

THE WESTERN
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Youth and adult leaders smile for a photo during the Nov. 16-18 National Catholic Youth Conference – including Bishop William F. Medley, raising his hands to form the “Y” part of the NCYC logo. **Page 18**



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Selfie time

(Left to right) Fr. Jerry Riney, Bishop William F. Medley, Fr. Uwem Enoch, and Fr. Enoch's brother, Namso Enoch, during the bishop's pastoral visit to Nigeria. [Page 8](#)

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Front page main photo by Riley Greif | WKC

Submissions

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Photo guidelines: The Western Kentucky Catholic will consider your high-resolution digital photos showing special moments and memories from within our diocese. Photos must be a JPEG format (ending in ".jpg") and sent via email. A photo description, date, and name of photographer must be included. Please email your articles or photos to wkc.editor@pastoral.org by the 15th of the month prior to the publishing month. Visit westernkycatholic.com/submissions for more information.

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Editor | Elizabeth Wong Barnstead

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A Word From Bishop Medley

Nigeria: A journey of gratitude

My Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

When I came to the Diocese of Owensboro 13 years ago, I believe there were six priests serving our diocese who were not born in the United States. My predecessor, Bishop John J. McRaith, was one of the first bishops in the United States to see the opportunities that inviting priests from around the world, to come to our nation as missionaries, might provide.

Today there are 27 priests serving our diocese who were not born in the USA. Several of them came to us as seminarians and were ordained for our diocese; several more have chosen to affiliate permanently with our diocese. Many others serve here for a limited period of time with the permission of their bishops or religious superiors.

These generous priests are pastors of 29 of the 78 parishes in the diocese – 37% of our parishes.

As bishop I have made a commitment to try and visit the homelands and meet the families of these priests. In 2018 I made a pilgrimage to Mexico to begin this multi-nation journey. In January of 2020 I visited India and Myanmar. (It was while returning home from this trip that I came face-to-face with the reality of a worldwide pandemic unfolding when we passed through Doha in Qatar, and everyone in the airport was wearing masks.)

Needless to say, the Covid pandemic brought a pause to my pastoral visits. In 2022, however, I was able to visit Guatemala. And with the success of that visit, I turned my mind to the African nations. We



COURTESY OF FR. JERRY RINEY
(Left to right) Fr. Jerry Riney; Akim K. Kikonda, country representative for Catholic Relief Services in Nigeria; Bishop William F. Medley; and Fr. Emmanuel Udoh at the CRS Nigeria headquarters in Abuja.

have priests from Nigeria, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and one who has previously served us from Uganda.

In October I made a 16-day pastoral visit to Nigeria. Fr. Jerry Riney accompanied me. There we visited and met the families of Fathers Emmanuel Udoh, Uwem Enoh, Julian Ibemere, John Okoro, and Jude Okeoma. We visited the provincial house of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, home to Sisters Anthonia Asayoma and Anne Marie Joshua.

BISHOP MEDLEY'S DECEMBER 2023 CALENDAR	
DECEMBER 4	6 p.m. Penance Service – Our Lady of Lourdes, Owensboro
DECEMBER 5	8 a.m. School Mass – Sts. Peter & Paul School, Hopkinsville
DECEMBER 6	9:30 a.m. Mass and lunch with the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph – Maple Mount
DECEMBER 8	9 a.m. School Mass – OCS 4-6 Campus, Owensboro 1:30 p.m. Perpetual Profession of Vows – Passionist Monastery, Whitesville
DECEMBER 14	11 a.m. Mass and visit at Fort Campbell – Fort Campbell, KY
DECEMBER 18	10 a.m. Priest Personnel Meeting – McRaith Catholic Center, Owensboro
DECEMBER 20	10:30 a.m. McRaith Catholic Center Staff Christmas Celebration
DECEMBER 24	11 p.m. Mass – St. Stephen Cathedral, Owensboro

It was my privilege, at the invitation of Bishop Camillus Raymond Umoh of the Diocese of Ikot Ekpene, to ordain three transitional deacons. This ordination was celebrated in the minor seminary where young boys ages 12-18 are aspirants to priesthood.

Meeting the families of our priests and celebrating Masses in seminaries, convents, and parish churches was for me the highlight of my journey. I defined my journey as one of gratitude but as is so often the case, when one says thank you, one sees that they

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FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE

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have received much more than they can give.

According to worldwide statistics, Nigeria has the highest rate of regular Sunday Mass attendance of its Catholic population of any country in the world. A total of 94% of Nigerian Catholics attend Mass every Sunday. At two small parish churches – St. Joseph (the home parish of Fr. Uwem) and St. Michael (the home parish of Fr. Emmanuel) – the churches were filled, and people stood outside of the windows looking in as scores would not fit in the church. When we departed from these churches maybe an hour after the liturgy ended, we may have been the first to leave.

These parish Masses, the ordination Mass, and Mass at a large city parish in Abuja (the capital city), all lasted about three hours! Trust me, though, if you had been with me, you would not have been looking at your watch and you would have been surprised to

realize that Mass had lasted that long.

It is not uncommon in parish churches for there to be at least three collections at Mass. Collections were not made by passing the basket, but everyone – man, woman, and child – came forward to make their offering. These processions were occasions of song and dance. At Holy Trinity Church in Abuja, I was intrigued when some came forward with a poster saying, “one cow.” This signified that this person had that week contributed a cow to feed the hungry.

Perhaps in another column I can share our experience of visiting a site of a Catholic Relief Services project in Abuja, where about 60 young adults had completed a vocational training program. Catholic Relief Services is the international arm of outreach for the U.S. Catholic Church and has more than 400 employees in Nigeria assisting tens of

thousands. The annual Lenten Rice Bowl initiative has been a primary source of funding for CRS for decades.

Though I will share stories of this journey for the rest of my life, one enduring reality I contemplate is that a nation such as the United States now depends upon lands that we, not so long ago, might have considered mission lands to provide priests and sisters to us. Where once European and North American Catholics trained and sent missionaries to the world, now less than half a century later these mission lands are sending the missionaries to us.

Sincerely in Christ,



Most Reverend William F. Medley
Diocese of Owensboro

Happy anniversary to the following priests:

Fr. Babu Kulathumkal

Ordained 12/18/1996

Pastor, St. Pius X Parish, Owensboro

Fr. John Paul Mang

Ordained 12/11/2001

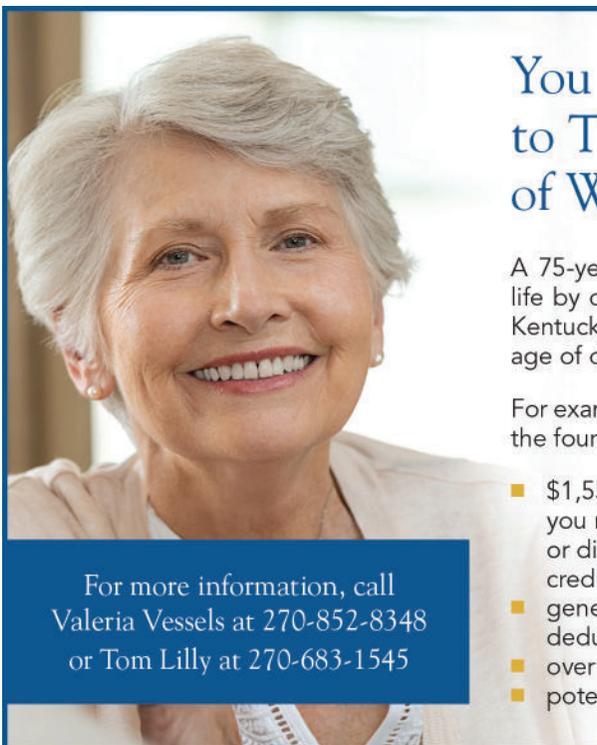
Parochial vicar, St. Pius X Parish, Owensboro

Fr. Jegin Puthenpurackal

Ordained 12/27/2004

Pastor, St. Sebastian Parish, Calhoun;
St. Charles Parish, Livermore

*Pray for vocations in the Diocese of Owensboro
and learn more at owensborovocations.com.*



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or Tom Lilly at 270-683-1545

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Bottom line is ‘helping people’ says Madisonville parishioner who restarted prayer chain

BY ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD, THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

For Martha Thomas, a faith-filled life is “about facing the day.”

This was never truer than after she experienced a stroke in the evening of Feb. 5, 2019.

Prior to her stroke, Thomas – a parishioner of Christ the King Parish in Madisonville ever since becoming Catholic in 2000 – could walk without a cane, eat and write with her right hand, and drive herself to work.

It all changed that night at 11 p.m. when her stroke happened.

Thomas detailed her memories of the experience in a reflection titled “My Anniversary,” which she wrote on Feb. 5, 2021 – having taught herself to write with her left hand during her healing process.

“Riding in the back of the ambulance the Lord put in my heart that He was going to take care of me,” she wrote.

“My Anniversary” is just one in a series of reflections that Thomas penned in a simple notebook between May 2020 and July 2023.

Her written reflections, which focus on her faith, her recovery, and many other parts of life, include titles like “Jesus, I Trust in You,” “Face the Day,” and “My Situation.”

Sharing these reflections with a close circle of friends, Thomas discovered that her journal entries spoke to their hearts, too. Her friends have since started using some of her spiritual writings in their own prayer reflections.

These writings are just one aspect of how Thomas has inspired and invigorated the parish community of Christ the King – all the while recovering from her stroke.

For years, Christ the King had a parish prayer chain. A prayer chain, typically, consists in a group of people who are committed to calling each other when they receive a prayer request; hence, creating a “chain” of phone calls. Intentions on the prayer chain would also be printed in the weekly parish bulletin.

Unfortunately, the prayer chain had ceased to exist by both phone and bulletin appearances, which troubled Thomas. She knew that there were still people out in the parish community who needed prayer.

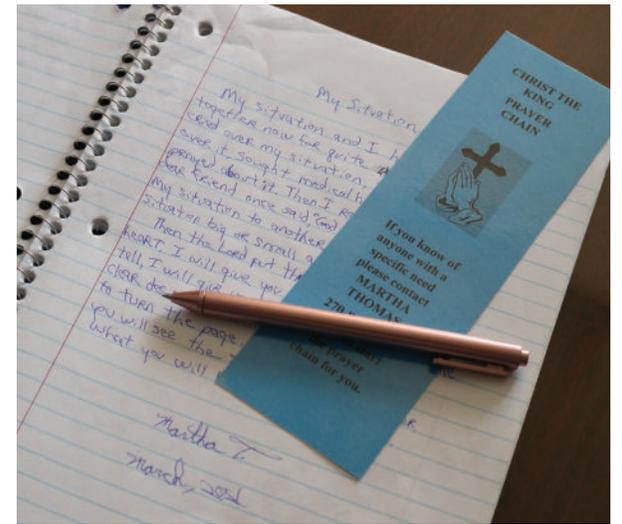
“Martha said, when people need prayer, they can’t wait until their names are seen in the Sunday bulletin,” said Barb Schnapf, the director of religious education for Christ the King and a close friend of Thomas.

Thomas considered the traditional phone call method, but with people’s busy lives, it was hard to make and answer calls consistently.

Thomas began talking to Schnapf and their pastor, Fr. Carl McCarthy, about restarting the prayer chain – one convenient for 21st-century parishioners.

“Barb suggested a group text,” said Thomas, which ended up being exactly what they needed.

