The Mountaineer

United States Conference of Secular Institutes

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From the President's Desk

Dear Friends,

This past September 20th-22nd, the USCSI held its annual meeting at the retreat house of San Damiano in Danville, California. Present were our Episcopal Moderator, Bishop Mark Rivituso, as well as delegates and/or principal officers of 16 secular institutes…a total of 24 in all, with nine Zoom participants. The presenter was Fr. John O'Neill of Voluntas Dei on the topic "Secular Consecration: Falling in Love Again." Fr. O'Neill was, to sum it up in one word, terrific. Erudite, funny, and clearly in love with his own vocation, Father told us his job was to get us excited about our vocations and I think he succeeded.

Some points which struck me focused on the reality of the complete integration of the secular and the consecrated in our lives, which defines us in the world. They are not separated; we are at once immersed in the world but coming from a place of deep prayer and the vows and promises which we have made. Another point was that Jesus (though of course High Priest and Lord of all) was a lay person, converting people in the world through his kindness, his gentleness, his teachings, his forgiveness, his mercy, his miracles.

During the weekend, topics discussed included the relationship between clergy and members of consecrated life–what were the similarities and differences, how can one support the other, and what could be done to further these relationships. Also addressed briefly was the Jubilee Year for Consecrated Life in 2025. More information will be coming as to how secular institutes can participate, both in this country and in Rome in 2025.

The survey at the end by those present indicated that they were enriched by the presentations, discussions, praying together, Liturgies of the Eucharist, and getting to know one another.

Our next conference will take place at the Bon Secours Retreat Center in Marriottsville, Maryland, the weekend of September 26th-28th, 2025. Come one, call all!
God Bless, *Sue Larkin*

Lord Jesus, we come to you in thanksgiving for living in a country as "one nation under God" that was founded on Biblical values and the freedom to uphold these values openly in society. We pray that you would give us boldness and courage to be good stewards of the calling you give to stand up for righteousness, especially when faced with persecution. Please give us wisdom with the right words to say to those who are deceived by ideology that goes against your original design of love. You are the King of Kings, Lord of Lords, and the world rests on your shoulders. You have made us for such a time as this in order to proclaim your name to every person we encounter. **Make us your saints. Amen.**

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National Meeting at San Damiano Center in Danville, California







Heart-warming, informative, uplifting, entertaining-in the right sense! These are four descriptions heard of the presentations from Fr John O'Neill, Voluntas Dei Institute, at the annual national meeting of the US Conference of Secular Institutes. **Secular Consecration: Falling In Love Again**. Fr John began by saying what I am giving on to you is nothing new. You have heard it all. **My job isn't to inform you, but to excite you t**o go back to your secular institutes and parishes and get others excited about this vocation!

We looked at an excerpt from a letter to *Diognetus* (Nn. 5-6; Funk, 397-401): The Christians in the World. This is a template from the 2nd century of the Church as to how baptized people were to live. Fr John notes: Since most of us were baptized as infants, what we remember are the sacraments that we receive later. **In the early Church you took a serious risk to be baptized!**

This Document, found in the Liturgy of the Hours, **is a summary of Secular Institute life**… We **LIVE like other people**. How many of our founders have emphasized: **Be NORMAL, be attractive personalities, not weird.** Example: Talk about Baseball every now and then, don't have visions, and be anchored in prayer. Imagine Jesus reminding you: "You witness to me!"

"Christians are indistinguishable from other men either by nationality, language or customs. They do not inhabit separate cities of their own, or speak a strange dialect, or follow some outlandish way of life. Their teaching is not based upon reveries inspired by the curiosity of men. Unlike some other people, they champion no purely human doctrine. With regard to dress, food, and manner of life in general, they follow the customs of whatever city they happen to be living in, whether it is Greek or foreign.

