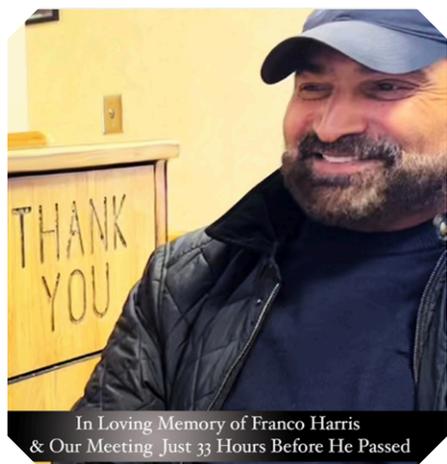




BLESSED ENCOUNTER WITH NFL GREAT, FRANCO HARRIS



Editor's note: In honor of Black Catholic History Month, we share this story about Franco Harris written by Bernadette Schreyer Conklin, who grew up in the northern panhandle of West Virginia and attended Corpus Christi Parish, where her 93-year-old father Bill Schreyer is still a member. Conklin, who now lives in the Diocese

of Pittsburgh, is the founder of the Preborn Jesus Ministry and creator of the Mary, Ark of the New Covenant Medal. She met up with Harris to present him the blessed medal and chat about all the connections between his fateful "Immaculate Reception," the sacred song Ave Maria, his own mother, and faithful sights and signs from heaven. It was 33 hours after this encounter, the famed Pittsburgh Steeler #32 passed away just days shy of being honored by the NFL for the 50th anniversary of the "Immaculate Reception" – a day we all may have seen him pin the medal of Mary on his retired jersey, while the song "Ave Maria" played for the crowd.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us". ~ Hebrews 12:1

In this race called "LIFE", I very much believe in the "cloud of witnesses" who help us to run with endurance, the race set before us. Amazingly, God inspired my favorite, Scripture passage as one of the topics I discussed with Franco (Harris) at our encounter on Dec. 19, 2022.

I wish to share some of the back story that led to my nearly 2.5-hour meeting with Franco Harris, to gift him the gold medal of Mary, Ark of The New Covenant just 33 hours before he passed.

I came across an interview by Pittsburgh news reporter, Andrew Stockey, of WTAE Action News 4, and was

astounded to learn what Franco Harris revealed... (about the) highly debated "Immaculate Reception."

According to Harris, his mother Gina was gathered with his siblings at her New Jersey home watching the game on TV. Harris stated, his mother knew something was wrong, "So she went and got one of her Italian albums and put one of her Italian albums on." Harris said, "To this day, my brothers and sisters verify this and say, yes, this happened, this is what was going on." During the very moment of the Immaculate Reception Harris said his mother was playing "Ave Maria" on that Italian music album. When shortly thereafter, his siblings came running to her shouting, "Mom, the Steelers won!" Harris said his mother looked at them and said, "I know." Reporter Andrew Stockey ends the interview with Harris saying, what we all know in our hearts to be true, "Mother always knows best!"

I reached out to reporter Andrew Stockey and on the evening of Aug. 22, 2022 (the Queenship of Mary), we discussed



the upcoming Dec. 24, 50th Anniversary of the Immaculate Reception and my desire to gift Franco the gold medal of Mary, Ark of The New Covenant in

honor of his mom, Gina playing the Ave Maria when the Immaculate Reception took place.

Andrew Stockey was kind enough to attempt to connect me with Franco, especially after the announcement that Franco's # 32 jersey would be retired, but months passed, and I still had not heard anything.

Most Steeler fans who know of the "Immaculate Reception" have heard of *Franco's Italian Army*, and so I received the inspiration to possibly reach out to a member and amazingly

I found one- Al Vento... the last surviving member of Franco's Italian Army.

I called Al and shared my story with him, stating my desire to gift Franco the gold medal.

Al said he wanted to witness me gifting the medal to Franco because over the years of their long friendship, he had heard him tell the Ave Maria story before, and Al said the medal would touch him deeply. (They met up on Dec. 19th at Vento's Pizza in East Liberty.)