The new-and-improved Christ the King prayer chain kicked off on Aug. 22, 2021, with Fr. McCarthy’s approval and a thread of dedicated



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC

Martha Thomas’s poem, “My Situation,” is seen in her journal with a bookmark promoting the prayer chain at Christ the King Parish in Madisonville, on Oct. 19, 2023. Thomas has been a leader in the parish community through her written reflections and re-starting the parish’s prayer chain – all accomplished after she experienced a debilitating stroke several years ago.

prayer warriors ready to offer up any intention sent their way.

“I would share (a prayer request) with 14 people and they would get it automatically,” said Thomas. “Prayer requests would go out much quicker.”

She added that she kept a journal of the prayer requests, so “if I wanted to reach out to that person and check in, I could,” she said.

Sherry Kittinger, parish office administrative assistant and bookkeeper, designed and printed bookmarks with Thomas’s contact information to place in stacks around the parish and to insert in bulletins. This way, anyone could reach out to

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Thomas to have their prayer intention added to the list.

“In the two years since it started, we have lifted up 265 people in prayer,” said Thomas. She said prayer requests go out every few days, and “nobody gets left behind.”

This summer, Thomas passed her role of prayer chain leader to fellow parishioner Kathy Dollahan. She looks back fondly to her time leading the prayer chain and is thankful for how much it continues to thrive, with about 15 members currently on the group text.

“Being the leader of the prayer chain was a very humbling experience,” she said. “I encourage other parishes to consider starting a prayer chain.”

Whether coordinating prayer for parishioners, or writing spiritual reflections, Thomas said “the bottom line is that I want to help people.”

“I came to realize this is a gift,” she said. “And if God gives you a gift, you’re supposed to share it. And I know that’s what I’m supposed to do.” ■

Note: Those who are interested in reading more of Martha Thomas’s writings may call the parish office of Christ the King at (270) 821-5494.

Time

The following is a reflection written by Martha Thomas, which has been reprinted with permission.

If I spent more time
Praising your name
And
If I spent more time
Lifting others up in prayer
I
Would spend less time
Asking for your forgiveness.

-Martha T.
May, 2020

‘Sharing our gift’: Black Catholics gather for Mass with Bishop Medley



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC

Members of the Congolese community at Holy Spirit Parish in Bowling Green sing a song for those gathered in the cathedral undercroft during a luncheon that followed the Nov. 4, 2023 Mass in celebration of Black Catholic History Month at St. Stephen Cathedral.



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC

Alison McFarland (foreground) attends the Nov. 4, 2023 Mass in celebration of Black Catholic History Month at St. Stephen Cathedral.

BY ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD, THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

F. Veronica Wilhite apologized for becoming emotional prior to the Nov. 4, 2023 Mass in celebration of Black Catholic History Month at St. Stephen Cathedral.

“This is where my parents met – in that choir loft,” said Wilhite, explaining that years ago, people of color were not allowed to sit in the main part of the cathedral.

Today, Wilhite, the director of the diocese’s Office of Black Catholic Ministry, pointed out the Black Catholics now sitting in the pews throughout the church and said, “Halleluiah.”

She said the purpose of this Mass was “about acknowledging who we are, where we came from, and what gifts we bring to our faith and our Church. And just

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ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC
Bishop William F. Medley accepts the gifts of bread and wine from Stacey and Dr. Thomas Braxton, Jr., during the Nov. 4, 2023 Mass in celebration of Black Catholic History Month at St. Stephen Cathedral.



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC
Bishop William F. Medley presides at the Nov. 4, 2023 Mass in celebration of Black Catholic History Month at St. Stephen Cathedral. Six framed portraits can be seen depicting the African American men and women whose causes for sainthood are currently open.



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC
F. Veronica Wilhite, director of the Office of Black Catholic Ministry for the Diocese of Owensboro, speaks before the Nov. 4, 2023 Mass in celebration of Black Catholic History Month at St. Stephen Cathedral.

like each of you – no matter your ethnic identity – we just need and want to share our gift.”

Bishop William F. Medley presided at the Mass, and the concelebrants were Fr. John Thomas, rector of St. Stephen Cathedral; and Fr. Jude Okeoma, pastor of Rosary Chapel and St. Mary Parish in Paducah. Dcn. Ken Bennett, co-coordinator of the diocese’s Office of Worship, assisted.

On display in front of the altar were framed pictures of the six African American men and women whose causes have been opened for canonization: Servant of God Sister Thea Bowman, Servant of God Julia Greeley, Servant of God Mother Mary Lange, Venerable Mother Henriette DeLille, Venerable Father Augustus Tolton, and Venerable Pierre Toussaint.

Music used in the liturgy included that of Clarence Joseph Rivers, a Black Catholic priest and famous composer of liturgical music – who paved the way for African American music to be used in the liturgy – and M. Roger Holland, II, another trailblazer in the legacy of African American Catholic music.

Speaking to the faithful attending the Mass, Bishop Medley thanked all for coming, especially those who drove from farther corners of the diocese that morning: “Your presence here today says that your Catholic faith is important, and we’ve got something to celebrate.”

Those attending included several members of the Congolese community at Holy Spirit Parish in Bowling Green. The Congolese choir was originally scheduled to sing at the liturgy, but transportation issues prevented this. Instead, the Congolese parishioners who made it to Owensboro sang a song for those gathered at the luncheon in the cathedral undercroft after Mass.

Stacey Braxton, who belongs to St. Charles Parish in Bardwell, attended the Mass with her husband and volunteered at the luncheon celebration.

Braxton said she met Wilhite when she signed up to attend the National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC) this past July. She was one of six Black Catholic delegates who traveled to Washington, D.C., for the congress.

Braxton – whose youngest child would altar serve and lector at the diocese’s annual YOUTH 2000 retreat for Catholic teens – said it is ironic that this was the first time she and her husband were attending a diocesan event themselves in Owensboro.

She expressed her admiration for Wilhite’s leadership in this ministry.

“The diocese is so large that it’s nice to have this opportunity to fellowship with each other,” said Braxton, adding that she hoped to have more events like these.

Jerrold Hamilton, who resides in Owensboro, said the celebration was “awesome.”

“I liked the fact that it brought not just Black Catholics but all Catholics together; it’s a really good thing when we get together,” he said.

Fellow Owensboro resident, Bernadette Thames, echoed what he said, and asked that more events like these take place.

“It was a wonderful celebration,” she said, “and the singing was just beautiful.” ■

Packed Masses and vibrant vocations

Bishop Medley takes ‘goodwill tour’ to Nigeria



COURTESY OF FR. JOHN OKORO
(Left to right) Fr. Emmanuel Udoh, Fr. Jerry Riney, Fr. John Okoro, Fr. Jude Okeoma, Bishop William F. Medley, and Fr. Julian Ibemere smiles for a photo in traditional Igbo Nigerian attire, during Bishop Medley’s visit to Nigeria.



COURTESY OF FR. JOHN OKORO
(Left to right) Fr. Emmanuel Udoh, Fr. John Okoro, Bishop William F. Medley, Fr. Jerry Riney, and Fr. Julian Ibemere visit Assumpta Cathedral in Owerri, Nigeria.



COURTESY OF FR. JOHN OKORO
Fr. Jerry Riney, Fr. John Okoro, and Bishop William F. Medley visit with the students of Divine Mercy School in Mbano in the Diocese of Okigwe in Imo State, and one of the religious sisters who teaches at the school, Sr. Loveline Eze of the Daughters of Divine Love.

BY ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD, THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

By the time he set off on his 16-day trip to Nigeria in October 2023, Bishop William F. Medley had become something of a pro at international pastoral visits.

And yet, these experiences never cease to move his heart and give him an opportunity for deep reflection upon returning home to the Diocese of Owensboro, Ky.

The bishop’s goal for his international trips is always the same: “To meet and thank the families of our priests, for sending them to serve our diocese,”

in reference to the 27 priests serving western Kentucky who were not born in the United States.

These priests are the pastors of 29 of the 78 parishes in the Diocese of Owensboro. They come from countries like Mexico, Guatemala, India, and Myanmar (also known as Burma), as well as several countries within the continent of Africa.

(The Owensboro diocese currently has 80 priests – though this includes several retired priests and one priest, Fr. Uwem Enoh, who is serving as a military chaplain with the Archdiocese for the Military Services, USA.)

Bishop Medley began what he calls his “goodwill tours” in 2018. He was aware of the sacrifice of these

priests’ families, most of whom never see their sons apart from when the priests can travel home for occasional visits.

Bishop Medley’s inaugural trip was to Mexico. Then, in early 2020 – the same year he celebrated his 10th anniversary as bishop of Owensboro – he visited India and Myanmar. It was while returning home from the latter trip that he saw people wearing masks in airports, and shortly after he made it back to Kentucky the world was overcome with the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the pandemic waned, the bishop was able to visit Guatemala in 2022. And following that successful visit, he considered Africa – keeping in mind

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that western Kentucky's priests hail from countries as varied as Nigeria, Kenya, the Democratic Republic of Congo, and Uganda.

He decided to visit Nigeria, which is home to five priests currently serving the Owensboro diocese: Fr. Emmanuel Udoh, Fr. Uwem Enoch, Fr. Julian Ibemere, Fr. John Okoro, and Fr. Jude Okeoma. Nigeria is also the home of the provincial house of the Franciscan Sisters of the Immaculate Conception, two of whom currently minister in the Diocese of Owensboro (Sr. Anthonia Asayoma and Sr. Anne Maria Joshua).

Several of these priests were ordained for and belong to the Diocese of Owensboro, and others serve the diocese with permission of their bishops in Nigeria.

During Bishop Medley's trip, which lasted from Oct. 9-24, he was accompanied by Fr. Udoh, as well as by Fr. Jerry Riney, an American priest of the diocese.

The bishop said that out of everything he saw and experienced, he was most impressed by the "celebration of the liturgies."

The bishop was also impressed by "the vocations of both men and women. Our Nigerian sisters have to turn down as many as they accept," he said.

At the invitation of Bishop Camillus Raymond Umoh of the Diocese of Ikot Ekpene, Bishop Medley even presided at the ordination of three transitional deacons.

Fulfilling his original goal of the trip, Bishop Medley met with the families of the Nigerian priests ministering to the Owensboro diocese. All five of the priests were able to be present, having coordinated their schedules to be in Nigeria during the bishop's visit (including Fr. Enoch, who received special permission from his military chaplain duties).

The bishop also visited Catholic Relief Services' Nigerian headquarters.

"I've always been fascinated by their work, especially as a bishop," he said. They went to the CRS national office in Abuja and met the country representative, Akim K. Kikonda, whose role is like that of an executive director.

The bishop said one of his most profound experiences in Nigeria was when he saw some wooden desks in a local school. Painted on the front of each desk was a message that said these desks had been donated by St. Thomas More Catholic Church in Paducah, Ky.

"Being 5,000 miles from home," he said, "and yet seeing these hand-painted desks" made him proud of the people of his diocese, who, having benefited from the service of Nigerian priests, had in turn provided these gifts for the schoolchildren of Nigeria. ■



COURTESY OF FR. JOHN OKORO
Bishop William F. Medley and Fr. Jerry Riney visit with the family of Fr. Jude Okeoma (third from left) during Bishop Medley's pastoral visit to Nigeria. Fr. Okeoma is the pastor of Rosary Chapel in Paducah and St. Mary Parish in LaCenter.



COURTESY OF FR. JOHN OKORO
Bishop William F. Medley visits with the family of Fr. Julian Ibemere (seen fifth from right) during Bishop Medley's pastoral visit to Nigeria. Fr. Ibemere is the pastor of St. Michael the Archangel Parish in Oak Grove.



