The Mountaineer

United States Conference of Secular Institutes

Winter 2025

Volume 18, Issue 4

From the President's Desk

Dear Friends,

In this season of the birth of our Savior and the hope for mankind that he brought, I thought it would be appropriate to share Father Scott Jones response to my query about the November 8th meeting of those in formation. Here is Father's response. *Sue Larkin*

Hi Sue,

Thanks for the email. Yes, Rome seems like a long time ago! Here is some info on the formation classes.

We had a good turnout at our November 8 meeting. The responses were excellent, as were the follow-up thank you emails. The topic was prayer.

My focus was on how each form of consecrated life has a unique approach to prayer, which is a gift to the Church:

1) Monastic Religious: Choral prayer and lectio, rooted in contemplation.

2) Apostolic Religious: Ministerial life structured around communal prayer (e.g. Liturgy of the Hours recited in common)

3) Consecrated Virginity: Prayer for her diocese and receives the Liturgy of the Hours in the consecration rite. Particularly spousal in imagery.

4) Consecrated Hermits: Prayer in solitude for the Universal Church.

5) Secular Institutes: What is our unique approach to prayer?

Answer:

I first asked them to share brief quotes regarding prayer from their own constitutions and then suggested we look for some common denominators among the secular institutes present. I then presented the following, based on what they shared:

Out of any form of consecrated life, our approach to prayer is most closely connected to Jesus' own approach to prayer.

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Blessed Christmas!

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Jesus was not a religious professional. His prayer life was not centered on the Temple (like the Pharisees and Sadducees), nor was he quasi-monastic, like the Essenes. Jesus was a "secular" in that he was a carpenter. Jesus, Mary and Joseph prayed like their Jewish neighbors who lived on either side of their house. Jesus prayed certain psalms at certain times of the day, and throughout the workday in the carpentry shop he took moments for prayer that were most certainly interrupted by customers.

Our "prayer gift" to the Church is that, like Jesus, we pray like our fellow Catholics, or, in the case of diocesan priests, like our fellow diocesan priests. There is nothing "different" in our prayer (e.g. getting up at midnight to chant Vigils like the Poor Clares). We pray on the couch, in the car, and in the parish church like our fellow believers. Because of our consecrated celibate lives we have the privilege of MORE time for prayer, but our prayer forms and prayer spaces are the same as any practicing Catholic who takes prayer seriously. We are also privileged to receive formation in prayer that others may not receive. Therefore, we are uniquely positioned as consecrated persons to walk with our fellow believers and support them in their prayer lives, because, like Jesus, we are living the same secular life as they are.

One point I made: "Consecrated laity, the woman in the pew next to you may never have been taught lectio divina. You can not only teach her, you can pray it with her. If you are in an Ignatian institute, you have been formed in Ignatian meditation. The members of your parish Bible study may never have learned that, so you can teach them this form of praying with scripture. The same is true for diocesan priests. We are formed to share intimately about our prayer lives with fellow institute members, so when we gather with other diocesan priests, we can ask them about their prayer experiences and share our own...most diocesan priests aren't comfortable doing that unless someone takes the initiative, and we can be the catalyst."

Conclusion: Our consecrated secularity means that our prayer lives are grounded in the secular world. Our prayer lives are similar to other baptized Catholics, and so we can walk with our fellow believers in a way that a Poor Clare or a Jesuit couldn't, because their lives are too "different." Consecrated secularity has a great spiritual gift to offer the world, we should never see our prayer as "less than" the prayer of cloistered monks or apostolic religious. Our prayer style is rooted in Jesus' prayer style...thoroughly sacred, but thoroughly secular in expression, and therefore extremely helpful to our fellow believers who are seeking a deeper relationship with Christ.



The above is an example of my teaching approach. Fr. John [O'Neill] did a great job of covering the canonical dimensions of our consecrated lives. My approach will be to look at the day-to-day living out of our commitments, using the formandi's own constitutions as their "textbook."

Next classes: February 14, April 18, and August 29.

God bless, Fr Scott

Pope Leo XIV appoints the Most Rev Mark Rivituso as next Archbishop of Mobile

On July 1, 2025 Pope Leo's 1st U.S. Archbishop Appointment was to name the Most Rev. Mark S. Rivituso, Auxiliary Bishop of the Archdiocese of St. Louis since 2017, as the third Archbishop of the Archdiocese of Mobile. He succeeds Archbishop Thomas J. Rodi, who submitted his notice of retirement on his 75th birthday, March 27. 2024, as required by Church law, after his service of more than 17 years.



