

THE WESTERN  
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'It's a family'

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Feeding the hungry Page 22



Teens kneel in Eucharistic Adoration while praying the rosary at Youth 2000, an annual retreat hosted at Brescia University in Owensboro, which took place over the weekend of March 13-15. Seminarian Juan Carlos Lazo Soriano prays nearby. [Page 12](#)

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A group of girls attending Youth 2000 at Brescia University smile for a photo while enjoying a break for snacks. The annual youth retreat took place March 13-15, 2026. [Page 12](#)

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Front page main photo by Riley Greif, *The Western Kentucky Catholic*.

## Submissions

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

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

**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](mailto:wkc.editor@pastoral.org) by the 15th of the month prior to the publishing month. Visit [westernkycatholic.com/submissions](http://westernkycatholic.com/submissions) for more information.

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# A Word From Bishop Medley: *Do this in memory of me: An invitation to the table of the Lord*



**FILE PHOTO**

Young William Francis Medley – the future Bishop Medley of the Diocese of Owensboro – is seen on the day of his First Holy Communion, April 24, 1960.

*Brothers and sisters: I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus, on the night before he was handed over, took bread, and, after he had given thanks, broke it and said, “This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me.”*

*In the same way also took the cup, after supper, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me.” For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the death of the Lord until he comes. -1 Corinthians 11: 23-26*

This passage, along with the account in the Gospel of John of Jesus washing his disciples’ feet, is the core of the Church’s liturgy on Holy Thursday. The institution of the Holy Eucharist, presented along with Jesus’ model of service, is the story of Holy Thursday.

Jesus presents three commands: take and eat, take and drink, and do this in memory of me. Here we are in 2026 fulfilling these commands in every nation on earth. The Eucharist is celebrated

on every day of the year, except on Good Friday when the Church remembers the passion and death of the Lord. But even on this day the Eucharist is offered to the faithful with the Sacred Bread that was consecrated on Holy Thursday.

From apostolic times the Church has held that we celebrate this memory primarily on Sunday, on the Lord’s Day, on the day that we commemorate the Resurrection of the Lord. From very early tradition Christians saw the sharing of the bread and wine and the memory as a serious obligation for all believers.

We speak of this commemoration as our Sunday obligation. Perhaps we should emphasize the privilege rather than the obligation. But there are many obligations in life and for Catholics there is no better way to “keep holy the Sabbath Day” that to come to the table of the Lord and receiving Holy Communion.

Wherever a priest was available there has been a long tradition of celebrating the Mass daily in parish churches, convent, and monasteries. Wherever this privilege has been possible there have always been faithful who made it a practice to receive Holy Communion daily, often known as “daily communicants.” In most places these faithful are people whose responsibilities in life have been lessened; their child-rearing years are complete and often even their working career. Though in most parishes the number of daily communicants is small, these faithful represent real prayer treasures for the entire parish, and indeed for the whole Church.

If your lifestyle enjoys more leisure and free

time, could you contemplate being among the daily communicants of your parish?

In the weeks to come, parishes will celebrate one of the happiest events of their Church year as children, typically second graders, receive their First Holy Communion. In some parishes in our diocese this may be only one or two boys or girls. In larger parishes this might be several dozen children. Look back upon photographs of First Communions going back generations and you will commonly see very happy children, children happy to have achieved a rite of passage as they can join parents and older siblings in the privilege of regularly receiving the Body and Blood of Christ.