We sat in the booth under the poster of Al's father who started Franco's Italian Army, with Franco pulling up a chair to the booth. As our conversation began and we reminisced about the miraculous Immaculate Reception play, something stopped Franco in his tracks when I asked him how old he was when the play took place. He said, in 50 years it never occurred to him 'til that moment, but there were 22 seconds left on the clock and he was 22 years old!

Looking back at our 2.5 hour meeting it delighted me to consider how, in addition to football, our conversation covered topics like our families, his vegetarian diet, his Catholic upbringing, and his love of Christmastime, with Franco adding, "It's about Jesus's birth."

The conversation got deep as we then talked about our moms who have passed, and God's design on Motherhood. He was charmed to hear that I shared the same birthday as his mother and at that moment, I felt such love pouring out of his eyes, it was as if I was looking into the eyes of Jesus! We talked about that special "Ave Maria" moment when the Immaculate Reception took place and how his mother "sensed something was wrong" leading us to discuss the intriguing scientific phenomenon called "fetal microchimerism" and a mother's intuition.

In total humility he poured out his words of affirmation, in gratitude for the gold medal of Mary, Ark of The New Covenant, connecting it to the Ave Maria and his mom.

When I thanked Franco for our meeting, I boldly suggested one more thing after handing him a bag of blessed replica medals that he might wish to share with others:

I asked, "Franco, what better way to honor your mom when your jersey's retired at halftime on Christmas Eve, as throughout our nation, football fans honor the 50th Anniversary of the Immaculate Reception, than to have the Ave Maria sung?"

"He considered not only that, but pinning the medal to his jersey!"

Franco gave me his permission to share our conversation, video, pictures and quotes from the grace-filled Dec. 19, 2022, meeting. Little did either of us realize that I would be one of the last to spend such a blessed encounter with this true man of humility....

Stunning the Steeler Nation and beyond, Franco Harris unexpectedly passed into his eternal reward just a little before midnight on Dec. 20, 2022.

Providentially, just 7 hours prior to the time of Franco's passing, as the sun was setting over Cranberry Township, PA, I videoed the most beautiful cross in the sky that Dec. 20th day!



To read this article in its entirety, watch video clips, and for more information about the Preborn Ministry and the Mary, Ark of the New Covenant Medal [CLICK HERE](#).

The watercolor painting included in the image accompanying this article is by Pittsburgh artist, Lea Ravotti for the Preborn Jesus Ministry.



SAINTS THIS WEEK

Nov. 13th – The feast day of **St. Frances Xavier of Cabrini** was the first US citizen to become a canonized saint! After she founded the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of Jesus, she was sent to the US with six other sisters from Italy in 1889, helping Italian immigrants who were being discriminated against. She became an American citizen and founded 67 schools, hospitals, and orphanages in North and South America. She was definitely a hands-on ‘roll up your sleeves’ or in her case, habit, kind of sister! As the story goes, she fired the general contractors who were cheating the missionary sisters who paid to have a hotel remodeled into a hospital. For weeks she was directing and overseeing the workers on the job to keep things efficient and effective. (Art by CATHOLICARTANDJEWELRY.COM)



the Mass as her strength and focus, and performing charitable acts for the poor as if serving Christ. She used her royal status to advance several projects for the service of the Church and for people in need. One project was establishing the Queens Ferry that would take the faithful across the waters of the River Forth to the Shrine of St. Andrew. (Art by Saints Alive Art Studio)

Nov. 16 – the feast day of **St. Gertrude the Great** (Art by Tracy Christianson). On this day start the holy habit of praying her Prayer for the Holy Souls in Purgatory. According to Church tradition the Lord appeared to St. Gertrude and told her that 1,000 souls are released from purgatory by praying this prayer with a sincere heart:



Eternal Father,
I offer You the most precious blood
of thy Divine Son, Jesus,
in union with the Masses said
throughout the world today,
for all the Holy Souls in Purgatory,
for sinners everywhere,
for sinners in the universal Church,
for those in my own home,
and in my family. Amen.