"I am most grateful to the Holy Father for sending us this outstanding bishop. I give thanks to God that the Spirit has guided this selection of our new archbishop," Archbishop Rodi said. Archbishop Rivituso also has a notable link to the Archdiocese of Mobile, being ordained a priest on Jan. 16, 1988, by Archbishop John L. May, who led the then-Diocese of Mobile from 1969-1980 before being appointed to the Archdiocese of St. Louis.



Archbishop Rivituso was born in St. Louis on Sept. 20, 1961, the sixth of eight children to August (Gus) and Rosemary Rivituso. He has ministered at several parishes throughout the St. Louis area, served as vicar general for the Archdiocese of St. Louis since 2011. Archbishop-Designate Rivituso attended Cardinal Glennon College and Kenrick Seminary, both in St. Louis. He earned a licentiate in canon and civil law at St Paul University in Ottawa, Canada.





Since 2022, Archbishop Rivituso has taken on the task of Episcopal Moderator of the USCSI to the US Conference of Catholic Bishops. We are grateful for his knowledgeable, generous, and faithful support of our conference and of each secular institute. We thank you for keeping the USCSI on your worklist and staying with us!



Pope Leo XIV and USCSI at NCYC 2025









Kathy Tierney and Jessica Swedzinski staffed the 10x10' booth for **Consecrated Life in Secular Institutes** at the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) at Indianapolis. Under the theme: **I AM + YO SOY**, from Thursday, November 20 thru Saturday evening, November 22, people gathered from **40** states: . No less than **15,796** participants, 306 Volunteers, 339 Clergy, 42 Bishops, 85 Seminarians and 213 Exhibitors! There was also the blessing of a **Digital Encounter with Pope Leo XIV**. Thousands of people tuned in live through EWTN's multicast, and over 275 watch parties were held across the country.

The encounter was billed as the **Pope's first livestream event** and as Archbishop Nelson Perez said he hopes it was just a start and that soon the Holy Father would visit the USA in person, Pope Leo responded with a smile. Here are **four papal quotes** to the youth's questions:

"We may struggle to forgive, but God's heart is different. God never stops inviting us back. We experience this mercy of God in a special way in the sacrament of reconciliation."

"Good friends will always tell us the truth, even when that's not easy to do. Scripture says that faithful friends are like a strong shelter and a treasure. I hope you are forming friendships like that, even during this conference. Friendships rooted in faith, rooted in love for Jesus."

"It's essential for our relationship with God and with each other. There's nothing that can replace true human presence, being with one another. While technology certainly can connect us, it's not the same as being physically present."

"If you want to help the Church prepare for the future, start by being involved today. Stay connected to your parish, attend Sunday Mass, join youth activities and say yes to opportunities … where your faith can grow."

It's clear: NCYC is where lives are changed.
94% of youth participants reported that they encountered Christ at 2025 NCYC.
83% of group leaders reported their goal of seeing their young people grow in their faith at 2025 NCYC was accomplished.
78% of parents reported that 2025 NCYC was a catalyst for a deeper or improved relationship with their child.
Through the interactive **service projects** at the Exhibit Hall, participants demonstrated their compassion and generosity by completing **3.5 mats (2,000 plastic bags per mat) for the homeless, 250 t-shirt bags** and donating an incredible **15,000 bags+600 t-shirts** to support St. Vincent de Paul Indianapolis.

Registration is open for Nov 20-21, 2026, NCYC in Long Beach, CA, to secure early bird pricing. Let's pray for many and good vocations to our secular institutes in the United States!

Encouraging RISING Catholic Numbers + SI's Happenings

The Jubilee of Youth, held July 28 through Aug. 3, 2025, is the most-attended event during the Catholic Church's 2025 Jubilee Year of Hope, with an estimated 1 million young adults, teens, and their chaperones flocking to Rome from 146 countries.

Advertising sources say:
Our updated **Parish List** is here, packed with **17,670+ parishes** across 176 dioceses in the United States.
A report from Wall Street Journal echoed a trend of growing interest in religion, explaining that 2.4 million Bibles were sold in September, a **36% increase compared to the same month last year**.