As a pastor it always perplexed me that too often this rite of passage of a First Holy Communion was followed by very infrequent presence at Mass. This, of course, is not the responsibility of seven and eight-year-olds. They can only attend Mass if someone brings them. So I would remind parents that they have not only a personal obligation to keep holy the

***Continues on page 4***

## Happy anniversary to our priests!

**Fr. Anthony Shonis** | Ordained 4/3/1971 | Retired

**Fr. Shaiju Thomas** | Ordained 4/7/1999 | Pastor, St. Anthony Parish, Axtel; and St. Mary of the Woods Parish, McQuady

**Fr. Carmelo Jimenez Salinas** | Ordained 4/25/1999 | Pastor, St. Michael Parish, Sebree

**Fr. Ramesh Kattermetla** | Ordained 4/25/2011 | Parochial Vicar, Blessed Mother Parish, Owensboro

# FROM THE BISHOP'S OFFICE

## BISHOP MEDLEY'S APRIL 2026 CALENDAR

April 2	6 PM   Holy Thursday Mass of the Lord's Supper – St. Stephen Cathedral
April 3	3 PM   Good Friday of the Passion of the Lord – St. Stephen Cathedral
April 4	8 PM   The Easter Vigil in the Holy Night – St. Stephen Cathedral
April 11	10 AM   Dedication of Altar – Blessed Mother Parish, Owensboro
	5 PM   Dedication of Altar – St. Mary Parish, Franklin
April 12	11 AM   Confirmation – Christ the King Parish, Scottsville
April 14	6 PM   Confirmation – St. Anthony the Abbot Parish, Axtel
April 15	6:30 PM   Confirmation – Blessed Mother Parish, Owensboro
April 16	8 AM   School Mass & Senior Conversations – Trinity High School, Whitesville
	12 PM   Meeting with Hispanic Ministers & Bishop José Maria Garcia Maldonado – Passionist Monastery
	6 PM   Evening Prayer for the Protection and Healing of Those Affected by Sexual Abuse in the Church – St. Stephen Cathedral
April 18	5 PM   Confirmation – St. Thomas More Parish, Paducah
April 19	10:30 AM   Confirmation – Precious Blood Parish, Owensboro
	2 PM   Confirmation – St. Mary of the Woods Parish, Whitesville
April 22	10 AM   Staff Meeting – McRaith Catholic Center, Owensboro

	6 PM   Confirmation – Immaculate Conception Parish, Hawesville
April 23	8 AM   School Mass – Holy Name of Jesus School, Henderson
	6 PM   Confirmation – St. Lawrence Parish, Philpot
April 25	5 PM   Confirmation – St. Pius X Parish, Owensboro
April 26	1:30 PM   Confirmation – St. Joseph Parish, Mayfield
	5 PM   Confirmation – St. Leo Parish, Murray
April 27	6 PM   Appreciation Night for Parish Catechetical Leaders & Youth Ministers – McRaith Catholic Center
April 29	10 AM   School Mass & Senior Conversations – St. Mary High School, Paducah

### Bishop Medley continued from page 3

Sabbath by participation in the Eucharist, but they have a moral obligation to assure their children's presence and participation.

If a child reminds a parent that they are hungry, the answer is not, "What do you mean? You ate at Christmas and Easter." Children have a hunger to know Jesus more perfectly and their parents should ensure that they are fed.

The commands of Jesus: take and eat, take and drink, and do this in memory of me.

May God bless you always!



**Most Reverend William F. Medley**  
Diocese of Owensboro

**The Office of the Bishop has announced the priest assignments for 2026. Please pray for those who will soon begin their transition into a new assignment and for the communities they serve.**

### PARISH PASTOR

#### **Clark, Rev. Gary**

Pastor, Rosary Chapel, Paducah and St. Mary, LaCenter while continuing as pastor of St. Francis de Sales in Paducah. Effective June 9, 2026.

### PAROCHIAL VICAR

#### **Okeoma, Rev. Jude**

Parochial Vicar, St. Francis de Sales, Paducah; Rosary Chapel, Paducah; and St. Mary, LaCenter. Effective June 9, 2026.

#### **Kattermetla, Rev. Ramesh**

Temporary Parochial Vicar, St. Edward, Fulton; St. Jude, Clinton; and Sacred Heart, Hickman. Effective August 11, 2026.

#### **Umoh, Rev. Paschal**

Temporary Parochial Vicar, St. Francis de Sales, Paducah; Rosary Chapel, Paducah, and St. Mary, LaCenter. Effective June 9, 2026.

