de ayer’, utilizando estrategias que por la razón que sea son anticuadas y se han vuelto ineficaces”.

“Nos encontramos ante la primera cultura e historia que fue profundamente cristiana, pero que, mediante un proceso lento y minucioso, se ha ido despojando conscientemente de su base cristiana.”

Estas dos citas ponen de relieve la llamada del Papa san Juan Pablo II cuando escribió en su documento sobre la evangelización: “La misión de la evangelización exige hoy un nuevo programa que puede definirse globalmente como una nueva evangelización”. Creo que es nuestra tarea, en nuestros días, descubrir qué nuevos modos y programas son necesarios a la luz de nuestra cultura

actual. En cierto sentido, puede resultar abrumador. Sin embargo, en otro

sentido: puede ser muy emocionante, lo que me lleva a otro punto. ¡Nuestros sacerdotes son muy trabajadores! Pero también debemos preguntarnos si lo que hacemos es eficaz para la iglesia local y su misión apostólica. Esto también se aplica a los que participan en nuestros programas

de Escuela Parroquial de

Religión (PSR, por sus siglas en inglés), nuestras escuelas católicas, RICA, formación en la fe para adultos, pastoral juvenil y preparación sacramental. ¿Existen buenas prácticas que podamos incorporar? ¿La formación religiosa puede ser más eficaz? ¿En qué medida son enriquecedoras nuestras reuniones en grupos pequeños?

Con este fin, una veintena de clérigos de nuestra diócesis asistirán del 24 al 26 de enero a una conferencia titulada “Sacerdotes para una Era Apostólica”, cuyo ponente principal será el autor que he mencionado antes, Mons. Shea. Por favor, recen para que el Espíritu Santo nos muestre el camino para avanzar en nuestro ministerio. En futuras columnas, seguiré destacando algunos de los principios esbozados en el libro para que todos podamos reflexionar sobre cómo puede crecer nuestra diócesis en los próximos años.

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Nos encontramos ante la primera cultura e historia que fue profundamente cristiana, pero que, mediante un proceso lento y minucioso, se ha ido despojando conscientemente de su base cristiana.

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THE ANNUAL DIOCESAN WEDDING ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS

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SUNDAY, FEB. 19, 2023, 2:30 P.M. ST. AGNES CATHEDRAL, SPRINGFIELD

Couples celebrating their 1st, 5th, 10th, 15th, 20th, 25th, 30th, 35th, 40th, 45th, 50th, or 50+ anniversary anytime during 2023, please pre-register for one of the two Diocesan Wedding Anniversary Celebrations and receive a Marriage Anniversary Certificate from Bishop Rice. In addition, those celebrating their 25th or 50th anniversaries will receive an Episcopal Blessing and a special gift from Bishop Rice.

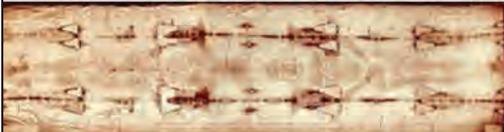
Join us for Mass with Bishop Edward M. Rice, followed by a reception with light Hors D'oeuvres, cake, and punch. These occasions enable all of us to celebrate and affirm the great gift of marriage within our communities. **Please make plans to attend!**



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February 25, 9:00 - 11:00 am
St. Ann's Church, Carthage

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“ I specifically requested permission to run this article by Bishop Barron, as it expresses some of the points I have made over the past year or so regarding sacramental practice, parish life, and how to move from “maintenance to mission.” In that spirit, I hope the article offers food for thought. —*The Most Rev. Edward M. Rice* ”

4 Ways to Grow the Church



WORD OF FIRE

Bp. Robert Barron

Last week, I met with the Deans of our diocese to discuss a number of issues, the most prominent of which was the ongoing process of merging some of our parishes and reorganizing others into clusters. These moves, which have been happening over the past several years, are necessitated by a number of factors: the diminishing number of priests, demographic shifts in our cities and towns, economic pressures, etc. Even as I expressed my approval for some of these changes, I told the Deans that, for every strategy of consolidation, I want a strategy for growth as well.

I simply refuse to accept the proposition that I, or any other bishop, should be presiding over the decline of our churches. By its very nature, Christianity is centrifugal, outward-tending, universal in purpose and scope. Jesus didn't say, "Preach the Gospel to a handful of your friends," or "Proclaim the Good News to your own culture." Rather, he said to his disciples: "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:18-19). He also instructed his followers that the very gates of hell would not prevail against the fighting Church that he established. Therefore, maintaining things as they are, or managing decline, or treading water is absolutely not what Jesus wants or expects of us.

Let us never settle for maintenance of the status quo.

Permit me to say, right away, that the expansion of our Church is by no means the exclusive responsibility of bishops and priests. As the Second

Vatican Council clearly teaches, every baptized Catholic is commissioned to be an evangelizer; so we're all in this together. Therefore, what are some of the strategies of growth that can be employed by any Catholic? A first one I would highlight is simply this: every family that comes regularly to Mass should make it their evangelical responsibility to bring another family to Mass this coming year. Every faithful Mass-goer reading these words knows people who should be going to Mass and aren't. They might be your own children or grandchildren. They might be coworkers who were once ardent Catholics and who simply drifted away from the practice of the faith, or perhaps people who are angry at the Church.