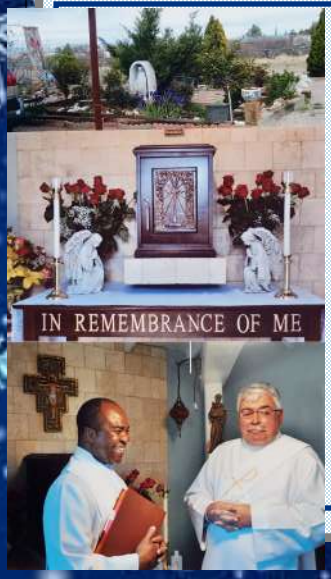
Kelsey Reinhardt, President of CatholicVote, notes:
Amazing things are happening in the American Catholic world. **Record numbers are entering or returning to the Church**, with a notable surge among younger Americans, **especially Gen Z men**. Priestly and religious vocations are on the rise. We even have an American-born Pope for the first time in the history of the Church.
We also have an unprecedented number of Catholics serving our nation at the highest levels, including the vice president, secretary of state, seven other top administration officials, and six Supreme Court Justices.
It's truly a "Catholic moment." But this moment also brings grave challenges. Our teachings on such things as abortion and human sexuality are met with charges of intolerance and lack of concern for others. Many Catholics feel they have no right to allow their religious beliefs to inform their public actions.

As Members of Secular Institutes, let us also seize the moment, staying true to our unique calling!
The Church and our neighborhoods are in great need of what we can offer!

Please check out this brochure of the Crusaders of Mary:
https://drive.google.com/file/d/1mjX_cTlQjyRz9ReQ8jodt3qJDsckyPqo/view

Don't forget to visit our webpage at: **www.secularinstitutes.org**. Contact us to ask for speakers at your next parish or diocesan vocation events. A Secular Institute Member would greatly enrich any panel offering vocation options.

Members of **Caritas Christi Secular Institute** traveled to Venice, Florida. I made my 4th renewal, a member made her 1st renewal and Emily made her Definitive Dedication in the presence of the Bishop of Venice.
I saw the ocean for the first time. In Christ Through Mary, Natasha Sager 8/8/25



Alice Ann Cortez is the **General Custodian for the Franciscan Missionaries of Jesus Crucified**, living in Benson, AZ (pictures of their chapel- and Mary Garden). Dolores made final vows. Sharon from Boise, ID; Andrew from Snyder, TX; Mary from Stevens Point, WI; John from Pittsburgh PA, and Kim from Carey, OH, are in formation at present.

Claudette Cyr, Principal Officer of the **Oblate Missionaries of Mary Immaculate**, shares that they are had a Regional Assembly, with an average age of 83.



Keeping active and serving others is her life.

She has done 60 quilts in one year. During Covid she won 1st prize with an 8,000-piece quilt "Among Friends!" (Pictured above).



She will be 85 this month and 2026 is her 70th anniversary—as she began at 15 with Fr Louis-Marie Parent, their Founder.

More from the Youth and Consecrated Life Holy Year Days in ROME

The Crusaders of Mary is a Secular Institute founded by a Jesuit priest, Fr Tomas Morales. We live our spiritual motherhood in the formation, accompaniment, and spiritual direction of young women. **We went on pilgrimage to the Jubilee of Young People in Rome.** Our pilgrimage had three stages.

The first stage was in the Footsteps of the Saints of Umbria from July 27-31, 2025. Umbria is the region of Italy where Assisi lies. The saints of that area are St Angela of Foligno, St Rita of Cascia, St Francis and St Clare of Assisi, and now St Carlo Acutis.

The second stage was the Jubilee of Young People in Rome from July 31- August 4 which included the meeting with Pope Leo XVI in Tor Vergata.

The third stage was what we called the Post-Jubilee in which we went to visit Gredos from August 4-9. Gredos is the cradle of the Crusaders of Mary, where our charism was born, so it is always a place of special graces from the Lord.

Visiting the places where the saints have been, made us realize that their lives are not just stories that we read in books, but that they are real people, just like us. This invited us to pray fervently: "Lord, help me love you like this saint did. Lord, help me to be an instrument of your love like St Francis or St Clare or St Angela of Foligno was" each time we visited the tomb of a saint, the house, or the convent where they lived.

The pilgrimage was a beautiful experience of the universality of the Catholic Church. The Crusaders of Mary lead a movement for young people that is called Militia of Mary. In this pilgrimage there were Crusaders of Mary that came with Militants of Mary and other young women from all over the world. We were around 300 people in total and we were organized by languages: Spanish, English and German speakers.