*\*Rev. Kattermetla and Rev. Umoh will serve in these roles while the pastors are away on sabbatical.*

## ‘Looking for something to believe in’ - Worship office co-coordinator sees ‘movement of the Holy Spirit’ with increased Rite of Election numbers

BY ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD, THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

With a total of 451 candidates and catechumens attending the Diocese of Owensboro’s Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion gatherings, Dcn. Ken Bennett thinks “there’s something going on.”

“People are looking for something real, something to hang their hat on,” said Dcn. Bennett, the diocese’s co-coordinator of the Office of Worship, who said attendance had increased by about 65% this year, as compared to 2025.

This year, one celebration was held on Feb. 15 at St. Thomas More Parish in Paducah and two were held in the afternoon and evening on Feb. 22 at St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro.

Dcn. Bennett said last year saw a total of 271 attendees, 2024 saw 257, and 2023 saw 196 total candidates and catechumens.

He added that these numbers do not reflect the total number of individuals participating in OCIA (Order of Christian Initiation of Adults) who will enter the Catholic Church at this year’s Easter Vigil. He explained that some people may ultimately choose to back out beforehand – and others, who do plan to enter the Church, may not have attended the celebrations due to scheduling conflicts.

Dcn. Bennett added that during these three gatherings, there were a significant number of people from Latin America and Myanmar. He also observed a number of families attending together.

“Things have been in turmoil (in society) over the past several years, and I think that despite what we’re told about how divided we are, I do believe people are looking for that unity, something spiritual,” said Dcn. Bennett. “They’re looking for something to believe in.”

He said he has observed similar growth in the diocesan Mass counts, in which parishes record the number of individuals in their pews during a specific weekend in the fall, and submit that information to the Office of Worship.

“When you look at our Mass count numbers, those are up,” he said. “We’re right back to pre-Covid as far as Mass attendance goes.”

In the November 2025 issue of *The Western Kentucky Catholic*, it was reported that that year’s Mass counts showed that 51.32% of registered parishioners had attended Mass during this period – a 2.53% increase from 2024.

“I think things ebb and flow,” said Dcn. Bennett, emphasizing that during this time of noteworthy growth, it does not guarantee that this phase is permanent.



RACHEL HALL | WKC

Individuals stand during the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion held at St. Thomas More in Paducah on Feb. 15, 2026

Yet “people know that when things are tough, or they feel uncertain, the Church is the place to go to,” he said.

He affirmed the parishes for welcoming all people who are seeking Christ amid their life’s journeys.

“Our pastors are doing something right, our OCIA is doing something right, and the people in the pews are doing something right,” he said. “There’s something that’s attracting people to us (because) it’s a living faith.”

He said that despite the uncertainty of today’s world, this is a sign of hope.

Even though humans may focus on the “doom and gloom” of today’s world, “what I saw at the Rite of Election were bright, sunshiny faces,” he said. “There’s some movement. It’s the movement of the Holy Spirit.” ■

## GEMMA program to support Catholic women in menopausal stages of life



BY ELIZABETH  
WONG  
BARNSTEAD,  
THE WESTERN  
KENTUCKY  
CATHOLIC

After seeing numerous women – and couples – in her years as a therapist, Dr. Jill Duba Sauerheber

COURTESY PHOTO  
Dr. Jill Duba Sauerheber.

recognizes a need for greater spiritual support for those experiencing the journey of menopause.

“When I meet with couples, they start talking about relationship dynamics,” she said. She often asks the wives, “tell me about your cycle” – and it is then that she realizes there is more happening beneath the surface.

Dr. Sauerheber is a professor and the department chair of the Department of Counseling and Student Affairs at Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, in addition to her work in private practice as a licensed professional clinical counselor.

She said women who are experiencing the premenopausal, perimenopausal, and menopausal stages undergo unique challenges in their lives and identities.

“This part of a woman’s life can feel like a tunnel with no light,” said Dr. Sauerheber, who belongs to St. Joseph in Bowling Green. “Any single second at a time could be drastically different.”