Identify these wandering sheep and make it your evangelical challenge to bring them back to Mass. If we all did this successfully, we would double the size of our parishes in a year.

EXPAND the Church

A second recommendation is to pray for the expansion of the Church. According to the Scriptures, nothing great is ever accomplished apart from prayer. So ask the Lord, insistently, fervently, even stubbornly, to bring back his scattered sheep. Just as we have to beg the harvest master to raise up workers to gather in his harvest, so we have to beg him to increase his sheepfold. I would encourage the elderly and the homebound in a parish to take on this specific task. And I might ask those who regularly do Eucharistic Adoration to spend 15 or 30 minutes a day asking the Lord for this specific favor. I would also suggest that liturgy planners include petitions for the growth of the parish in the Prayers of the Faithful at Sunday Mass.

INVITE Seekers

A third enjoinder is to invite seekers to raise their questions. I know from lots of concrete experience over the past 20 years that many young people, even those who claim hostility to the faith, are actually deeply interested in religion. Like Herod listening to the preaching of John the Baptist in prison, even the seemingly anti-religious will go on religious Websites and Podcasts and attend carefully to what is being discussed. So, ask those who have disaffiliated why they no longer come to Mass. You might be surprised by how ready they are to tell you. But then, you have to have followed the recommendation of St. Peter: "Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a

reason for your hope" (1 Pet. 3:15). In other words, if you elicit questions, you better be ready to give some answers. This means that you have to bone up on your theology, your apologetics, your Scripture, your philosophy, and your Church history. If that sounds daunting, remember that in the last 25 years or so there has been an explosion of literature in just these areas, focusing precisely on the kinds of questions that young seekers tend to ask—and most of it is available readily online.

BE kind

A fourth and final suggestion that I would make is simply this: be kind. Sherry Waddell, whose *Forming Intentional Disciples* has become a modern classic in the field of evangelization, says that a crucial first step in bringing someone to the faith is the establishment of trust. If someone thinks that you are a good and decent person, she is far more likely to listen to you speak about your faith. May I be blunt? Even the most casual glance at

Many young people, even those who claim hostility to the faith, are actually deeply interested in religion.



Catholic social media reveals a plethora of obnoxious behavior. Far, far too many seem intent upon trumpeting their own correctness, focusing on narrow issues that are unintelligible and irrelevant to most people, and tearing down their enemies. I fear that this reality on social media may be an amplification of attitudes in the Church outside of the digital space. These attitudes are inimical to evangelization. A colleague of mine has related that in his conversations with the alienated and unaffiliated that what keeps them away from the Church is their experience of what they describe as "meanness" from believers. So both Online and in real life, be kind. No one will be interested in hearing about the faith life of obviously bitter and unhappy people.

So, we have our marching orders: proclaim the Lord Jesus Christ to all nations. Let us start with our own parishes, our own families. And let us never settle for maintenance of the status quo. ©TM

This article originally appeared at wordonfire.org. It is reprinted with kind permission.

Bishop Robert Barron is the founder of Word on Fire Catholic Ministries and Bishop of the Diocese of Winona-Rochester in Minnesota. He is also the host of *CATHOLICISM*, a groundbreaking, award-winning documentary about the Catholic Faith, which aired on PBS.



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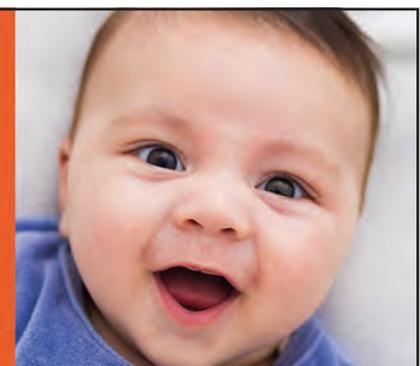
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ANNOUNCEMENTS

Belleville, IL—The National Shrine of Our Lady of the Snows, in conjunction with King's House Retreat & Renewal Center, will provide a **video study series**.

Based on the book, *Fully Human: Understanding Christian Anthropology*, by Sr. Sara Fairbanks, OP, PhD. Fr. Mark Dean, OMI, of King's House will host this series. We will examine the multi-faceted Christian perspective on humanity's place in the evolving universe. We will also study our origin, purpose, goal, and future destiny. All sessions are Tuesday mornings, 10 a.m.-Noon, and will be held at the Shrine Visitors Center on Jan. 24, Jan. 31, Feb. 7, and Feb. 14. Cost is \$20 for the series, or \$5 for individual sessions. Information and registration is available at <https://snows.org/ministries/spiritual-programs/> or call the Shrine at (618) 394-6281.