Nov. 15th – The feast day of **St. Albert the Great**. He was known for his love of God and being a great teacher of the faith. He taught St. Thomas Aquinas, who because of his shy and demeanor was often called “dumb ox” by his peers, believing he was ignorant since he was not outgoing in class. When St. Albert the Great heard this, he scolded the boys, confidently telling them to be ware St. Thomas Aquinas, “will do great things and be very influential.” He was right.



“The noblest power of man is reason. The highest goal of reason is the knowledge of God.” --St. Albert the Great. (Art by Tracy Christianson)

Nov. 16 – The feast day of **St. Margaret of Scotland**. She was an 11th Century Queen of Scotland and was of royal lineage in England and Hungary as well. Three of her sons became kings of Scotland and a daughter the Queen of England. She lived a holy Catholic life, honoring



Nov. 17 – the feast day of **St. Elizabeth of Hungary**. She was a princess by title, but a humble servant of God by choice. Although she was privileged, Elizabeth chose to live a simple life and dedicated much of her time to helping the underprivileged with the support of her husband. The couple was happy and reverent to God and His teachings.



In 1226, she used her dowry to establish a hospital in honor of St. Francis of Assisi, where she personally cared for the sick. A year later, when Elizabeth was 20 years old, her husband died from the plague that struck their region, while out on a crusade to Jerusalem. She

was so distraught and vowed not to remarry. Elizabeth fell from power and was exiled by her in-laws, who did not support in any way her charitable and pious life.

One of the most well-known miracles of Elizabeth happened when she was married. She had stowed several loaves of bread in her apron to take to the poor, but when she came upon a hunting party, they asked her what she was hiding in her cloak, assuming she may have been stealing from the castle. However, when she opened her arms roses appeared instead of the bread. Her great compassion and selfless acts of love revealed another miracle during the early years of her marriage. She had welcomed Helias of Eisenach, a leper, into her home. She gave the leper her room. This infuriated her mother-in-law, and she had Ludwig go clear out the room. However, when Ludwig removed the cover from the leper, he saw the crucified Christ in the bed.

She was declared a saint four years after her death. (Art by Heart of IESVS)

Nov. 18 - Honor the memorial of a little-known holy soul - **Blessed Grimoaldo of the Purification.**

His name sounds like he was more of a grim character in a fairy tale or a crusty old hermit, but quite the contrary - he was cheerful, kind, went out of his way to help others, and his prayer life made him an example for his peers. Blessed Grimoaldo was born in France in 1883. He loved being an altar server and sing



in the choir. Wanting to be a priest since he was a young boy, he entered the Passionist Congregation as a novitiate in 1899 and took his vows as a Passionist religious in 1900. He died after contracting meningitis in 1902 at the age of 19.



Nov. 18 - the feast day of **St. Rose Philippine Duchesne.**

She was born in 1769 into a prominent family in France. Without the knowledge of her parents, St. Rose joined a group of nuns in Grenoble when she was about 18. However, the French Revolution shut down

the religious house and she had to return home. She lived the vows of a religious by her actions - helping those who suffered due to the war and never losing her focus on Christ and the hopes of becoming a nun. With her monastery unable to recover from the war and with her parent's approval she was able to join the Society of the Sacred Heart in 1804. Passionate about bringing the Church into the Americas, she had to wait 14 years before she could finally leave Europe for the US, where she would do charitable work throughout the Louisiana Territory, create schools for girls throughout the Missouri region, and also minister to Native Americans. When she retired from her administrative duties at the age of 71, she opened a school for Native Americans of the Potawatomi tribe, whose name for her meant "Woman Who Prays Always." (Art available at St. Jude Religious Store on Etsy)

NOVEMBER PRAYER INTENTION

*Bless those
gone before us.*

When you remember someone during the day or even in a dream who has passed pray for them, and thank them for praying for and with you!

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f @

REMEMBER AND PRAY FOR SOULS

Remember them. Pray for them. They are praying for you.