To address this need, Dr. Sauerheber will offer the opportunity for Catholic women to join her in a virtual,

small group counseling experience geared toward those in the premenopausal, perimenopausal, and menopausal phases of their lives. The meeting dates are May 15, May 22, June 5, and June 12.

She named the group GEMMA, after St. Gemma Galgani, who experienced chronic illnesses and suffering throughout her life – which Dr. Sauerheber said is relatable to the woman undergoing menopause. She added that GEMMA is an acronym based upon “Group Experience for Mental health, Menopause, and (self) Attunement.”

“I like bringing St. Gemma into this,” she said, “moving through this struggle, moving through the darkness.”

Dr. Sauerheber said that both in her personal experience and in working with female clients in this part of their lives, the “integrative nature of our psychology” impacts a variety of feelings, including one’s sense of self.

“It can feel like I don’t have control of what’s going on in my head and maybe even feel like I’m hurting people,” she said, emphasizing “importance of faithful, spiritual support for that.”

Dr. Sauerheber said the four sessions will weave together psychological education, experiential practices, and guided group processing, offered within a safe space for healing and growth. She added that this group is not meant to treat chronic mental health issues.

Due to the clinical nature of the group, all participants will need to complete a formal screening and informed consent process to ensure an appropriate fit for the group. The group size is capped, and spaces will be filled on a first-come, first-served basis after completing the

screening, consent, and payment of a non-refundable group fee of \$180, due within one week of invitation.

“It will be a bit different than an informal support group, because of the clinical nature,” said Dr. Sauerheber.

Participants will also be asked to purchase “The Menopause Brain” by Lisa Mosconi prior to the first meeting. No reading ahead is required, but the book will help provide a platform for specific conversations.

Dr. Sauerheber looks forward to working with these women as they explore “who they’re coming into, and where they came from.”

“(Menopause) can threaten our identity – or become one of the most enlightening windows of who we are,” she said. ■

*Inquiries will be considered until April 24. To inquire and begin the screening process, email Dr. Jill Sauerheber at jill.sauerheber@therapysecure.com.*




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# Diocese of Owensboro to leave Christian Brothers retirement program, will move into single-employer pension plan

*Decision follows Christian Brothers' \$800 million shortfall announcement impacting multiple dioceses across U.S.*

BY ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD, THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

On March 18, 2026, Bishop William F. Medley informed all priests and Catholic school principals of the Diocese of Owensboro that the diocese plans to leave the Christian Brothers Employee Retirement Program (CBERP), following the 2025 announcement that the CBERP was facing a serious underfunding.

The bishop explained that as of July 1, 2025, the diocese's pension plan was underfunded by approximately 42%, or \$30 million.

The date that the diocese leaves, also known as “spinning off of” the program, has yet to be determined. However, Bishop Medley stated that retirees will continue to receive their pension payments, and those who retire in the future who have accrued benefits will receive their pension payments upon their retirements.

This decision follows several months of discussions following CBERP's July 2025 announcement to its more than 180 clients that it was facing a shortfall of \$800 million. The Diocese of Owensboro is among those CBERP clients that has used its services to provide a pension to its employees of Catholic schools, parishes, and other diocesan entities.

According to a December 2025 story in the National Catholic Register, Christian Brothers Services – which is a nonprofit company sponsored by the De La Salle Christian Brothers – had asked

its clients to dramatically boost their contributions to make up the difference, which many clients said they could not afford.

“The firm blames the shortfall on changes in the financial climate and an increase in the ratio of retirees to active employees,” reported the National Catholic Register, explaining later in the story that Christian Brothers also cites “what it described as reckless investments by a German investment management firm, Allianz Global Investors, which led the Christian Brothers Employee Retirement Plan to sue Allianz Global in federal court in September 2021.”

The Register reported that the lawsuit was settled in February 2022 with undisclosed terms, so it is unclear how much of its losses Christian Brothers recouped.

