

THE WESTERN
KENTUCKY



Catholic

CATÓLICO DE KENTUCKY OCCIDENTAL

February 2024 ● Volume 51 Issue 2 ● A Publication of the Diocese of Owensboro ● westernkatholic.com



Serving those who serve

Fr. Rajmund Kopec
(center), senior command
chaplain at Fort
Campbell, Ky., leads
Bishop William F. Medley
through Soldiers Chapel
during a visit with the
Catholic community
there in December 2023.

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Youth climb Tower #68 during Christmas/New Year's Camp at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center, which takes place annually from Dec. 29-Jan. 1.

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PHOTO COURTESY OF GASPER RIVER

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Front page main photo by Elizabeth Wong Barnstead | WKC

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Deadline for submissions is the 15th of the month prior to the publishing month. The Western Kentucky Catholic will take reader-submitted content into consideration but no submissions are guaranteed placement, due to space restrictions.

Article guidelines: The Western Kentucky Catholic will consider submitted articles pertaining to issues and events within our diocese. Please contact the editor in advance for a word limit, as space varies by month.

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THE WESTERN KENTUCKY  Catholic

Official newspaper of the Diocese of Owensboro

Published monthly, 10 times a year at
600 Locust Street, Owensboro, KY 42301

Telephone (270) 683-1545

Email wkc.editor@pastoral.org

Publisher Bishop William F. Medley

Editor Elizabeth Wong Barnstead

Contributors Riley Greif, Rachel Hall

Layout Rachel Hall

Send change of address requests to
janet.clancy@pastoral.org

View current and archived
issues at westernkycatholic.com/wkc-archives



The Western Kentucky Catholic is a member of the
Catholic Media Association.

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A Word From Bishop Medley

This Lent, consider sharing your bounty with our neighbors around the world

Lent comes early this year. It is February 14 - Valentines Day - so if that is an important day for you to celebrate with a loved one or open a heart-shaped box of chocolates maybe you should find an alternative date now! Ash Wednesday, marking the first of forty days of Lent, does not lend itself to transfer.

This month I want to promote an old Lenten custom for American Catholics. At your parish you will be able to pick up a little square cardboard box that you will recognize as a Rice Bowl distributed by Catholic Relief Services. I remember the Rice Bowl as a child and at the end of Lent proudly turning in my meager contribution with the understanding that I was assisting with providing a bowl of real rice to an impoverished child somewhere in the world.

There are many special collections that we promote in our Catholic parishes throughout the year and every one of them represents a worthy venture and opportunity for American Catholics to share of our bounty with others. For many years I have been very partial in my own charity to this Lenten Rice Bowl initiative that serves to fund Catholic Relief Services.

Catholic Relief Services was founded in 1943 by the Catholic Bishops of the United States to serve World War II survivors in Europe. It provided a way for American Catholics to serve those devastated by the war. Since then, CRS has expanded in size to reach more than 130 million people in more than 100 countries on five continents.



CNS PHOTO/OCTAVIO DURAN
Boxes for Catholic Relief Services' Rice Bowl program are displayed in this illustration photo. CRS is the overseas relief and development agency of the U.S. bishops.

When we learn of natural or human-created disasters in the world, we often learn that among the first on the scene to offer assistance is Catholic Relief Services - because chances are they are already there offering programs of aid to the poorest of the poor. When the Israeli-Hamas war started, CRS was already in the very poor region of Gaza. CRS has been active in Ukraine since the days immediately after the Russian invasion to assist the hundreds of thousands of refugees displaced by the violence.

Last October when I visited Nigeria, I made arrangements to visit the CRS headquarters in the capitol city of Abuja. CRS has more than 400 workers in Nigeria. In their offices we met the directors of many of their programs. Some of these programs address food insecurity, malaria prevention, AIDS prevention, housing and vocational training.

BISHOP MEDLEY'S FEBRUARY 2024 CALENDAR	
FEB 1	9 a.m. School Mass – St. Romuald Interparochial School, Hardinsburg
FEB 4	10 a.m. Confirmation – Immaculate Parish, Owensboro
FEB 6	8 a.m. School Mass – St. Mary of the Woods Catholic School, Whitesville
FEB 10	10 a.m. Confirmation – Our Lady of Lourdes Parish, Owensboro 5 p.m. Confirmation – St. Francis de Sales Parish, Paducah
FEB 11	2 p.m. Rite of Election – St. Francis de Sales Parish, Paducah
FEB 13	10 a.m. School Mass – St. Mary Middle School, Paducah
FEB 14	12:05 p.m. Ash Wednesday Mass – St. Stephen Cathedral, Owensboro
FEB 18	2 p.m. Rite of Election – St. Stephen Cathedral, Owensboro 6 p.m. Rite of Election – St. Stephen Cathedral, Owensboro
FEB 19	10 a.m. Priest Personnel Meeting – McRaith Catholic Center, Owensboro
FEB 20-22	Meeting of the Bishops of the Province
FEB 26-28	Conference – University of Notre Dame, South Bend, Ind.

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FROM THE BISHOPS OFFICE

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Nigeria's population is about evenly split between Christians and Muslims, the Christians dominating in the south and the Muslims in the north. Of the 400 CRS employees in the nation, about half are Muslims. Although the CRS mission is rooted in the Catholic faith, their operations serve people based solely on need, regardless of race, religion, or ethnicity.

After visiting the CRS offices we accompanied the executive director, Akim Kikonda, to visit the site of a vocational training program for young adults cosponsored by CRS and the Archdiocese of Abuja. This was graduation day for 60 young adults who had completed a several month program. Among the program offerings were training in poultry and fish production, food service, computer training, and sewing. These graduates were the fifth cohort to complete the training in the last couple of years,

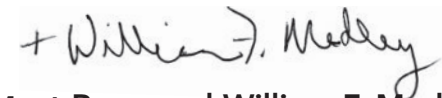
so nearly 300 have benefited.

The graduates were not just given a certificate and sent out the door. For those trained in poultry production each was given a case of 48 chicks and a 50-pound bag of feed as a starter. Each who completed the sewing program received a sewing machine. The sewing machines were electric but lacked the bells and whistles we might see in stores in our country; just the basics. Mr. Kikonda spoke proudly on this program as just one of scores of CRS programs throughout the country.

Catholic Relief Services is said to be one of the best kept secrets of the American Catholic Church, quietly and humbly going about their mission year in and year out around the world, always positioned and ready to be among the first organizers after any catastrophe.

Almsgiving is one of the three-fold Lenten chal-

lenges along with prayer and fasting. This year I will be more conscious of my Rice Bowl and how my offering is changing the lives of people. Perhaps we can more consciously connect our fasting to our almsgiving by forgoing some fast food or even that heart-shaped box of candy. Whether the gift is the meager pennies and nickels of a child or a more substantial offering, I have seen firsthand that our sacrifices make a difference. ■



Most Reverend William F. Medley
Diocese of Owensboro

To learn more, including how you can contribute to Catholic Relief Services' Rice Bowl, visit www.crsricebowl.org.

Happy anniversary

to our priests!

Fr. Pat Bittel

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‘Selfless contributions’ helped raise \$100,000 for Catholic marriage ministry initiatives across western Ky.

BY ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD, THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

Thanks to multiple “community and ministry partners... as well as many generous donors who believe in strengthening marriages,” Danny May, the director of the Diocese of Owensboro’s Office of Marriage and Family Life, recently learned some big news: the \$50,000 matching grant he’d been working on had finally been achieved, securing a total of \$100,000 for marriage ministry in western Kentucky.

Being awarded \$50,000 from the Catholic Marriage Initiative required that May’s office raise their end of the match via “new money.”

“In other words, we couldn’t just move money around in our budget. We had to go out and raise it,” May stated in a press release.

The \$50,000 raised by May’s office came from a variety of community members, including the Michael Horn Family Foundation, 14 local Knights of Columbus councils, the Catholic Foundation of Western Kentucky (which is supported by the diocese’s annual Disciples Response Fund), Owensboro Health Community Health mini-grant, and 14 private donors.

The Diocese of Owensboro was one of the first five dioceses in the country to be selected in the first round of funding from the Catholic Marriage Initiative grant in 2022. Grant applications had to demonstrate that the marriage ministry initiatives in the grant project need to have a balance of “vision, skills, and support” across marriage preparation and marriage enrichment.

Affirming this major development, Bishop William F. Medley said in the press release that “it’s important to focus on keeping ‘good’ marriages healthy through accompaniment. The Church has long called for marriage formation to be on-going, continuing after marriage preparation and the Sacrament of Matrimony, dating back to John Paul II’s encyclical, *Familiaris Consortio* (1981).”

The grant itself has been spread over a three-year initiative from Jan. 1, 2022-Dec. 31, 2024, and has already helped fund marriage enrichment projects like Grace Marriage, a parish-based, ongoing, small group model in which couples spend intentional time together to assess, engage, and grow in their marriage.

Renea Estes, a Catholic marriage ministry consultant with Grace Marriage, called the grant “a huge blessing to help establish marriage ministry” within the Diocese of Owensboro’s parishes.

“The example that our diocese is setting is encouraging other dioceses to be proactive in marriage enrichment,” Estes told *The Western Kentucky Catholic*, adding that the generosity of those supporting local marriage ministry “will have a generational impact.”

May agreed, explaining that to date, 200 couples within the diocese have participated in at least one year of Grace Marriage. Within the first quarter of 2024, three more locations are going to start offering Grace Marriage.

May said that to accomplish this, his office held “come and see” events in four locations across the diocese, funded by grant money, and then trained



RACHEL HALL | WKC

A couple smiles during the renewal of vows at the Sept. 24, 2023 Marriage Anniversary Mass at St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro, Ky., coordinated by the Diocese of Owensboro’s Office of Marriage & Family Life.

parish teams in those locations.

“Once we did that, we hit the tipping point and other parishes started reaching out to us to build a marriage ministry using Grace Marriage,” he said.

Leonard Walther, a Knights of Columbus field agent based in Bowling Green, helped connect May with local councils willing to support the matching grant.

“I was honored to work with Danny to secure the funding needed for the Catholic Marriage Initiative,” said Walther. “As a Knights of Columbus field agent, I get the privilege of attending a lot of council meetings and council events. During those council meetings I hear the good work the Knights are doing, and I knew this would be a cause they could get behind. *Vivat Jesus*.”

May credited Valeria Vessels, the diocese’s director of stewardship and development, for supporting and guiding him every step of the grant

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application process.

Vessels, for her part, said that the “selfless contributions” of donors “will guide and strengthen the bonds of marriages throughout the diocese. Thank you for sharing your blessings.”

In addition to expanding Grace Marriage, other grant projects included launching Red Bird Ministries, a ministry for child loss; launching Life-Giving Wounds, a ministry for adult children of divorce and separation; expanding marriage retreats in Spanish; and incorporating a balance of vision, skills, and support in existing marriage preparation and marriage enrichment programs. ■

To learn more about marriage and family life resources, support and initiatives within the Diocese of Owensboro, visit owensborodiocese.org/office-of-marriage-family-life.



RILEY GREIF | WKC

A couple prays together during a Pre-Cana session for Diocese of Owensboro couples, held at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center in Bowling Green, Ky.



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC

Bishop William F. Medley of the Diocese of Owensboro presides at a Dec. 14, 2023 Mass in Soldiers Chapel at Fort Campbell, Ky. Concelebrants included Fr. Christopher Kight and Fr. Emmanuel Udoh of nearby Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Hopkinsville; Fort Campbell Senior Command Chaplain Col. Fr. Rajmund Kopec; and U.S. Army Chaplain Maj. Fr. Maciej Napieralski. Dcn. Tony Carmona, the Catholic coordinator for Fort Campbell, assisted at the liturgy.

Fort Campbell’s Catholic outreach meets military families ‘where they’re at’

BY ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD, THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

The Sacred Heart Catholic Community at Fort Campbell, Ky., has a tradition at the end of each Mass in Soldiers Chapel.