Check with your local parishes to see if they are having a special service, event, or other opportunity to honor the dead this month.

As the Church around the world honors these souls this month, here are three shared with us planned for Wheeling this week:

- Sunday, Nov. 12, 5:30 pm at the Bishops' Chapel, Mt. Calvary Cemetery
- Monday, Nov. 13, 7 pm at St. Michael Parish
- Wednesday, Nov. 15, 6 pm at the Cathedral of St. Joseph

"Every year during the month of November we pause to remember our deceased by praying the Evening Prayer for the Dead at the Bishops' Chapel," said Deacon Doug Breiding, Director of Catholic Cemeteries for the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston. "It is a time to gather and pray for the souls of our loved ones that have gone before us."

Eternal rest grant unto them, Oh Lord. And let perpetual light shine upon them. May they rest in peace. Amen.

May their souls and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace. Amen.

THREE CATHOLIC SCHOOLS IN WV NAMED TO AP SCHOOL HONOR ROLL

Three of the Diocese of Wheeling-Charleston's Catholic high schools are among only seven in the state to earn The AP (Advanced Placement) School Honor Roll Award, a recognition for the best of the best in outstanding achievements for college readiness.

Interim Superintendent Jennifer Hornyak said the accolade is a significant testament to academic excellence, student work ethic, accountability, and mission of the Catholic Schools in West Virginia.

"We are so proud of this distinction not only for our Catholic schools, but also for our students, their families, and our teachers," Hornyak said. "When you are a member of our Catholic schools you are an important part of our team that works hard to remain focused on living our united mission, *'accompany families in challenging children to recognize, develop, and share their God-given gifts and talents.'*"

Charleston Catholic High School (Charleston), Notre Dame High School (Clarksburg), and Central Catholic High School (Wheeling), were recognized along with four other WV high schools. Charleston Catholic High School earned top honors designated as a Platinum Award Winner. Notre Dame earned the Silver Award, and Central Catholic High School the Bronze Award. All of these schools are being showcased by AP and the College Board for their commitment to increasing college bound culture, providing opportunities for students to earn college credit, and maximizing college readiness.

There are four levels of distinction: Bronze, Silver, Gold, and Platinum. For a school to be recognized on the AP School Honor Roll in a given year, it must meet each of the following criteria for their students in the most recent graduating class (2023); and these criteria are anchored in research-based relationships between AP and college outcomes:

- **COLLEGE CULTURE:** 40% or more of the graduating cohort took at least 1 AP Exam during high school.
- **COLLEGE CREDIT:** 25% or more of the graduating cohort scored a 3 or higher on at least 1 AP Exam during high school.
- **COLLEGE OPTIMIZATION:** 2% or more of the graduating cohort took 5 or more AP Exams during high school. At least 1 of those exams was taken in 9th or 10th grade, so that students are spreading their AP experience across grades rather than feeling disproportionate pressure in any single year.

"I am proud of our students for choosing challenging academic courses and working hard to complete the coursework with high levels of achievement," Hornyak said. "We expect a lot from our students and encourage them to exceed their own expectations in the classroom, community, and our churches. We want them to think bigger."



The Catholic Schools of West Virginia prioritize not only grade level aptitude, but also college and career readiness in a strong faith-based environment, Hornyak said. In order to provide the best opportunities for our students, our teachers must also be forward thinking and lifelong learners.

"Our principals and teachers are the cornerstone of our Catholic schools, and their dedication to their students is inspiring," Hornyak said. "Accolades our schools and students receive are a direct reflection of our educators, who demonstrate their own commitment to be high achieving lifelong learners and promoters of a growth mindset."

Wheeling's Central Catholic High School was also awarded the AP Access Award, identifying it as a school with a clear and effective commitment to equitable access to advanced coursework. Schools earn the additional award if the percentage of AP Exam takers who are underrepresented minority and/or low-income students mirrors the school's overall student demographics. (For example, if 50% of a school's student body is low income, then 50% of the AP Exam takers must also be low income for a school to receive the AP Access Award.)