In his March 18 letter, Bishop Medley expressed his gratitude to those who participated in the diocese's listening sessions across the diocese on Dec. 1, 2025, at St. Thomas More Parish in Paducah; Dec. 2, 2025, at Holy Spirit Parish in Bowling Green; Dec. 3, 2025, at Sts. Peter and Paul Parish in Hopkinsville; and Dec. 11, 2025, at St. Pius X Parish in Owensboro.

“It has been beneficial to hear from so many of you,” wrote the bishop.

“In addition to the listening sessions, I also consulted with the priests of the diocese, the Diocesan Finance Council, the Priests' Council, other bishops who are in similar situations as ours,

and a group of financial professionals that I invited to study the issue and offer counsel,” he wrote.

The bishop wrote that after the diocese leaves the plan at a date to be determined, it will move into a “single-employer pension plan and will seek a manager for that plan that will provide continued pension payments to retirees and payments to future retirees who have accrued benefits.”

He said the diocese will create a defined contribution 403(b) plan for every eligible employee and will make contributions to each 403(b) at a rate to be determined, as well as continuing to pay down the underfunded liability of the spun-off defined benefit plan. The employees may make contributions at a rate allowed by the IRS.

The Western Kentucky Catholic inquired about employees who had not yet been vested in the plan and may not have yet accrued benefits, and was informed by diocesan administration that this level of detail has yet to be determined.

According to the diocese's employee handbook, “Employees who have worked 4 years and 9 months will be vested in the Diocese's retirement plan.”

The WKC was informed that it is likely that a cross-section of management and employees will work on a plan design to address the question of non-vested employees.

The WKC also inquired whether paying off the unfunded liability costs required in “spinning off” will present an additional cost to general diocesan operations, and was informed that paying this off

*Continues on page 8*

*Pension plan continued from page 7*

will be shared by all diocesan employers in this situation, and that diocesan operations are not expected to be impacted.

“Many of the details involved in moving to a defined contribution plan are yet to be determined,” the bishop wrote in his letter. “My purpose here is to offer my thanks to you for your input and your patience, to inform you of our next steps, and to offer assurance to you.”

“As we move forward in implementing these changes, you will be hearing more from the diocese,” he added. “I am grateful to each of you for the role you play in carrying out the mission of the Church. Be assured of my prayers for you and of my continued commitment to honoring promises made to you.” ■

## Diocese releases statement regarding shooting on St. Lawrence grounds

BY WKC STAFF

The parish community of St. Lawrence and St. William in the Knottsville area was saddened by a tragic shooting that took place on St. Lawrence’s church property just after midnight on March 7, 2026. The shooting resulted in the death of a young person and injuries to another.

In response to the incident, Bishop William F. Medley stated that he was offering his prayers for the victim, the injured, and the shooter, who is now in custody.

“May the Lord bring comfort to the family who lost their loved one, and to the families who have to endure the aftermath of this tragedy. Let us all pray for peace in our community,” said the bishop in a statement.

The Diocese of Owensboro stated that the gathering on the parish grounds was not “organized, approved, or permitted by the parish or its leadership,” and that security footage shows a group of people trespassing by breaking open a gate and holding a bonfire.

According to the statement, reports indicate that an invitation to this gathering had circulated on social media without the knowledge or permission of the parish administration.

“The church property is private and is intended for worship, prayer, and approved parish activities,” the diocese stated. “As the community mourns this tragic occurrence, we are grateful for the response of our local law enforcement. We are continuing to cooperate with authorities fully as they work on the investigation.”

The statement added that “At this difficult time, we request that the public allow the authorities to conduct a proper investigation. Anyone who has information pertaining to this incident is asked to report it directly to civil authorities. We also ask everyone to respect the sanctity of church property and refrain from using it for unauthorized activities.” ■

+

ecumenical  
**Taizé**  
prayer

*For protection and healing for victims of sexual abuse*

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*Sponsored by the Diocese of Owensboro*

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## K of C Lenten fish fry supports Catholic school



COURTESY OF JOHN CLARK  
Members of the Knights of Columbus Council #11132 prepare food for the Feb. 20, 2026 annual Lenten fish fry at Christ the King Parish Center in Madisonville, which supports the parish school.