And yet there is something extraordinary about their lives. They live in their own countries as though they were only passing through. They play their full role as citizens, but labor under all the disabilities of aliens. Any country can be their homeland, but for them their homeland, wherever it may be, is a foreign country. …

They live in the flesh, but they are not governed by the desires of the flesh. They pass their days upon earth, but they are citizen of heaven. Obedient to the laws, they yet live on a level that transcends the law. Christians love all men, but all men persecute them. Condemned because they are not understood, they are put to death, but raised to life again. They live in poverty, but enrich many; they are totally destitute, but possess an abundance of everything. They suffer dishonor, but that is their glory. They are defamed, but vindicated. A blessing is their answer to abuse, deference their response to insult. For the good they do they receive the punishment of malefactors, but even then they, rejoice, as though receiving the gift of life. They are attacked by the Jews as aliens, they are persecuted by the Greeks, yet no one can explain the reason for this hatred." -Please follow link to read the last two paragraphs:

https://www.vatican.va › spirit_20010522_diogneto_en

National Meeting Hosted 16 Secular Institutes September 20-22, 2024

Father John continues: **Why are we so disliked?? Because we bother people – we should be a PAIN!** Be a pain to others, not by being rude or uncivil… Recognize that we must speak up more for Christ, his radical way of living, and the goal of our lives. Prick their conscience. If we would have more excitement and joy in all we do following Jesus – then people will come toward us! **Show genuine interest in others.** Children, students, frazzled business execs, retirees – ALL want to come back when there is an experience of loving care – a home – a selfless heart!

In the language of Hans Urs von Balthasar: Yes, we live on the edge. **We are something utterly unique and identified by Life on the Edge.** Practically, **our life is never settled.** If you join a religious order, take vows, and set/done. With secular institutes it is a work in progress! **We don't start in a monastery and go into the world. We start in the world and stay there!** Because we live in secular circumstances holding together consecration and secularity. It is a hard vocation because we pull together two things that never flow together and it never gets fixed. We are NOT a Half Thing! The Church needs to instruct people that we are fully aware of being committed to the three counsels right where we are. It is not easy as we stand on the edge between the secular world and the total consecration of heart to God!

My consecration touches EVERYTHING that I do in my life. It is not *secular OR sacred.* If I type for insurance companies, I should not wish to be in a holier place. We must see ourselves IN the mystery of the incarnation, IN the world. So, being in parish adoration or typing finance for my grumpy boss is the exact same.

Life on the Edge: living secularity and living total consecration come together. We are right on that EDGE of where both meet! Sometimes one or the other gets lost and we have a tough vocation to hold the two things together… As consecrated lay members of secular institutes our secular job is vitally connected to the sacred. It is never NOT connected in a God-centered reality. Both, my secularity in being with both feet in the midst of the world and my ongoing consecration to holiness, are intertwined as we journey and go forth building the Kingdom of God.



Refueling in Body, Mind, Heart and Soul—Count Me In—We Need This!



During the National Meeting, ideas were spawned in small groups as to what "Best Practices" could be implanted for the coming Holy Year as Pilgrims of Hope – Living Consecrated Life.

How can we better live the balance between consecration and secularity?
+ Self-understood, we want to help and support others. We need to be the bridge builders. Let's be instrumental in offering a National Synod on Consecrated Life.
+ We need to pray for Vocations for priests and all forms of Consecrated Life.
+ We want to support life-giving relationships, as priests may feel isolated, and show appreciation.
+ Offer catechism and faith formation on how vocations interact in the Church. Dare to give on help and compassion, along with our professional advice.
+ Teach about SIs in seminaries; reinforce commonalities as we are all building the church. Each vocation has difficulties and gifts to share.
+ If clergy has personal contact with members of secular institutes, then they can better understand! Clear up the misconceptions.
+ We have the same mission and we are on the same team – we just have different mission fields. Our secular institute specialty is to serve in All aspects of life; for this we need to have correct terminology. Pope St John Paul II wanted to re-write the 1978 *Mutual Relations* - update this document. Send a representative to Rome for the October 8-12, 2025, Consecrated Life Jubilee.



Sue Larkin was elected USCSI President for a second three year term, and St Louis was deemed the site of our 2026 national gathering.



Some evaluation comments included:
-Loved Fr John's presentation which really made me appreciate my professional work as the apostolate.
-Need more communal prayer, times of Eucharistic Adoration; and how we can build bridges to people fallen away or fully unchurched.
-Could we find a time that would allow younger non-retired members to come?



Don't be left in the cold – Three steps to take for the coming Holy Year of 2025

1. Read the Bull of Indiction of the Ordinary Jubilee of the year 2025

Since Old Testament times, Leviticus 25:8–13, a jubilee year was prescribed. The recent ordinary jubilee years occur every 25 years. The Proclamation Document or Bull of Indiction as it is called, is solemnly read on the Feast of the Ascension.

