Faith IN WV
NOVEMBER 2, 2025
DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

NATIONAL VOCATIONS AWARENESS WEEK

Today begins National Vocation Awareness Week, celebrated November 2-8. This is an important time for our Catholic community to be reminded to habitually pray for and support those discerning a call to the priesthood, diaconate, or religious life.

Jesus' command to "go into all the world and proclaim the gospel" (Mark 16:15) extends to all of us.

As Sister Martha Gomez, RGS, Delegate for Consecrated Life in the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston, reminds us, "Every priest, deacon, and consecrated person is the fruit of fervent prayer. Therefore, let us renew our commitment to this essential ministry, which includes participating in the diocesan Rosary Crusade for Vocations."

A CALL FOR PRAYER AND DISCERNMENT

This week serves as a special invitation to both pray for more vocations and to be open to God's call in our own lives. Every one of us is called to holiness, but God's plan is unique for each individual. This week, let us ask the Lord to send more laborers into his harvest, and let us listen for his voice in our own hearts.

PRIESTHOOD, DIACONATE, AND CONSECRATED LIFE

The Church needs men to be ordained as priests and deacons and men and women to live as consecrated religious. These are vital roles that require deep faith and a generous spirit.

As Sister Martha notes, each of these vocations is nurtured by the prayers of the faithful. This week, let us be mindful of our responsibility to pray for those considering these paths.

How can you respond?

1. **Pray:** Pick up your Rosary and offer your prayers for vocations to the priesthood, diaconate, and consecrated life.
2. **Participate:** Consider making a pledge to the official diocesan Rosary Crusade for Vocations, which runs through May 13, 2026. https://dwc.org/rosary-crusade/
3. **Discern:** Reflect on your own life. What is God calling you to do? He has a unique plan for each of us, and this week is a perfect time to ask him to reveal it to you.

Let us make this National Vocation Awareness Week a time of deep reflection, fervent prayer, and open hearts. Let us be a community that supports and encourages those who are called to serve God and His Church in every way possible.

Grave of Unknown Priest Honors Vocation of Faithful Pioneer

Near the crest of a Marshall County hill is a modest grave that stands as a sacred reminder of the earliest Catholic missionaries who brought Christ to the rugged frontier of western Virginia more than 200 years ago.

On Glen Dale Heights, beneath the shade of trees on an old family farm rests an "unknown priest," whose life and ministry, though unrecorded in name or detail, left a lasting spiritual legacy honored by the property owners and generations of parishioners of St. Jude and St. James parishes.

The grave is encircled by a low cement wall and marked by a weathered cross. It was officially honored in 1954 by the Holy Name Society of St. James Parish in McMechen. A bronze plaque contains the following inscription:

> *Erected by the Holy Name Society of St. James Parish, McMechen, in the year of our Lord 1954 to the sacred memory of a pioneer priest who more than one hundred and fifty years ago ministered to the spiritual needs of the Catholic people living here on what was then a distant outpost of the faith. May he rest in the peace and the joy of the omnipotent God who alone knows his name and whence he came.*

Historical accounts suggest that the late priest traveled along the Ohio River ministering to Catholic families who had immigrated to the US and settled here. His work would have required great courage and perseverance—navigating wilderness, isolation, and sickness to serve people who had no way to receive the sacraments of the Church.

Local oral history, passed down by Catholic families, tells of the priest falling ill during his missionary

travels. After two days of sickness, he died in the home of a family named Clarke, the first known owners of the farm where he was buried.

In the 1950s, before St. Jude Parish in Glen Dale was established, the Holy Name Society of St. James Parish wanted to honor the site. Members—including Martin Conner, James Welsh, James McCulley, and others—reopened the grave in hopes of finding evidence of the burial. Though no bones or artifacts were found, a section of deep purple soil, consistent with long-term human decomposition, confirmed the presence of a body. According to cemetery expert John Shuetz (of Mount Calvary Catholic Cemetery) the grave's "soapstone" ground likely caused a faster decay, preventing skeletal remains from surviving. His professional judgment validated what families had long believed: a priest truly rested there.

