



12 Alexandria area softball players to watch for in 2022

SPORTS, 1B

THE TOWN TALK

FRIDAY/SATURDAY, MARCH 18 - 19, 2022

ALEXANDRIA-PINEVILLE, LOUISIANA

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK

Take a spiritual walk



All Catholic Churches have the 14 Stations of the Cross said Father James Ferguson, St. Francis Xavier Cathedral rector and Defender of the Bond for Tribunal. Two Stations can be seen on the wall behind Ferguson. The Stations tell the story of Jesus Christ's last day on Earth. MELINDA MARTINEZ/THE TOWN TALK

What are the Stations of the Cross? Why do Catholics pray them in Lent?

Melinda Martinez Alexandria Town Talk | USA TODAY NETWORK

Praying the 14 Stations of the Cross is a devotion of hope. It's about walking a spiritual journey with Jesus Christ on His last day on Earth. "It is actually called the Way of the Cross, so we're actually journeying with Jesus to the cross," said Father James Ferguson, St. Francis Xavier Cathedral rector and Defender of the Bond for Tribunal.

"The 14 Stations of the Cross trace Jesus' walk from his trial to his crucifixion," said David Carson, deacon of First Christian Church of Pineville and main organizer for the Walk for Justice Stations of the Cross. "The practice grew out of pilgrimage to Jerusalem as a devotion to Jesus."

The Stations are usually prayed during Lent though they can be prayed at any time of the year.

"Although the Stations can be prayed at any time of the year, they are particularly appropriate during this season, since Lent is thought of as a spiritual journey toward the cross," said Carson. "I walk and pray this way because it helps me to meditate on the meaning of Jesus's death and how it affects what I do and say. It is a metaphorical way for me to 'take up my cross and follow him.'"

The 40 days of Lent are a time of fasting, prayer and almsgiving, said Ferguson. It is also a time to prepare for Easter and the three sacred days before: Holy Thursday, Good Friday and Holy Saturday. It was on Holy Thursday that Jesus gathered his disciples at the Last Supper and instituted the Holy Eucharist and the priesthood.

"He knew he was going to be arrested that night. Judas betrayed Him. And so we began at that point really with the Stations of the Cross, when Jesus is arrested," said Ferguson. "Of course, Good Friday is when Jesus died on the Cross for our salvation. That's truly where we get the Stations of the Cross from - is what he experienced on Good Friday. And three days later after He was crucified, He rose from the dead, which we consider Easter Sunday."

See WALK, Page 7A

"We imagined walking the Stations not in our church but downtown Alexandria where everyone would feel welcome... People from any church - or no church at all - are welcome to join with us."

David Carson
Deacon of First Christian Church of Pineville and main organizer for the Walk for Justice Stations of the Cross

Cassidy on no-fly zone, 'Operation Warp Speed'

Greg Hilburn
Lafayette Daily Advertiser
USA TODAY NETWORK



Cassidy

Louisiana Republican U.S. Sen. Bill Cassidy said he opposes implementing a no-fly zone over Ukraine that would lead to direct engagement from American troops but instead supports providing equipment that would improve Ukraine's anti-aircraft defense.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addressed the U.S. Congress Wednesday, directly asking Congress and President Joe Biden for a no-fly zone against Russian air attacks.

"Is this a lot to ask for, to create a no-fly zone over Ukraine to save people? Is this too much to ask?" Zelenskyy said virtually on Wednesday. "I can say, I have a need. I need to protect our sky."

Cassidy praised Zelenskyy and the Ukrainian people, calling his speech to Congress "incredible."

But Cassidy said the U.S. can't risk direct combat with Russia, which would likely happen if U.S. pilots fired on Russian planes.

"I do think that would be an escalation," Cassidy said in a conference call with reporters. "I do not think (American troops) should be (deployed) there."

But Cassidy does believe the U.S. and other European allies should supply Ukraine with anti-aircraft equipment, planes and drones to shoot down Russian jets that are relentlessly bombing Ukraine.

President Joe Biden announced Wednesday that an additional \$800 million in military aid will be sent to Ukraine.

'Operation Warp Speed'

Cassidy said his proposed plan to increase American oil and natural gas production would help lower prices at home and help Europe wean itself from Russian energy, placing more pressure on Russian President Putin to end his invasion of Ukraine.

He said Biden's "assault on energy production" through drilling limits, pipeline cancellations and other policies limiting fossil fuels caused gas prices to begin rising dramatically even before Russia's invasion.

See CASSIDY, Page 7A

New report recommends closing VA medical center

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has announced a proposal to close its medical center in Pineville, which U.S. Sen. Bill Cassidy has called "infuriating."

MELINDA MARTINEZ/
MMARTINEZ@THE TO



Proposal calls for moving services to local providers

Melissa Gregory
Alexandria Town Talk
USA TODAY NETWORK

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs has announced a proposal to close its medical center in Pineville, which U.S. Sen. Bill Cassidy has called "infuriating."

The proposal to close the Alexandria VA Medical Center was included in a report released by the Asset and Infrastructure Review Commission.

The report states that the Alexandria facility, built in 1950, does not meet current design standards and "facility condition assessment deficiencies" are about \$156.9 million. Annual operation and maintenance costs are estimated at \$9.8 million.

See REPORT, Page 2A

USA TODAY

President Joe Biden's attempt to adjust foreign policy is complicated by Russia's invasion of Ukraine. 9A

Ranking 'The Batman'

All of the big-screen Dark Knights (including Robert Pattinson), definitively ranked. 9B

Weather

High 70° || Low 42°
Clouds, then sunshine.
Forecast, 2A

Volume 140 | No. 1
Home delivery pricing inside
Subscribe 800-292-0581
©2022 \$2.00