Pope Francis Announced the Opening and Closing dates of the Holy Doors of the Jubilee 2025 in Rome from December 24, 2024, to ending on January 6, 2026 with the theme: "**Pilgrims of Hope.**" The opening paragraph reads:

1. *SPES NON CONFUNDIT.* "Hope does not disappoint" (*Rom* 5:5). In the spirit of hope, the Apostle Paul addressed these words of encouragement to the Christian community of Rome. Hope is also the central message of the coming Jubilee that, in accordance with an ancient tradition, the Pope proclaims every twenty-five years. My thoughts turn to all those *pilgrims of hope* who will travel to Rome in order to experience the Holy Year and to all those others who, though unable to visit the City of the Apostles Peter and Paul, will celebrate it in their local Churches. For everyone, may the Jubilee be a moment of genuine, personal encounter with the Lord Jesus, the "door" (cf. *Jn* 10:7.9) of our salvation, whom the Church is charged to proclaim always, everywhere and to all as "our hope" (*1 Tim* 1:1).

May the light of hope be able to reach all people, as a message of God's love addressed to all. And may the Church be a faithful witness of this announcement in all parts of the world.

2. "Walk With One" is part of the third year of the National Eucharistic Revival

For the Year of Mission and inspired by the parable of the Good Shepherd leaving the 99 sheep to find a single lost one, *Walk With One* initiative encourages each of us to act as instruments of Christ in reaching out to those who have drifted from the Church.

Identify Someone: "Spend a little time in prayer, asking the Holy Spirit to show you whom he wants you to accompany," the Revival noted that you might be surprised by who God shows you needs your particular support.
Intercede for Them: "Lift them up in your prayers, asking God to prepare their heart for whatever he has in store. Stay attuned to the voice of the Holy Spirit, and ask him to guide you in being a vessel of his grace," the release stated.
Connect in Eucharistic Friendship: This third step should involve developing a relationship, "rooted in compassion," like the Good Shepherd has with his lost one by listening to their story, sharing your story, and offering continual support.
Invite to Action: The final step is to encourage them to take tangible steps of any size to come back home. "Whether it's inviting them to join you for Mass, a small group, or a service opportunity," the release stated, "the Holy Spirit will lead you in guiding the person he wants to call home to Christ and his Church.""If every active Catholic brings just one person into an encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist, it will be a remarkable revival for our time!" changing lives! -*CatholicVote.org*

3. Visit your diocesan Office for Consecrated Life and offer to help present and share the February 2, 2025 Event

The World Day of Prayer for Consecrated Life will be specially highlighted during the Holy Year 2025. Parish Vocation Teams, Vocation Directors, Religious Education Teachers, Concerned Parents and Parishioners are working hard to bring the options of Consecrated Life to all.

Please, make the call! Do contact your Diocesan Office and get involved in presenting our secular institute vocation to interested persons. *Send O Lord Laborers into Your Vineyard and Spare Your People.*

Together, Let Us Renew the Sunday Rest

Ever since I read about the melancholy that would come upon St Therese when Sunday evenings were about to end, I noticed that the further one distanced oneself from the true meaning of the Lord's Day, the deeper the melancholy could become. When the Catholic World Report published this piece on September 1, 2024 John M. Grondelski, Ph.D. The Dispatch 8 Print Editor Carl XX was asked and gave reprint permission.

"Sunday scaries" refers to the "unique anxiousness that Sunday nights bring." It's the awareness—sometimes creeping, sometimes sudden—that another "manic Monday" is imminent. (At this time of year, it's often accompanied by a related syndrome, the "summer-is-over" shock).

The first time I ran into the "Sunday scaries" was by reading the Sunday *New York Times.* Cody Delistraty's September 1 essay—"How Should We Mourn the End of Summer?"—on the end of summer (riffing on his book about "grief") happened to mention them as "the dread or nervousness about the forthcoming workweek."

Separately, the *Times* usually runs a puff column about how somebody spends his Sunday. This week, it was about a food writer who's now found a niche getting people to cut back on alcohol. Her Sunday routine consists of checking her Fitbit to see if her sleep had enough REM time, followed by a run, a stop at a local bakery, tuna-and-quinoa sandwiches at a local café, a tennis session, supper at an Italian restaurant. I guess her "Sunday scaries" set in during her "skin care routine."