“Before the final blessing the priest asks if there are any soldiers leaving our community,” said Dcn. Tony Carmona, the Catholic coordinator for Fort Campbell, which is located on the border of Kentucky and Tennessee. “Some may be deploying, or a Permanent Change of Station (PCS), or

finishing their time in service.”

The priest then has them come forward and gives them “a special blessing and a rosary with a St. Michael prayer card.”

They do this for any soldier present – even if it is their first time ever attending Mass in the chapel on base.

It is practices like this that contribute to the vibrant Catholic community at Fort Campbell, which has its own Catholic chapel with a tabernacle, crucifix, and Stations of the Cross.

Dcn. Carmona said that to his knowledge, the

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only other installation that has a Catholic chapel like this is United States Military Academy West Point.

He explained that Soldiers Chapel is dedicated to the Catholic members, however, it is still a government building. That means anyone on the installation can request the use of the chapel through the Religious Services Office. It is a shared space, built to be utilized by anyone who needs it – though there are multiple other chapels and spaces throughout base in which other faiths typically worship.

“If someone makes a request we would ‘sterilize’ the chapel,” said Dcn. Carmona. “Any unconsumed Host would be moved to a smaller tabernacle in the sacristy, the Stations of the Cross have doors that close, and there is a curtain behind the crucifix that we can use to (cover it).”

In the past, in fact, the Catholics shared the chapel with the Protestant community “and we worked well together,” said Dcn. Carmona, who retired from the U.S. Army in 2010.

Serving anyone they encounter is the responsibility of all who minister at Soldiers Chapel, according to Lori Sylvia, the director of religious education for the Catholics at Fort Campbell.

“Here, no matter where you are sacramentally, the chaplains will meet you where you’re at,” said Sylvia, whose husband, Maj. Gen. Brett G. Sylvia, is the commanding general of the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault) and Fort Campbell.

Sylvia and her husband raised their five children throughout his 30 years in the military, and therefore are familiar with the unique needs of Catholic families like their own.

An important aspect of the community at Soldiers Chapel, for instance, is “helping to foster

a sense of home so new families can feel welcome,” she said, which includes assisting with whatever sacramental prep may need to be completed: “You have to be flexible.”

Christine Kuhns is a parishioner at Soldiers Chapel whose husband, Col. Matthew L. Kuhns, is commander of the 52nd Explosive Ordnance Disposal located at Fort Campbell.

“This is a very welcoming community,” said Kuhns. “It’s a difficult thing for military families to move around and make sure your kids receive all of their sacraments.”

But “military families, who relocate often, find the community here to be very welcoming,” she said.

This sentiment was echoed by Lisa Lynch, who with her husband are retired members of the Fort Campbell community and live locally. They assist in coordinating Masses and serving as lectors and Extraordinary Ministers of Holy Communion.

“We love coming here,” she said, explaining that the retirees help the “continuing” factor of having an ongoing Catholic presence at Fort Campbell. “It’s really an honor and a privilege to be part of this community.”

Fr. Rajmund Kopec, who holds the rank of colonel in the U.S. Army and serves as the senior command chaplain at Fort Campbell and the 101st Airborne Division (Air Assault), emphasized that the military is “a transient community.”

“At times families move in January – the middle of the school year,” he said, adding that it is ideal for military bases to have Catholic programs “that support the full spectrum of sacramental requirements and pastoral needs.”

Just as military parish life differs from that of a civilian parish, priest chaplains operate differently than their civilian counterparts.



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC
Lori Sylvia, the director of religious education for the Catholics at Fort Campbell, Ky., lectors during a Dec. 14, 2023 Mass in Soldiers Chapel, at which Bishop William F. Medley presided.

Fr. Kopec, like every priest who serves as a military chaplain, is on loan from his diocese for a set term, which can be renewed (he is from the Archdiocese of Newark, N.J.)

To be a chaplain, priests are “endorsed” by the Archdiocese for the Military Services, U.S.A., (often shortened to AMS), which permits them to serve active-duty, Reserve, National Guard, Civil Air Patrol, and Coast Guard Auxiliary officers in the U.S. Armed Forces.

According to milarch.org, the AMS’s official website, “Chaplains never become members of the archdiocese; instead, they always remain subject to their home bishop/religious superiors.”

Their role is crucial in the pastoral life of the Church: a total of 1.8 million Catholics currently serve in the U.S. Armed Forces.

Fr. Kopec said some specific needs of Catholics at Fort Campbell include providing more adult

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ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC
Fort Campbell Senior Command Chaplain Col. Fr. Rajmund Kopec presents Bishop William F. Medley with a framed sketch of Soldiers Chapel at Fort Campbell, Ky., during a Dec. 14, 2023 Mass at which the bishop presided.

catechesis, addressing the issue of occasional gaps in priests' presence on base due to deployments, and offering young adult ministry.

"We have about 4,500 Catholic active-duty soldiers who are considered young adults," he said.

Speaking of the wider Church, Fr. Kopec said clergy and laity alike can improve healthier collaboration between military and civilian parishes by emphasizing mutual support between military priests and local pastors.

"As priests - military and civilian - we can do a better job of helping each other with sacramental ministry and not to be 'too territorial,'" he said.

In the spirit of universality, Fr. Kopec encouraged civilian parishes to share more information with and invite military families to local activities like marriage retreats and youth events.

Of utmost importance for the health of Catholics

in the military, he added, is that bishops allow their priests to serve on active duty.

As with priestly vocations in general, there is a critical shortage of Catholic priest chaplains - which has necessitated the AMS to endorse priests to fill GS (General Schedule) and contract positions at military installations across the globe.

According to milarch.org, "The requirements for these positions are different from those for commissioning as an officer and provide another avenue for priests to minister to a Catholic community on a military installation."

Yet, there are local signs of hope. A Diocese of Owensboro seminarian, Conrad Jaconette, is being cosponsored by Owensboro and the AMS, which will allow him to become an officer in the U.S. Air Force before being ordained.

After he is ordained to the priesthood, Jaconette will spend three calendar years serving in parishes around the diocese, and then go on a five-year active-duty contract with the AMS.

And this past December, Bishop William F. Medley was invited to make a pastoral visit with the Catholics at Fort Campbell, which included Mass, a meet-and-greet luncheon, and a tour around base.

"Inviting Bishop Medley was a supporting effort to achieve that goal" of greater collaboration within the local Church, said Fr. Kopec, who presented the bishop with a framed sketch of Soldiers Chapel as a gift from the parishioners.

During his homily, Bishop Medley spoke to the distinct calling of Catholics in the military and challenged them to take Our Lady as their model.

"When God asks something of us, some moment of service, some moment of compassion, are we ready to give our yes as Mary did?" he said. "Let's practice saying 'Yes, Lord.'" ■

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2024 Black History Month: African Americans and the arts

BY F. VERONICA WILHITE, OFFICE OF
BLACK CATHOLIC MINISTRY

Each year ASALH (Association for the Study of African American Life and History), the founding organization of Black History Month, dedicates a Black history theme. This year, the theme places focus on the historical significance of celebrating the contributions of African Americans to the arts: past, present, and future.

The artful weaving of the African, Caribbean and slavery experiences into a unique artistic presentation is truly remarkable. Initially, despite limitations of language and restrictions on education, this included quilting, the creation and use of the banjo, sweetgrass basket weaving, folktales such as “Brer Rabbit” and topsy-turvy dolls as folk-art forms. The Negro Spirituals, borne out of expressions of recurring themes of yearning for freedom (Old Black Joe), the hope to be lifted out of suffering (Swing Low Sweet Chariot), and the belief that a higher power will help a person persevere in tough times (Wade in the Water) have been recognized as Black folk music from which Black music forms have evolved. These spontaneous and unscripted songs were a part of religious and social gatherings as well as work songs and continue to be the “voice” of Black culture from the plantation during slavery to the rural South and urban settings after Emancipation and worldwide today. “We Shall Overcome,” the anthem of the Civil Rights movement embodies these recurring themes even today as does the Black National Anthem, “Lift Every Voice and Sing.”

While Spirituals remain an integral part of praise and worship, by the 1920s, Gospel music had evolved with such composers as Thomas Dorsey (“Precious Lord”). Along with this development, Black folk music or Blues in the Southern Delta was advancing nationally while in New Orleans jazz had become a unique style of music spreading to cities to which Blacks were migrating.

Black contributions to literature began with the slave narratives written by former slaves about their experience and often physical and emotional torture. Blacks established newspapers in New York, Chicago, Pittsburg, and many other cities since major publishers would not print obituaries or any news or information of concern to them. The first Black-owned and operated newspaper in the U.S., *Freedoms Journal*, was established in 1827. “We want to plead our own case,” wrote publishers John B. Russwurm and Samuel Cornish. “Too long have others spoken for us.”

Sculptors like Edmonia Lewis and painters like Henry O. Tanner all contribute to Black expression through art. The 1960s brought the Civil Rights Movement, the Vietnam War and a cultural evolution known as the Black Arts Movement. Many Black entertainers such as Ray Charles and James Brown spoke out against racism. The Freedom riders staged sit-ins and peaceful protests throughout the South while Black artists wrote poems, song lyrics and essays in protest of the war and promoting racial/ social justice such as Sam Cooke (Change is Gonna Come), Marvin Gaye (Inner City Blues/What’s Going on?).



OSV NEWS PHOTO/GREGORY A.SHEMITZ
Mark Howell directs the choir during the Archdiocese of New York’s annual Black History Month Mass at St. Patrick’s Cathedral in New York City Feb. 5, 2023.

The term Afrofuturism was used approximately 30 years ago to define cultural and artistic productions that imagine a future for Black people without oppressive systems and examines how Black history and knowledge intersects with technology and science.

Let us recognize Owensboro’s Pulitzer prize-winning photojournalist, Moneta J. Sleet, Jr. Additionally, we recognize Black Catholics who have had an impact on art, which include Toni Morrison, Kobe Bryant, Amanda Gorman, Simone Biles, Billie Holiday, Mary Lou Williams, Aaron Neville, and Fr. Clarence Rufus J. Rivers, a pioneering priest and liturgist, artist, composer, author, presenter and activist. ■

F. Veronica Wilhite is the director of the Office of Black Catholic Ministry.

Official statement from Bishop William F. Medley on “Fiducia Supplicans - On the Pastoral Meaning of Blessings”

On December 18, 2023, the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, with the consent of Pope Francis, issued a declaration on the pastoral meaning of blessings, *Fiducia Supplicans*. This declaration comes in response to inquiries over the years regarding the blessing of persons in unions not recognized as marriages by the Catholic Church. These unions may be that of a same-sex couple or a man and woman not married within the Catholic Church.

Every priest is approached frequently to impart blessings. This happens in hospitals, airports, grocery stores – in public or private places – and signifies a respect for the Church as an instrument of God’s blessing and indicates a hunger to receive that blessing by people of faith. When such a blessing is requested, one has never needed to ask for credentials, which remains the same now. Through the Church, God deigns to bless everyone. What one does with the grace the blessing imparts, however, is up to the recipient of that blessing.

Thus, the new declaration does nothing to change Church teaching regarding the sacrament of marriage as a union of a man and a woman in a permanent covenant of life and love. In fact, the declaration goes to great lengths to establish that any blessing of persons should not be presented as such, in order not to confuse the Church’s teaching on marriage or be attached to a civil

ceremony that might celebrate another such union or wedding.

From the Old Testament traditions to the life of Jesus and the early Church portrayed in the New Testament, we see God’s desire to bless his people and peoples’ desire to be blessed. The Church’s latest declaration is meant to affirm the importance of God’s desire to bless all creation.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops issued the following response:

“The Declaration issued today (12-18-23) by the Vatican’s Dicastery for the Doctrine of the Faith articulated a distinction between liturgical (sacramental) blessings and pastoral blessings, which may be given to persons who desire God’s loving grace in their lives. The Church’s teaching on marriage has not changed, and this declaration affirms that, while also making an effort to accompany people through the imparting of pastoral blessings because each of us needs God’s healing love and mercy in our lives.”