COURTESY OF FR. JOHN OKORO
Bishop William F. Medley visits with the family of Fr. John Okoro (seen fifth from right) during the bishop's visit to Nigeria. Fr. Okoro is the pastor of St. Ambrose Parish in Morganfield, St. Francis Borgia Parish in Sturgis, and St. William Parish in Marion.

Vatican Nativity scene to honor 800th anniversary of St. Francis' creche

BY CINDY WOODEN, CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE

VATICAN CITY (CNS) - On the 800th anniversary of St. Francis of Assisi setting up the first Nativity scene, the creche in St. Peter's Square in 2023 will come from the Diocese of Rieti, Italy, and pay tribute to the scene set up in the diocese in 1223.

St. Francis' Nativity scene in a cave in Greccio featured live animals, but the one set to be unveiled in St. Peter's Square Dec. 9 will not, according to a press release from the Vatican City State governor's office.

But the scene still will be very simple: Mary and Joseph and the baby Jesus, some shepherds and figures representing the nobleman Giovanni Velita, his wife Alticama, and three Franciscan friars who, at St. Francis' behest, put a hay-filled manger, an ox and a donkey in a grotto where the local faithful could come to pray and to imagine the poverty and simplicity into which Jesus was born.

At the center of the scene, the governor's office said Oct. 30, there will be a copy of the fresco that now decorates that grotto in Greccio. One half shows St. Francis kneeling in adoration of the baby Jesus while Franciscan friars celebrate Mass; the other half shows Mary feeding the newborn savior while St. Joseph, the ox and the donkey look on.

The Diocese of Rieti also is providing a Nativity scene for the Paul VI Audience Hall, the press release said. It will be made of blown glass and will

feature both St. Francis and St. Clare.

The Christmas tree that will stand in St. Peter's Square is expected to be more than 80 feet tall and come from the Maira Valley near Turin. It will be decorated with live edelweiss flowers cultivated at a nursery nearby; picking or transplanting wild edelweiss is against the law in Italy, Switzerland, Austria and Germany.

The unveiling of the creche and lighting of the Christmas tree in the square is scheduled for 7 p.m. Dec. 9. They will remain in the square through the feast of the Baptism of the Lord, Jan. 7, 2024. ■



CNS PHOTO/PAUL HARING
The Nativity scene and Christmas tree decorate St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Dec. 5, 2022. This year, the creche in St. Peter's Square will come from the Diocese of Rieti, Italy, and pay tribute to the scene set up in the diocese in 1223.

The Ursuline Sisters' online Quilt Sale continues!



The quilts are made by Ursuline Sisters, Associates and friends.

Lots of items still available

Quilts make great Christmas gifts!

Check out the pretty selection for sale on our website:

www.ursulinesmsj.org/online-quilt-sale

Quilts are available in a range of sizes, including baby quilts. All are unique. The sizes and prices are included in the captions. We also have handmade shawls available for purchase.



Proceeds provide funding for the Ursuline Sisters to continue their ministries focusing on education and Christian formation.

To order a quilt, contact Carol Braden-Clarke: 270-229-2008
carol.braden-clark@maplemount.org

 **Ursuline Sisters**
of Mount Saint Joseph
8001 Cummings Road, Maple Mount, KY

Real Presence: Experience the mystery!

BY DR. JEFF ANDRINI, OFFICE OF
EVANGELIZATION AND DISCIPLESHIP

Is it possible to receive the Eucharist and not experience God's love? Unfortunately, it is, and many have walked away from the gift of the Eucharist and feel there was nothing there for them. Have you ever received the Eucharist and walked away unchanged? Honestly, it can happen to any of us. There is something required of us to "experience the mystery."

Quoting our Catechism paragraph 1128, "the Sacrament is not wrought by the righteousness of either the celebrant or the recipient, but by the power of God. From the moment that the sacrament is celebrated in accordance with the intention of the Church, the power of Christ and his Spirit acts in and through it... Nevertheless, the fruits of the sacraments also depend on the disposition of the one who receives them."

This month in our Acts 2:42 Small Groups we are reading from a document titled, "The Real Presence of Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist" written by our U.S. bishops, in which they remind us: "We are thus enabled to understand at least in some measure what would otherwise remain unknown to us, though we can never completely comprehend the mystery of God." The words of Jesus, the teachings of the apostles and Church dogma are all clear about what the Eucharist is, and yet, it is called a mystery.

No matter how we try to explain that the bread and wine are changed into the Body and Blood of Jesus, our language falls short. And our faith and disposition become of utmost importance.

Much concern has been generated regarding recent surveys in the Church that people either don't understand Church teaching on the Eucharist or simply don't believe it. Another way to respond to these surveys is to help people realize that so much of our faith is a mystery. And that our words are indeed limited in conveying the truths of God and describing eternal realities. However, God wants to encounter us. God wants humanity to experience unconditional, merciful love and Jesus is standing at the door of our hearts knocking every moment of every day, and especially as we receive Holy Communion.

While we might not fully understand or be able to technically explain the Real Presence, let's live our faith. We do this by cultivating a good disposition by preparing ourselves well and centering our lives around the Eucharistic table. May our disposition of longing for God's love, of preparing well to encounter Jesus in the Eucharist, and of pausing to contemplate the mystery while inviting Jesus into our hearts, truly change us for the better at every Mass. We do not need words for this, for we are forever changed, and our lives reflect it in how we love!

In this Advent season, may we more fully experience the mystery and invite others by the way we live it.

Blessings to you and yours this Christmas.

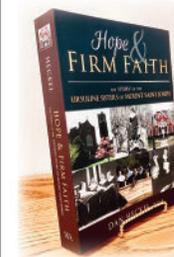
Peace,
Jeff ■

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



CNS PHOTO/DAVE HRBACEK, THE CATHOLIC SPIRIT
Bishop Andrew H. Cozzens of Crookston, Minn., elevates the Eucharist during his installation Mass at the Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception in Crookston Dec. 6, 2021.

Discover the unique story of the Ursuline Sisters who arrived in Davies County in 1874...



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Ursuline Sisters
of Mount Saint Joseph

Advent and the Eucharist: An intimate connection

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

Advent is a period of joyful anticipation and preparation for the coming of Christ. It is a time when Catholics reflect on the mystery of the Incarnation and prepare their hearts to welcome Jesus, both as the infant born in Bethlehem and as the Lord who will come again in glory. As we journey through the liturgical season of Advent, there is a profound connection between this period of awaiting and the Eucharist.

The Eucharist holds a central place in Catholic worship. It is the sacrament in which the Church receives the very Body, Blood, Soul, and Divinity of Jesus Christ. During the Eucharistic celebration, the Mass brings together the past, present, and future as it celebrates the memory of Christ's passion, his presence in the Eucharist, and the promise of his second coming.

In the context of Advent, the connection between it and the Eucharist becomes even more profound. Advent prepares us for the celebration of the birth of Jesus. In the Eucharist, we encounter the resurrected Christ, who was born of the Virgin Mary and became one of us. It is through the Eucharist that we enter into intimate communion with Jesus, who comes to us in the humble form of bread and wine.

Just as Advent is a time of waiting for the arrival of Christ, the Eucharist is a constant source of expectation and longing for Christ's presence in our lives. Every time we participate in the Mass, we are reminded of the Incarnation. We remember

how Christ became Emmanuel, "God with us," humbling himself to be born in a manger. Similarly, in the Eucharist, Jesus humbles himself again to be present among us, hidden under the simple elements of bread and wine. Through the Eucharist, Christ continues to be with us, nourishing our souls with his love and grace.

Advent prepares us for Christ's coming with repentance and conversion. It is a time of introspection, as we examine our lives and strive to remove any obstacles that hinder us from fully embracing Christ's presence in our hearts. Likewise, the Eucharist calls us to examine ourselves and seek reconciliation with God and our neighbor before partaking in the divine banquet. Through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, we cleanse our hearts of sin, preparing ourselves to receive the Eucharist worthily.

Advent also reminds us to be watchful and vigilant, awaiting Christ's second coming. As Catholics, we believe that Jesus will return in glory to judge the living and the dead. The Eucharist draws our attention to this eschatological dimension of our faith. When we receive the Eucharist, we not only encounter Christ's historical presence in the past but also experience His future coming. The Eucharist becomes a foretaste of the heavenly banquet that awaits us



CNS PHOTO | LISA A. JOHNSTON

A sculpture showing an expectant Mary with Joseph traveling to Bethlehem is seen in a Missouri church during the season of Advent, the time of anticipation and hope before Christmas.

in eternity.

Advent and the Eucharist share a profound connection within the Catholic faith. Both provide an opportune time for reflection, expectation, and preparation. Advent prepares us to celebrate Christ's birth while Eucharist allows us to commune intimately with Jesus. These two liturgical realities invite us to be vigilant and watchful, anticipating the second coming of Christ. As we journey through the season of Advent, let us remember the importance of the Eucharist in deepening our relationship with Christ and helping us draw closer to Him as we await His coming. ■

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.

Blessings on The Journey: Second young adult hike retreat offers space for prayer, reflection, and relying on community



COURTESY OF CHARLIE HARDESTY
Fr. Gary Clark celebrates Mass for The Journey Young Adult Hike Retreat, which took place Oct. 20-22, 2023.



COURTESY OF CHARLIE HARDESTY
Hikers take a break during the Oct. 20-22, 2023 hike retreat for young adults in the Diocese of Owensboro.



COURTESY OF CHARLIE HARDESTY
The participants of the Oct. 20-22, 2023 hike retreat for young adults in the Diocese of Owensboro.

BY CHARLIE HARDESTY, OFFICE OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

“We each had different reasons for coming together this weekend and all left with so much more love for God and each other as necessary creations in his image. Our willingness to be open and vulnerable with each other truly brought out the beauty of the Christian life and I am so excited to apply these lessons to my daily life. God used my love of nature and hiking to grow my faith in unexpected ways,” shared Paige McGehee of St. Mary Magdalene Parish after her experience on The Journey Young Adult Hike Retreat.

During the weekend of Oct. 20-22, 2023, the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry offered our second young adult hike retreat called “The Journey.” There were 12 participants on the

retreat, coming from all around the diocese. Danny May (director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life), Fr. Gary Clark (pastor of St. Francis de Sales in Paducah) and I again facilitated the retreat experience.

The vision for the retreat is to offer a space for participants to slow down, put down distractions, and create intentional space for God to be present to a particular intention they have brought with them on retreat. The team works to remove the stress of the details so the participants can simply enjoy the hike, God’s gift of creation, and one another.

Clint Roberts of St. Francis de Sales Parish shared: “My intention with this retreat was to avoid all distractions and reconnect with God, nature, and others. I was able to witness a lot of special moments and learn more about the lives of other

hikers. I was able to reflect on my own life and faith. I felt like I had permission to leave all my worries behind and simply enjoy the sights and sounds of nature. In the week after the retreat, I had a very productive week at work and felt closer to God than ever. I highly recommend this retreat to any young adult that needs to clear their mind and reconnect with God and the present moment.”

We plan to offer The Journey Young Adult Hike Retreat twice a year and registration for the next retreat, April 12-14, 2024, has already opened. Please check out the website <https://owensborodiocese.org/journey-retreat/> for more details and to register. ■

Charlie Hardesty is the director of the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry. Learn more at owensborodiocese.org/youth-ministry and email him at charlie.hardesty@pastoral.org.

Bed sponsoring changes lives!

St. Benedict's announces 11th annual bed sponsor campaign 2023-2024

A message from Harry Pedigo, executive director of St. Benedict's Shelter.