BY JOHN CLARK, SPECIAL TO THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

On Friday, Feb. 20, 2026, the Knights of Columbus Council 11132 held the first of their annual Lenten Fish Fries, which are held every Friday until Holy Week. Several members met at Christ the King Parish Center to prepare the food, set up tables and serve customers. The fish fry is open to the Madisonville community and all proceeds are given to Christ the King School. Earlier this year, the Knights also served a pancake breakfast for the members of the parish as a kickoff to Catholic Schools Week 2026. ■

## Ursuline Sisters observe Catholic Sisters Week by giving blankets to those in need

BY MOUNT SAINT JOSEPH STAFF

Ursuline Sisters Elaine Burke and Margaret Ann Aull delivered 11 blankets to St. Benedict's Women and Family Services in Owensboro on March 9.

"We have people who sleep outside, they were in need of blankets," said Jessie Schartung, program director.

For the past three years during Catholic Sisters Week, which is March 8-14, the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph have made blankets to donate to facilities supporting women in need. St. Benedict's is a day shelter where women can shower, do laundry, utilize a clothes closet, and meet with a case worker. The staff will help them with medical cards, food stamps and make doctor appointments,

There is bible study, a life coach, job postings, and an effort for the women to support each other. St. Benedict's also provides bus tokens for the women to travel to Crossroads, which is an overnight women's shelter in Owensboro.

A post about the donation can be seen, along with posts from many other congregations, on the Catholic Sisters Week website: <https://c4wr.org/catholic-sisters-week/>. ■



COURTESY OF MOUNT SAINT JOSEPH  
Ursuline Sr. Elaine Burke, left, and Ursuline Sr. Margaret Ann Aull, right, join with Jessie Schartung, the program director of St. Benedict's Women and Family Services in Owensboro.

## In the Know

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## Pope Leo grants audience to Opus Dei critic as reform of statutes continues

BY OSV NEWS

ROME (OSV News) – Pope Leo XIV met March 16 with British journalist Gareth Gore, author of a book alleging exploitation and human trafficking within Opus Dei – claims the organization has dismissed as “absolute nonsense.” Gore said he presented documentation to the pope and urged a formal investigation into the organization. The private audience at the Apostolic Palace was not officially commented on by the Vatican. The meeting comes as Opus Dei continues revising its statutes under a 2022 decree by Pope Francis. The group has strongly rejected Gore's allegations, calling them “absolutely false,” and issued a detailed 106-page rebuttal to claims made in Gore's book, “Opus: The Cult of Dark Money, Human Trafficking and Right-Wing Conspiracy inside the Catholic Church.” The encounter also highlights Pope Leo's consultative approach. As one bishop in the Roman Curia said, “His style of governance has always been marked by a great ability to listen.” The pope has recently met with multiple authors while emphasizing the importance of hearing victims' voices across the Church. ■



OSV NEWS PHOTO/SIMONE RISOLUTI, VATICAN MEDIA

Gareth Gore, author of the book “Opus: The Cult of Dark Money, Human Trafficking and Right-Wing Conspiracy inside the Catholic Church,” is pictured with Pope Leo XIV at the Vatican March 16, 2026.



OSV NEWS PHOTOT/NOAH BERGER FOR AWS VIA REUTERS

A technician works at an Amazon Web Services data center in Hermiston, Ore., May 9, 2025. The explosion of massive data centers to handle the increasing generative demands of artificial intelligence have placed high demands on both power and the water used in cooling systems -- millions of gallons per day -- and low-income communities have typically endured the brunt of the air pollution they create.