I have yet to read a "spending Sundays" column that mentioned including the Lord in the Lord's Day. The classical Judaeo-Christian vision of how to spend the Sabbath–Saturday or Sunday–included two elements: worship with contemplation and abstention from work. To borrow a John Paul II image, today's moderns are marking Sundays breathing with one lung: they don't work, but they don't worship, either. Sunday is not *just* about God. It's about man, too. It's about humans regularly encountering what Fribourg philosopher Jozef Bochenski once called the "existential questions." Why am I here? What am I doing with my life? What's the meaning of it all? What's my purpose? …"

Grondelski raises points that weekends are a chance to do the necessary life things, left undone in a hectic over-hour workweek, or to chill and sleep. Covid has erased many a thought of embracing a full-time, regular job that one enjoys going to. "Traumatic is the term about what preceding generations probably just called 'life.'"

*Ask yourself if you couldn't improve on **how** you spend your Sundays, as Grondelski concludes:*

"Yes, people should rest and enjoy themselves. But if the high point of one's Sunday midday is a debate over tuna and quinoa sandwiches, doesn't that say something about what *might be missing* in that day? And shouldn't *that* be scarier than the arrival of "just another manic Monday?" *-John M. Grondelski (Ph.D., Fordham) was former associate dean of the School of Theology, Seton Hall University, South Orange, NJ*



Meaningful Ways to Express Your Gratitude

These Six Meaningful Ways to Express Your Gratitude are reprinted from CaringBridge.org Website…

A gift that is freely given, gratitude is a selfless act. It's an emotion that can connect us with others or to a specific purpose, and can motivate us in our everyday lives. Gratitude by itself is defined as the quality of being thankful, a readiness to show appreciation for and show kindness. Sometimes we can be at a loss when we want to express gratitude to someone – whether they've sent a kind gift, helped you when you most needed it or provided comfort during a difficult time.

1. Write a Thank You Note

Snail mail is certainly not out-of-date, and many people still *love* to get cards in the mail. A thank you note can hold every ounce of gratitude that you wish to express, and often it means more because the recipient knows that you've taken the time to sit down and write to them. Plus, it's also a nice little memento to keep should they choose to.

2. Tell Someone How Much They Mean to You

Sometimes the easiest way to express your gratitude for someone is simply to tell them how much they mean to you. Tell them why they are such a special person, and how their qualities enhance your life. Sometimes a kind word really is enough to turn someone's day around. You could give them a sweet list of what you are thankful for, or you could share your thoughts with them over a phone call or video chat.

3. Spend Time Together

Time spent together is never wasted – especially if it's to show appreciation for a kind word or action. If you're unable to meet in person, try scheduling a time to virtually enjoy a meal together or have a coffee – it may not be the same as seeing each other in person, but it's still meaningful!

4. Smile – It Does More Than You May Ever Realize!

A smile carries more weight than you might think. For some, a smile says more than words ever can – and therefore, can mean the world to someone. If you're at a loss for words the next time you'd like to express your gratitude, try a smile – not only will it make you feel good, but it will make the other person feel good, too. "Say thank you with a beautiful smile, kindness costs us nothing." -Myra

5. Pay It Back or Pay It Forward

If you are wanting to show appreciation for someone, returning the favor can be a great way to do it. Help them in their garden, deliver a favorite dessert, or send them a few dollars for a coffee on you. Gestures like these can make their whole day brighter. If the person you'd like to show appreciation to is a total stranger, pay it forward by doing the same for the person behind you. Kindness can set off a chain reaction, and you could be a part of it.

6. A Simple "Thank You" Says It All

Sometimes the most powerful way to express gratitude is to simply say 'thank you.' These two words are so significant, and can make a huge impact when said to someone that you are truly grateful for. Words are powerful, and when you can see the meaning in someone's eyes as they say them, it makes them even more so. However, if you can't say thank you in person, you can always do so over the phone. "Nothing tops a sincere "thank you!" -Natalie



Accepting Gratitude
It's an interesting conundrum – oftentimes, we find it easier to share appreciation than to receive it. It can feel awkward and uncomfortable to receive compliments or someone else's gratitude for something that may not have seemed like a big deal to you.