Bed sponsoring is an investment!

St. Benedict's Shelter for Men is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to providing nonjudgmental shelter and social support services in a Christian atmosphere. We provide high-quality programs that benefit Daviess County and the surrounding area. We do this through our Bed Sponsorship Campaign! It is only \$500 to sponsor a bed; that's less than a \$1.50 a day!

Will you join our efforts and partner with us today?

When it comes to shelters that care for men experiencing homelessness, St. Benedict's operates one of the most phenomenal facilities west of

Louisville. We accept anyone who needs a safe place to sleep, eat and bathe, and we don't place time limits on their stays. As a result, we serve a large number of clients who come from several counties. For example, in 2022-2023, our facility assisted about 500 men from 105 zip codes.

Our annual Bed Sponsorship fundraiser makes it possible for St. Benedict's to offer a safe shelter and the types of programs that help clients move into permanent housing. We estimate it costs \$500 a year to provide a bed for a client, so, at this time each year, we ask our supporters to consider sponsoring a bed.

Funds from the Bed Sponsorship campaign are used to expand and enhance existing programs, which center around restoring self-

confidence and regaining self-sufficiency. The campaign runs through January 30, 2024.

To show our appreciation, sponsors' names are displayed on a plaque in the men's shelter.

Generous community support is vital to our clients' success. If you want to partner with us and sponsor a bed, please fill out the enclosed envelope and mail to St. Benedict's or donate online at <https://stbenedictswensboro.org/sponsor-a-bed/>.

If you donated to the Bed Sponsorship program in the past, thank you for supporting regional men who experience homelessness. We hope you will consider partnering with St. Benedict's again this year. ■

Paducah Faith Formation students pray for peace during annual Living Rosary

BY GING SMITH, SPECIAL TO THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

Paducah Faith Formation held their annual Living Rosary during the month of October. Selected students, catechists and board members helped lead in the prayers and reflections. Students from second grade through high school each represented a bead by holding an illuminated candle. The Apostles' Creed as well as the Our Father beads were represented by colored lights while the Hail Mary beads were white. As the Mysteries of the Rosary and each prayer were recited, participants were encouraged to pray for peace as well as to reflect on how to faithfully live out their Catholic faith in emulation of Mary through love of God, prayer and humility, obedience to the Father's will, and service to others. ■

Ging Smith is the director of Paducah Faith Formation and can be reached at paducahfaithformation@smss.org.



COURTESY OF LOUIS YOPP

Paducah Faith Formation prays their annual Living Rosary on Oct. 25, 2023 in the gym of St. Mary Elementary School in Paducah. This year, Paducah Faith Formation has 133 students.

Sr. Helena Fischer receives Outstanding Alumnus Award



BY MOUNT SAINT JOSEPH STAFF

On Sept. 30, Brescia University Alumni Association's president, Sagan Storm, presented the Outstanding Alumnus Award to Sr. Helena Fischer, OSU, during the Alumni Homecoming and Family Weekend.

Sr. Helena is serving in her 62nd year as an Ursuline Sister of Mount Saint Joseph. She is a 1965 Brescia graduate, and spent 22 years as a teacher or principal, before returning to minister at Brescia in 1987 as director of institutional research (1987-97), assistant registrar (1987-90), and registrar (1990-present). She embodies St. Angela Merici's message to adapt to the signs of the times, constantly changing to meet the needs of college students for the past 36 years.

Her 33 years as registrar is the second longest tenure in the same ministry of the current Ursuline Sisters, behind only Sr. Judith Nell Riney's 43 years as director of library services at Brescia. ■

COURTESY OF RACHEL WHELAN

Brescia University Alumni Association president, Sagan Storm, left, presents the Outstanding Alumnus Award to Sr. Helena Fischer, OSU, during the Alumni Homecoming and Family Weekend on Sept. 30.

National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) Announces Annual Retirement Fund for Religious Collection

PRESS RELEASE

OWENSBORO, Ky – The National Religious Retirement Office (NRRO) is announcing the annual Retirement Fund for Religious collection, scheduled in parishes throughout the Diocese of Owensboro on Dec. 9-10.

In 2022, parishioners contributed \$31,139.43 to the collection. From this collection, the Home Mission Sisters of America and the Passionist Nuns received a combined total of \$24,027.82 in financial support made possible by the Retirement Fund for Religious.

Mr. John Knutsen, director of the NRRO, looks forward to this year's collection, stating, "We are privileged to support those who have dedicated

their lives to tireless service, and we are immensely grateful for the continuing generosity of U.S. Catholic donors to this vital cause."

Catholic sisters, brothers and religious order priests—collectively known as women and men religious—have selflessly served for decades without significant financial compensation. However, due to escalating health-care costs, numerous U.S. religious communities face a substantial gap between their elderly members' needs and the financial resources available for their care. Many religious orders currently experience insufficient retirement savings.

The 2022 appeal demonstrated Catholics' tremendous generosity by raising \$27.6 million. These funds from the Retirement Fund for Religious collection provided financial assistance for

retirement needs for 297 U.S. religious communities.

The NRRO coordinates the annual national appeal for the Retirement Fund for Religious and distributes financial assistance to eligible religious communities to help care for their aging members. To address the deficit in retirement funding among U.S. religious orders, the Catholic bishops of the United States initiated the Retirement Fund for Religious collection in 1988. The NRRO is sponsored by the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, the Council of Major Superiors of Women Religious, the Leadership Conference of Women Religious and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops. ■

For more information, visit retiredreligious.org, or contact Robin Cabral, Campaign Director, by phone at (508) 685-8899 or by email at robincabral@retiredreligious.org.



COURTESY OF BELINDA ABELL

Vicki Duncan, SVDP community liaison, plays with a young survivor of the 2021 tornadoes during a Nov. 11 pre-Thanksgiving celebration for Mayfield tornado survivors.

BY BELINDA ABELL, SPECIAL TO THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

On Nov. 11, St. Vincent de Paul – Diocesan Council of Western Kentucky, Inc. hosted a pre-Thanksgiving celebration in Mayfield, Ky., with 50 tornado survivor families. Many survivors expressed their gratitude for SVDP’s national House in a Box program.

One survivor, Tommy Jackson, singled out SVDP

community liaison, Vicki Duncan, saying, “Miss Vicki was so helpful through it all. When I didn’t know where to go or what to do, she gave me direction. She is truly a blessing.” When he left, Jackson shared with Duncan a handmade afghan and several scripture quotes that are dear to him.

During the day survivors had a chance to visit with two SVDP Diocesan Council board members Nancy Harris, president; and Harry Bellew, vice president. Harris reflected on the day, “Journeying with the survivors in their recovery is essential so they know they’re not forgotten; we as Vincentians are the long-term recovery people. When everyone else is gone, we’re still here to help; western Kentucky is our home. I was humbled by their gratitude. Their stories made it so real for me. It was also a great opportunity for us to visit with our special Mayfield Vincentians (St. Joseph Conference) – they are our local boots on the ground.”

The Mayfield Vincentians provided fellowship and wonderful hospitality to the survivor families, including delicious food and refreshments.

St. Vincent de Paul continues to serve 2021 tornado survivors

Unfortunately, there are still so many unmet needs. SVDP Diocesan Council CEO, Richard B. Remp-Morris says, “We are thankful for the resources to continue to help tornado survivors. We have seen such generosity from our donors, especially SVDP Disaster Services Corporation and the American Red Cross, however, the need is still so great. It has been a privilege and at the same time personally rewarding to be able to serve the western Kentucky tornado survivors.”

As families left, each were gifted a new microwave, a tin of holiday cookies, and a \$50 gift card towards their Thanksgiving meal. All children received a small bag of candy. ■

Donations for tornado survivors are still being accepted by St. Vincent de Paul – Diocesan Council of Western Kentucky, Inc. If you would like to contribute visit svdpwky.org/give or send your contribution to SVDP P.O. Box 1203 Owensboro KY 42302-1203

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

Together on mission: Knights of Columbus look forward to diocesan collaboration while serving the people of western Kentucky

BY DANNY MAY, SPECIAL TO THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

On a beautiful autumn afternoon, Bishop William F. Medley met with about 30 Knights of Columbus leaders from councils across the Diocese of Owensboro. Hosted by Council #11132 at Christ the King in Madisonville, the meeting began with lunch following the parish’s 10:30 Mass on



COURTESY OF LEONARD WALTHER

Bishop William F. Medley addresses the Grand Knights and other Knights of Columbus representatives from around the diocese during a Nov. 5 gathering hosted at Christ the King.

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Knights continued from page 16

Sunday, Nov. 5. Also present was Dr. Jeff Andrini, director of the diocese's Office of Evangelization and Discipleship.

In his address to the Knights, Bishop Medley thanked them for their service to the people of western Kentucky and the example they set by putting their faith in action.

"When I think of the Knights of Columbus, I think of your faithful witness," said Bishop Medley. "I think of social things like fish fries, but I also think of charitable works. There's no better example in my mind than when the tornado hit many of your council areas in December (of 2021). It's safe to say most, if not all, of your councils stepped up to make donations to tornado victims and help in other ways."

Grand Knights and other representatives then shared brief reports of some of the good works the councils in our diocese have done in the past year. One notable report was the 10th anniversary of the Bluegrass on (Lake) Beshear fundraiser that



COURTESY OF LEONARD WALTHER

Bishop William F. Medley presides at Mass at Christ the King Parish on Nov. 5, 2023, prior to attending a gathering with the Grand Knights and other Knights of Columbus representatives from around the diocese.



COURTESY OF LEONARD WALTHER

Grand Knights and other Knights of Columbus representatives smile for a photo with Bishop William F. Medley during a Nov. 5 gathering hosted at Christ the King Parish in Madisonville.

raises money for crisis pregnancy centers. At that annual event, eight councils collaborate to help organize and fund the festival, with funds then going to three local crisis pregnancy centers.

Several councils reported raising money to install Safe Haven Baby Boxes in their communities, which provide a safe, legal, and anonymous way for a parent to surrender a newborn baby to eventually be adopted. Other councils reported on mission trips to Appalachia, working with school family resource centers to provide underprivileged students with brand new shoes and/or Christmas presents, providing scholarships to Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center, supporting seminarians, sending donations to flood victims, and other projects.

The Knights then brainstormed ways they, the parishes, and the diocese as a whole could collaborate more in the future to be "together on mission" in western Kentucky. Their feedback was taken back to the McRaith Catholic Center (the central office for the diocese) for further

discussion, to be shared with all Grand Knights.

Leonard Walther, who belongs to Council #1315 in Bowling Green, and is also the Knights of Columbus insurance field agent for the eastern half of the Diocese of Owensboro, said he appreciated the meeting.

"It was great to have the bishop meet with the Knights of Columbus leadership from his diocese," said Walther, who attends St. Joseph Parish in Bowling Green. "I am looking forward to seeing programs like Cor flourish with the help of the diocese. I believe that, together on a mission, we can achieve great things for Catholic men that will have a very positive impact on their families."

The meeting closed with an overview of the upcoming "Cor" initiative – which is a small group gathering of men in parishes – spearheaded from the Knights of Columbus's national office. According to kofc.org, the mission of Cor is "to refocus Catholic men on Jesus Christ and to form and strengthen them in faith and virtue through a brotherhood committed to prayer, formation, and fraternity." ■

'Fully alive' NCYC youth challenged to celebrate mysteries of faith, science and self

BY NATALIE HOEFER, OSV NEWS

Grace Stacker of the Diocese of Helena, Montana, pulled out her cellphone and called her dad, right in the middle of a talk during the National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC).