In the US, US Territories, and Canada only 30-percent of eligible schools are recognized for creating elite AP programs. This year 4,570 schools make up that 30-percent. Only seven of those are in WV. It is important to note of those top schools:

- 886 schools (6% of eligible schools) received Platinum level AP School Honor Roll recognition.
- 914 schools (6% of eligible schools) received Gold level AP School Honor Roll recognition.
- 1,430 schools (9% of eligible schools) received Silver level AP School Honor Roll recognition.
- 1,340 schools (9% of eligible schools) received Bronze level AP School Honor Roll recognition.

For more information about AP go to: [APCENTRAL.COLLEGEBOARD.ORG.](https://apcentral.collegeboard.org)

THE HISTORY OF THE CATHOLIC FAITH IN THE AMERICAS CONFERENCE

PAST LESSONS, FUTURE WISDOM, SEEKING REVIVAL

The faithful throughout WV are invited to a special one-day conference - The History of the Catholic Faith in the Americas Conference to be held Saturday, Dec. 9, at the Priest Field Pastoral Center, 4030 Middleway Pike, in Middleway (overnight accommodations available).

According to Stanley William, who is one of the presenters of the conference, American History Buffs with an interest in the role Catholicism played or didn't play in the founding of America will find this interesting.

Of particular interest is the historical, cultural, and future place of Priest Field Pastoral Center in Middleway, WV and the role religion played in the development and strengthening of communities in the eastern panhandle of West Virginia.

Speakers include:

- **NANCY CORTESE** - The Birth of the Catholic Church in West Virginia and Harper's Ferry. Nancy is a docent at Harper's Ferry National Historic Park, mother of three sons one a seminarian, B.S. Computer Science, and Coast Guard project manager.
- **BETTY SEYMOUR** - The Historical Significance of Servant of God Demetrius A. Gallitzin and His Impact on the founding of the Catholic Church in America. Betty and her husband Frank Seymour are the Diocesan Postulators for the cause of sainthood for Servant of God Demetrius A. Gallitzin.
- **DONALD PATTHOFF, DDS** - The Evolving Nature of Freedom, Reason, and Faith and The Role of the Sacraments in Shaping History. Don is a Washingtonian historian, an author, Editor-in-chief: Journal of Laser Dentistry, and co-founder George Washington Institute of Living Ethics. Dr. Patthoff is a member of St. Joseph in Martinsburg, WV.
- **DAVID THROWER, PHD** Candidate - The Historical Significance and Cultural Impact in America of the 1531 Apparitions of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico. David is a historian, author, and paralegal.
- **STANLEY D. WILLIAMS, PHD** - Bishop John Carroll's Presumptuous Renegades. Stan is a filmmaker, Hollywood story and script consultant, catholic apologist, and author.
- **EMILY ARLEDGE, PHD** - Curating the Saints and Making History at the National Shrine of Saint Frances Xavier Cabrini, the National Shrine of Saint John Neumann, the Seton Shrine, and the Blessed Solanus Casey Center, and Best Practices for Shrine Museums. Emily is the Assistant Professor of History at Belmont

Abbey College and director of the Public History program.

- **MARIE NUAR, STD** - The Catholic Revival of the Late 19th Century and its Application to Today. Marie is the Adjunct Theology Professor of the Josephinum Diaconate Program, and past Faculty Chair for Catholic Distance University. Dr. Nuar received her M.A. in Jewish Studies from Pontifical Gregorian University, and her Sacred Theology Doctorate from Pontifical University of St. Thomas in Ecumenism and Interreligious Dialogue.

Priest Field is a 38-acre parcel of land that was included in a 1749-1752 land survey by young George Washington who had been hired by Thomas Lord Fairfax and William Fairfax to determine the boundaries of their land out of the five million acres deeded by King Charles II of England to his loyal supporters. Thereafter the land rested quietly in the cradle of the Washington family homelands during the birth of the U.S. Constitution and the unanimous inaugural of its first President.