Guided by faith and respect, the Holy Name Society built the concrete wall around the grave and commissioned a striking Celtic cross carved from white granite. The artisan was an Italian-born prisoner at the Moundsville State Penitentiary who crafted it as an act of devotion. The monument, completed in 1954, is a lasting memorial—a visible symbol of gratitude to one of the first missionaries.

McCulley, a St. James parishioner, documented the grave restoration in a 1954 article. McCulley saw the priest's life as a reflection of the missionary spirit that built the Church on the American frontier—a reminder that the Church's growth came through personal sacrifice, brave service, and steadfast faith.

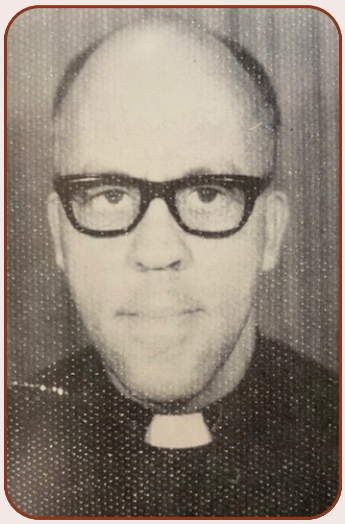
Today, more than two centuries after the priest's death, the site remains hallowed ground. The owners of the site have frequently hosted the faithful including parishioners from nearby St. for prayer services.

While the farm has passed from one family to another—the Clarkes, Reilleys, Markeys, Ottes, Keys, and Whartons—the reverence for the unnamed missionary endures, uniting generations through a shared devotion.

Though his name, nationality, and place of ordination will likely never be known, his influence remains deeply felt. This silent witness speaks of the courage, determination, and enduring faith that shaped the early Catholic Church in Appalachia. The stone cross calls believers to pray for those who answered God's call to bring the light of Christ to West Virginia's hills—and to live with the same quiet devotion to God and His people. God bless their souls.

Black Catholic History Month

Father Uncles



Friar Martin de Porres Maria Ward

Father Ward Praying

Each November, the Church celebrates **Black Catholic History Month** to honor the faith, perseverance, and witness of Black Catholics throughout history. This month reminds us that the Church is truly universal—one family made strong by the gifts and cultures of all God's people.

From saints like St. Augustine and St. Martin de Porres to modern holy figures such as Sr. Thea Bowman and Fr. Augustus Tolton, Black Catholics have shown heroic faith amid adversity. Their lives call us to unity, justice, and deeper love for Christ and His Church. As we celebrate their legacy, praise God, for holiness knows no boundaries for every culture reflects the beauty of God's kingdom.

SIGNIFICANCE OF FATHER UNCLES

His name may not be familiar, but it should be.

Father Charles Randolph Uncles (1859–1933) was the first African American priest ordained in the United States. Others like Tolton, were ordained in other countries.

A gifted scholar and teacher, Fr. Uncles believed faith and education together uplift the soul and the community. He often said that the Church's strength lies in its universality. His life was a living example of how diversity enriches, rather than divides, the Body of Christ.

Father Uncles worked humbly, without seeking recognition, yet his witness continues to shape the Church. Fr. Uncles shows that true greatness comes from faithfulness, not fame.

Be like him - courageous disciples who build bridges of faith and unity.

"PRAISE GOD ALWAYS"

-FRIAR MARTIN DE PORRES MARIA WARD

Born Matthias DeWitte Ward in 1918 Boston, the eldest of 13 children in a biracial Methodist family, he discovered Catholicism as a teenager after attending Mass with a friend. Captivated by truth and grace, the young man converted—accepting that it would cost him the acceptance of some family members. Converting lead to more. Ward felt a strong tug in his heart to discern the priesthood. He said, "I know the Lord and His Dear Son have bestowed an abundance of grace on me."