During the day, some moments were spent with our language groups and other times we spent together. Every evening during Adoration, we prayed as one Body of Christ; one Family of the Church. It was very beautiful to meet young Catholics from all over the world gathered in prayer with the Pope.

One really special moment was the Vigil in Tor Vergata with Pope Leo XVI and more than one million young people. The silence during the time of Adoration was so



More from the Youth and Consecrated Life Holy Year Days in ROME

The Crusaders of Mary *continued ...*

impressive and how we all repeated after Pope Leo "Stay with us, Lord" as he invited us to open our hearts like the disciples of Emmaus.

The Lord is always working in us, sometimes the fruits are more interior and sometimes are more outwardly visible. From this pilgrimage, one of the fruits that was readily visible was a joy that was contagious. Another one was a desire for service that was also very visible in all the pilgrims. Some other fruits we have seen are some of the young women that participated are interested in committing more deeply in their spiritual life. Some attended the Ignatian Spiritual Exercises or the one-day monthly retreat that we held in September.



We are overflowing in gratitude to the Lord for the gift of this pilgrimage and in a very special way for the gift of *our* vocation.

Thank you, Lord, for calling us to be laborers in your harvest, for taking us as your instruments and channels of your love for everyone that we encounter!
-Ester Sesmero, Crusader of Mary, Washington, DC

Company of St Ursula met for Holy Year

Our Marie Chantal (left) and 35 other secular Ursulines were among 16,000 women and men celebrating the Jubilee of Consecrated Life who gathered in Rome in October. She is praising God and thanking the Company for this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. She is quoted: Sweltering in Rome's heat, we pilgrims inched along for



two hours on the rough stones of St. Peter's Square, amid the suffocating swirl of thousands of voices in many languages. Yet devotion and joy prevailed.

At long last, we reached the Holy Door and entered the Basilica. At once a prayerful silence descended. "I felt deep joy," and "blessed to witness the universality of the Catholic Church: 'a great multitude … from every nation, race, people, and tongue'" (Revelation 7:9).

Marie Chantal was "happy to be with the lovely Holy Father and brothers and sisters in Christ." It was exciting to encounter pilgrims from Companies of St. Ursula around the world. ▼



Secular Institute of St. Francis DeSales enjoys Historic General Assembly

The Secular Institute of St. Francis DeSales held their General Assembly on October 6-10, 2025, at the Franciscan Sisters of Penance and Christian Charity in Sao Leopoldo, Brazil. Sixteen members and two associate members from Brazil, Ecuador, Namibia, and the United States were in attendance.

This General Assembly represented a historical shift in numerous ways. It was the first time an online meeting platform was utilized, allowing an additional six members and three associates from Germany, Namibia, and the United States to join meetings online. It was also the first time that the General Assembly was held outside Europe. Scheduled to take place in Germany in the summer of 2023, the lingering difficulties from the COVID Pandemic in Europe and the political uncertainties surrounding the war in Ukraine led the General Council to advise a move to Brazil. This caused a two-year delay in hosting the meeting.

The Brazilian community rose to the challenge of hosting the General Assembly for the first time, even after recovering from historic floods the year before that devastated much of the local community. Their hospitality was poured upon the international community through their music, food, liturgies, decorations, endless gifts and tokens, as well as their warm greetings in smiles and friendly embraces.

After a week of serious discussion on the most pressing issues of the institute, the community elected a new General Council. **The new members of the Secular Institute of St. Francis DeSales General Council are: Kathleen Tierney (USA Group) General Councilor**, Iria Urnau (Porto Alegre Group) First Councilor, Antoninha de Rosa (Porto Alegre Group) Second Councilor, Ottilie Kutenda (Nambia Group) Third Councilor, Maria Ines de Silva Mattos (Palmeira Group) Fourth Councilor, Adelheid Weiss (German Speaking Group) Fifth Councilor. All were very pleased that every region that had eligible candidates was represented on the council. *-Kathleen Tierney*



Delegates to the 2025 Secular Institute of St. Francis DeSales General Assembly, Sao Leopoldo, Brazil
CONGRATULATIONS, Kathy! Prayers from all of us as you now do juggle four languages at task...

Priests of the Heart of Jesus — Fr Kolbe Missionaries

Fr Scott Jones emailed: We just had a great retreat. A couple of pictures and brief description are below for the next Mountaineer.





The Secular Institute of the Priests of the Heart of Jesus held their annual retreat July 27-August 1, 2025, at Our Lady Co-Redemptrix Retreat House in Bloomington, Indiana. Father Steve Avella, a priest of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee and retired professor of history at Marquette University, gave the retreat on the early history of the Institute. During the retreat Father Richard Watson renewed his temporary vows.