## Vatican theological commission warns of replacing God with ‘a world governed by machines’

BY OSV NEWS

ROME (OSV News) – The Vatican's International Theological Commission has warned that if humanity places total trust in technology in a “world ruled by machines” it risks replacing the “living God” with a counterfeit “virtual God” in a sweeping new document on technology and Christian anthropology published on March 4. The 48-page document describes how artificial intelligence, transhumanism and other technological developments can pose profound risks to human identity and dignity, while calling on Christians to offer a prophetic alternative rooted in the Gospel. It is titled “Quo vadis, humanitas?” and the text asks, “Where are you going, humanity?” and warns that technological progress must be matched with moral responsibility. “At this juncture in the 21st century, the human family is faced with questions so radical that they threaten its very existence as we have known it,” the document says. The document's sharpest critique is aimed at transhumanism and posthumanism, which it presents as cultural challenges to Christian anthropology. Against these trends, the commission proposes the concept of life as vocation – receiving oneself as a gift, sharing that gift with others, and recognizing its transcendent source in God. “Man is not an atom lost in a random universe, but is a creature of God, to whom He wished to give an immortal soul and whom He has always loved,” it says. ■

# The gift of communication as the deepest truth of humanity

## *The WKC's commitment to you as we explore this new world of artificial intelligence*

BY ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD, THE  
WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

This year, on the feast of St. Francis de Sales – one of the patrons of writers and journalists – Pope Leo XIV issued a challenge to all people, but especially to media professionals and others in communications industries.

“Do not renounce your ability to think,” the pope wrote in his message, which was released ahead of the 60th World Communications Day, and which will take place in May.

He went on to write, “By simulating human voices and faces, wisdom and knowledge, consciousness and responsibility, empathy and friendship, the systems known as artificial intelligence not only interfere with information ecosystems, but also encroach upon the deepest level of communication, that of human relationships.”

Artificial intelligence, or “AI,” is explained by the Catholic Media Association as “a technology that enables mechanical and computer systems to perform tasks that have been historically the purview of human intelligence, simulating human cognitive functions by drawing from data and algorithms to respond to queries.”

A simple example of this is asking an AI system, like ChatGPT, Gemini, or Claude for an answer about something. These programs quickly dig through the internet and other data-collection locations to produce a response almost immediately. AI can also be helpful to sort information and brainstorm ideas to provide a

jumping-off point for the human creator.

Pope Leo warned, however, that “In recent years, artificial intelligence systems have increasingly taken control of the production of texts, music and videos. This puts much of the human creative industry at risk of being dismantled and replaced with the label ‘Powered by AI,’ turning people into passive consumers of unthought thoughts and anonymous products without ownership or love.”

Near the end of his message, the pope emphasized that “We need faces and voices to speak for people again. We need to cherish the gift of communication as the deepest truth of humanity, to which all technological innovation should also be oriented.”

As a journalist, this heartened me, and as a Catholic, this filled me with the joy that I have continued to experience following our American pope’s election last year. Besides his words of wisdom about the spiritual life, Pope Leo’s practical, pastoral guidance has been a calm amid the storm of polarized and ideological camps within our society.

It is with this in mind that the team which brings you The Western Kentucky Catholic would like to recommit our promise to always provide you with true, good, and beautiful Catholic reporting and storytelling – written by human writers, for human readers.

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*The Western Kentucky Catholic is produced through the efforts of Elizabeth Wong Barnstead, editor and coordinator of diocesan publications; Rachel Hall, communications director and layout; Riley Greif, digital media specialist; Bishop William F. Medley, publisher; and all of you, our faithful readers.*

Note: You can read Pope Leo’s full message for World Communications Day at <https://www.vatican.va/content/leo-xiv/en/messages/communications/documents/20260124-messaggio-comunicazioni-sociali.html>.

## Youth 2000 celebrates 29 years of encountering Christ in the Eucharist

BY WKC STAFF

From March 13-15, 2026, young people gathered from all over the Diocese of Owensboro to attend a beloved annual youth retreat that has been offered for 29 years. The retreat, called Youth 2000 due to its founding as the world approached the third millennium, is hosted at Brescia University in Owensboro and is led by the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal, through the efforts of the diocese's Marian Shrine Committee and the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry. Featuring talks, panels, music, Mass, confession, and Adoration, Youth 2000 drew approximately 594 registrations this year. ■



RILEY GREIF | WKC

The Blessed Sacrament is seen in a monstrance during Adoration at Youth 2000, which was held this year from March 13-15, 2026, at Brescia University.