Jackson—Immaculate Conception Parish will have a **Pancake/Sausage Breakfast**, Sun., Jan. 29, 7-11 a.m., in the parish center. Orders are also being taken for bulk and link sausage: call or text Courtney Ruch at (573) 521-0163, or Email courtneyallgier@hotmail.com.

Marble Hill—**SAVE THE DATE!** In memory of Gus & Marjie Eftink, the family will host **BandFest IV**, Sat., Sept. 23, 2023. The net proceeds to benefit Options for Women in Cape Girardeau. Please mark your calendars and plan to attend.

Sikeston—**SAVE THE DATE!** St. Francis Xavier School will hold its annual **School Dinner Auction**, Sat., Feb. 18, 2023.

Sikeston—St. Francis Xavier School will have a **trash bag sale**, beginning Jan. 17 and ending Jan. 27. Cost is

\$10 per box; to order contact the school office at (573) 471-0841. Thank you for supporting St. Francis Xavier School.

Springfield—Beginning Experience of Springfield is offering an eight-week support program, **Coping With Life Alone**, designed to help individuals work through the trauma of losing a spouse through death or divorce. Beginning Experience programs offer strength and growth through a community of friendship, support, and prayer with trained facilitators who have themselves experienced divorce or the death of a spouse. The program will begin Thu., Feb. 16, 6:30 p.m. at St. Elizabeth Ann Seton Church, located at 2200 W. Republic Rd. Cost is \$30, but financial assistance is available. To pre-register, call Diane at (417) 859-0175, or (870) 688-8829 (cell); Donna, at (417) 529-1085; or Barb, at (417) 827-3641.

Springfield—Springfield Area Perpetual Adoration, hosted at Holy Trinity Chapel, has an **urgent need of Adorers**: Tue., 9 p.m.; Wed., 2 a.m. & 3 a.m., and Sat., 1 a.m. Substitutes are needed for all hours, please consider joining our substitute list to experience the peace of adoration. For more information or to sign up, please contact Marilyn Gibson at (417) 224-4043.

Springfield—Immaculate Conception PCCW will host a **Day of Retreat** with Sr. Pauline Nugent, CCVI, on Sat., March 25, 9 a.m.-2:30 p.m. This retreat is open to all women of the diocese. More information will be available soon.

Parishes and organizations are invited to submit notices of future events to be printed on a space-available basis. There is no fee.

PRINCIPAL OPENING

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Contact: The Very Rev. Daniel Robles, Sacred Heart Parish, Poplar Bluff, MO (573) 785-9635.





By
Fr. Joshua
J. Whitfield

WHAT WE BELIEVE, PART 10:

The Church Interpersonal & Personal

The New Testament, blessedly, does not read like instructions for installing a flat screen. It is not even a work of systematic theology, of some theologian writing in logical sequence. Rather, the New Testament is an inspired body of texts (a collection of Gospels, letters, a brief work of apologetic history, and an apocalypse), which portray, like art, the truth of the Faith. And that truth is the Gospel: the good news that the incarnate Son — died and risen — is one with the Father who sent his Son and who, by the gift of the Holy Spirit, shares that oneness with believers in the communion we call the Church.

Taking an even wider look at the New Testament, we notice that this thing we call the Church is described in these sacred texts in different ways and at different angles, using several different images. Each image, in a sense, takes a different measure of the Church and reveals another aspect of it.

But let us begin by looking at the Church first as an interpersonal phenomenon, that is, as something that is born, endures and grows within and between persons who share faith in Jesus. Given what we learned from John 17—how Jesus prayed first for his disciples and then for those who believe “through their word”—to look for the beginnings of the Church interpersonally makes perfect sense (Jn 17:20). In fact, it is exactly what we

find at the beginning of the First Letter of John. Acts of the Apostles portrays the geographic and spectacularly charismatic blossoming of the Church and great numbers being added to the fellowship of believers. But in John’s first letter, we see how that happened, but intimately, interpersonally. John describes, theologically and spiritually, what Luke describes historically: how the faith spreads, how evangelism happens. By the Spirit, person to person.

“What was from the beginning, what we have heard ... seen with our eyes ... looked upon ... touched with our hands ... the Word of life” (1 Jn 1:1). This is the disciple who laid his head on Jesus’s breast at the Last Supper; and basically, all he is saying is, “I know him. I have personal experience. I’ve had this encounter with Jesus.” But then John goes on to say, “what we have seen and heard we proclaim now to you, so that you may have fellowship with us” (1 Jn 1:3). This is the mission for glory—the Father sends the Son and the Son sends the apostles and John says, “we proclaim now to you.” That is how it happens, how the Church grows—one disciple sharing the “Word of life” with another, all throughout history.