On Friday, November 21, 2025 (during the NCYC Youth Gathering) Fr Vinny made his first vows with the Priests of the Heart of Jesus. They gathered at the Cathedral in Indianapolis for their annual renewal of vows as an institute starting at 12:30 with daytime prayer and renewals followed by 1:00 pm Mass and Banquet.

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As **Fr Kolbe Missionaries of the Immaculata**, we celebrated the 20th anniversary of the death of our Founder, Father Luigi Faccenda, OFM Conv. He lived from 1920 to 2005 and established our institute in 1954 in Bologna, Italy. Our General Directress, Elisabetta Corradini, gave a message to those who gathered in Rome for this occasion—meant for the entire Institute, including friends, collaborators, and benefactors! YOU!

See: www.kolbemission.org.en.blog.jubilee

Note, we did not gather in Rome, but had a wonderful gathering in Orange County, CA, beginning with a visit to Christ Cathedral.



YOU are invited on *A JOURNEY WITH GOD*

First step in this journey

Missionary conversation introducing the Blessed Trinity Missionary Institute - BTMI

*The following is based on a **real** conversation between a teacher (BTMI aspirant) in her daily activities in a school (M) and a custodian working at the school who is a millennial (A) in the Philadelphia, Pennsylvania area.*

A: You're a missionary?

M: Yes, I'm a lay missionary called and sent. And so are you, by the way.

A: Me? A missionary? No, I haven't been to Africa or anything.

M: We don't have to cross an ocean to find a world of need.

A: Well, that's true. The poor seem to be everywhere.

M: You got it. Jesus said, "The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me," (Mt 26:11) in defence of the woman's anointing his feet with costly perfume.

A: So what do you do? Do you bring Jesus to people?

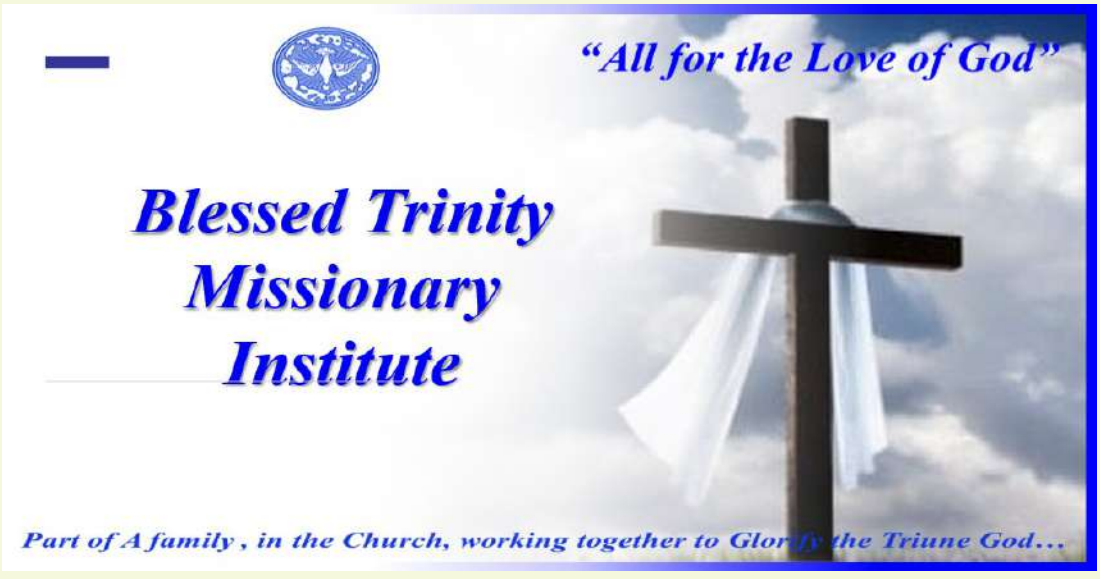
M: No, Jesus is already there. A missionary brings awareness of the Presence of God's Love in the here and now, wherever we are.

A: So what's this thing you want to join? What's the Blessed Trinity Missionary Institute?

M: It's a group of lay women living in the world, not of the world, taking private vows of poverty, chas tity, and obedience; living out the vision of a young Vincentian priest of "being good, doing good, and being a power for good." (Fr. Thomas Augustine Judge, CM)

A: Who is Fr. Judge?