Most Reverend William F. Medley
Bishop of Owensboro
December 19, 2023

*Note: The full text of *Fiducia Supplicans* may be accessed at https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_dcf_doc_20231218_fiducia-supplicans_en.html.*

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OSV NEWS PHOTO/COURTESY METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART | PUBLIC DOMAIN VIA THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART
This is a painting entitled "The Virgin Adoring the Host," created by Jean Auguste Dominique Ingres in 1852.

BY DR. JEFF ANDRINI, OFFICE OF EVANGELIZATION AND DISCIPLESHIP

St. John Paul II said, "There is a profound analogy between the Fiat which Mary said in reply to the angel and the Amen, which every believer says when receiving the body of the Lord." Mary's yes and statement, "Let it be done unto me according to your word" is analogous to our Amen at Mass; we too are saying "Yes, I believe" and "your will be done in and through me."

In our Acts 2:42 groups this month, we are reflecting on the document by St. John Paul II, titled "Ecclesia de Eucharistia," meaning in English, "The Church draws her life from the Eucharist." The section we are focusing on is Mary's words and actions. He suggests

'The Body of Christ' – Amen!

that Mary says to us, "Do not waver; trust in the words of my Son. If he was able to change water into wine, he can also turn bread and wine into his body and blood, and through this mystery bestow on believers the living memorial of his Passover, thus becoming the bread of life."

How great a mystery! How great the gift of God we receive in the body and blood of Jesus at every Mass! The National Eucharistic Revival has a mission and vision. The mission is "to renew the Church by enkindling a living relationship with the Lord Jesus in the Holy Eucharist." And the vision is "to inspire a movement of Catholics across the United States who are healed, converted, formed, and unified by an encounter with Jesus in the Eucharist – and who are then sent out on mission for the life of the world." This is a huge vision led by those who are Healed, Converted, Formed, and Unified.

How are you allowing the Holy Spirit to heal, comfort, form and unify you and through you to be an instrument of God's loving presence in your world today? Where are you finding a vibrant, holy, and compassionate Catholic community? Are you open to being a lifelong learner about how God wants to live in and through you as a "sparkle" of God's light in this dark world. St. Augustine reminds us that, "we are called to become who we receive." This requires openness to the power and transformation of the Holy Spirit. We are called to be transformed more and more into the very heart of God. How are you finding this transformation in your walk with the Lord today?

Our Acts 2:42 groups will discuss the following three questions this month and then listen to Bishop Medley's reflection, which you can

find on our diocesan YouTube (www.youtube.com/@dioceseofowensboro7623/videos), titled "Acts 2:42 – Video 6 – Mary as Model."

1) What comes to mind as you imagine Mary as the first tabernacle?

2) How does our Amen correlate to Mary's yes to the angel?

3) Comment on Mary's intimacy with Jesus and our invitation to do the same. Discuss with a spouse or friend. ■

Peace,
Jeff Andrini

Dr. Jeff Andrini is the director of the Office of Evangelization and Discipleship, and can be reached at jeff.andrini@pastoral.org.

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Lent: A period of repentance and renewal

BY DCN. JAY W. VANHOOSIER, OFFICE OF FAITH FORMATION

The sacred season of Lent holds immense significance in the Catholic faith. It is a time when believers are called to engage in acts of penance, reflection, and preparation, as they strive to strengthen their relationship with God. It is, in essence, a call to repentance and renewal.

Repentance, at its core, is an acknowledgment of one's own shortcomings and sins, and a sincere desire to turn away from those behaviors that distance us from God. It is an integral part of the Catholic faith, as it opens the door to forgiveness, reconciliation, and ultimately, transformation. Lent provides Catholics with a focused period of forty days, mirroring the forty days Jesus spent in the desert, to reflect on their lives, repent, and grow closer to God.

During Lent, Catholics are encouraged to engage in various acts of penance. This may include fasting, which not only strengthens one's self-discipline but also allows individuals to experience a sense of solidarity with those who live in hunger or poverty. By going without certain foods or luxuries, Catholics become more aware of their dependence on God's grace and develop a sense of humility.

In addition to fasting, Lent also invites Catholics to engage in prayer and almsgiving. Through prayer, individuals enter into a deeper conversation with God, seeking his guidance and forgiveness. It is a

time for self-examination, as believers discern areas in their lives that need repentance and ask for God's transforming grace to heal and reshape their hearts.

Almsgiving, or acts of charity, are also key elements of Lent. It involves sharing one's blessings with others – especially those in need. By giving of oneself, Catholics demonstrate their commitment to love and serve others, just as Jesus did. Acts of almsgiving encourage individuals to examine the ways in which they may have failed to love their neighbors and inspire them to correct those actions through repentance.

Repentance during Lent is not simply a private matter; it also involves the Sacrament of Reconciliation and Penance. Catholics are called to confess their sins to a priest, who, in the Person of Christ, offers absolution. Through this sacrament, believers experience the incredible gift of God's mercy and forgiveness.

Lent, therefore, is a season of deep spiritual renewal. It challenges Catholics to examine their lives, repent for their sins, and make a firm commitment to change. It is in this process of repentance that individuals experience the transforming power of God's love, grace, and forgiveness. Through repentance, Catholics grow closer to God, and their faith is strengthened.

Lent calls people to repentance by urging them to engage in acts of penance, prayer, and almsgiving. It is a time for self-reflection, repentance, and a renewed commitment to following Christ. By repenting of



RILEY GREIF | WKC
Bishop William F. Medley traces a cross made of ashes on a woman's forehead during the Ash Wednesday liturgy at St. Stephen Cathedral on Feb. 22, 2023.

their sins and seeking God's forgiveness and grace, believers experience spiritual renewal and growth. Lent is a true gift within the Catholic faith, guiding individuals towards a transformed life in Christ. ■

Dcn. Jay W. VanHoosier is the Director of Faith Formation for the Diocese of Owensboro. For more information visit owensborodiocese.org/faith-formation, email jay.vanhoosier@pastoral.org or call (270) 852-8324.

FOCUS leaders say synodality, listening to young people guided mission of SEEK24



COURTESY OF GRACE WELLS

Some of the participants of Jan. 1-5 SEEK24 attending from Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Ky.



COURTESY OF PHILOMENA HEMPEL

The group who traveled from Murray State University to attend SEEK24 from Jan. 1-5, 2024, held in downtown in St. Louis, Miss.

BY OSV NEWS

ST. LOUIS (OSV News) – A record number of attendees gathered at the Jan. 1-5 SEEK24 conference in downtown St. Louis, with excitement already mounting for the 2025 conference.

Hosted by the Fellowship of Catholic University Students in this Missouri city for the second consecutive year, the conference drew more than 23,000 attendees, including 188 international participants. SEEK attendees participated in presentations and discussions about the Catholic faith led by globally recognized speakers, along with opportunities for Mass, confession and Eucharistic adoration.

A group from Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, Ky., took about 50 students and a

group from Murray State University in Murray, Ky., took about 40 students.

Edward Sri, FOCUS' senior vice president of apostolic outreach, recounted the humble beginnings of FOCUS in 1998 at a Jan. 4 press conference.

"Curtis Martin and I were graduate students together ... we did a retreat in January of 1998," he said, describing how a small group of 24 students gathered in "nowhere Kansas" and sparked a movement that now touches thousands nationwide.

"I remember driving on I-25 from downtown Denver and seeing what at the time was called the Pepsi Center," Sri said. "I remember saying to Curtis that one day we're going to be in the Pepsi Center." At SEEK24, liturgies were held in The Dome at America's Center, the former home of the NFL's

St. Louis Rams. "It's very moving to see," Sri said, describing the impact of students falling to their knees during Eucharistic adoration.

P.J. Cronin, a student at University College Cork, Ireland, said he heard about the SEEK conference while hanging out in a Dominican-run cafe with some friends.

"I really love Scott Hahn," Cronin said. "He really opened up Scripture for me in ways that I hadn't seen before." Hahn is a professor of biblical theology at Franciscan University of Steubenville, Ohio.

Cronin said he recognized a few other speakers too, but the biggest draw was seeing other young people practicing the Catholic faith, which is not something he sees in Ireland.

"I'm there in my local parish at Mass on a Sunday;

Continues on page 14

SEEK24 continued from page 13

I look around and there might be one other person my age, and it's demoralizing sometimes. ... You're on your own," he said. "And I come here and there's 20,000 young college students all practicing the faith and trying to live a good life."

Fr. Mike Schmitz, director of youth and young adult ministry for the Diocese of Duluth, Minnesota, and chaplain at the University of Minnesota Duluth Catholic Center, spoke about his engagement with FOCUS and its impact on campus ministry. He highlighted the tremendous growth in student involvement, noting his campus now hosts 75 regular Bible studies.

"It's just amazing stuff," Fr. Schmitz said.

Sri admitted this growth comes with challenges. In response to concerns about the organization being perceived as "cultish" or "clicky," Sri emphasized the importance of inclusivity in training and outreach.

"What the church is calling us to~and what FOCUS is calling all of our staff, all of our missionaries to do ~ is to be like Jesus, who goes out," he said. Sri noted it's a perennial temptation for Catholic ministries to become "insular." He called for "courage and charity" to drive outreach to people of all backgrounds and to accompany them.

Fr. Schmitz agreed. He described conversations he's had challenging leaders in his ministry to continue to go beyond a small circle as a "family meeting." He said that it's human nature to be comfortable with a group of friends, but it's essential to continue to encourage students to reach out.

"Every community is going to have some dysfunction," Fr. Schmitz said, "but when you can point out that dysfunction without fear of recrimination, that's a sign of health."

Asked about the polarization visible in the church today and the impact of the Synod on Synodality,

Fr. Schmitz responded by contrasting his experience growing up with what he sees among young people today.

"The anger, the bitterness, the resentment, the need to change the Church that was present when I was in college. ... I grew to love Jesus and hate the church," he said. But Fr. Schmitz finds students today come with a new openness. "I find our students saying when they encounter Jesus, 'I love the church.'"

Listening is a two-way street, Fr. Schmitz said, requiring the Church to listen to students but also for students to listen to the church.

Sri noted that a number of FOCUS staff have participated in listening sessions at parishes held in preparation for the synod, and he emphasized a synodal approach is at the heart of FOCUS's evangelical mission.

"So much of what we're doing is going to listen to people downstream," he said. Sri insisted that hearing the questions of young people has driven the way that FOCUS has developed its formation curriculum. And that process will continue, as formation materials are revised and reissued, Sri said.

Emily Wilson Hussem, an author and speaker, described the openness she has seen among students at SEEK24.

"They're so hungry, they're so sick of the culture, they know it's all a lie ... and they're here, and they're ready and open," she said.

Fr. Schmitz echoed Hussem's hope. He described meeting attendees who enthusiastically shared with him that the Bible, and a newfound love for Scripture, had saved their families.

As SEEK24 drew to a close, FOCUS announced the theme for SEEK25, to be held in Salt Lake City, using the words Jesus Christ speaks to his disciples in the Gospel: "Follow me." ■



COURTESY OF PHILOMENA HEMPEL
Fr. Josh McCarty, pastor of St. Leo Parish in Murray, which ministers to the Murray State University Newman Catholic Center, waves a flag to help students find their seating at SEEK24



COURTESY OF GRACE WELLS
Ben Warrell (wearing hoodie), the director of Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center in Bowling Green, stands with SEEK24 attendees who have worked at Gasper. Pictured are (left to right) Caroline Long, Sakura Ogawa, Ben Warrell, Carol Staples, Landon Reffitt, Grace Wells, Courtney Kramer, and Sam Rhodes. This was the first year that Gasper River had a vendor booth present at SEEK.

Epiphany at St. Alphonsus and St. Elizabeth

BY FR. ANTHONI OTTAGAN, SPECIAL TO THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

St. Alphonsus Parish in St. Joseph and St. Elizabeth Parish in Curdsville had our annual Epiphany Celebration with our children and choir on Jan. 7, 2024. A total of 30 children participated in our live nativity play and three of our children participated in singing Christmas carols. ■



COURTESY OF FR. ANTHONI OTTAGAN
(Above photo) The children of St. Alphonsus Parish in St. Joseph and St. Elizabeth Parish in Curdsville depict the Epiphany, which observes the day the Wise Men came to see the Christ Child, during a celebration on Jan. 7, 2024.