And notice why John is sharing the Gospel—“so that you may have fellowship with us.” This is the communion of the Church, sharing in the communion of the Trinity. Personal witness draws believers

into communion. This is important to understand. What John is not saying is, “OK, there’s this thing called Christianity with this amazing set of propositions and explanations to which you’ll really want to give your intellectual assent.” Rather, he is saying, “I’ve met Jesus, and I want you to meet him too. Why? So that you can join our fellowship which, mysteriously, is also fellowship with God.” And notice too that this is an apostolic fellowship. John, one of the Twelve, invites readers into “fellowship with us.” That is, personal faith in Christ also necessarily draws each of us into the Church. Belief and fellowship are inseparable. This may seem strange to our modern individualist ears, but the communal reality of the Faith is plainly biblical. From the perspective of the New Testament, there simply is no such thing as a Christian without communion, who is outside the Church.

FELLOWSHIP OF HUMANS

So, what does this say about the Church? When you go to your parish community or to any community of Christians, what do you see? Hopefully you will see a diverse group of people from all walks of life, groups, and groupings of people you could describe historically, sociologically and economically. But that would not completely describe them. The fellowship of the Catholic Church is also the fellowship of the

Father and the Son in the Holy Spirit. There is a divine truth and depth to the communion of the Church. The Church is not just a club. If it were, then, honestly, there are much better clubs out there. The Church is different. The fellowship of the Church is a fellowship of human beings—saints and sinners both—but also the fellowship of God, a communion divine. That is, there is a difference to the Church that is mystical.

Which is why John dares to talk about joy. Because he is talking about a mystical fellowship that brings about genuine joy—“that our joy may be complete.” This is exactly the joy Jesus prayed for while praying to his Father (see Jn 17:13). When a disciple shares the Gospel with another person and that person enters the fellowship, joy increases—both the disciple’s joy and the new believer’s. And that joy is, in substance, the beginning of heaven.

But we can look at this even more deeply. Not only can we see the Church as an interpersonal phenomenon, we can also discover the beginnings of the Church at the personal level. Coming into the communion of the Church, by way of the apostles, is at its core a personal encounter with Jesus, an intimate kiss between you and the lover of your soul, an intimate conversion. That is what happens when someone shares the Faith with someone who comes to believe. There is a communal



COMMUNION OF THE CHURCH—This is what we believe the Church is in its essence; this is how the Church grows and endures—it is a communion of believers, reborn in Christ, who have received the Gospel and the joy of Christ, and who dare to share that faith and joy in Christ with others. This is the faith Luke in Acts of the Apostles said began to spread like wildfire—a fire of faith still spreading.

(Getty Images)

aspect to it—the Church of over a billion souls—but within that universal communion is always that individual union each person has with Christ.

We see this described in various ways throughout the New Testament. In the Letter to the Hebrews we hear how both Christ and believers “all have one origin.” Jesus, the “consecrator,” and believers, the “consecrated,” are united in glory, which is why Jesus calls believers “brothers” (Heb 2:11-12). Paul puts it even more strongly in his Letter to the Galatians. The believer’s union in Christ, he suggests, marks the very being of the believer. That is, some believers might be Republicans, others Democrats, but that just describes political agreement. Some might root for Notre Dame while others root for Stanford, but that just names school loyalty. These, no matter how passionately we claim them, are merely superficial modifiers. They do not say anything about who you are in your very being. Believing in Christ is different; it changes you. “I have been crucified with Christ; yet I live, no longer I, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2:20). Paul is talking about something deeper than political or even philosophical unity, much less anything like school loyalty! Paul is not making a claim like, “I’m a Republican because I believe in limited government.” Rather, he is making a deep claim about the character of his soul. He is not even making a claim about intellectual agreement necessarily. He is making a claim about his very being. That is why elsewhere he described life in Christ in terms of a “new creation” (2 Cor 5:17). This, of course, will be discussed when we explore baptism. Now, simply, it suffices to point out that this is what happens personally and interpersonally within the communion of the Church. This is what we believe the Church is in its essence; this is how the Church grows and endures—it is a communion of believers, reborn in Christ, who have received the Gospel and the joy of Christ, and who dare to share that faith and joy in Christ with others. This is the faith Luke in Acts of the Apostles said began to spread like wildfire—a fire of faith still spreading.

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WHAT WE BELIEVE: PART 11

The Church Cosmic

Father Joshua J. Whitfield is pastor of St. Rita Catholic Community in Dallas and author of *The Crisis of Bad Preaching* (Ave Maria Press, \$17.95), and other books.

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10 great books to help Catholics ring in 2023

By Mike Mastromatteo

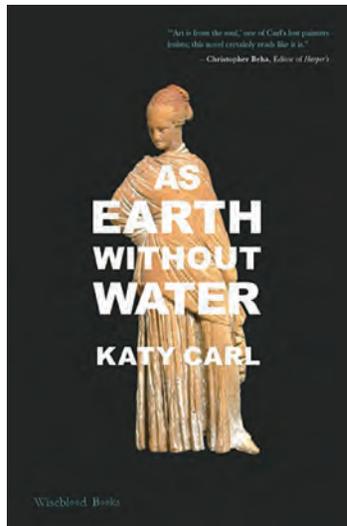
Here are 10 books, past and present, that Catholics might be interested in for 2023:

FICTION:

As Earth Without Water – Katy Carl (Wiseblood Books)

Ten years after artists (and romantic partners) Dylan and Angele have

parted, he reaches out to her. To Angele's surprise, Dylan is now a monk known as Brother Thomas Augustine, and just weeks away from ordination. He has turned to his old partner after an experience in community that has thrown him into spiritual tumult, casting a cloud over his future. The denouement of this debut novel is none too sentimental but holds out the promise of conversion and redemption in the face of devastating trauma.