Here are a few tips to help you accept gratitude the next time it comes your way:

- **Allow yourself to experience happiness.** You are allowed to feel happy that an action you took made someone else grateful. Smile, and say 'you're welcome.' They will see that you mean it.

- **Say "thank you" in return.** If someone has given you a gift or a compliment in order to show their gratitude, savor the moment and say 'thank you,' they will appreciate the moment that you've shared together.

- **Take a breath before responding.** When being shown gratitude, often it can be best to pause before we say anything. This will give us the time to say what we would truly like to say, rather than the first thing that comes to mind.



Share how their gratitude makes you feel. Sometimes sharing our joy in one's gratitude can make us feel vulnerable – however, as long as you are sincere with what you say, there is no wrong way to respond.

How Else Do You Show Gratitude?
Life offers so many moments to give and receive gratitude. We sincerely hope these tips have offered you some helpful guidance on how to openly express and receive this kindness.

What are some of your favorite ways to show your appreciation?

What have been some of your favorite ways you've been thanked?

Please share in future *Mountaineers.*

We thank the Caring Bridge community for all they do in ministry to ill, suffering, and dying hearts and souls! These two pages were shared from their website, Bloomington, MN.

The word "Eucharist" comes from the Greek word eucharistia, which means "thanksgiving." The Eucharist is considered the highest form of thanksgiving because it is a sacrifice of thanksgiving to the Father.



Pope Benedict XVI said "Jesus gives thanks by endlessly offering himself and making a gift of himself to God and to men!"

USA Members Attend Global Assemblies—Take Up Tasks



The Company of St. Ursula Elects International Councilor from USA Marie Chantal Mukuluku was elected to the Council of the international Federation of Companies in August. An Assembly of about 100 delegates from every continent gathered in Rome.

Marie Chantal bridges several continents, having immigrated from the Democratic Republic of Congo to the United States after living in Belgium and France. She is the Vice-directress of the Company of St. Ursula of Canada, which has recently shifted its governance to the USA.

A social worker, she is an activities director for an assisted-living facility in Rockville, Maryland. Because it is a Catholic facility, she can provide pastoral care. Besides her Master's degree in social work, she trained for pastoral ministry at the Lumen Vitae Institute in Louvain and earned a Master's degree in theology at the Catholic University of Toulouse. She most appreciates the opportunity to serve people who are poor.





The Assembly for Madonna della Strada was held at Vienna, Austria, from August 4 to 10, 2024. It was so exciting since it was the first meeting of the General Council Members since pandemic times. Delegates from the different places all over the world gathered, some being new faces and remembering some who have passed away in the past six years. Stories, sharing and more short talks with the old members as well as the new ones were enjoyed.



Some of us found time to explore Vienna and Salzburg where the Sound of music was filmed. What a gift to see the Austrians love for music and their special relationship with nature. The environment was well kept and clean.

The highlight of everything was the election of the new Director General and four General Assistants. She is Adelaide Vaz from India. Everybody is happy for her and expressed their full support. Madonna della Strada, pray for us. *-Judy L. Salcedo, Regional Director, U.S.A/ Jamaica/Caribbean Region*



Three Obituaries



On July 3, 2024 reaching the age of 73, **Jeanette Pullis** returned to the Father's House. With her degree in elementary education she worked for two years at a Catholic school in Lucan, Minnesota. It was there that she first came in contact with the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary who taught at the same school.

Jeanette began her formation in the institute in September 1974, in Madison, Wisconsin. The following year she began teaching at St. Philip Neri School in Milwaukee for the next 14 years. Her natural capacities for order and organization unfolded in this task, and she was able to pass these life skills on to her students.

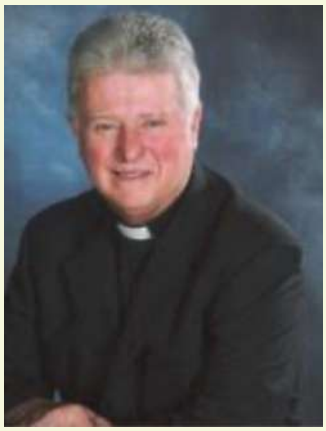
Later she studied accounting, worked as an accountant for the Waukesha County Government, and took on the responsibility for "Penny Power," an ongoing fundraising effort to support the institute's mission in the Dominican Republic. Jeanette had a calm and quiet personality that often helped her deal with challenging situations. She acted slowly but effectively. She led a simple style of life and remained realistic, stressing the importance of family and friends.