In 1945, years before the Civil Rights Movement, he applied to the Franciscan order, writing, "I wish to state that I am colored. . . if you think it not wise to accept me, I shall not feel hurt."

However, the Holy Spirit prevailed, and he was welcomed into formation.

He took the name Friar Martin de Porres Maria Ward in honor of the Dominican saint who shared his struggles with racial prejudice and his deep love for Christ.

Ordained in 1955, Friar Martin became one of the first African American Franciscan priests. His life was marked by joy, humility, and tireless service to the sick, the poor, and his students. Those who met him described him as "holy, warm, and full of laughter."

His missionary zeal carried him to Brazil, where he spent decades teaching, preaching, and giving medals and crucifixes to everyone he met. To the people, he was "Compadre Martin"—their friend and spiritual father.

Despite enduring racism, illness, and loneliness, Friar Martin lived a life of grateful faith, always whispering, *"Laus Deo Semper"—"Praise God Always."* He died in 1995.

Find Strength of Mind and Heart in St. Martin de Porres

November 3rd is the Feast Day of St. Martin de Porres – patron of racial harmony, those of mixed race, social justice, and health workers.

His life teaches us to tune out the noise and any hatred toward us. In St. Martin we learn to not only focus on Christ, but also to be like Him - merciful and compassionate.

Saint Martin was born in Peru in 1579. His mother was a freed African slave, and his father was of Spanish nobility. Martin, his mother, and sister were abandoned by his father, forcing the family into poverty.

No matter the difficulty they faced St. Martin knew to honor God with is life. God was indeed St. Martin's Heavenly Father.

At the age of twelve, he took up the trade of barber, which also in that era included minor medical procedures and medicine/pharmacy roles, learning herbal medicines.

While he wanted to enter religious life, he was forbidden in Peru, because of his race. He persisted with his desire, and when he was 15, he was accepted as a volunteer for the Dominicans who assigned him the least favored tasks at the monastery – cleaning, laundry, and barbering. For that he was able to wear their habit and live inside their community.

Eight years later, his diligence, loving heart, and reverence paid off, Juan de Lorenzana disregarded the law discriminating against St. Martin, and allowed the young man to take his vows as a member of the Third Order of St. Dominic. That didn't mean life was easy for St. Martin, nor did it stop the racist and mean comments from some of his brother religious, who shamed him, called him degrading names, and mocked his presence.

Saint Martin kept his focus on his dream job as a religious brother, and did so with God at the center of his life, refraining on slinging hate and ugly actions back at the men, who despite their offensive behaviors proclaimed they were too living in honor of God, but obviously conditional.

He was assigned to care for the sick, diseased, and dying. He cared for them with great love and compassion – seeing Christ's creation in their very being. It is recorded that he had extraordinary abilities and truly miraculous knowledge.

His life on earth was the epitome of one living out Christ's mission. He was friends with St. Rose of Lima, who was a member of the Third Order of Saint Dominic, and Dominican friar, St. Juan Macias. Many miracles have been attributed to him both after his life and during it. He died in 1639

Twenty-five years after his death his body was exhumed and was completely intact and reportedly a beautiful fragrance filled the air around those viewing the incorrupt body.

He was canonized a saint in 1962.

(Editor's note: The image of St. Martin is a digital painting by Lee of Pixel Perfexion available on Etsy.)

WV's Martin de Porres School

Wheeling was a significant center for African American Catholic education during the segregation era, with the Blessed Martin de Porres Catholic School operating from 1942 to 1955, offering a Christ-centered education during an era when such an opportunity didn't exist in the state.

Once segregation laws were repealed, the students were able to integrate into mainstream parochial schools like Central Catholic High School for boys and the former St. Joseph's Academy for girls, which later merged with Central Catholic.