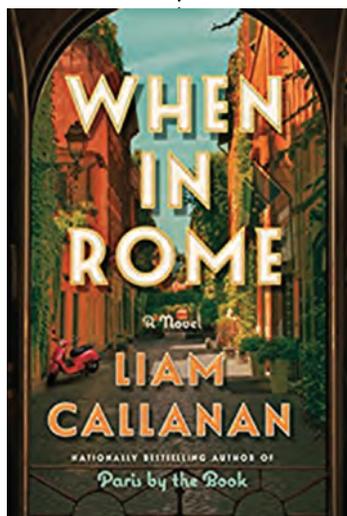


New York, My Village: A Novel – Uwem Akpan (W.W. Norton & Company)

Ekong Udousoro arrives in New York to edit history books about the aftermath of the 1967-70 Biafran civil war. From this premise, writer Uwem Akpan's first full-length novel examines how refugees struggle for identity in their adopted homes. By turns wry, satirical and darkly historic, the book sees the subtle racism extant in the publishing industry and by extension, much of contemporary American society. For Catholics, the novel's great success comes by urging readers to consider one of Christianity's most difficult but necessary challenges: to love our neighbors and welcome the stranger.

Every Cloak Rolled in Blood – James Lee Burke (Simon & Schuster)

Still going strong at age 86, crime novelist Burke's most recent title is the fourth part of a semi-autobiographical family saga pondering the mysteries of evil and why some seem to willfully embrace it. For balance,



Burke often flavors his stories with at least one "truly good" character, and here some ghost-like creatures propel the narrative, adding a supernatural edge to his tale. With allusions to the dangers of political division and mob rule, the book may resonate with readers who fear a malevolent Zeitgeist may be close at hand.

Infinite Regress – Joshua Hren (Wiseblood Books)

This timely fiction about the struggle between religious faith and the forces of nihilism is both entertaining and deeply thoughtful. The story, which manages humor, pathos and moral discourse reminiscent of Dostoevsky, follows the progress of Blake Yourrick, who takes any job he can get after racking up huge student debts pursuing a useless degree. When a former

mentor (and defrocked Catholic priest) shows up, the battle between evil and spiritual fortitude gets to the heart of where society appears to be headed. "Infinite regress" is a philosophical concept whereby the existence of a creator-God is unprovable, thus questions of morality, sin and salvation become endless speculation. Yourrick's eventual victory over meaninglessness brings a satisfying, if fragile, resolution to the tension in the narrative.

NEW FOR 2023:

When in Rome – Liam Callanan (Penguin Random House)

This novel, due in February 2023, will almost certainly resonate with Catholic readers. We are introduced to Claire Murphy, a middle-aged professional woman, who suddenly finds herself forced to discern whether to become a nun or rekindle a lost college romance. By turns funny, smart, and faithful, Liam Callanan's real strength here is in showcasing the real struggles of ordinary Catholics to find grace and contentment in whatever vocation they choose.

MEMOIRE:

The Deep Places: A Memoir of Illness and Discovery – Ross Douthat (Penguin Random House)

It is said that Catholicism contains the most complete theology on suffering. In this moving memoir of his three-year struggle with the debilitating effect of Lyme's disease, New York Times columnist (and Catholic convert) Ross Douthat brings us a 200-page primer on how suffering can take on redemptive meaning. Recounting his physical miseries as this mysterious disease seemed to be threatening his mind and body, Douthat is stunned by the medical community's often dismissive attitude toward an affliction that resists easy remedying. Douthat's experience forced him to do some hard thinking on the meaning of suffering and the capriciousness of nature, and suggests that "if God gave his son to the cross, then a version of the same test is what every Christian should expect."

Uncertain Ground: Citizenship in an Age of Endless, Invisible War – Phil Klay (Penguin Random House)

In this 22-essay collection, Klay, a former US Marine deployed in the Iraq War, brings deep insight into the impact of armed conflict on the human psyche. As a Catholic, he shares where and how religious faith can be found amid the horror and bloodshed of modern warfare. One essay, "Tales of War and Redemption," covers examining one's conscience when making moral choices. "You can accept the miraculous or not, the divine or not. Either way, we remain both blessed and guilty, obliged to absorb the full radiance of the world and to accept the consequences of our failings as people, as members of churches, as members of nations."