COURTESY OF FR. ANTHONI OTTAGAN
(Right photo) The children of St. Alphonsus Parish in St. Joseph and St. Elizabeth Parish in Curdsville sing carols to the audience gathered for the parishes' annual Epiphany Celebration, which took place on Jan. 7, 2024.



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Welcoming 2024, Gasper River style

BY WKC STAFF

Every Dec. 29 to Jan. 1, current eighth grader and high school students are invited to attend Christmas/New Year's Camp at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center in Bowling Green.

This lowkey, holiday-themed camp is an opportunity for eighth-graders to meet other youth they'll attend Camp LIFE with the following summer – and for high schoolers to reconnect with friends from previous camps. Campers participate in Gasper's regular activities, celebrate the sacraments including Mass and Adoration, but do so in a more relaxed atmosphere in the spirit of Christmas break.

To learn more or register for this year's camps at Gasper River, visit www.gasriverretreatcenter.org/camp-information. ■



COURTESY OF GASPER RIVER
Boys don helmets for outdoor activities during the Dec. 29, 2023 to Jan. 1, 2024 Christmas/New Year's Camp at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center in Bowling Green.



COURTESY OF GASPER RIVER
Several campers recreate a nativity scene during the Dec. 29, 2023 to Jan. 1, 2024 Christmas/New Year's Camp at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center in Bowling Green.



COURTESY OF GASPER RIVER
Teens assist each other on the Jacob's Ladder during the Dec. 29, 2023 to Jan. 1, 2024 Christmas/New Year's Camp at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center in Bowling Green.

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“Solvitur Ambulando
in walking, it is solved.”
ST. AUGUSTINE



Office of Young Adult Ministry
DIocese of OWENSBORO

Paducah parishioners collect, share items for moms with unplanned pregnancies

BY ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST PARISH STAFF, SPECIAL TO THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

St. John the Evangelist parishioners in Paducah on March 25, 2023, named their spiritually adopted babies and began praying each day for nine months for these babies by name that they will be saved from the scourge of abortion. Spiritual adoption consists in praying for a particular but unknown unborn baby in danger of abortion will be given life. The week of Christmas 2023, we celebrated their due dates and safe births. Then on the weekends of the Feasts of the Holy Family and Epiphany, parishioners brought baby gifts that can be used at Hope Unlimited Family Care Center for their clients that need help with their unplanned pregnancies and newborn babies. Jesus, Mary and Joseph, we love you very much and ask you to watch over the lives of our spiritually adopted babies as they grow in wisdom and grace throughout their lives. To learn more about Hope Unlimited, which assists women facing unplanned pregnancies and families in crisis, visit <https://hopeunlimitedfcc.org>. ■



COURTESY OF ST. JOHN THE EVANGELIST PARISH
Items for the clients of Hope Unlimited are seen at St. John the Evangelist Parish in Paducah, after an initiative in which parishioners spiritually adopted unborn babies in danger of abortion. The items were later given to Hope Unlimited for those with unplanned pregnancies and newborn babies.



COURTESY OF TOM CLINTON
Supporters of life brought the annual Knights of Columbus Walk for Life indoors in Paducah on Jan. 20, 2024 at the St. Francis de Sales parish center. The event, which usually is outdoors in downtown Paducah, was moved indoors due to extremely dangerous weather conditions.

BY TOM CLINTON, SPECIAL TO THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

Echoes of “Choose Life” resounded through the parish center at St. Francis de Sales on

Paducah Walk for Life continues indoors amid freezing weather conditions

Saturday afternoon, Jan. 20, 2024.

The day after thousands gathered in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere around the country to celebrate life, 42 people assembled on a frigid afternoon for the annual Paducah area Walk for Life.

The walk and rosary is an annual event, normally held outdoors at Dolly McNutt Plaza in downtown Paducah, sponsored by local councils of the Knights of Columbus. Extremely cold wind chills forced the event inside. In no way did the cold outside cool the enthusiasm of walkers, hoping and praying for a restoration of the culture of life in the United States.

The event began with recitation of a rosary, led by members of Knights of Columbus Councils 11591

and 1055 and Daughters of Isabella Circle 258.

The rosary served as a reminder of the ultimate “Yes” to life given by Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Participants were reminded that, while the infamous Supreme Court decision, Roe v. Wade, legalizing abortion, has been returned to the states for review (as of the 2022 Dobbs v. Jackson decision), the fight for life continues. While laws can ban legal abortion, much prayer and a national change of heart is more important than ever.

Catholics in Paducah and beyond were also urged to pray a Novena for Life, along with Knights and supporters across the country.

The Knights of Columbus is unwavering in their commitment to choosing life, from conception to natural death. ■

‘Giving people hope it can happen’

Braver Angels to host three free Owensboro workshops on bridging the political divide

BY ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD, THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

Amid ever-growing polarization and tensions with this election year, the organizers of Braver Angels hope to help Owensboro and Daviess County residents “give one another grace.”

“I have seen this polarization in faith communities. I’ve seen pastors really stressed by this. The divisions are far-reaching in both Protestant and Catholic communities,” said Carolyn Dupont, the Braver Angels Kentucky state coordinator, who will help lead a series of three free workshops.

Braver Angels is a national organization dedicated to bridging partisan divides. Founded in 2016, it works from the grassroots to help Americans see one another with less rancor and more empathy.

The Diocese of Owensboro and Brescia University in Owensboro are partnering with Braver Angels to offer the workshops, which will be held on Saturdays in February, March, and April. The workshops will be held from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m., and lunch is included. Advance registration is required and may be accessed at <http://tinyurl.com/yc7n7z5d>.

Dupont, a professor of history, philosophy and religious studies at Eastern Kentucky University in Richmond, Ky., has worked with Braver Angels for about five years.

She ran for election to the Kentucky House of Representatives in 2020, and while she did not win, “I had so many conversations with people whom I wouldn’t have ordinarily,” she said.

This taught her something significant.

“We’re all living in intellectual un-information silos,” said Dupont. “That reinforces our biases that we are right.”

Braver Angels provides a setting “to have conversations with people you don’t necessarily agree with, but it is a safe place to do so,” she said.

The series of three workshops coming to Owensboro are Feb. 3, “Red/Blue”; March 9, “Skills for Bridging the Divide”; and April 13, “Can we agree about abortion?”

She said the Red/Blue topic is typically offered first in Braver Angels’ workshop series, since it is a good introduction to the experience.

“I think people come to this extremely skeptical,” she said, but “the goal of this first workshop is to give people hope that it can happen.”

Dupont said that the first time she led this workshop, people were amazed and “could leave feeling like they had been heard and could hear others in a human way.”

“It can be such a refreshing experience to talk with people who think differently than we do,” she said.

One of the lessons Dupont has learned through participating with Braver Angels is that “for politicians, there’s an advantage to painting every issue as black and white. So then you start to think of every issue in such dichotomized ways.”

“Every issue is very complicated and every issue is multifaceted,” she said, adding that “this polarization is making us less informed.”



COURTESY OF BRAVER ANGELS

The logo for Braver Angels, which will hold a series of three workshops in Owensboro this spring.

In terms of the final workshop, Dupont said she is aware of the divide between Kentuckians on the topic of abortion. However, she said the rationale is that “if we can talk about this, we can talk about anything,” she explained.

She encouraged individuals who are on the fence about participating to still attend. She said there is also a possibility for people to participate as observers, even if they do not wish to actively participate in the workshops. Those interested in this option can email her at carolynreneedupont@gmail.com.

“Show up, even if they don’t believe it can happen,” she said. “Give it a chance. My own journey with Braver Angels is what makes me continue to do this, and why I do this. It has changed me, and I really love that.”

Dupont said Braver Angels “helps people perceive other people as real human beings. I wouldn’t say my political opinions have changed much – but I love the fact that I have real, ongoing conversations with people.”

“Maybe, we can work our way out of the mess we’re in,” she said. ■

Knottsville, Philpot parishioners gather to celebrate pastor's 20th ordination anniversary

BY WKC STAFF

On Jan. 21, 2024, the parishioners of St. William Parish in Knottsville and St. Lawrence Parish in Philpot gathered to honor their pastor's 20th anniversary of priesthood. Their pastor, Fr. Shijo Vadakumkara, was celebrated with a reception in the Mary Carrico School Gym after 10 a.m. Mass at St. William Parish. The party feast included a large cake decorated with a stole, a ciborium and a bible made of icing. ■



COURTESY OF LAUREN JOHNSON
Fr. Shijo Vadakumkara stands ready to cut his 20th ordination anniversary cake on Jan. 21, 2024.

A Vincentian's journey

BY BELINDA ABELL, SPECIAL TO THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

A conversation with Nancy Harris, president of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul – Diocesan Council of Western Kentucky, Inc.

What brought you to becoming a Vincentian?

About eight years ago I was looking for something to do after being retired for a while. I wanted to volunteer in some capacity and decided to check out the Society of St. Vincent de Paul at my parish, Sts. Joseph and Paul. I had volunteered at the Help Office in Owensboro and had worked with Vincentians when looking for resources for those needing assistance. I was impressed with how they truly cared for our neighbors in need.

What do you find to be the most rewarding part of being a Vincentian?

It's being able to make a difference in other people's lives. As a member of my parish conference, it's assisting a neighbor with rent or food or keeping their utilities on or simply praying with them. As diocesan council president, it's helping Vincentians at all levels grow in friendship, spirituality, and service to others.

Looking back from when you became a Vincentian to today, how would you describe your journey?

My journey was nothing I could have imagined. As president of my parish conference, I became involved at the district level, which includes all conferences in Daviess, McLean and Henderson counties. I was asked to serve as vice president of the diocesan council and after a short time was elected as its first female president since its inception in 1961. Our council encompasses all 32 counties of the Diocese of Owensboro. I'm nearing the end of my second three-year term and I've enjoyed all the chal-

lenges and accomplishments. I was fortunate to attend St. Vincent de Paul's week-long leadership program – "Invitation for Renewal" where I joined Vincentians from across America who seek a deeper understanding of Vincentian spirituality. I've grown as a person and as a Catholic. I've met, worked with, and collaborated with some of the most amazing people and been fortunate to have made wonderful, new friends that I will carry through the rest of my life. I'm always learning something new - about myself and about the Society. All my experiences have taught me what being humble really means. The challenges have meant learning to depend on the Holy Spirit whether I'm speaking to a neighbor in need, Vincentians, at a meeting or whatever situation I find myself in.

What are your future plans for this Vincentian journey?

When my time as president ends, I will serve on national committees and continue to be a part my parish conference. I will, if asked, assist the next president and their board as needed. I was recently invited to serve on the national peer review team to review requests from councils and conferences. I'm excited to discover what else is next!

What advice would you give someone who is pondering a Vincentian Journey?

Do it! Don't have any preconceived notions or expectations. Just open yourself up to whatever the Holy Spirit has in store for you. As a Vincentian, I love that I can share my time and talent with a group of like-minded people who have fun in serving neighbors in need, growing spiritually, and building friendship. ■

Belinda Abell is the external affairs director for Society of St. Vincent de Paul – Diocesan Council of Western Kentucky, Inc.

Fr. Edward Fitzgerald, protector of the Eucharist



COURTESY OF ARCHIVES

This is said to be the actual photograph depicting little Edward Fitzgerald asleep atop the Eucharist "guarding the Precious Treasure."

BY EDWARD WILSON, ARCHIVES

A frantic knocking echoes through the Fitzgerald house one summer morning in 1863. The door swings open to reveal a priest standing on the stoop with his hands earnestly pressing something to his chest. Violence, screams and breaking glass, can be heard from the streets behind him. "Take me to Edward," the priest commands. Mr. Fitzgerald leads the priest to the sleeping three-year-old Fitzgerald boy. The priest takes the pyx containing the Holy Eucharist that he has been clutching to his chest and places it beneath the shoulder of the sleeping boy.