In fact, teens all around her were talking on their phones, even as the speaker stood on the stage.

But they had his permission.

"I want you right now, in one minute, to just make a call to somebody in your life whom you love, who's pretty special, whom you appreciate," Scripture scholar and astrophysicist Father John Kartje asked of the more than 12,000 NCYC participants.

The request came as part of his talk on the oneness of God and the universe ~ faith and science ~ that served as the topic of the opening session of NCYC in Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis on Nov. 16.

He began the talk echoing words spoken by Archbishop Charles C. Thompson just moments before.

"The line that really struck me amongst everything he said is this," Father Kartje noted: "You're not a problem to be solved, but you are a mystery to be encountered."

Archbishop Thompson spoke to the teens about this year's NCYC theme "Fully Alive" in a prayer service at the beginning of the opening session ~ after the teens had settled down from a rousing concert by Christian rock band for KING



RILEY GREIF | WKC

At one point during the Nov. 16-18 National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis, youth ministers were called forward to stand by the stage while their youth were invited to pray together for them. Here, teens lift their hands while praying for their youth ministers.

+ COUNTRY.

He quoted his "favorite line" from Pope Francis' encyclical, "Laudato Si": "Rather than a problem to be solved, the world is a joyful mystery to be contemplated with gladness and praise."

"We heard that beautiful reading about creation from the Book of Genesis," Archbishop Thompson said of the beginning of the prayer service. "But the ultimate part of that creation is when God created humanity, when God created us. We are part of that creation that's been given life by the Spirit breathing into us, by the Word taking root in us, claiming us

as his own.

"And so no one here is a problem to be solved, but is to be contemplated as a joyful mystery with gladness and praise.

"Whatever pains in our lives, whatever is going on, whatever hurts, whatever guilt, whatever fears, whatever anxieties, whatever it is ~ that does not define us."

Rather, he said, we are defined by our identity in Christ, whose body, blood, soul and divinity is present in the Eucharist.

"The Eucharist has been given to us through

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RILEY GREIF | WKC

Youth wear NCYC t-shirts and funny hats during the Nov. 16-18 National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis. As part of time-honored NCYC tradition, participants trade silly hats throughout the conference.



RILEY GREIF | WKC

Fr. Daniel Dillard, who is vocations director for the Diocese of Owensboro, chaplain at Owensboro Catholic High School, and associate pastor of Sts. Joseph and Paul Parish, wears a dragon hat while attending the Nov. 16-18 National Catholic Youth Conference.



RILEY GREIF | WKC

(Left to right) teens Cendal Brown, Ella Johnston, and Katie Beth Osborne, all parishioners of St. Stephen Cathedral, sit together during the Nov. 16-18 National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis, held at Lucas Oil Stadium.



RILEY GREIF | WKC

The National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) is an opportunity for youth from different parishes and states to meet up and maybe even reunite. Here, Laney Chaudoin of Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Hopkinsville, hugs Ella Johnston of St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro. The two know each other from attending the Diocese of Owensboro's Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center in Bowling Green during the summer.

the passion, the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ so that we have life, that we have what is necessary to be witnesses to the good news, what it means to be fully alive," Archbishop Thompson said.

"We are most fully alive when we live our lives not with ourselves at the center, but keeping Christ at the center. We are fully alive when we live for the glory of God and in service to others," he said. "We gather tonight remembering that we belong to something greater than ourselves as children of God, created in the image of God. We have a dignity, a dignity no power on earth can take away.

"That's why we can claim to be fully alive."

Father Kartje picked up where Archbishop Thompson left off ~ speaking about the NCYC theme.

"If you talk about being fully alive, I can't think of a better way to get at what that actually looks like in our world today than to look at this interaction between faith and science," he said. With doctorates in Scripture and astrophysics, the current rector and president of the University of St. Mary of the Lake/Mundelein Seminary in Mundelein, Illinois, is an expert on both topics.

He quoted John 1:3: "All things came into being

through him. Without him, not one thing came to being."

"A hundred billion galaxies exist," Father Kartje said. "That very same God of creation is the God alive in our own bodies. The very same God that gives you the galaxies ... gives us the very life in our hearts."

Science and faith are both a way of looking at the world, he explained ~ one through the lens of a telescope, the other through the glass of a monstrance.

"The Eucharist you see through the glass of the monstrance gives us the ability to see the body and the blood of Christ in a way that doesn't look like the body and blood of Christ," Father Kartje said.

Meanwhile, through the new Webb Telescope "you can see the world that goes all the way back to Genesis," he said. "It's the world that goes back to the life that is in us. That is a monstrance all its own, these beautiful images from the Webb Telescope, to look at them for who Jesus is precisely because

Continues on page 20

NCYC continued from page 19

he is the one through whom all of that glorious astronomy is possible.”

To gaze upon the universe or to gaze upon Christ in the Eucharist, said Father Kartje, “is literally to let yourself be gazed upon by the one who delights in your very existence.”

As for his request for the more than 12,000 youths to call someone they love, Father Kartje explained the connection to faith and science.

“The person you called is probably feeling loved right now,” he said. “The reason something special happened at that connection is because of what you see in the monstrance. That’s why Christ came into the world ~ the one who does all of this is love.” ■

Hoefler is a staff writer at The Criterion, newspaper of the Archdiocese of Indianapolis.



RILEY GREIF | WKC
Bishop William F. Medley smiles for a photo with two youth during the Nov. 16-18 National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis. Bishop Medley was one of many bishops who attended the conference to concelebrate liturgies, hear confessions, and meet the many participants who traveled from across the country.



RILEY GREIF | WKC
(Left to right) Kennedy and Dustin Payne, Cendal Brown, Katie Beth Osborne, and Ella Johnston stand with their youth minister Karina Romero while waiting for Lucas Oil Stadium to open in the evening of Nov. 16, the first day of the 2023 National Catholic Youth Conference (NCYC) in Indianapolis.

The Journey
Young Adult Hiking Retreat
2 NIGHTS/2 DAYS/23 MILES
**Friday Evening-
Sunday Afternoon**
**The North Trail at Land
Between the Lakes**



[owensborodiocese.org/
journey-retreat/](https://owensborodiocese.org/journey-retreat/)

Registration is now open for
April 12-14, 2024

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



**Office of Young Adult Ministry
DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO**

Newly-digitized recording of Bishop McRaith's installation steeped in 1980s holiday nostalgia

BY EDWARD WILSON, ARCHIVES

Around this time of year, it seems like we can hardly cram in any more celebrations before the year's end. Multiple Thanksgivings give way to Christmas parties with friends, family, and coworkers. However, on a "cold and drizzly" December evening, 41 years ago, the Diocese of Owensboro was happy to add an additional celebration to the holiday season. Just 10 days before Christmas, our third bishop, the Most Reverend John J. McRaith, was installed. Luckily for us, that celebration was filmed and edited down to a very watchable piece of diocesan history. It should definitely be on your Christmas watchlist this season.

Presented by Cable 2 TV in Owensboro, the celebration is introduced by a Latin rendition of "O Come, O Come Emmanuel." After the narrator gives a short overview of the history of the diocese, she reveals that around 5,000 people are in attendance. Of them, one is an archbishop, 29 are bishops and 175 are priests. This celebration was clearly no small ordeal. I will not bore you with a play-by-play of what happens in the video, as I highly recommend that you view it yourself. However, I will remark on some of my takeaways.

The video captures the true spirit of our diocese so well. Our diocese has never been lauded as affluent. Most of our ancestors worked on a farm or in a mine. We have, however, been lauded for our warmth and hospitality. With the laughter, cheering, smiles and joyous voices, there is no doubt Bishop McRaith understood that we were happy to

help make Kentucky his home.

If you want to feel some real nostalgia, this video has what you need. The low-fidelity audio and dull video quality transport you to when VHS and cable TV were the peak of entertainment. The inability of the low-definition cameras to register the lights in the Owensboro Sportscenter causes every hanging bulb to blaze, each appearing as an individual star of Bethlehem. The dress, the hair, the aesthetic... this video transports you to evening Mass in the 80s and early 90s before going to a Christmas Eve party at your grandparents'.

Perhaps the most powerful moment in the video is due to retrospect. The presentation of the gifts was administered by members of Bishop McRaith's family. The narrator mentions that his father is presenting in a wheelchair because he has been battling sickness. Little did anyone watching know that the bishop's father would pass away the next December. It is a truly powerful moment.

If you are interested in viewing this video, it will be accessible on the Diocese of Owensboro's YouTube



ARCHIVES SCREENSHOT

Bishop John J. McRaith is seen in this screen grab from his Dec. 15, 1982 episcopal ordination and installation as the third bishop of the Diocese of Owensboro, which was broadcast on cable television.

channel under the Archives playlist, which can be found at the Diocese of Owensboro's YouTube page (www.youtube.com/@dioceseofowensboro7623). Not to leave out the two bishops that preceded Bishop McRaith, Bishops Francis Cotton and Henry Soenneker, a historic event of them will also be digitized and made available soon. Enjoy, and have a merry Christmas! ■

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.

December Wedding Anniversaries

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

Blessed Mother, Owensboro

Ed & Mae Hoskins, 54
Mark & Jan Hubbs, 55
Mike & Rose Clark, 51
Tom & Darlene Quinn, 50
Tony & Lois Booker, 51

Christ the King, Madisonville

Bob & Floy Daugherty, 70
James & Debbie Allen, 54
Sherrell & Jeannie Calhoun, 65

Holy Name of Jesus, Henderson

Allen & Terri Allen, 55
Danny & Lynn DeKemper, 53
Forrest & Mary Meuth, 62
Herb & Mary Gold, 54
Jacob & Hannah Simpson, 5
Jaime & Eve Tiu, 50
Leonard & Nicel Mechels, 10
Lucio & Ramona Hernandez, 56
Steve & Roxanne Sellars, 52

Holy Redeemer, Beaver Dam

Steve & Dorothy Storm, 52

Holy Spirit, Bowling Green

Allen & Judy Freeland, 55
Darrell & Marcia Cassady, 50
Frank & Carol Kersting, 54
Gim Mung & No Cing, 10
H Leon & Jane Brasher, 58
John & Carmen Hughes, 5
John & Mary Anne Reiss, 60
Kyle & Carrie Larkin, 10
Larry & Anita Willoughby, 60
Peter Gin Mang & Veronica Cing Vung, 10
Richard & Marcia Poole, 54
Sam & Tina Rzepka, 52
William & Lynda Svano, 61
William & Sharon McKay, 59

Immaculate Conception, Earlington

Ken & Rosemary Porter, 63

Immaculate Conception, Hawesville

David & Joan Wettstain, 40
Ellis & Sharon Russelburg, 57

Immaculate, Owensboro

Carl & Brenda Millay, 55
Fred & Beverly Bosley, 53
Murray & Sara Pride, 59
Otis & Judy Hicks, 60
Paul & Donna Munsey, 56

Our Lady of Lourdes, Owensboro

Ben & Veronica Englert, 5
Daniel & Dolores Fickas, 54
James & Diane Hunter, 55
James & Linda Warren, 56
John & Kay Steele, 62