Reverend Enrique Sera was truly a wonderful friend to the rich and poor, a very faithful and inspiring Catholic witness to follow, and a very holy and dedicated priest, who served in many ways his priesthood as chaplain in the military, to law enforcement, and to those who strived to live out their Catholic faith with their struggles that they encountered in their everyday lives.

Since Fr Sera had such an intensive mental health background and experience, he was very understanding and supportive of me and other priests who had struggled in serving of their priestly ministry. When I went to the personnel board several years ago, I was delighted and relieved to know that Fr Sera (who was principal officer of the Institute of the Sacred Heart Priests) was one of its members. Even in his own struggle with cancer, very peacefully surrendering on Sept 17, 2024, Fr Sera was an inspiration with offering up all his sufferings as a true witness of our Lord Jesus in such a sincere and humble way.

Thank you, Fr Sera, for all that you have done for us, and all that you will continue to do for us as you intercede and pray for us, helping us to follow your inspiring example of service to our Lord Jesus, whom you loved so much and witnessed by the service of your life as our spiritual father. *–Current pastor at the Bells of St Mary's Parish, Fullerton, CA, Fr Steve Correz*



Reverend Joshua Peter Lee died Thursday, June 6, 2024. He was 81 years old and a beloved member priest of the Institute of the Heart of Jesus. Fr Joshua was ordained a priest on June 3, 1989, for the Benedictine Monks (of Valyermo), and he was incardinated into the Archdiocese of Los Angeles on November 20, 1996. While serving as a priest in the archdiocese, these were his assignments:

Administrator Pro Tem, Associate Pastor, Supply, St Mary Church, Palmdale
Associate Pastor, St. Alphonsus Church, Los Angeles
Pastor, Administrator Pro Tem, St Hilary Church, Pico Rivera

These were good men. I'm sure he is catching up with a lot of old friends. Early on in his illness Fr Sera told me that he was looking forward to seeing many of his Cor Unum brothers who died before him. *-Fr Scott Jones, present principal officer of the Institute of the Heart of Jesus*

News Briefs



An invitation was received: We are planning to host the Religious Vocations Day at the campus of Franciscan University, Steubenville, Ohio, on Friday October 11th, 2024. We think it would be good to create greater awareness about what the Consecrated Life Vocation of Secular Institutes is so that the students might be able to learn more about it. We've not had representation before. The event is by invitation and is held in a central location of our campus from 9 AM to 4 PM. The participants set up display tables and we generally expect to see about 800-1000 students, local individuals, prospective students and others attend.

Kathy Tierney, DeSales Institute, drove up and reported: It went well. Like a baby SEEK. One person is enough for staffing our booth, pictured here with my makeshift banner frame made with PVC pipe.



Nancy Arroyo, member of the Schoenstatt Sisters of Mary, is the director of a Biotechnology Center at the Pontifical Catholic University in Puerto Rico. She recently gave a conference at the Puertorican Association for Agricultural Biotechnology Industries (PRABIA) Convention. Their theme this fall was Cultivating Agricultural Innovations. Nancy, on left, presented a gift to Liliana Sanchex, former president of PRABIA.



"What's a secular institute?"

Rachael and Mary-Cabrini of the Company of St. Ursula answered that question for college seniors and staff members of the University of Dayton at a recent event, "After UD."

USCSI DATA

USCSI Mission Statement:

- The USCSI shares in the mission of Jesus Christ in serving its member institutes by providing education, resources, and support for member institutes.
- The USCSI is an organization of member institutes committed to making known, understood, and appreciated the call to consecrated secularity in the Catholic Church.
- The USCSI collaborates with other groups to present consecrated secularity as a viable option in today's Church.

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SECULAR_INSTITUTES_USA

Contributions and photos for our **Winter *Mountaineer*** are due by **Dec 1, 2024.** Email to jessica@schsrsmary.org or text 262-244-9329. Thanks in advance.

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St. Paul wrote that God "chose us in [Christ] . . . to be holy" (Ephesians 1:4).
He has given us his own Holy Spirit to make us
holy temples where he can dwell – saints for our world!