That morning, little Edward Fitzgerald lay sleeping in his bed completely unaware of how tumultuous the world outside was. The streets of the little Massachusetts town could not find peace. For

decades anti-Catholic riots had plagued the area. Most famously, an Ursuline convent, five miles from where Edward now slept, was burned to the ground by anti-Catholic mobs. This wasn't an anti-Catholic riot, however; it was a draft riot.

Displeased with the stipulations of the draft, the poor all throughout the Boston area, took to the streets. They were outraged that the rich would be able to pay a substitute to fight in their place, while the poor had to leave their families fatherless to fight a war against fellow Americans.

The priest, knowing what destruction the previous riots had brought, took the most precious thing in the whole church, in the whole city, and placed it beneath the sleeping boy. The boy would keep Christ safe, and Christ would keep the boy safe.

Years later, that little boy was ordained a priest and found his way to Owensboro, Kentucky, as

Fr. Edward Fitzgerald. For 35 years he served as one of the most beloved pastors St. Paul Parish in Owensboro has ever had. For 21 years he served the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph. He passed away in 1927 and is buried in Mount Saint Joseph's Cemetery. His entire life from infant to man he humbly served Our Eucharistic Lord.

With 2024 here, we have only a handful of months remaining in the National Eucharistic Revival: Year of Parish Revival. After the Eucharistic Congress this summer, the revival will kick off its final year: the Year of Going Out on Mission.

This initiative was called almost two years ago to refocus the faithful on the source and summit of our Catholic faith and our entire existence, the Eucharist. Christ uses whatever he needs to speak to us, even an archived photograph of one of our very own priests. In a time and place when it must have seemed like the country would surely come to an end, when hatred and division was rampant, and a Civil War that had long been looming was now fully underway, Christ was to be found in perhaps the last bit of peace in that world, in a Catholic home, in the company of a sleeping child.

May we make our homes a place of peace where Christ is always welcome, even in the chaos of this world. To do this, we cannot forget that where peace is desired, the Eucharist is necessary. Fr. Edward Fitzgerald, pray for us! ■

Edward Wilson is the director of the Diocese of Owensboro's Archives and the Archives of the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph. Comments and questions may be sent to edward.wilson@pastoral.org.

Kirche Heilige Joseph: The tale of the German church in Owensboro



COURTESY OF GRADY EBELHAR

This brick, which had been located next to the cornerstone of the former St. Joseph Church in Owensboro, was saved by Grady Ebelhar, writer of this article. He had the church painted on the front of the brick with his great-grandparents' names and the date they were married.

BY GRADY EBELHAR, SPECIAL TO THE
WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

In the 1850s, more than 150,000 Germans had

come to the United States, and many were trickling into southern Indiana. Early in the 1880s and throughout that decade many German Catholic farmers came from the parishes in southern Indiana and settled in the vicinity of Owensboro.

St. Joseph Parish School was one of the oldest institutions of learning in the city of Owensboro. It began in 1868 and was two years older than the parish. Ten German-Catholic families who were members of the St. Stephen's Church separated themselves into another congregation, organizing as St. Joseph's Church with Fr. Paul Joseph Volk. Fr. Volk, who was then the pastor of St. Alphonsus, assembled the German-speaking Catholics in Owensboro in the summer of 1870 in an old brick building that stood at the corner of West Third Street and Cedar for church gatherings.

In the spring of 1871, Fr. Ivo Schacht, pastor of St. Stephen's, built the first St. Joseph Church at Ninth and Sweeney Streets.

The German Catholics were allowed to worship at old St. Stephen Church but were only allowed to sit in the back of the church away from the rest of the congregation. Prejudice against the Germans continued for years. In May 1878, a fire burned the church down, destroying the first church. Problems for the parish began. Bishop William McClosky of the Diocese of Louisville wanted to move the church to Seventh and Frederica and the rural Germans wanted it back in its original site.

By fall, a foundation had been laid at Fourth and Clay Streets and the church was underway. One report says the location angered Bishop McClosky and he ordered it closed before it was complete. The Ger-

man Catholics persisted.

On March 7, 1880, the new 86-foot by 43-foot church was finally opened and blessed. Dedication would not come until 1883. The building cost \$10,000. At that time, the parish had 65 families.

By the turn of the century, the building was reported to be in poor repair with the windows falling out. In 1912, the building was enlarged and the stained-glass windows in the church were imported from Munich.

When the church was finished it was said to be one of the prettiest sanctuaries in western Kentucky. In 1915 the Todd Estate on East Fifth Street adjoining St. Joseph Church was purchased by the congregation for school purposes and became St. Hubertus Academy, the parish school. In 1915 St. Joseph's Parish School became a Catholic free school. St. Joseph's was the only Catholic parish owning its own parochial school. It was a free school for all members of St. Joseph Parish who paid for their pews in church.

Some of the last names of the earlier parishioners were Graf, Arnold, Mischel, Weikel, Oberst, Lamb, Tennes, Crans, Strehl, Meis, Schaffer, Rose, Gillies, Dittman, Eger, Ebelhar, Kaelin, Kraft, Hart, Scherm, and Kamuf.

The people in the church and school had stopped speaking German in World War I. For a few years there were still a few confessions and rosaries said in German. Some of the early priests had worked all along to Americanize the parishioners.

The old German parish was combined in 1948 with St. Paul Parish. That left the new Saints Joseph and Paul Parish in the position of having two churches within a block of each other.

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INSIDE THE ARCHIVES

St. Joseph Church continued from page 21

By the winter of 1977 with rising inflation driving heating and cooling bills up, St. Joseph Church could no longer justify staying open and the doors were locked.

The beautiful stained-glass windows imported from Germany were in danger of collapsing under their own weight. The church building was declared a Kentucky Landmark in 1978, but its usefulness to the diocese had passed. St. Joseph Catholic Church was one of the last remaining landmarks in Owensboro associated with the city's early German settlers. Brescia College considered establishing an Art Center there and Theatre Workshop of Owensboro studied the idea of turning the church into a theater, but the building was too deteriorated.

Bishop John J. McRaith said that it had become unsafe and that it would be demolished as soon as the historic windows could be removed. The windows, which were bought by individual families in St. Joseph Parish in 1912, were removed to the Owensboro Museum of Fine Art and were valued at more than \$400,000. The 12 largest windows are 16 feet high by four feet wide with a Gothic Arch at the top. Most windows feature a realistic painting of a Catholic saint or other religious figures. The names of donors are painted on the lower panels of the windows.

In August 1989, the demolition of the 111-year-old church began. In September, the St. Joseph Parish was no longer a monument to the German American Catholic faith. ■

Grady Ebelhar is a descendant of one of the early parishioners.



COURTESY OF GRADY EBELHAR

The stained-glass windows from the former St. Joseph Church in Owensboro, seen in their new home at Owensboro Museum of Fine Arts.



COURTESY OF GRADY EBELHAR

St. Joseph Church in Owensboro, a few years before the church was closed.



COURTESY OF GRADY EBELHAR

St. Joseph Church in Owensboro, a week before it was demolished in 1989.

February Wedding Anniversaries

5, 10, 25, 40, 50 and More Than 50 Years of Marriage

Blessed Mother, Owensboro

Bob & Marian Davis, 56
John & Mary Medley, 63
Ralph & Rose Bemboom, 55
Vince & Joan Frey, 65

Blessed Sacrament, Owensboro

Burnell & Mabel Hamilton, 54

Holy Name of Jesus, Henderson

Bernard & Betty Feltrop, 69
David & Laura Hager, 50
Fred & Michaelene Guillerman, 58
John & Carlene Gabe, 61
John & Kathy Prough, 52
Kenneth & Harriett Hite, 57
Lawrence & Darlene Smithhart, 53
Mike & Bobbie Willett, 61
Norman & Mary Anne Williams, 59
Phillip & Nancy Daily, 25
Richard & Doris Market, 61
Walter & Gail Clancy, 53

Holy Spirit, Bowling Green

Adam & Samantha O'Leary, 10
Agustin & Margaret Sepulveda, 56
Donald & Janet Mott, 56
Joe & Betty Kunkel, 51
Kan & Lah Dee, 10
Par Reh & Ei Meh, 25
Peter & Kaye Buser, 57
Toby & Nancy Church, 56

Immaculate Conception,**Hawesville**

Charles & Patricia Hagman, 53
Denis & Martha Wheatley, 64

Immaculate, Owensboro

Bob & Mary Ramage, 59
Danny & Francele Warren, 54
Fred & Gloria Zinobile, 69
Gary & Pat Satterwhite, 64
Tony & Becky Dant, 52
William & Lynda Maddox, 57

Our Lady of Lourdes,**Owensboro**

George & Brenda Hardesty, 56

John & Vickie Ballard, 10

Precious Blood, Owensboro

Dennis & Joni Blair, 54
Frank & Rita Cecil, 63
Guy & Linda Connor, 63
Randall & Susan Jones, 40

Wayne & Linda Winfield, 55

Rosary Chapel, Paducah

Johnny & Lauretta Hollis, 58

Sacred Heart, Waverly

Greg & Jennifer Wirth, 40

St. Agnes, Uniontown

Donnie & Becky Ervin, 56
Eddie & Karen Clevidence, 40
Jack & Sue Miller, 59
Robert & Carolyn Mills, 57
Wayne & Loretta Nally, 63

St. Alphonsus, St. Joseph

Paul & Beverly Smith, 59

St. Ann, Morganfield

Kenny & Rosie Holt, 55

St. Anthony, Axtel

Homer & JoAnn Mattingly, 56

St. Augustine, Grayson Springs

Billy & Diana Thompson, 50

St. Benedict, Wax

Dwight & Brenda Johnston, 58
Ruel & Louise Patterson, 56
Tom & Judy Croghan, 57

St. Charles, Bardwell

Mike & Ruth Elder, 56

St. Columba, Lewisport

Dan & Patricia Emmick, 25
Dwayne & Joyce Duncan, 54

St. Denis, Fancy Farm

David & Sandy Hayden, 55

St. Edward, Fulton

Rick & Maria Smith, 52

St. Francis Borgia, Sturgis

Cletus & Peggy Russelburg, 57
Jimmy & Cecilia Curtis, 52

St. Francis de Sales, Paducah

Larry & Becky Hopper, 51
Paul & Terry House, 56

St. Francis of Assisi

Sheril & Virginia Howard, 56

St. Henry, Aurora

Philip & Dianna Alvey, 54

St. Jerome, Fancy Farm

Jim & Ann Munsell, 51
Thomas & Shannon Rondon, 25

St. John the Baptist, Fordsville

Jim & Dorothy Roberts, 56
Lee & Connie Roberts, 54

St. John the Evangelist, Paducah

John & Anna Drury, 55
Kenny & Jeannie Spraggs, 53
William & Conchita Willett, 10

St. Joseph, Bowling Green

Carroll & Sue Hughes, 58
Gerald & Norma Jenkins, 57
Tom & Pat Volk, 56

St. Joseph, Leitchfield

Bob & Joanne Deweese, 57
John & Reva White, 50

St. Joseph, Mayfield

Charles & Dorothy Harris, 57
Jerry & Norma Erwin, 58
Randy & Sandy Gossum, 56
Robert & Rose Coplen, 73

St. Leo, Murray

Joe & Linda Ohnemus, 54

St. Mary Magdalene, Sorgho

Bernard & Cindy Krampe, 25
Eddie & Alo Byrne, 55
Jim & Barbara Schwartz, 51
Sam & Sherry Holinde, 55

St. Mary of the Woods,**Whitesville**

Bryce & Sue Roberts, 51
David & Peggy Morris, 54
Fred & Sharon Coomes, 53
Jimmy & Marty Johnson, 60
Marvin & Mary Ann
Bickwermert, 56
Randy & Denise Edge, 50

St. Mary, Franklin

David & Marian Becker, 50
Lew & Helen Garst, 63
Richard & Elizabeth Gardner, 55

St. Mary, LaCenter

Jim & Marie Funk, 57

St. Michael the Archangel,**Oak Grove**

Charles & Barbara Peltier, 61
Gary & Cheryl Heim, 53

St. Peter of Antioch, Waverly

John & Judy Moore, 53

St. Pius X, Owensboro

David & Pat Jones, 56
Mike & Janet Schwartz, 53

St. Romuald, Hardinsburg

Doug & Mona Hinton, 51
Ken & Michaelanne James, 62

Kenny & Faye Glasscock, 50

Larry & Mary Edward Henning, 51

St. Rose of Lima, Cloverport

Randell & Geraldine Brown, 56

St. Stephen Cathedral, Owensboro

Audie & Lana Chaney, 54
Bob & Mildred Gilles, 25
Robert & Vurble Mahoney, 67
Tom & Lucy Neal, 63

St. Stephen, Cadiz

Hong & Cathy Khang, 55
Jim & Kathleen Ariagno, 59
Tom & Patricia Fritsch, 59

St. Thomas More, Paducah

Al & Mary McKeown, 61
Larry & Phyllis Stovesand, 54

St. William, Knottsville

Stanley & Barbara Roberts, 52

Sts. Joseph & Paul, Owensboro

Randy & Elizabeth Belcher, 57
Vincent & Linda Cecil, 56



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Parish, and Sts. Joseph & Paul Catholic Church



FEBRUARY 2024 BULLETIN BOARD

Mass and confession times in the Diocese of Owensboro

Did you know you can view Mass times on the diocese's website? Visit <https://owensborodiocese.org/find-a-parish/> for a list of parishes, Mass times and more. As confession times are subject to change, visitors are encouraged to contact the parishes directly for their most up-to-date confession schedule.