Precious Blood, Owensboro

Craig & Tiffany Nalley, 25
Gary & Lois Miller, 51
James & Dorothy Hodges, 52

Resurrection, Dawson Springs

Joe & Mazie Mastromarino, 71

Sacred Heart, Russellville

Mike & Linda Slaughter, 56

Sacred Heart, Waverly

Mike & Linda Williamson, 53
Mike & Marilyn Fenwick, 54

St. Agnes, Uniontown

Alvin & Betty Borup, 65
Kenny & Linda Gough, 56

St. Alphonsus, St. Joseph

Chris & Joyce Kormelink, 60
Jim & Patsy Love, 53

St. Ann, Morganfield

Justin & Wilma Wolfe, 60

St. Anthony, Axtel

Celestine & Bonnie Hinton, 54
Denvir & Carolyn Henning, 53

St. Anthony, Browns Valley

Isaac & Sara Fulkerson, 5
Ron & Janice Tindall, 56

St. Anthony, Peonia

Danny & Patsy Clemons, 54

St. Augustine, Grayson Springs

Leon & Martha Hill, 56

St. Charles, Bardwell

Daniel & Wanda Hayden, 59
Jim & Sue McIntyre, 57
Michael & Denise Thompson, 50

St. Charles, Livermore

George & Carol Rhodes, 58

St. Columba, Lewisport

Anthony & Margaret Hall, 56

St. Edward, Fulton

Jonathan & Brittany Burnette, 10

St. Elizabeth, Clarkson

Glenn & Patty Campbell, 55

St. Francis de Sales, Paducah

David & Edie Keeney, 64
Jerry & Diane Perry, 55
John & Shelia Vogt, 10

St. Jerome, Fancy Farm

Brannon & Glynda Thompson, 25

Bruce & Sue Turner, 54
Dennis & Peggy Tharp, 56
Laddie & Judy Thomas, 58
Wayne & Ruth Ann Higdon, 68

St. John the Baptist, Fordsville

Ray & Peggy Montgomery, 53

St. John the Evangelist, Paducah

Donald & Karol Richards, 53

St. Joseph, Bowling Green

Bill & Joey Powell, 64
Jim & Phyllis Huggins, 56
John & Rita Riley, 60
William & Linda Nesbitt, 53

St. Joseph, Central City

Donald & Bonnie Adams, 53

St. Joseph, Leitchfield

Doug & Mary Mantooth, 40

St. Joseph, Mayfield

Jimmy & Diane McIntyre, 10

St. Lawrence, Philpot

Jerry & Shirley Powers, 61

St. Leo, Murray

Aaron & Maria Brown, 10
Phil & Sarah Bryan, 62
Tyson & Sue DeLoach, 55

St. Mary of the Woods, McQuady

Louis & Elaine Hinton, 56

St. Mary of the Woods, Whitesville

David & Judy Connor, 59
Ivo & Martha Burch, 55

Jerry Howard, 55
Mark & Alleen Mills, 51
Paul & Brenda Clemons, 59
Raymond & Emma Whistle, 71
Ronnie & Patsy Mayfield, 56

St. Mary, LaCenter

Butch & Janie Rainer, 59
Clyde & Mary Kay Riepe, 56
David & Gladys Fraser, 64
King & Cecilia Moss, 53

St. Michael the Archangel, Oak Grove

Joseph & Marcia Schmitt, 54
Lionel & Sue McElroy, 71

St. Michael, Sebree

Daryl & Carmen Periard, 59
Greg & Lea Ann Sugg, 51

St. Pius X, Owensboro

Robert Maung Lian & Veronica Siang, 10
Thomas & Janice Conrey, 54

St. Romuald, Hardinsburg

Harold & Fonda Roach, 52
Joe & Marion Oelze, 52
Ort & Barbara Critchelow, 51
Paul & Anne O'Reilly, 57
Steve & Jenny Critchelow, 51

St. Sebastian, Calhoun

David & Betty Abrams, 64
Larry & Patricia Hardison, 59
Mark & Paula Hayden, 40

St. Stephen Cathedral, Owensboro

Chris & Vickie Warren, 50
Garry & Ann Pierce, 55

St. Stephen, Cadiz

Raymond & Roberta Ward, 65

St. Thomas More, Paducah

James & Priscilla Hollowell, 56

St. William, Knottsville

Oran & Nancy Bowlds, 51
Tom & Chelsea Wathen, 10

St. William, Marion

Donnie & Jeanette Phillips, 56

Sts. Joseph & Paul, Owensboro

Jim & Jenny Wilson, 53
Philip & Annie Storm, 50

Sts. Peter & Paul, Hopkinsville

Bill & Linda Harkins, 65
Jerry & Malinda Powell, 52
Juan & Ana Aguirre, 10

DECEMBER 2023 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.

Service of the Longest Night set for December 16

Abbey Caskets, a work of Saint Meinrad Archabbey, will host a Service of the Longest Night on Saturday, December 16, 2023, at 6 p.m. Central Time in the Saint Meinrad Archabbey Guest House Chapel in St. Meinrad, IN. Many people find the holidays a challenging time. Instead of celebrating, they are struggling with grief. They miss loved ones and find that the usual traditions and bright lights serve only to heighten their struggle. Fr. Adrian Burke, OSB, will lead the service with prayer and Scripture that acknowledge those who mourn and struggle with loss during the Christmas season. The service will be recorded and posted on the Abbey Caskets website for those unable to attend in person. Everyone is welcome. Light refreshments will follow. RSVP requested, but not required, for planning. Reply to info@abbeycaskets.com or call 800-987-7380 for further information. Parking is available in the Guest House parking lot.

Ursuline Sisters have added 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/>

Help Ursuline Sisters continue "cultivating the vine" for 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 in 2024 will celebrate 150 years of service to God's kingdom. The Sisters are "Cultivating the vine Saint Angela entrusted to us." We invite you to share in their legacy by supporting the Ursuline Sisters' ministries. Sister Mary Celine Weidenbenner has been a teacher for over 50 years, the last 16 at Mary Carrico School in Knottsville. Sister Lorraine Lauter brings clean drinking water to impoverished nations through Water With Blessings. Sister Mimi Ballard is in her 26th year of teaching crafts to women in Chile. 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. In honor of the Ursuline Sisters' 150 years of service, we ask that you prayerfully consider a gift to support the Sisters' ministries. We would also like you to submit your stories about how an Ursuline Sister(s) has affected your life. Visit <https://ursulinesmsj.org/get-involved/> or email carol.braden-clarke@maplemount.org.

Need a meeting space? Maple Hall is available at Mount Saint Joseph

Need a meeting space for up to 200 people? Maple Hall (formerly known as Mount Saint Joseph Auditorium/Gym) is available for rent. It is located on the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph campus, 8001 Cummings Road, Maple Mount, Ky., 12 miles west of Owensboro on Hwy. 56, across from the park. Maple Hall is an open space with a kitchen equipped for catering. It's perfect for hosting receptions, parties, reunions, etc. There are two rental options -- a partial rental for up to four hours (\$100) and a full rental which allows use for a full day (\$200). This use of 8-foot tables and chairs is included in the rental fee (user is responsible for setup, or this can be done for you for an additional fee). To reserve Maple Hall, contact the Mount Saint Joseph Finance Office by email: ap@maplemount.org or call the switchboard at 270-229-4103 and ask to speak to the Finance Office. Normal business hours are Monday through Friday 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. You can find out more on this

webpage: <https://ursulinesmsj.org/renting-maple-hall/>

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/>

Bricks from the former Mount Saint Joseph Academy/Retreat Center are still available



The 1874 building had to be deconstructed this year, but some bricks from the original Academy were saved for posterity. For a suggested donation of \$25, you can own or give someone a memorial brick. It comes with a certificate of authenticity.

Visit ursulinesmsj.org/mount-brick/

To order by mail, make check payable to "Ursuline Sisters" and mail to: **Academy Brick, 8001 Cummings Road, Maple Mount, KY 42356.**

Questions? Call Carol Braden-Clarke at 270-229-2008.



Ursuline Sisters
of Mount Saint Joseph

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Flowers in December



COURTESY OF ST. JOSEPH PARISH
A statue of Our Lady of Guadalupe is seen at St. Joseph Parish in Bowling Green in December 2022.

BY SUSANA SOLORZA, SPECIAL TO THE
WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

Flowers in December, the brown skin of the Queen of Heaven and Earth, and a request, all pieces of a story which has been carried from generation to generation for almost 500 years. Her story has been chanted, sung, tapped out to the beat of a solitary drum, and dramatically played out in churches, homes, and community spaces for years in the Diocese of Owensboro.

She charged her story to an Aztec man living in the midst of a society torn apart by greed and forced assimilation. St. Juan Diego, formerly Cuauhtlatoatzin (He Who Speaks Like The Eagle), was entrusted with a message for the Spanish church leaders of the time. In the Mexico of 1531, the Spanish colonizers had the power and the wealth, gained from the labor and stolen land of the indigenous people of the Americas. Although the Spanish did bring the truth of Christ, they also brought pain and devastation leading to violence and a disintegration of many cultures and languages. How could we make our way back from this chaos? Divine intervention was the only solution which Bishop Juan Zumárraga could fathom. Just like the story of salvation, no matter how low we can fall as a people, Christ is always ready to be present to our pain and unrest, with his mother, Mary, as our intercessor. Our Lady of Guadalupe appeared to St. Juan Diego on the hill of Tepeyac on a cold December day with bird song to accompany her visit. She appeared to her “Littlest Son” dressed in royal Aztec colors and spoke to him in his native tongue, Nahuatl. She was veiled in stars, postured in front of the sun, and she stood on the moon. All of these symbols indicated to Juan Diego this: she was in fact the Queen of Heaven and Earth. She was brown-skinned, her hair parted down the middle, indicating she was not yet married, but wearing the black ribbon of pregnancy tied around her waist. A four-petalled flower, situated right above her womb, indicated she carried the Creator within. St. Juan Diego was to be her messenger,

he was charged with carrying her story off of the Tepeyac.

As an educator and minister, I too have been charged with her story. I have shared it with young and old, to those who have known her for years and those who are hearing her story for the first time. I have found the importance of her story lies in this: Our Lady of Guadalupe saw St. Juan Diego and his people, their pain, sufferings, and longings for a world where Jesus died on the cross for all, not just the powerful and wealthy. She represents those who fight to have their voices heard when others choose to see them as less than. She challenges us because she is the counterweight to an imbalanced world where privilege is ascribed to certain people and denied to others. I pray this post is a launching point to getting to know Our Lady of Guadalupe and her story. Now you can be one of those messengers, ready to tell her story and be present to the pain of those most in need, ready to celebrate her intercession, and ready to receive Christ as the center of your world. ■

Susana Solorza is the coordinator of Pastoral Juvenil (youth and young adult ministry) for the Office of Hispanic Ministry in the Diocese of Owensboro. She can be reached at susana.solorza@pastoral.org or (270) 683-1545.

This article also ran in The Western Kentucky Catholic's online blog series, Source & Summit, in celebration of the National Eucharistic Revival. Read more posts at westernkycatholic.com/source-summit.

How to celebrate a Catholic Christmas

BY AMY WELBORN, OSV NEWS

For Catholics, great feasts like Christmas don't come at us out of the blue: In the secular world, "Christmas" seems to start in October! However, our approach to this holiday as Catholics must be different, and it can be. We can put aside the worldly calendar; we can allow the ancient, rich tradition of the church to surround and center us instead. And then, we will be enriched by truly celebrating a Catholic Christmas.

"God's sign is simplicity. God's sign is the baby. God's sign is that he makes himself small for us. This is how he reigns. He does not come with power and outward splendor. He comes as a baby ~ defenseless and in need of our help," Pope Benedict XVI preached in his homily for Midnight Mass in 2006. "He does not want to overwhelm us with his strength. He takes away our fear of his greatness. He asks for our love: So he makes himself a child."