In 2023, a restored statue of St. Martin de Porres was blessed and permanently placed at CCHS's gymnasium to not only honor St. Martin, but also and especially to honor the students who attended Blessed Martin School and our ancestors who open and ran the school. The old school stood on the site the gymnasium was built - the corner of 13th and Jacob streets.

Several Blessed Martin School students were part of the blessing ceremony, sharing their love of the school and singing the school's fight song from 70 years ago.

St. Martin, Patron on racial harmony and social justice, pray for us!

Special collection
Nov. 22-23

1926•2026
THE Cathedral of St. Joseph
CENTENNIAL

$1,000,000
Campaign Goals:

- ***Roof Replacement***
- **Exterior Stone Repair**
- ***Interior Repair & Restoration***

Let Us Go Rejoicing to the House of the Lord

Psalm 122:1

Celebrating 100 Years of Faith.

A Cathedral for All the Faithful

The Cathedral of St. Joseph is more than a parish—it is the spiritual heart of the entire Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. It is where we gather as one Church for Chrism Mass, ordinations, diocesan celebrations, and moments of mourning and hope.

As we mark 100 years of grace, we invite every Catholic across the Diocese to participate in preserving this sacred treasure that belongs to all of us.

Support the Cathedral of St. Joseph
by donating online at:
saintjosephcathedral.com/100th

All Souls Day

MAY THE SOULS OF THE FAITHFUL DEPARTED,
THROUGH THE MERCY OF GOD,
REST IN PEACE. AMEN.

Please join us for the

Mass of Gratitude

In thanksgiving of all those who support the Catholic Sharing Appeal

CATHEDRAL OF ST. JOSEPH, WHEELING
MONDAY, NOVEMBER 24, 2025
12:05 P.M.

Unable to attend in person?
JOIN US VIA LIVESTREAM AT
DWC.ORG/CSA

CATHOLIC SHARING APPEAL

ST. PAUL CENTER

PARISH EVENT

Scott Hahn in Wheeling, WV

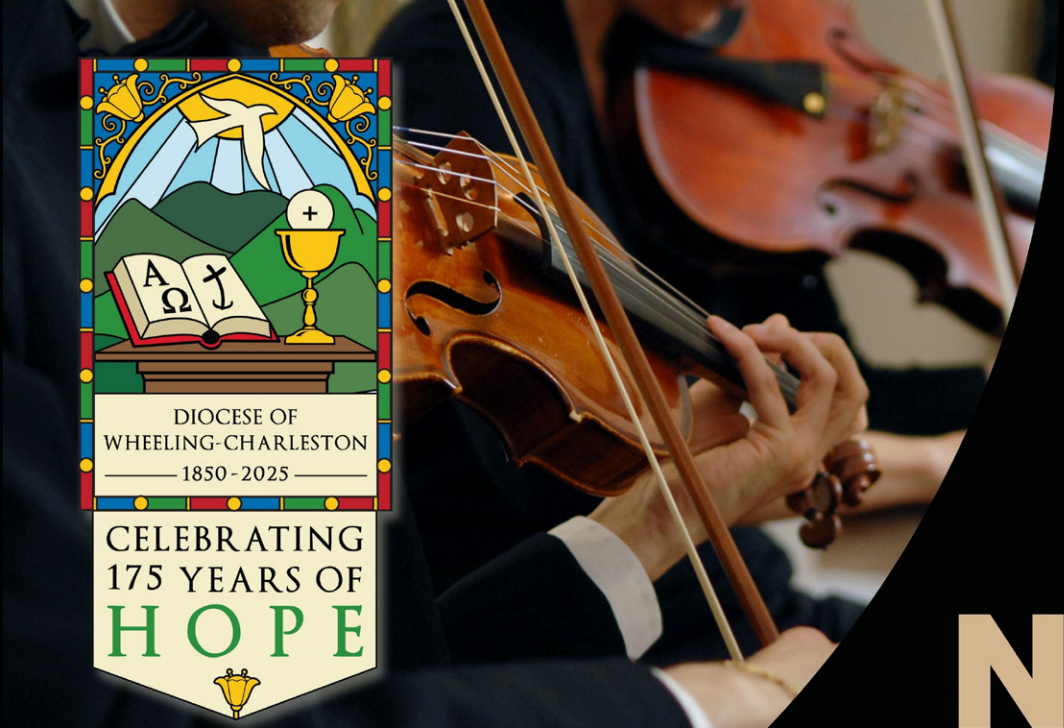
The Catholic Church: Family of God, Body of Christ