Blessed Sacrament's annual Italian Night Feb. 24

Blessed Sacrament Chapel in Owensboro will have their annual Italian Night on Saturday, February 24. Doors will open at 6 p.m. and festivities will begin at 6:30 p.m. Join us for a fun night of good food, music, and games. The number of tables is limited. Call (270) 926-4741 for reservations.

Sign up for a Cursillo weekend in 2024

Do you want to strengthen your relationship with God? Are you seeking a faith-filled community of love and support? Then, make a Cursillo Weekend! Learn more about the abundant teachings of the Catholic Church, and how to live more deeply as a Christian in the world, living out your baptismal calling of being priest, prophet, and king. Held at the beautiful Gasper River Catholic Retreat Center outside of Bowling Green, Ky., spend 4 days and 3 nights encountering the Lord through prayer, discussions, and community while celebrating the Sacraments. Men will gather from Feb. 29-March 3 and women will come together from March 7-10, 2024. All vocations are welcome, (married/religious/single) but each person must be in good standing with the Church as Mass will be celebrated daily. Jesus invites all of us, saying, "Come, and you will see." ~ Jn 1: 39. Come experience what God has in store for you and your future! For more information call Martha or Dennis Wheatley at 270-922-6860 or 270-927-6540 or email them at marthawheatley@att.net. You can also visit the website at www.cursillo-owensboro.org.

St. Pius X in Owensboro to host parish mission

St. Pius X Parish, Owensboro, parish mission to take place March 3, 4, 5, 2024: "Deepening Our Eucharistic Devotion" with Fr. Tony Stephens, CPM. Evening talk: 6-7 p.m. Daily confessions 5-5:45 p.m. Sunday-Tuesday, and 7 p.m. following each evening talk. On Monday, March 4, priests from the deanery also will be available for hearing confessions. A light meal will be served in the parish hall from 5-5:45 p.m. each evening. Sunday: "Wasting Time with the Lord" (A talk on Eucharistic Adoration) Monday: "The Eucharist Aiding Family Holiness (A talk on family life) Tuesday: "Breathing Fire Like Lions" (A talk on receiving Holy Communion) For more information call the parish office at (270) 684-4745.

Rachel's Vineyard Retreat for healing after abortion

If you are suffering from grief or trauma from an abortion, come experience the healing love of Jesus Christ on a Rachel's Vineyard weekend retreat on May 3-5, 2024 at the Passionist Retreat House in Whitesville, Ky., sponsored by Rachel's Vineyard of Bowling Green. The weekend retreat will combine discussions, spiritual exercises, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a Memorial Service and a Mass of Entrustment of our Children to Jesus. Participation is strictly confidential and offers a beautiful opportunity to experience God's love, forgiveness and compassion. For more information or registration contact: Rita by phone (270-474-4707) or email (retreats@hopeafterabortionky.com). The cost is \$200 for meals, private room, and all retreat materials. If you have a financial burden, assistance is available – no one is ever turned away due to financial need! For a complete listing of retreat dates and locations contact 1-877-HOPE-4-ME or visit the Rachel's Vineyard website at www.rachelsvineyard.org.

Support groups for victims/survivors of clergy abuse

The Diocese of Owensboro would like to share some support group opportunities made available through the Archdiocese of Saint Paul and Minneapolis. These groups are open to all victims/survivors in the United States. Learn more at

<https://owensborodiocese.org/support-group/> and <https://owensborodiocese.org/safe/>.

A Scout is Reverent

It is time to begin working toward Scout religious emblems. They include for Cub Scouts: Light of Christ and Parvuli Dei and for Boy Scouts: Ad Altare Dei and Pope Pius XII and Light is Life (Eastern Catholic) and for Girl Scouts and others: God is Love, Family of God, I Live My Faith, Mary the First Disciple, The Spirit Alive, and Missio. For more information on these, visit <https://owensborodiocese.org/scouting/>

Help Ursuline Sisters "cultivate the vine" during their 150th anniversary

Ursuline congregations have spread like vines in the nearly 500 years since Saint Angela Merici founded her company. Among those vines are the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph, who are celebrating 150 years of service to God's kingdom in 2024. The Sisters are "Cultivating the vine Saint Angela

The Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph are celebrating 150 years in Daviess County!

Would you like to share your story about how an Ursuline Sister(s) has affected your life? Visit this link: ursulinesmsj.org/get-involved and click the link in the last sentence. Follow us on Facebook for anniversary news and videos.



Continues on page 25

UPCOMING EVENTS

Bulletin Board continued from page 24

entrusted to us." Sister Mary Celine Weidenbenner has been a teacher for over 50 years, the last 16 at Mary Carrico School in Knottsville. Sister Barbara Jean Head has served as the senior accountant for Brescia University for almost 20 years. Sister Alicia Coomes currently serves as a parish minister for St. Peter of Alcantara, Stanley, and St. Augustine, Reed. These are just a few ways the Ursuline Sisters serve God's people. Jesus taught us that he is the vine, and that together we are called to bear fruit. Would you like to submit your story about how an Ursuline Sister(s) has affected your life? Visit this link: <https://ursulinesmsj.org/how-have-the-ursuline-sisters-affected-your-life/> or email carol.braden-clarke@maplemount.org.

Ursuline Sisters add Eucharistic Adoration on the first Sunday

The Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph have added the first Sunday of the month to their Eucharistic Adoration schedule. They invite the public to join them for Eucharistic Adoration on the first Sunday from 1 p.m.-5 p.m. at the Motherhouse Chapel, 8001 Cummings Road, Maple Mount, Ky. (12 miles west of Owensboro on Hwy. 56). The Ursuline Sisters will continue to have Eucharistic Adoration on Fridays from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m. The public is also welcome to attend on Fridays. Adoration on the second Friday of each month is dedicated to praying for vocations. The Adoration concludes with evening prayer. To see Adoration and Mass times for the Ursuline Sisters, visit <https://ursulinesmsj.org/mass-prayer-times/>

The Ursuline Sisters' prayers are a source of strength year round

We could all use prayers. The Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph want everyone to know that they take your requests for prayers seriously. Prayer cards are completed and put in a basket in the Mount Saint Joseph Chapel, and then prayed with throughout the year. The Sisters pray for the intentions during daily Mass, and some of the Sisters will take a stack of cards to sit and pray with. The Ursuline Sisters consider it an honor to be entrusted with these prayers. To submit a prayer request, visit ursulinesmsj.org and click on Prayer Requests.

Schedule of 2024 fish fries in the Diocese of Owensboro

Editor's note: Canons 1250 and 1251 state that all Fridays are days of penance in the Catholic Church. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops requests that Catholics abstain from meat on Fridays during Lent, and practice some form of penance on the other Fridays throughout the year. Due to fish being a popular Lenten Friday option in this part of the world, the tradition of Friday fish fries has become a common activity for many communities. Below is information for the 2023 fish fries offered within the Diocese of Owensboro, provided by the parishes and local community organizations. All questions about the individual fish fries should be directed to the parishes and organizations.

Holy Spirit Parish Knights of Columbus

Address: 4754 Smallhouse Road, Bowling Green
Dates: Feb. 16, 23; March 1, 8, 15, 22
Format: Dine-in and carryout
Serving time: 4:30-7 p.m.
Contact: (270) 842-7777

Blessed Sacrament Chapel, Owensboro

Address: 602 Sycamore Street, Owensboro
Date: March 22
Format: Dine-in and carryout
Serving time: 5-7 p.m.
Contact: (270) 926-4741

Knights of Columbus Holy Rosary Council 1055

Address: 3028 Jefferson St., Paducah
Dates: Feb. 9, 16, 23; March 8, 15, 22
Format: Drive-thru only
Serving time: 4-7 p.m.
Contact: (270) 443-4380

Knights of Columbus Council 1418 at St. Jerome Parish

Address: 161 Picnic Blvd, Fancy Farm
Dates: March 8, 15, 22
Format: Dine-in and carryout
Serving time: 5-7 p.m.
Contact: Joe Goff (270) 559-7720

Knights of Columbus Fr. Glahn Council #11132

Address: Parish hall, 1600 Kingsway Dr., Madisonville
Dates: Feb. 16, 23; March 1, 8, 15, 22
Format: Dine-in, carryout, and drive-thru
Serving time: 5-7 p.m.
Contact: Jim Donley (270) 339-7244

Our Lady of Lourdes Knights of Columbus, Owensboro

Address: 4029 Frederica St., Owensboro
Dates: Feb. 16, 23; March 1, 8, 15, 22
Format: Drive-thru, carryout and dine-in
Serving time: 5:15 p.m.
Contact: (270) 684-5369

Precious Blood Parish, Owensboro

Address: 3306 Fenmore St., Owensboro
Dates: Feb. 16, 23; March 1, 8, 15, 22
Format: Dine-in and carryout
Serving time: 5:30 p.m.
Contact: (270) 684-6888

Mary Carrico Catholic School, Daviess County

Address: 9546 Hwy. 144, Philpot (school gym)
Dates: Feb. 16, 23; March 1, 8
Format: Dine-in and carryout
Serving time: 4:30-6 p.m.
Contact: Candice Schwartz (270)314-0221

St. Agnes Parish, Uniontown

Address: Knights of Columbus hall, 501 Sixth Street, Uniontown
Dates: Feb. 23; March 8, 22
Format: Carryout only
Serving time: 5 p.m.
Contact: Parish office at (270) 822-4416

St. Alphonsus Parish, St. Joseph

Address: 7925 State Route 500, Owensboro
Date: March 22
Format: Dine-in and carryout
Serving time: 4 p.m.
Contact: Jessica Green (270) 302 9171

St. Ann Parish, Morganfield

Address: 304 S Church St., Morganfield
Dates: Feb. 16; March 1, 15
Format: Dine-in and carryout
Serving time: 5 p.m.
Contact: (270) 389-2287

St. Columba Parish, Lewisport

Address: 815 Pell St., Lewisport
Dates: Feb. 16, 23; March 1, 8, 15, 22
Format: Dine-in, carryout, and drive-thru
Serving time: 4-6:30 p.m.
Contact: (270) 295-3682 or (270) 927-8419

Continues on page 26

UPCOMING EVENTS

Fish fries continued from page 25

St. John the Evangelist Knights of Columbus Council 10962

Address: 6725 US 45 South, Paducah
Dates: Feb. 16, 23; March 1, 8, 15, 22
Format: Dine-in and carryout
Serving time: 4-7 p.m.
Contact: Tim Stewart (270) 554-0700