A child is coming: As for any birth, we must prepare. The Advent season is a gift, rich with opportunities to ready our lives for the embrace of our Savior.

One powerful way to prepare for the gift of Jesus is to turn away from the outside noise and pressure and take a few quiet moments to pray with the church. Use your church bulletin (or visit <https://bible.usccb.org>) to look up the Mass readings for each day. If you can, take time to attend daily Mass; use it as a period of refreshment in the midst of the busyness all around.

Even during our most hectic times, we can still

"watch and wait" with the church. Everything else that we do during Advent can echo what we hear in God's Word and the church's prayer. Our Advent wreaths and Jesse Trees are physical reminders of the coming light and the prophecies fulfilled. When we celebrate the sacrament of reconciliation, we acknowledge our darkness and need, and rejoice in the light of forgiveness offered through the Child.

Joining our thoughts and prayers to those of the communion of saints whose feasts occur during this season ~ Ambrose, Lucy, John of the Cross, Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin, and others ~ helps us hear John the Baptist's call along with these holy men, women and even children who have gone before us in faith. Just as they heard and responded, so can we.

During this season, we twice celebrate the Blessed Virgin Mary, whose openness to God models our own patient Advent waiting. On the solemnity of the Immaculate Conception (Dec. 8), we celebrate the truth that she was conceived without sin. On the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe (Dec. 12), we celebrate Mary's appearance to the indigenous St. Juan Diego Cuauhtlatoatzin ("Talking Eagle") in Mexico in 1531.

St. Nicholas of Myra's feast Dec. 6 is celebrated in many European countries as a day to share gifts ~ often candy, and often placed in shoes. As Europeans immigrated to the United States, various St. Nicholas traditions combined and emerged as Santa Claus. Sharing the story of the real St. Nicholas can help us emulate the generosity of his faith-filled life, which is in turn an expression



OSV NEWS PHOTO/CROSIERS

A church window depicts the visit of the Three Kings celebrated on the Feast of the Epiphany.

of God's own generosity and the gift of Jesus.

When Christmas arrives, we have spent four weeks preparing for the Child. At last, the day to celebrate arrives: The Father has answered our prayers, sending his Son as one like ourselves, humbly immersing himself in human life and speaking words we can understand, inviting us to

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Catholic Christmas continued from page 25

love.

At Christmas, we celebrate God's gift of Jesus to the world. The very name of the day and the season ~ "Christ's Mass," derived from the Old English way of speaking of it ~ places Jesus, present to us in the Eucharist, at the center of the day. Might this Christmas be the beginning of a closer friendship with Jesus, nurtured by the Eucharist?

There are actually four different Masses for Christmas: the Vigil, Midnight Mass, Mass at Dawn and Mass During the Day. Each has a distinct theme and different readings, reflecting the richness of the mystery of the Incarnation. Even though most of us will attend only one Mass at Christmas, it's a beautiful custom ~ and well worth our while ~ to meditate on the Mass readings from the others as well. This can deepen our appreciation for what God has done for us and the whole world in Christ.

Christmas is rich with symbols. We put up Christmas trees, Nativity sets and lights, all beautiful in their own right ~ and all symbolic of the deeper, richer dimensions of meaning that our faith brings to this season.

Christmas trees, being evergreens, speak to us of God's eternal life and love, embodied in Christ. They also recall the tree in the garden through which sin came into the world, and the tree of the crucifixion by which that sin was conquered. Saying a prayer as we put up our tree, and making sure that some of our ornaments evoke the Nativity, can help bring this "home" to us.

The Nativity scene, or crèche ("crib" in French), was popularized by St. Francis of Assisi in the 13th century out of a desire to bring home the reality of the humility and love of Christ. Setting out the Nativity scene ~ saving the Child for Dec. 25 and the Magi for Epiphany ~ can be natural moments

for prayer and reflection.

God gives the world his Son, who dwells among us, filling us with a love that must be shared. So we, on Christmas, give gifts. Contemplating the examples of gift-givers like the Magi, St. Nicholas and King Wenceslas can bring a new perspective to our own actions. Who is in greatest need, and what gifts can we give?

Many families have already discovered the joy of giving of themselves to others on Christmas Day: seeking out shut-ins, visiting residents of nursing homes or hospital patients, or serving the poor and the homeless. They reach out, as God reaches out to us in Christ. We can consider other alternatives as well: supporting charities in the name of our friends, or encouraging our families to center their gift-giving energies on those less fortunate in order to give as Christ has given to us.

We know as Catholics that Christmas isn't over Dec. 26. Even just those first few days after Christmas invite us to continue to open our hearts to the Christ Child and what he brings: There's the challenge of discipleship (St. Stephen Dec. 26), the beauty of the Word Made Flesh (St. John the Evangelist, Dec. 27), the reality of opposition to Christ (the Holy Innocents Dec. 28) and the blessing of family (Holy Family, the Sunday after Christmas).

Jan. 1 is the beginning of a new calendar year, but that's not the reason we celebrate it as a feast. On the Roman calendar, New Year's Day is both the Solemnity of Mary, Mother of God, and a day of prayer for peace. We make all sorts of resolutions for a new year, but alongside those efforts, we say a different sort of prayer. God has come to us, not in overwhelming power, but in humility as a child. So, on this day, we pray that the new year might be



ARCHIVES PHOTO

Fr. Joe Mills decorates the Christmas tree at the Catholic Pastoral Center (now known as the McRaith Catholic Center) in Owensboro in this undated photo.

marked by humility and peace, brought by Christ and modeled by Mary.

The Solemnity of the Epiphany, traditionally observed Jan. 6 (the day following the familiar "Twelve Days of Christmas"), is transferred to a Sunday in the United States. "Epiphany" means "manifestation," and it's the celebration of Jesus manifesting his glory as Savior to all nations of the world (symbolized by the Magi).

Epiphany is a gift-giving day in some cultures, as well as a day to ask for God's blessings on our homes. One particular blessing includes bracketing the initials of the traditional names of the Magi who visited the home of Jesus ~ Caspar, Melchior, and

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Catholic Christmas continued from page 26

Balthazar -- with the year above the front entry door, usually in chalk, like this for 2023: 20+C+M+B+23.

In the scope of the universal Church, past and present, the Christmas season actually has two endings:

In the old Roman calendar, the feast of the Presentation Feb. 2 marked the end of the Christmas season. On this day, also called Candlemas, candles are blessed as a symbol of Simeon's recognition of the infant Jesus as the light to the Gentiles, and as a way to bring the light of Christ home to burn all year. Even today, the Christmas tree and crèche in St. Peter's Square in Rome remain on display until Candlemas.

Likewise, the Baptism of the Lord, celebrated the Sunday after Epiphany, commemorates the final "Christmas" feast of our present Roman calendar. As we hear the Scriptural account of the Father revealing the divinity of Jesus at his baptism in the Jordan River, we celebrate our own baptism, our "new birth" in Christ and inclusion in his body, the church.

For Catholics, Dec. 25 is only the beginning of the celebration of Christmas. As others pack away the decorations, we continue to celebrate the gift of Christ, ever present for us in the Eucharist -- a continual manifestation of God's loving care for us all year long. ■

Amy Welborn is a freelance writer living in Birmingham, Alabama. She is the author of many books on faith and spirituality for children, teens and adults. Her website is AmyWelborn.com.



SCREENSHOT

Staff of the McRaith Catholic Center, including Bishop William F. Medley, sing along to Christmas carols on an Owensboro Catholic High School bus during a video shoot for the 2016 holiday season.

A promotional poster for a Christmas concert. At the top left is the logo for Holy Spirit Catholic Church, featuring a stylized flame above the text "HOLY SPIRIT CATHOLIC CHURCH". To the right, it says "CULTURAL ENRICHMENT & OUTREACH SERIES PRESENTS". The main title is "An Advent / Christmas Concert" in a large, elegant font. Below that, it says "with Contemporary Catholic Artists" and "JOHN ANGOTTI & LORRAINE HESS". A quote from B. Rankin reads: "This promises to be an awesome time with perhaps some special appearances throughout the evening." At the bottom, it says "HOLY SPIRIT CATHOLIC CHURCH December 10th | 7:00 PM". The background features a photograph of John Angotti and Lorraine Hess, and a decorative purple and blue wave at the bottom.

Un Mensaje del Obispo Medley

Nigeria: Un viaje de gratitud

Cuando llegué a la Diócesis de Owensboro hace 13 años, creo que había seis sacerdotes sirviendo en nuestra diócesis que no habían nacido en los Estados Unidos. Mi predecesor, el Obispo John J. McRaith, fue uno de los primeros obispos de los Estados Unidos en ver las oportunidades que podría brindar invitar a sacerdotes de todo el mundo a venir a nuestra nación como misioneros.

Hoy en día hay 27 sacerdotes que sirven en nuestra diócesis y que no nacieron en los Estados Unidos. Varios de ellos vinieron a nosotros como seminaristas y fueron ordenados para nuestra diócesis; otros han elegido afiliarse permanentemente a nuestra diócesis. Muchos otros sirven aquí por un período de tiempo limitado con el permiso de sus obispos o superiores religiosos.

Estos generosos sacerdotes son párrocos de 29 de las 78 parroquias de la diócesis – el 37% de nuestras parroquias.

Como obispo me he comprometido a intentar visitar los países de origen y conocer a las familias de estos sacerdotes. En 2018 realicé una peregrinación a México para comenzar este viaje multinacional. En enero de 2020 visité India y Myanmar. (Fue al regresar a casa de este viaje que me encontré cara a cara con la realidad de una pandemia mundial que se estaba desarrollando cuando pasábamos por Doha en Qatar, y todos llevaban máscaras en el aeropuerto).

No hace falta decir que la pandemia del Covid hizo una pausa en mis visitas pastorales. En 2022, sin embargo, pude visitar Guatemala. Y ante el



FOTO POR CORTESÍA DEL P. JERRY RINEY (De izquierda a derecha) El P. Jerry Riney; Akim K. Kikonda, representante nacional de Catholic Relief Services en Nigeria; el Obispo William F. Medley; y el P. Emmanuel Udoh en la sede de CRS Nigeria en Abuja.

éxito de esa visita, volví mi atención a las naciones africanas. Tenemos sacerdotes de Nigeria, Kenia, la República Democrática del Congo y uno que nos sirvió anteriormente de Uganda.

En octubre realicé una visita pastoral de 16 días a Nigeria. El P. Jerry Riney me acompañó. Allí visitamos y conocimos a las familias de los padres Emmanuel Udoh, Uwem Enoh, Julian Ibemere, John Okoro y Jude Okeoma. Visitamos la casa provincial de las Hermanas Franciscanas de la Inmaculada Concepción, la casa de las Hermanas Anthonia Asayoma y Anne Marie Joshua.

CALENDARIO DEL OBISPO MEDLEY DICIEMBRE DE 2023

4 DE DICIEMBRE	6 pm Servicio de Penitencia – Nuestra Señora de Lourdes, Owensboro
5 DE DICIEMBRE	8 a.m. Misa Escolar – Escuela San Pedro y San Pablo, Hopkinsville
6 DE DICIEMBRE	9:30 a.m. Misa y almuerzo con las Hermanas Ursulinas del Monte San José – Maple Mount
8 DE DICIEMBRE	9 a.m. Misa escolar - OCS Campus 4-6, Owensboro 1:30 p.m. Profesión de Votos Perpetuos – Monasterio Pasionista, Whitesville
14 DE DICIEMBRE	11 a.m. Misa y visita en Fort Campbell – Fort Campbell, KY
18 DE DICIEMBRE	10 a.m. Reunión del Consejo de Personal Sacerdotal – Centro Católico McRaith, Owensboro
20 DE DICIEMBRE	10:30 a.m. Celebración navideña del personal del Centro Católico McRaith
24 DE DICIEMBRE	11 p.m. Misa - Catedral de San Esteban, Owensboro

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Tuve el privilegio, por invitación del Obispo Camillus Raymond Umoh de la Diócesis de Ikot Ekpene, de ordenar a tres diáconos de transición. Esta ordenación se celebró en el seminario menor donde estudian adolescentes de entre 12 y 18 años, aspirantes al sacerdocio.