In 1802 the Priest Field parcel was donated to a local association of Catholic men by a local farmer named Adam Livingston, who had acquired and farmed the land for some years before. Williams will share more of this intriguing story at the conference.

For more information and to register go to: CATHOLICHISTORY.STANWILLIAMS.COM



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HISTORY of the CATHOLIC FAITH in the AMERICAS CONFERENCE

Saturday, December 9, 2023
8:00 am-5:00 pm

Priest Field Pastoral Center, Middleway, WV
4030 Middleway Pike, Middleway, WV

Register - Bios - Agenda www.catholichistory.stanwilliams.com



AUGUSTINE OF HIPPO
A Perspective of History

NANCY CORTESE
*The Birth of the Catholic Church in
West Virginia and Harper's Ferry*

BETTY SEYMOUR
*History and Significance of
Fr. (Prince) Demetrius A. Gallitzin (SOG)*

DR. DONALD PATTHOFF
*The Evolving Nature of Freedom, Reason, and Faith
and The Role of the Sacraments in Shaping History*

DAVID THROWER, PHD CANDIDATE
*The Historical Significance and Cultural Impact in
America of Our Lady of Guadalupe in Mexico*

STANLEY D. WILLIAMS, PHD
Bishop John Carroll's Presumptuous Renegades

EMILY ARLEDGE, PHD
Making History at American Catholic Shrines

MARIE NUAR, STD
*The Catholic Revival of the Late 19th Century
and its Applications Today*



Agenda subject
to change due
to history in
the making.



THIRTY-SECOND SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

First Reading: Wisdom 6:12-16

Seek wisdom always – have the attitude of a lifelong learner in faith and you will not be disappointed.

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 63

“My soul is thirsting for you, O Lord my God.”

Second Reading: 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 or 4:13-14

St. Paul writes Jesus died for us, giving us the hope of heaven. Therefore, do not grieve like the rest for those who have passed. There will come a day when God will come down from heaven, and those who love Christ will rise be with the Lord always.

Gospel: Matthew 25:1-13

The parable about the ten virgins leads us to ask ourselves are we among the wise or foolish? Does it depend on the circumstance? We naturally have both characteristics – when it comes to our faith continually seek to be wise, prepared, and alert – take accountability, responsibility, and pride in being a lifelong learner.

[CLICK HERE FOR FULL SCRIPTURE TEXT
BIBLE.USCCB.ORG/BIBLE/READINGS/111223.CFM](http://BIBLE.USCCB.ORG/BIBLE/READINGS/111223.CFM)

PRAYER INTENTIONS

For the Church, that we may always seek wisdom as we prepare our hearts to be with Christ, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For our local, state, national, and world leaders, that they value the importance of understanding and being empathetic, enabling them to be elite servants of their people and for the protection of God’s creation, let us pray to the Lord. . .

For all of us in the Church that we are living examples of Christ’s mercy, love, and hope for all we encounter, ever aware of the Lord’s presence in each stage of life, let us pray to the Lord. . .

That our parish community not only foster the attitude of lifelong learners, but also foster true Christian living as Christ taught us, let us pray to the Lord. . .

Lord hear our prayer

November 20, 2023

*Mass of
Gratitude*

celebrated by
Bishop Mark E. Brennan

12:05 P.M. at the Cathedral of St. Joseph
1218 Eoff Street, Wheeling, WV

Livestream available at dwc.org/CSA

In celebration of all YOU do for your local parish and the Church, please join us for the **Mass of Gratitude** on Monday, November 20th at 12:05pm at the Cathedral of St. Joseph in Wheeling.

Mass will be livestreamed for all those who are unable to attend. You can offer your prayer intentions on the CSA website for Bishop Brennan to pray over during the Mass.

#CatholicSharingAppeal

Faith IN WV

DIOCESE OF WHEELING-CHARLESTON

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Montgomery - Beckley	FM	89.7
Purgitsville	FM	98.7
St. Marys - Parkersburg	FM	105.3
Star City - Morgantown	FM	89.7
Summersville	FM	91.3
Wheeling - Martins Ferry, OH	FM	90.7
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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.