Study Scripture from the heart of the Church with one of today's most respected scholars.

St. Michael Parish

1225 National Road
Wheeling, WV 26003

Thursday November 13
7:00 PM



DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON
1850 - 2025
CELEBRATING 175 YEARS OF HOPE

MONONGALIA SYMPHONY ORCHESTRA & REGIONAL DIOCESAN CHOIRS AND MUSICIANS

6 PM NOV. 16

ST. FRANCIS DE SALES CHURCH
MORGANTOWN, WV

JUBILEE & HOPE SYMPHONY CONCERT

SONGS TO CELEBRATE THE JUBILEE YEAR OF HOPE
AND THE 175TH ANNIVERSARY
OF THE DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

EVENT IS FREE | ALL ARE WELCOME | RECEPTION TO FOLLOW

SPONSORED BY: DIOCESAN MUSIC COMMISSION

DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON
www.dwc.org

ALL SOULS' DAY

First Reading: Wisdom 3:1-9
The souls of the just are in the hand of God.

Responsorial: Psalm 23
"The Lord is my shepherd; there is nothing I shall want."

Second Reading: Romans 5:5-11
Hope does not disappoint.

Gospel: John 6:37-40
Everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life.

CLICK HERE FOR FULL SCRIPTURE TEXT

PRAYER INTENTIONS

For the Church, that we may share our faith, hope, and love with the world, bringing comfort to all who mourn, let us pray to the Lord. . .

That the leaders of all nations be compassionate to all who are suffering may they be a sign of God's mercy, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For all who care for those nearing the end of their lives, that they may be blessed for their ministry, let us pray to the Lord. . .

That we may be inspired by those who have pursued a vocation to serve the Church, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For young people in our community that they may open their minds, hearts, and ears to the call of the Lord to serve the Church in the priesthood, diaconate, or consecrated life, let us pray to the Lord. . .

Lord hear our prayer

WV CATHOLIC RADIO
BROUGHT TO YOU BY YOU

Berkeley Springs - Hancock, MD	FM	96.3
Berkeley Springs	FM	107.9
Clarksburg-Bridgeport	FM	97.5
Dunbar - Charleston	AM	1450
Grafton - Clarksburg	AM	1190
Keyser - coming soon	FM	98.9
Montgomery - Beckley	FM	89.7
St. Marys - Parkersburg	FM	105.3
Star City -Morgantown	FM	89.7
Summersville	FM	91.3
Wheeling - Martins Ferry, OH	FM	90.7
Weirton - Steubenville	FM	97.9

~Listen on LoL Stream at www.rdo.to/WLOL~
Radio Luz de Vida streaming at www.rdo.to/WLOL2

ENROLL TODAY
WV Catholic Schools
Empowered by knowledge. Transformed by faith.
Register today
wvcatholicschools.org

Liturgy of the Hours
LITURGY OF THE HOURS

Pray the prayer for this day, this hour! EBREVIARY.COM LITURGY OF THE HOURS
Scan the QR code or visit the link below to view a PDF version of the Liturgy of the Hours.

MASS ONLINE

Saturday 6pm Masses will continue to be livestreamed from the Cathedral of St. Joseph, and will be available on our website each Sunday at DWC.ORG.