Conocer a las familias de nuestros sacerdotes y celebrar Misas en los seminarios, conventos e iglesias parroquiales fue para mí lo más destacado de mi viaje. Definí mi viaje como uno de gratitud, pero como suele ser el caso, cuando uno ofrece el agradecimiento, se da cuenta que ha recibido mucho más de lo que puede dar.

Según estadísticas mundiales, Nigeria tiene la tasa más alta de asistencia regular a la Misa dominical entre su población católica que cualquier país del mundo. Un total del 94% de los católicos nigerianos asisten a la Misa todos los domingos. En dos pequeñas iglesias parroquiales - San José (la parroquia de origen del P. Uwem) y San Miguel (la parroquia de origen del P. Emmanuel) - las iglesias estaban llenas y la gente permanecía afuera de las ventanas mirando hacia adentro, ya que decenas de personas no lo cabían en la iglesia. Aunque salimos de estas iglesias tal vez una hora después de que terminara la liturgia, fuimos unos de los primeros en salir.

Estas Misas parroquiales, la Misa de ordenación y la Misa en una parroquia grande de la ciudad de Abuja (la capital) ¡duraron aproximadamente tres horas! Créame, sin embargo, si hubiera estado conmigo, no habría estado mirando su reloj y se habría sorprendido al darse cuenta de que la Misa había durado tanto tiempo.

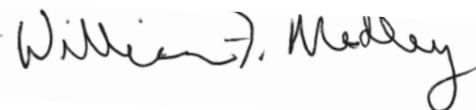
No es raro que en las iglesias parroquiales haya al menos tres colectas durante la Misa. Las colectas no se hacían pasando la canasta, sino todos - hombres, mujeres y niños - se acercaron para hacer su ofrenda.

Estas procesiones eran ocasiones de cantos y bailes. En la Iglesia de la Santísima Trinidad en Abuja, me impresionó cuando algunos se acercaron con un cartel que decía "una vaca". Esto significaba que esa persona había contribuido esa semana con una vaca para alimentar a los hambrientos.

Quizás en otro artículo pueda compartir nuestra experiencia de visitar un sitio de un proyecto de Catholic Relief Services en Abuja, donde unos 60 jóvenes adultos habían completado un programa de formación vocacional. Catholic Relief Services es el brazo internacional de ayuda de la Iglesia católica de los Estados Unidos y cuenta con más de 400 empleados en Nigeria que ayudan a decenas de miles. La iniciativa anual Plato de Arroz de Cuaresma ha sido una fuente principal de financiación para CRS durante décadas.

Aunque compartiré historias de este viaje por el resto de mi vida, una realidad perdurable que contemplo es que una nación como los Estados Unidos ahora depende de tierras que, no hace mucho, podríamos haber considerado tierras de misión para proporcionar sacerdotes y hermanas para nosotros. Donde antes los católicos europeos y norteamericanos capacitaban y enviaban misioneros al mundo, ahora, menos de medio siglo después, estas tierras de misión nos envían misioneros a nosotros.

Sinceramente en Cristo,



Obispo William F. Medley
Diócesis de Owensboro

Banquete de Bodas en noviembre de 2023



FOTO POR CORTESÍA DE LA PARROQUIA SAN MIGUEL

En la foto, las parejas que asistieron a la segunda parte del retiro matrimonial Banquete de Bodas, en noviembre de 2023 en la Parroquia San Miguel en Sebree.



FOTO POR CORTESÍA DE LA PARROQUIA SAN MIGUEL

En la foto aparecen varias parejas que participaron en la segunda parte del retiro matrimonial Banquete de Bodas, en noviembre de 2023 en la Parroquia San Miguel en Sebree. También en la foto aparece el P. Carmelo Jiménez Salinas, párroco de San Miguel.

Trece parejas participan en Pre-Cana

POR EL PERSONAL DE WKC

El 28 de octubre de 2023, en el Centro de Convenciones Ballard en Madisonville, 13 parejas participaron en el programa de preparación matrimonial Pre-Caña en español. La preparación matrimonial ayuda a las parejas que se van a casar a prepararse no sólo para el día de su boda, sino también a prepararse para un matrimonio de por vida que continúa creciendo, madurando y mejorando a medida que pasan los años.

¡La formación como pareja no termina el día de la boda! Un retiro para parejas casadas, llamado Banquete de Bodas, está disponible para los católicos latinos varias veces al año. Para obtener más información sobre esto, comuníquense con el Diácono Cristóbal Gutiérrez en chris.gutierrez@pastoral.org o (270) 880-8018. Las parejas que estén interesadas en aprender métodos naturales de planificación familiar/conocimiento de la fertilidad en español también pueden comunicarse con el Diácono Cristóbal para obtener más información.

Por favor oren por todas las parejas que se preparan para el matrimonio y por todas las parejas casadas que su amor se fortalezca cada día. ■



FOTO POR CORTESÍA DEL DIÁCONO CRISTÓBAL GUTIÉRREZ

Las 13 parejas que participaron en el programa de preparación matrimonial Pre-Caña el 28 de octubre de 2023.



FOTO POR CORTESÍA DEL DIÁCONO CRISTÓBAL GUTIÉRREZ

Feligreses de la parroquia Santa María en Franklin asistir Conferencia Nacional de Jóvenes Católicos (NCYC) 2023: Plenamente viva en Indianápolis, este noviembre.

Parroquias con misa en Español





FOTO POR CORTESÍA DE PARROQUIA DE SAN JOSÉ
POR SUSANA SOLORZA, ESPECIAL PARA EL
CATÓLICO DE KENTUCKY OCCIDENTAL

Flores en diciembre, la piel morena de la Reina del Cielo y la Tierra y una petición, todas piezas de una historia que se ha transmitido de generación en generación durante casi 500 años. Su historia ha sido coreada, cantada, tocada al ritmo de un tambor solitario y representada dramáticamente en iglesias, hogares y espacios comunitarios durante años en la Diócesis de Owensboro. Ella contó su historia a un hombre azteca que vivía en medio de una sociedad desgarrada por la codicia y la asimilación forzada. A San Juan Diego, antes Cuauhtlatoatzin (El que habla como el águila), se le confió un mensaje para los líderes de la iglesia española de la época. En el México de 1531, los colonizadores españoles tenían el poder y la riqueza obtenidos del trabajo y las tierras robadas de los pueblos indígenas de América.

Flores en diciembre

Aunque los españoles trajeron la verdad de Cristo, también trajeron dolor y devastación que llevaron a la violencia y la desintegración de muchas culturas e idiomas. ¿Cómo podríamos salir de este caos? La intervención divina fue la única solución que el obispo Juan Zumárraga pudo imaginar. Al igual que la historia de la salvación, no importa cuán bajo podamos caer como pueblo, Cristo siempre está listo para estar presente en nuestro dolor y malestar, con su madre, María, como nuestra intercesora. Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe se apareció a San Juan Diego en el cerro del Tepeyac en un frío día de diciembre con el canto de los pájaros para acompañar su visita. Ella se apareció a su “Hijo más pequeño” vestida con los colores reales aztecas y le habló en su lengua nativa, el náhuatl. Estaba cubierta de estrellas, colocada frente al sol y de pie sobre la luna. Todos estos símbolos le indicaban a Juan Diego esto: ella era en realidad la Reina del Cielo y de la Tierra. Ella era de piel morena, su cabello con partido a la mitad, indicando que aún no estaba casada, pero llevaba la cinta negra del embarazo atada alrededor de su cintura. Una flor de cuatro pétalos situada justo encima de su vientre indicaba que llevaba dentro al creador. San Juan Diego iba a ser su mensajero; se le encomendó llevar su historia fuera del Tepeyac.

Como educadora y ministra, a mí también me han encargado su historia. Lo he compartido con jóvenes y viejos, con quienes la conocen desde hace años y con quienes están escuchando su historia por primera vez. He descubierto que la importancia de su historia radica en esto: Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe vio a San Juan Diego y su pueblo, su dolor, sufrimientos y su anhelo por un mundo donde Jesús sí muriera en la cruz por todos, no solo por los poderosos y ricos.

Ella representa a aquellos que luchan para que se escuchen sus voces cuando otros eligen verlos como menos. Nos desafía porque es el contrapeso de un mundo desequilibrado donde se atribuyen privilegios a determinadas personas y se les niegan a otras. Espero que esta publicación sea un punto de partida para conocer a Nuestra Señora de Guadalupe y su historia. Ahora puedes ser uno de esos mensajeros, listo para contar su historia y estar presente en el dolor de los más necesitados, listo para celebrar su intercesión y listo para recibir a Cristo como el centro de tu mundo. ■

Susana Solorza
Cordinador de pastoral juvenil
Diócesis de Owensboro



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A woman reads the back of the program for a Nov. 20, 2023 memorial Mass held for Fr. Joe Mills, who passed away during the COVID-19 shutdown on April 4, 2023.

Fr. Joe Mills remembered at memorial Mass

BY ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD, THE WESTERN
KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

On Nov. 20, 2023, the faithful of the Diocese of Owensboro were invited to attend an extra-special Mass for a priest whose funeral had been tragically limited by the COVID-19 pandemic. The liturgy, held at St. Stephen Cathedral, was celebrated in memory of Fr. Joe Mills, who died on April 4, 2023 during the COVID-19 shutdown. Due to pandemic restrictions, his funeral liturgy was closed to the public – which had lain heavy on the heart of Bishop William F. Medley until the November 2023 memorial Mass could be scheduled and celebrated. Fr. J. Patrick Reynolds, the diocese’s vicar general, gave the homily for the Nov. 20 Mass, as he had done for the small, private April 2020 funeral. Saying many of the same words, but with just as much warmth, Fr. Reynolds said Fr. Mills “loved the ministerial priesthood,” that he “loved and supported his fellow priests,” and that he “always radiated a sense of joy and youthfulness.” At the closing of the memorial liturgy, Bishop Medley said he had long heard Fr. Mills referred to as “the patron saint of the priests of the Diocese of Owensboro.” In fact, the bishop had heard this description upon his arrival as bishop in 2010. “It’s been three-and-a-half years after his passing and I’m sure you still miss him,” said Bishop Medley to Fr. Mills’ family present. “We still miss him too, the priests who knew him. We, too, should keep alive his memory.” ■

The original obituary for Fr. Joe Mills, printed in the May 2020 issue of The Western Kentucky Catholic, may be accessed online at <https://tinyurl.com/yz5pbwaz>.



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC
Priests of the Diocese of Owensboro fill the sanctuary at St. Stephen Cathedral on Nov. 20, 2023, during a memorial Mass held for Fr. Joe Mills, who passed away during the COVID-19 shutdown on April 4, 2023.



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC
Bishop William F. Medley receives the gifts from Dr. Kendrick Mills and Keith Mills, nephews of Fr. Joe Mills; and Jack Mills, the brother of Fr. Joe Mills.