Our Lady of Hot Messes: Getting Real with God in Dive bars and Confessionals – Leticia Ochoa Adams (Ave Maria Press)

In a highly personal but compelling series of essays, Adams discusses her transformation from an angry, abused, promiscuous self-loathing young girl and mother, to a contemporary evangelist who believes that Christ's love is always within our grasp. This is a moving story

of salvation after years of suffering, sin and irresponsibility. Working through her profound grief after her son's death by suicide, Adams offers a message both simple and staggering: God wants us to trust in his love, no matter what bad choices we have made, no matter how keen or life-changing is our pain. She emphasizes the need for spiritual and psychological healing as a path to unity and full communion in the church and society, writing, "The world is on fire. Working on my own sins and giving space to those who have been treated unjustly are ways I can learn to put out the flames."

YOUNG ADULTS:

Brave Water – Sarah Robsdottir (Voyager Comics & Publishing)

A haunting encounter with a fundraising flyer detailing how clean-water-



collecting young girls in Africa become targets for kidnapping and human trafficking inspired this debut novel. Set in eastern Africa, the story follows teenagers who battle a human trafficking ring to save a kidnapped friend. The author has created vivid characters and makes good use of simile and metaphor to paint word pictures of incidents both prosaic and profound. This is

a splendid (and socially enlightening) read not only for teenagers, but for just about anyone with an appreciation for poignant storytelling, and Robsdottir is donating a portion of her proceeds to clean water and human trafficking initiatives.

Breda's Island – Jessie Ann Foley (Quill Tree Books)

Brash and antisocial teenager Breda Moriarity is sent from Chicago by her feisty Irish-born mother to spend a summer in Ireland. There Breda meets her widower grandfather, Granda Davey, who, despite his own secrets, grudges and suffering, helps Breda learn the importance of family, community, acceptance and personal accountability. This is a delightful coming-of-age tale which, while aimed at younger readers, will certainly strike a chord with most Catholic (especially Irish Catholic) readers. ©OSV News

Mike Mastromatteo is a writer and editor from Toronto.



By Elizabeth Scalia, OSV News

'IT IS GOOD': 3 messages to take to heart in this new year

At the start of each new year, many of us examine our lives and, based on what we know of ourselves and how we receive the overly harsh, ever-lecturing judgments of the world, we make resolutions for our self-improvement. We make promises to ourselves—and sometimes to God and to our families: We're going to be thinner; we're going to become patient; we're going to embrace disciplines that will help us grow as human beings.

Most of us won't keep our promises for very long, and often the first ones to hit the pavement with a resounding "splat" are those we've made to heaven, or to our families.

The reason for that is simple: No matter how much we want to change some aspect of ourselves, God knows us intimately, as do our families. **Where there is intimacy, we generally let go of artifice, because we can -- because we know that where we are loved unconditionally,** we are loved in all of our faults and weaknesses, and thank God for that. The world of

work acquaintances, friends, and the utter strangers who populate our social media threads (and to whom we hand over way too much of ourselves for inspection and eventual verdicts, yay or nay) is very different.

For their "likes" or button-conveyed

"hearts," we may work at our resolutions just a little bit longer, because we are truly addicted to those dopamine hits of instant approval. Also, we have been conditioned by marketers and ad campaigns

Where there is intimacy, we generally let go of artifice, because we can -- because we know that where we are loved unconditionally

to believe that no, we're not good enough as we are—not in our looks, our homes, not even in how we do laundry. *Don't you know that if your T-shirts don't smell like springtime, you're failing?*

The deal with resolutions in the new



year is that no one expects us to succeed. Everyone makes them with great intentions and an absolute certainty that they will fail—that our instinct to interior growth and exterior shrinkage, finagled into a promise by an arbitrary date, is a mean invitation to begin the new year with a big fat sense of failure.

To paraphrase the great Catholic writer Flannery O'Connor, "Well, if that's all it is, then to hell with it."

She was speaking, of course, about the notion that the holy Eucharist was a mere "symbol" of the body and blood of Jesus Christ, but it works for New Year's resolutions, too.

This year, as we grimace at our swollen waistlines thanks to holiday feasting, or vow never again to over-imbibe, or to shout in anger, or raise a fist while driving, let's resolve to work mindfully on a few ideas that can help us build the sort of inner serenity which, once gained, can become the foundation

for all of those other good intentions. None of them is harsh or burdensome, although any might prove challenging enough. Remembering just these three things throughout the year, however, can color so much of the rest of it.

- It doesn't really matter what anyone else does, only that we recognize what we are called to do, and that we do it with our whole hearts. The opinions others have of us are really none of our business.
- Whether we get the credit we deserve for the good things we manage doesn't matter, either. Jesus Christ knows what is true. The world quickly forgot all the good He did, and it was unjust to Him, too.
- As Christians, we have no work of our own, only the work God has placed before us—so in the end, it's really God's work that we do, and that's all that really does matter. We serve a crucified Lord who calls us. If we answer that call in 2023, we will be equipped for the job.

And none of that, taken up in honesty and in good faith, needs to touch our egos: not for the better or the worse, no matter whether everything ends up a small "splat" or a great success. God will still say to you, "It is good that you exist."