St. Leo Parish, Murray

Address: 401 N 12th St., Murray
Dates: Feb. 16, 23; March 1, 8, 15, 22
Format: Dine-in and carryout
Serving time: 4:30-6 p.m.
Contact: (270) 753-3876

St. Martin Parish, Rome

Address: Parish hall, 5856 State Route 81, Owensboro
Dates: Feb. 9 and 23

Format: Dine-in and carryout
Serving time: 5 p.m.
Contact: (270) 685-0339

St. Peter of Alcantara Parish, Stanley

Address: 81 Church St., Owensboro
Dates: Feb. 16, 23; March 1, 8, 22
Format: Dine-in and carryout
Serving time: 5:30 p.m.
Contact: (270) 764-1983

Sts. Peter and Paul Knights of Columbus Council 7847

Address: 902 E. 9th St., Hopkinsville
Dates: Feb. 16, 23; March 1, 8, 15, 22
Format: Dine-in and to-go orders
Serving time: 5-7 p.m.
Contact: Tom O'Hagan (270) 348-2322

St. Pius X Parish, Calvert City

Address: 777 E. 5th Ave, Calvert City
Dates: Feb. 16, 23; March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
Format: Dine-in and carryout
Serving time: 4-7 p.m.
Contact: Call to order (270) 395-5747

St. Sebastian Parish, Calhoun

Address: 180 Hwy. 136 W, Calhoun
Dates: March 1, 8, 15, 22
Format: Dine-in and carryout
Serving time: 5-7 p.m.
Contact: (270) 273-3185

Whitesville Lions Club, Whitesville

Address: Whitesville Senior Citizen Center, 10345 Hwy. 54, Whitesville
Dates: Feb. 2, 9, 16, 23; March 1, 8, 15, 22, 29
Format: Dine-in and carryout
Serving time: 5 p.m.
Contact: For to-go orders, call (270) 233-4332

Family reunion: St. Peter of Alcantara celebrates 150 years

BY MARK POLLARD, SPECIAL TO THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

As I get ready for Mass on Jan. 20, 2024, something feels different. No, it's not the fact that it is nine degrees outside. It's not that the house that is unusually quiet for a group of seven getting ready for church at the same time. Finally, I put my finger on it. It is a Saturday morning, and today is a special Mass celebrating St. Peter of Alcantara's 150 years of being a parish.

As we pull into the parking lot and make our way inside, the atmosphere resembles a family reunion. It's warm, maybe because of the three layers of clothes I have on, or maybe because there is a buzz in the air. People greet others with smiles and warm welcomes. Hugs are given left and right. The Mass doesn't start for 35 minutes and, already, it is almost full.

I lead my family through the crowd and recognize someone I have not seen in years. It's Fr. Suresh Bakka! He was our pastor from 2009-2012. It's been so long since we have seen him. Fr. Bruce Fogle was to the right. This was his parish growing up. He has come to celebrate with us as well.

We weave our way toward the front where we sit, with echoes of laughter and greetings behind us. It feels good to hear the joy in people's voices. To my left, the choir assembles. It looks like about 20 people. Men, women, and children signed up weeks ago to sing during this celebration. The servers exit the sacristy, one at a time, adjusting their albs.

As the Mass begins, I can sense how full the church is. The singing is loud as everyone is participating. Fr. Will Thompson's homily is about the church and how it withstands the tests of time. He touches on how even the architecture was built large and heavy. Not only the materials used, but the style

suggests it will be here forever. I take great comfort in knowing and feeling that.

A reception follows Mass in the parish hall. A meal is catered so everyone can join in the celebration instead of having to work to prepare it. Beautifully decorated tables, great food, and several stories about the past 150 years are shared. A photo booth is set up; this is a big hit. All ages filter in to get a picture taken with their families, friends, and their former elementary school classmates. (There used to be an elementary school on these grounds.) No one is in a rush to leave. It is wonderful to witness.

As the celebration comes to an end, and my family and I are gathering our coats, one thing comes to mind: "Family reunion." Just like family, the Church will always be there for us. It is ever-present and waiting for us to return home. ■

Mark Pollard belongs to St. Peter of Alcantara Parish in Stanley.



‘At the foot of the cross’

Parishioners across the diocese share why they love Eucharistic Adoration

BY DCN. KEN BENNETT, OFFICE OF WORSHIP

Over the past several years, especially during this National Eucharistic Revival, there seems to be an increased interest in Eucharistic Adoration. While for some, Eucharistic Adoration is new, the devotion has been around for a long time. It is a centuries-old practice firmly rooted in the teaching that Jesus Christ is truly and fully present in the Eucharist.

Early Christians would take the Eucharist to those sick and unable to attend liturgy. Monasteries began to reserve the Eucharist around the fourth century for the sick and dying, but the practice of praying before the Eucharist wouldn't fully develop until the Middle Ages. Since then, the practice has remained among the most popular Catholic devotions.

The practice diminished somewhat after the Second Vatican Council (1962-65), particularly in the United States and Europe. But over the last few decades, under Popes St. John Paul II, Benedict XVI, and Francis, the Church has strongly encouraged the practice, which has produced positive results. As we journey through this Eucharistic Revival, our parishes, schools, and religious communities within the Diocese of Owensboro make regular Exposition and

Adoration available.

For those new to the practice, certain questions arise. For example, why should I practice this devotion? What are the benefits? And, of course, what do I do for an hour? To answer these questions, I spoke with several people who dedicate at least one hour per week to Eucharistic Adoration. This is some of what they offered.

Kathy Hayden from Owensboro emphasized Christ's true presence in the Blessed Sacrament. For her, spending time in front of the Blessed Sacrament helps her maintain her peace.

Dcn. Mike Marsili from Dawson Springs also stressed Christ's true presence in the Blessed Sacrament. For him, the time he spends in front of the Eucharist reminds him that he is at “the foot of the cross and the church itself is Holy Ground.”

Megan Bell from Murray said there is something comforting about knowing you are in the presence of the Lord. During Adoration, she prays for her husband and children and believes the practice has made her a better wife and mother.

Common practices during Adoration include using prayer books, reading religious books, reciting various prayers, and simply sitting in silence. The rosary was the one devotion that was common to all the people I talked with. One man said regarding the rosary, “It just seems right to



RILEY GREIF | WKC

Eucharistic Adoration is held at the Owensboro Diocese Youth Conference (ODYC) during the Nov. 18-19, 2022 event held in Bowling Green, which takes place every other year.

ask her intercession in front of her son's Body.”

In the end, reverence in front of the Blessed Sacrament differs for each person.

A list of locations that offer Eucharist Exposition and Adoration can be found by visiting owensborodiocese.org/eucharistic-revival and clicking on the “Worship/Confession Schedules” button.

We should also remember that whether we have the exposed sacrament or not, adoration is available before any tabernacle in which he is reserved. So, if you feel called to spend time with Jesus in front of the Blessed Sacrament, as the Nike commercial used to say, “Just do it.” The time will be well spent. ■

Dcn. Ken Bennett is the co-coordinator for the Office of Worship in the Diocese of Owensboro. For more information, visit owensborodiocese.org/worship.

Priests gather for prayer, camaraderie, and to discuss vocations

BY WKC STAFF

From Jan. 15-18, 2024, the priests of the Diocese of Owensboro gathered at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad, Ind. This gathering, which is called their Presbyteral Convocation, takes place annually and serves as an opportunity for ongoing formation and building up the spirit of shared brotherhood.

This year the theme was that of “vocation” and how to create a culture of vocations within one’s parish and the diocese overall. Bishop J. Mark Spalding of the Diocese of Nashville, Tenn., was the main speaker.

Besides prayer time together, Presbyteral Convocation provides time for talks, confession and Adoration, reconnecting with Saint Meinrad faculty and staff, and social and recreational opportunities. Per the usual tradition, the jubilarian priests were honored at an evening banquet. ■



COURTESY OF FR. COREY D. BRUNS
Priests of the Diocese of Owensboro gather in prayer during Presbyteral Convocation at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, which took place from Jan. 15-18, 2024.



COURTESY OF FR. COREY D. BRUNS
(Left to right) Fr. John Thomas, Fr. Randy Howard, and Fr. Dave Johnson pray during Presbyteral Convocation for the priests of the Diocese of Owensboro at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, which took place from Jan. 15-18, 2024.



COURTESY OF FR. COREY D. BRUNS
Fr. Ken Mikulcik chants the Prayers of the Faithful during Presbyteral Convocation for the priests of the Diocese of Owensboro at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, which took place from Jan. 15-18, 2024.

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Un Mensaje del Obispo Medley

Esta Cuaresma, consideren compartir su generosidad con nuestros vecinos de todo el mundo

La Cuaresma llega temprano este año. Comienza el 14 de febrero, el Día de San Valentín, así que, si ese es un día importante para celebrar con un ser querido o abrir una caja de chocolates en forma de corazón, ¡tal vez deberían buscar una fecha alternativa ahora! El Miércoles de Ceniza, que marca el primero de los cuarenta días de Cuaresma, no se presta a cambios de fecha.

Este mes quiero promover una antigua costumbre de Cuaresma para los católicos en los Estados Unidos. En su parroquia podrán recoger una pequeña caja de cartón cuadrada que reconocerán como un Plato de Arroz distribuida por Catholic Relief Services (CRS). Recuerdo el Plato de Arroz cuando era niño y al final de la Cuaresma entregaba con orgullo mi escasa contribución con el entendimiento de que estaba ayudando a proporcionar un plato de arroz real a un niño empobrecido en algún lugar del mundo.

Hay muchas colectas especiales que promovemos en nuestras parroquias católicas durante todo el año y cada una de ellas representa una iniciativa y una oportunidad valiosa para que los católicos en los Estados Unidos compartan nuestra generosidad con los demás. Durante muchos años, en mis propias contribuciones caritativas, he sido muy parcial a esta iniciativa del Plato de Arroz de Cuaresma que sirve para financiar Catholic Relief Services.

Catholic Relief Services fue fundado en 1943 por los obispos católicos de los Estados Unidos para servir a los sobrevivientes de la Segunda Guerra Mundial en Europa. Proporcionó una manera para que los católicos en los Estados Unidos sirvieran a los devastados por la

guerra. Desde entonces, CRS ha ampliado su tamaño hasta llegar a más de 130 millones de personas en más de 100 países en cinco continentes.

Cuando nos enteramos de desastres en alguna parte del mundo, ya sean naturales o provocados por el hombre, a menudo nos damos cuenta de que entre los primeros en ofrecer asistencia se encuentra Catholic Relief Services, porque es probable que ya estén allí ofreciendo programas de ayuda a los más pobres entre los pobres. Cuando comenzó la guerra entre Israel y Hamás, CRS ya estaba en la muy pobre región de Gaza. CRS ha estado activo en Ucrania desde los días inmediatamente posteriores a la invasión rusa para ayudar a los cientos de miles de refugiados desplazados por la violencia.

En octubre pasado, cuando visité Nigeria, hice arreglos para visitar la sede de CRS en la ciudad capital de Abuja. CRS tiene más de 400 trabajadores en Nigeria. En sus oficinas nos reunimos con los directores de muchos de sus programas. Algunos de estos programas abordan la inseguridad alimentaria, la prevención de la malaria, la prevención del SIDA, la vivienda y la formación profesional. La población de Nigeria está dividida aproximadamente en partes iguales entre cristianos y musulmanes: hay más cristianos en el sur y más los musulmanes en el norte. De los 400 empleados de CRS en el país, aproximadamente la mitad son musulmanes. Aunque la misión de CRS tiene sus raíces en la fe católica, sus operaciones atienden a personas según sus necesidades, independientemente de su raza, religión u origen étnico.