M: Fr. Judge was a Vincentian priest who recognized the power of the laity years and years before the Vatican II documents empowered us. Fr. Judge, with the co-support of Mother Boniface and Dr. Healy were the founders of the Missionary Cenacle Family. Its four branches are the Missionary Cenacle Apostolate (M.C.A.) (lay men and women), the Missionary Servants of the Most Holy Trinity (S.T.) (the priests and brothers), the Missionary Servants of the Most Blessed Trinity (M.S.B.T.) (the sisters), and the Blessed Trinity Missionary Institute (BTMI)(lay women who take private vows).



A: What's the difference between the sisters and the BTMI?

M: Good question! In our secular institute private vows are taken. Religious sisters profess public vows and live in community. They are both members of the Missionary Cenacle Family dedicating their lives to God. MSBT's live in community with all things in common. BTMI members continue in their living arrangement of choice just as before and continued employment as before at jobs of their own choosing. The difference is their place of work becomes a place of ministry, a place to be a missionary in the providence of our everyday life.

A: Is this institute old?

M: Lay women started taking private vows in the Missionary Cenacle Family with Fr. Judge since the early 1900's. Dr. Margaret Healy was appointed the first General Custodian of the Blessed Trinity Missionary Institute. At that moment in time Dr. Healy had been a lay missionary for decades.

A: Does this BTMI thing have approval from the Church?

M: Yes, all the proper channels have been followed. The ministry of the BTMI has been taking place since the early 1900's. Dr. Healy was a lay missionary since age 17. The term secular institute came into existence in the 1950's, and the Blessed Trinity Missionary Institute (BTMI) received official recognition in the Diocese of New York in 1964 as a "pius union" (now association of the faithful).

A: So that was decades ago. What makes it relevant today?

M: Another good question! The Holy Spirit continues to move in our world. There has always been response to the needs of the world from God as long as he has people like you and me who say yes to *His Call.* We are *His Instruments.*

A: Me? An instrument of God? That's a stretch. I'm a janitor. You're a teacher

M: (Big hearty laugh) Exactly! You can reach people in your life as a missionary that I can't reach. And vice versa. God is calling us to be a missionary in the Providence of our everyday life. Everywhere we go, we are sent to bring awareness of the Good News. By the way, in the Missionary Cenacle Family, do you know what we call our leaders?

A: I don't know. Superiors?

M: No, they are called General Custodians.

A: No way! Like a Janitor, like me?

M: Yes, exactly! It's about servant leadership.

A: How can anyone find out more about the BTMI?

M: We have a website: www.btmi.info Help us spread the word!

A: I'd like to do that. Can we meet again?

M: Sure! Anytime you wish.



In our Spring 2026 Mountaineer, you will have the opportunity to hear how this conversation continues —

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. It is an organization of member institutes committed to making known, understood, and appreciated the call to consecrated secularity in the Church. The USCSI collaborates with other groups to present consecrated secularity as a viable option in today's society.

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Contributions and photos for our Spring **Mountaineer** are due by **February 28, 2026** to jessica@schsrsmary.org or text 262-244-9329

New Year's Resolutions: Daily Decalogue of Pope St. John XXIII

1. Only for today, I will seek to live the livelong day positively without wishing to solve the problems of my life all at once.
2. Only for today, I will take the greatest care of my appearance: I will dress modestly; I will not raise my voice; I will be courteous in my behavior; I will not criticize anyone; I will not claim to improve or to discipline anyone except myself.
3. Only for today, I will be happy in the certainty that I was created to be happy, not only in the other world but also in this one.
4. Only for today, I will adapt to circumstances, without requiring all circumstances to be adapted to my own wishes.
5. Only for today, I will devote 10 minutes of my time to some good reading, remembering that just as food is necessary to the life of the body, so good reading is necessary to the life of the soul.
6. Only for today, I will do one good deed and not tell anyone about it.
7. Only for today, I will do at least one thing I do not like doing; and if my feelings are hurt, I will make sure that no one notices.
8. Only for today, I will make a plan for myself: I may not follow it to the letter, but I will make it. And I will be on guard against two evils: hastiness and indecision.
9. Only for today, I will firmly believe, despite appearances, that the good Providence of God cares for me as no one else who exists in this world.
10. Only for today, I will have no fears. In particular, I will not be afraid to enjoy what is beautiful and to believe in goodness. Indeed, for 12 hours I can certainly do what might cause me consternation were I to believe I had to do it all my life.