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Elizabeth Scalia is Culture Editor at OSV News.

CONTINUED from page 1...

"Before I attended Cursillo, I was a lukewarm Catholic. ...It didn't take me long to slip off track and start following the world," Mell said. "I was living in mortal sin when I got asked to come to Cursillo. I went reluctantly, and it changed my life! My faith has grown more than I could ever even imagine in a lifetime, but better than that: it has grown quickly."



"I love Jesus more and more with every day," said Mell. "Cursillo helped me to realize there is a lot more work to put into our relationship with Christ than one hour of Mass a week. Where was my prayer, study, and action? I was lacking hugely and needed to admit it and seek out the solutions to change. I am now continuing my faith journey with Cursillo (Christ) as center of it. Jesus heard my cry and answered me! Praise and Glory be to God! Now I am going forward and trying to spread the 'Good News' that Christ is King of our hearts and if we only allow him to reign there, we have nothing to fear."

"All Catholics who are at a place in their life where they want to grow in their love of God and others should attend Cursillo," Williams said.

"It (Cursillo) is life-changing if you allow The Holy Spirit to work within and through you," Mell said.

For more information about Cursillo and the retreats, visit the diocese Website link at <https://dioscg.org/cursillo/>. ©TM



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BIOETHICS IN 2023: What Catholics should watch for



CATHOLIC BIOETHICS

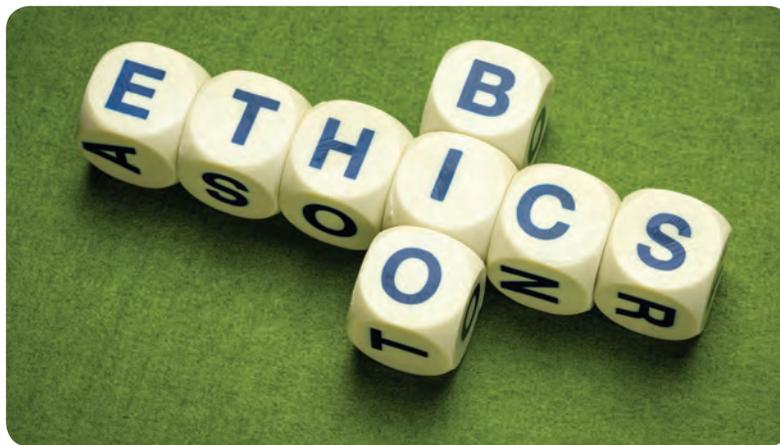
By Barbara Golder,
MD, JD

remains unsettled is how much is driven by social contagion, how much results from as yet undefined physical or psychological influences (One question: Has 60-plus years of massively increased use of hormonal treatments, both natural and artificial, impacted the environment, and is it related to all the rest?), and what interventions are therefore appropriate in any given case. The tendency to reduce solutions to policies or ideologies, and the ever-present desire of government policymakers to intervene in medical situations, adds to the confusion. Until we understand these intersecting concerns better, the first rule—written all those years ago by Hippocrates—is still “first, do no harm,” especially with complicated treatments or policy positions that are potentially damaging or irreversible in young lives.

- **The increasing control of individual health care decisions by insurance companies or governments** whose goals are cost savings over optimal patient care. Insurance companies often aim to reduce their provisions of costly but life-changing drugs in order to control expenses. Sometimes this action leaves patients with no option but to accept less effective treatment or pay astronomical out-of-pocket expenses. Crippling costs are compounded by

Catholics find themselves involved in some surprisingly arcane discussions of ethics and medical care these days. Some of the topics are both obvious and ominous. Others are less obvious but equally important. All are worth keeping an eye on. From my perch as a physician-lawyer turned bioethicist, here are my “top five” issues in bioethics to pay attention to in the coming year.

- **End-of-life care**, euthanasia and so-called “medical aid in dying.” End-of-life care is always a difficult medical balance and there is no dearth of strong, divergent opinions among Catholics on what care is necessary, what is obligatory, and what must be discretionary. As governments expand the “right” to euthanasia to include the mentally ill and the underage, Catholics are concerned about increasing pressure being put on patients with expensive illnesses (or who are simply old or disabled) to end their lives prematurely by voluntary restriction of otherwise appropriate care, or by assisted suicide. Along with this worry comes a “flip side” concern: In the face of controversial, high-profile end-of-life cases and the heated rhetoric that comes with them, some Catholics may second-guess their already difficult, perfectly appropriate end-of-life decisions—to their detriment.
- **The care of transgender youth.** Catholic teaching has a lot to say about sex and sexuality, of course, but how our teachings apply to gender dysphoria depends on understanding the basic biology and, importantly, the psychology that is still evolving. There is clearly an explosion of young people questioning their sexuality. What



prioritize and deliver care to the most vulnerable of our brothers and sisters within a system that is politically fragmented, morally confused, and so driven by the profit-motive that people who are a danger to themselves or others due to mental illness are simply left to live on the streets, affecting whole cities?

inescapable ads selling the general public on game-changing, highly expensive drugs for treatment of diseases ranging from eczema to multiple sclerosis. It raises the question: Of what value to the patient is a drug that costs in excess of \$50,000 a year, and what is the Catholic responsibility to find ways to make such drugs more affordable?