Después de visitar las oficinas de CRS acompañamos

CALENDARIO DEL OBISPO MEDLEY FEBRERO DE 2024	
1 DE FEBRERO	9 a.m. Misa escolar – Escuela Interparroquial San Romualdo, Hardinsburg
4 DE FEBRERO	10 A.M. CONFIRMACIÓN – PARROQUIA INMACULADA, OWENSBORO
6 DE FEBRERO	8 a.m. Misa escolar – Escuela Santa María del Bosque, Whitesville
10 DE FEBRERO	10 a.m. Confirmación – Parroquia Nuestra Señora de Lourdes, Owensboro 5 p.m. Confirmación – Parroquia San Francisco de Sales, Paducah
11 DE FEBRERO	2 p.m. Rito de Elección – Parroquia San Francisco de Sales, Paducah
13 DE FEBRERO	10 a.m. Misa escolar – Escuela Secundaria Santa María, Paducah
14 DE FEBRERO	12:05 p.m. Misa de Miércoles de Ceniza – Catedral de San Esteban, Owensboro
18 DE FEBRERO	2 p.m. Rito de Elección – Catedral de San Esteban, Owensboro 6 p.m. Rito de Elección – Catedral de San Esteban, Owensboro
19 DE FEBRERO	10 a.m. Reunión del Consejo de Personal Sacerdotal – Centro Católico McRaith, Owensboro
20-22 DE FEBRERO	Reunión de los Obispos de la Provincia
26-28 DE FEBRERO	Conferencia – Universidad de Notre Dame, South Bend, Indiana.

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al director ejecutivo, Akim Kikonda, en una visita al sitio de un programa de capacitación vocacional para jóvenes adultos copatrocinado por CRS y la Arquidiócesis de Abuja. Este fue el día de graduación de 60 jóvenes adultos que habían completado un programa de varios meses. Entre las ofertas del programa se encontraban capacitación en producción avícola y pesquera, servicio de alimentos, capacitación en informática y costura. Estos graduados fueron el quinto grupo en completar la capacitación en los últimos años, por lo que casi 300 se han beneficiado.

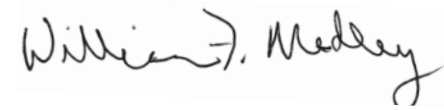
A los graduados no se les despedía solamente con un simple certificado. En cambio, a cada estudiante capacitado en producción avícola, por ejemplo, se le entregó a cada uno una caja con 48 polluelos y una

bolsa de alimento de 50 libras para comenzar. Cada uno de los que completaron el programa de costura recibió una máquina de coser. Las máquinas de coser eran eléctricas, pero carecían de las cosas extras que podíamos ver en las tiendas de nuestro país; eran básicas. El Sr. Kikonda habló con orgullo sobre este programa como uno de los muchos programas de CRS a través del país.

Se dice que Catholic Relief Services es uno de los secretos mejor guardados de la Iglesia católica estadounidense, que silenciosa y humildemente lleva a cabo su misión año tras año en todo el mundo, siempre situado y listo para estar entre los primeros organizadores después de cualquier catástrofe.

Dar limosna es uno de los tres desafíos de la

Cuaresma junto con la oración y el ayuno. Este año seré más consciente de mi Plato de Arroz y de cómo mi ofrenda está cambiando la vida de las personas. Quizás podamos conectar más conscientemente nuestro ayuno con nuestra limosna renunciando a la comida rápida o incluso a esa caja de chocolates con forma de corazón. Ya sea que la donación consiste en los escasos centavos de un niño o una ofrenda más sustancial, he visto de primera mano que nuestros sacrificios marcan la diferencia. ■



Obispo William F. Medley
Diócesis de Owensboro

Declaración oficial del Obispo William F. Medley sobre “Fiducia supplicans sobre el sentido pastoral de las bendiciones”

El 18 de diciembre de 2023, la Congregación para la Doctrina de la Fe, con el consentimiento del Papa Francisco, emitió una declaración sobre el sentido pastoral de las bendiciones, *Fiducia supplicans*. Esta declaración surge en respuesta a consultas a lo largo de los años sobre la bendición de personas en uniones no reconocidas como matrimonios por la Iglesia católica. Estas uniones pueden ser la de una pareja del mismo sexo o un hombre y una mujer no casados dentro de la Iglesia católica.

A cada sacerdote se le acerca con frecuencia para pedir que imparta bendiciones. Esto sucede en hospitales, aeropuertos, tiendas de comestibles — en lugares públicos o privados — y expresa respeto por la Iglesia como instrumento de la bendición de Dios e indica hambre de recibir esa bendición por parte de personas de fe. Cuando se solicita tal bendición, nunca hemos tenido que pedir credenciales, y esto sigue siendo el caso

ahora. A través de la Iglesia, Dios se digna bendecir a todos. Sin embargo, lo que uno haga con la gracia que imparte la bendición depende de quien la recibe.

Por lo tanto, la nueva declaración no hace nada para cambiar la enseñanza de la Iglesia sobre el sacramento del matrimonio como la unión de un hombre y una mujer en una alianza permanente de vida y amor. De hecho, la declaración hace todo lo posible para establecer que cualquier bendición de personas no debe presentarse como un matrimonio, para no confundir la enseñanza de la Iglesia sobre el matrimonio ni debe adjuntarse a una ceremonia civil que podría celebrar otra unión o boda similar.

Desde las tradiciones del Antiguo Testamento hasta la vida de Jesús y la Iglesia primitiva retratadas en el Nuevo Testamento, vemos el deseo de Dios de bendecir a su pueblo y el deseo de los pueblos de ser bendecidos. La reciente

declaración de la Iglesia pretende afirmar la importancia del deseo de Dios de bendecir toda la creación.

La Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de los Estados Unidos emitió la siguiente respuesta:

“La Declaración emitida hoy (18-12-23) por el Dicasterio para la Doctrina de la Fe del Vaticano articuló una distinción entre bendiciones litúrgicas (sacramentales) y bendiciones pastorales, que pueden ser dadas a personas que desean la gracia bondadosa de Dios en sus vidas. La enseñanza de la Iglesia sobre el matrimonio no ha cambiado, y esta declaración afirma esto, al mismo tiempo que hace un esfuerzo por acompañar a las personas al impartir bendiciones pastorales porque cada uno de nosotros necesita el amor sanador y la misericordia de Dios en nuestras vidas”.

Obispo William F. Medley

Diócesis de Owensboro

19 de diciembre de 2023

El texto puede leerse en: https://www.vatican.va/roman_curia/congregations/cfaith/documents/rc_ddf_doc_20231218_fiducia-supplicans_sp.html

Encuentros Regionales se centran en el Año Parroquial del Avivamiento Eucarístico

POR EL PERSONAL DE WKC

En enero, los Encuentros Regionales, que se llevan a cabo cada año, se centraron en el tema del Avivamiento Eucarístico Nacional, siendo este año en particular el Año Parroquial. Se llevaron a cabo de 8:30 am a 3 pm y fueron coordinados por la Oficina de Ministerio Hispano/Latino de la Diócesis de Owensboro. Como de costumbre, los encuentros estuvieron guiados por las reflexiones del P. Julio César Palarino de Argentina. La parroquia de San Miguel en Sebree fue anfitriona el 6 de enero; la Parroquia del Santo Redentor en Beaver Dam fue anfitriona el 13 de enero; la Parroquia San León en Murray fue anfitriona el 20 de enero, y la Parroquia San Pedro & San Pablo en Hopkinsville fue anfitriona el 27 de enero. ■



FOTO POR CORTESÍA DEL DIÁCONO CRISTÓBAL GUTIÉRREZ

Los participantes cantan alabanzas en el Encuentro Regional el 13 de enero en la Parroquia Santo Redentor en Beaver Dam.



FOTO POR CORTESÍA DEL DIÁCONO CRISTÓBAL GUTIÉRREZ

Mientras estaba en el pueblo para dirigir el Encuentro Regional el 6 de enero en la Parroquia San Miguel en Sebree, el P. César Palarino dirige una sesión especial con los hombres y mujeres que han estado participando en Cristo Renueva su Parroquia.



FOTO POR CORTESÍA DEL DIÁCONO CRISTÓBAL GUTIÉRREZ

Durante el Encuentro Regional el 6 de enero en la Parroquia San Miguel en Sebree, los participantes reflexionan en oración y conversan.



‘Al pie de la cruz’

Feligreses de toda la diócesis comparten por qué valoran la Adoración Eucarística

POR EL DIÁCONO KEN BENNETT, OFICINA DE CULTO

En los últimos años, especialmente durante el Avivamiento Eucarístico Nacional, parece haber un mayor interés en la Adoración Eucarística. Si bien para algunos la Adoración Eucarística es nueva, la devoción ha existido desde hace mucho tiempo. Por siglos ha sido una práctica firmemente arraigada en la enseñanza de que Jesucristo está verdadera y plenamente presente en la Eucaristía.

Los primeros cristianos llevaban la Eucaristía a los enfermos y otros que no podían asistir a la liturgia. Los monasterios comenzaron a reservar la Eucaristía alrededor del siglo IV para los enfermos y moribundos, pero la práctica de orar ante de la Eucaristía no se desarrollaría completamente hasta la Edad Media. Desde entonces, la práctica se ha mantenido entre las devociones católicas más populares.

La práctica disminuyó un poco después del Concilio Vaticano Segundo (1962-65), particularmente en Estados Unidos y Europa. Pero en las últimas décadas, bajo los Papas San Juan Pablo II, Benedicto XVI y Francisco, la Iglesia ha fomentado fuertemente esta práctica, que ha

Continúa en la contraportada



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producido resultados positivos. A medida que avanzamos en el Avivamiento Eucarístico, nuestras parroquias, escuelas y comunidades religiosas dentro de la Diócesis de Owensboro han creado más oportunidades regulares para la Exposición y Adoración.

Para aquellos nuevos en la práctica, surgen ciertas preguntas. Por ejemplo, ¿por qué debería practicar esta devoción? ¿Cuáles son los beneficios? Y, por supuesto, ¿qué hago durante una hora? Para responder a estas preguntas, hablé con varias personas que dedican al menos una hora semanal a la Adoración Eucarística. Esto es algo de lo que ofrecieron.

Kathy Hayden de Owensboro enfatizó la verdadera presencia de Cristo en el Santísimo Sacramento. Para ella, pasar tiempo frente al Santísimo Sacramento la ayuda a mantener la paz.

El Diácono Mike Marsili de Dawson Springs también destacó la verdadera presencia de Cristo en el Santísimo Sacramento. Para él, el tiempo que pasa frente a la Eucaristía le recuerda que está “al pie de la cruz y la iglesia misma es un lugar sagrado”.

Megan Bell de Murray dijo que hay algo reconfortante en saber que estás en la presencia del Señor. Durante la Adoración, ella ora por su esposo y sus hijos y cree que la práctica la ha convertido en una mejor esposa y madre.

Las prácticas comunes durante la Adoración incluyen el uso de libros de oraciones, la lectura de libros religiosos, la recitación de diversas oraciones y simplemente sentarse en silencio. El rosario era la única devoción común a todas las personas con las que hablé. Un hombre dijo sobre el rosario: “Me parece correcto pedirle su intercesión delante del Cuerpo de su hijo”.

Al final, la reverencia ante el Santísimo Sacramento es diferente para cada persona.

Puede encontrar una lista de lugares que ofrecen exposición y adoración eucarística visitando



RILEY GREIF | WKC

La Adoración Eucarística se celebró en la Conferencia de Adolescentes de la Diócesis de Owensboro (ODYC) durante el evento del 18 al 19 de noviembre de 2022 que se realizó en Bowling Green. La ODYC se lleva a cabo cada dos años.

owensborodiocese.org/eucharistic-revival-gathering y haciendo clic en el botón “Horarios de adoración/confesión”

También debemos recordar que tengamos o no el Santísimo Sacramento expuesto, la adoración está disponible ante cualquier tabernáculo en el que esté reservado el Santísimo Sacramento. Entonces, si te sientes llamado a pasar tiempo con Jesús frente al Santísimo Sacramento, como solía decir el comercial de Nike, “simplemente hazlo”. El tiempo estará bien invertido. ■

El Diácono Ken Bennett es el co-coordinador de la Oficina de Culto en la Diócesis de Owensboro. Para obtener más información, visita owensborodiocese.org/worship.

Información
sobre boletos para el
Congreso Eucarístico Nacional



[owensborodiocese.org/
congreso-eucaristico-
nacional/](https://owensborodiocese.org/congreso-eucaristico-nacional/)