- **The crisis of mental health care** and the damage that decades of policies preventing involuntary treatment have created. Recent events and news stories suggest that society may be rediscovering the Catholic principle that caring for the most vulnerable among us is a profound social need. How do we

- **The intersection of conscience and medical care.** Expect attempts to compel Catholic medical providers to engage in procedures to which they object on moral grounds to increase. What remains to be seen is whether governmental concern for patients—that they receive the kind of care they desire—will extend to Catholic patients who want care consistent with their deeply held beliefs, delivered by physicians who either share or respect them. ©TM

Barbara Golder is a physician-lawyer-bioethicist and Editor in Chief of *The Linacre Quarterly*. She can be reached at ladydoctlawyer@gmail.com.

OBITUARY | Sr. Marie Elizabeth Koehler, RSM



Former Bereavement Coordinator in Mercy Springfield, Sr. Marie Elizabeth “Sr. Liz” Koehler, RSM, age 73, of St. Louis, MO, died Jan. 18, 2023, in hospice care at Catherine’s Residence, sponsored by the Sisters of Mercy.

Born the eldest of seven children, on Jan. 25, 1949, in Little Rock, AR, Sr. Koehler dedicated her life to serving others. She graduated from St. Edward Elementary School in 1963 and Mount St. Mary’s in 1967, both in Little Rock. After graduating from “the Mount,” she entered the Sisters of Mercy Novitiate in St. Louis. Continuing her education, Sr. Koehler received her Bachelors of Arts in Social Studies from Maryville College, St. Louis, in 1973,

with an Elementary Education Certificate. While continuing in her ministry, she received her Masters of Science in Counseling at the University of Southern Mississippi, Hattiesburg, MS, in 1986, and a Certificate in Spiritual Direction from the Aquinas Institute of Theology, St. Louis, in 1997.

Sister Koehler’s call to self-sacrifice and service sustained her through teaching at Christ the King School, Fort Smith, AR; St. Patrick School, Meridian, MS; St. Joan of Arc School, St. Louis; serving as a Child Care Worker at Mercita Hall, St. Louis; in parish ministry at St. Richard Church, Jackson, MS; as Spiritual Director in Little Rock, AR; and as a Bereavement Coordinator at Mercy Medical facilities in Hot Springs, AR, and Springfield, MO.

Preceded in death by her parents, Robert L. Koehler, Sr., and Mary Ellen (Penny) Koehler, and brother, Dennis, Sr. Koehler is survived by her sisters, Clara (Koehler) Smith, of Little Rock, and Michelle (Koehler) Haydel and her husband, Greg, of North Little Rock; her brothers and sisters-in-law, Robert L. Koehler, Jr., and Laurie, of Sherwood, AR, Duane Koehler, D.O., and Tammy, D.O., of Miami, OK, and Kenneth Koehler and Lesia, of Fayetteville, AR, and numerous nieces, nephews, and her Sisters of Mercy.

In addition to her love of her family, Sr. Koehler enjoyed scrapbooking, sewing, cake decorating, photography, reading, and traveling.

The Mass of Christian Burial will be privately celebrated Jan. 23, 2023, at Catherine’s Residence. ©TM

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LADY BULLDOGS CELEBRATE MASS WITH BISHOP RICE



LADY BULLDOGS BASKETBALL -The Notre Dame Regional High School girls basketball team and Principal Tim Garner were able to celebrate Mass with Bishop Edward Rice and Deacon Rob Huff, Superintendent, on January 19 at St. Agnes Cathedral in Springfield! The Cape Girardeau team is currently participating in the Nixa Invitational Tournament in Nixa, MO. GO BULLDOGS!
(The Mirror)

A GRATEFUL CHURCH

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Preregistration is necessary: If you are a new registrant please go to www.virtus.org and click on "first time registrant" on the left, and follow the prompts to register for Online training. Instructions for the registration process can also be found on the Child and Youth Protection Page of the diocesan Website.

www.dioscg.org/wp-content/uploads/How-to-Register-for-a-VIRTUS-withOnline-Option.pdf

Both in-person and online training sessions are for adults only.

Before engaging in activities involving minors and/or vulnerable adults, new volunteers or employees are required to complete the VIRTUS Protecting God's Children training for adults, submit a current Background Disclosure and Authorization Form, and read, sign and submit the annual Code of Conduct, which are available on the VIRTUS Website and the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau Child and Youth Protection Webpage: www.dioscg.org/child-youth-protection/

For more information, please contact the Office of Child and Youth Protection, childandyouthprotection@dioscg.org; or Bill Holtmeyer, billholtmeyer@dioscg.org; or Shelly Ferry, sferry@dioscg.org, (417) 866-0841.



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