RILEY GREIF | WKC

A teen serves as a lector during Mass at Youth 2000, which was held March 13-15, 2026 at Brescia University.



RILEY GREIF | WKC

A young woman serves as a lector during Sunday morning Mass at Youth 2000 at Brescia University on March



RILEY GREIF | WKC

Diocesan seminarians lead the procession at the start of Mass on March 15, 2026 during the final day of Youth 2000.

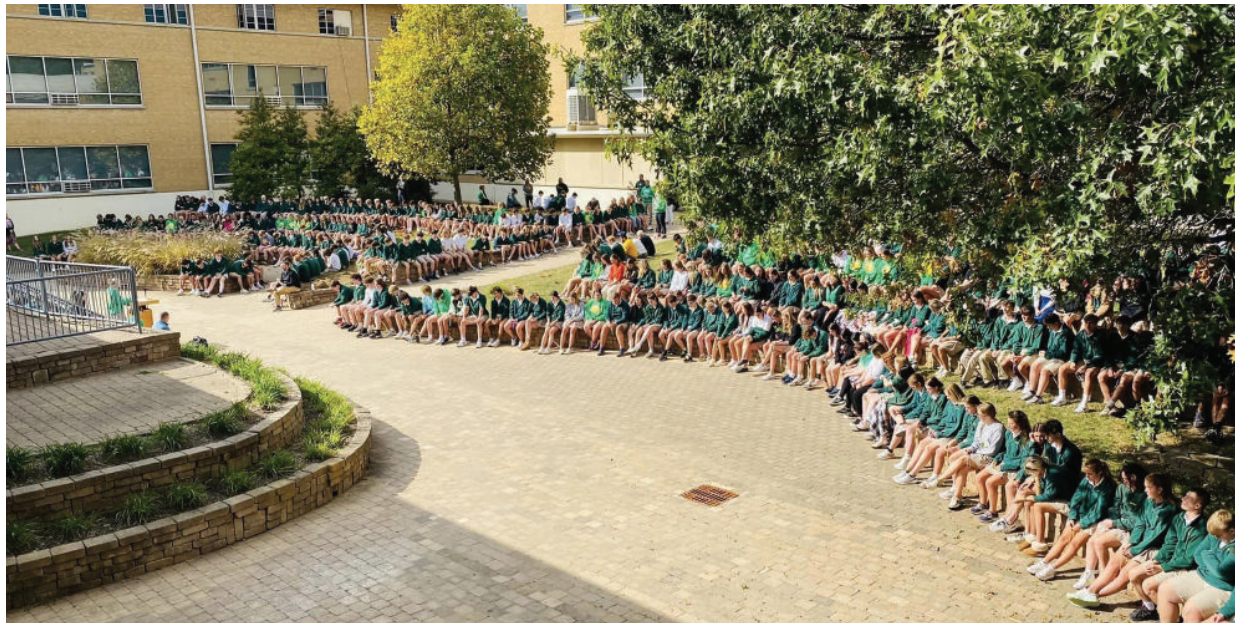
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COURTESY OF OCS

On Oct. 17, 2023, the students, faculty and staff of Owensboro Catholic High School gather in the courtyard to pray the rosary. Prayer in the courtyard has been a longstanding tradition from early in the school's history.

## 'It's a family': Owensboro Catholic School system celebrates 75 years of the high school

BY RACHEL HALL, THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

2026 marks the milestone of 75 years for Owensboro Catholic High School. "Whoever or wherever you are, you're standing on a lot of history you don't even know about," said Harold Staples, who was principal at the school for 19 years.

The school's history stretches back before it took its current name. Once named St. Frances Academy, an all-girls school founded in 1849 by Sisters of Charity of Nazareth, it became coed in 1914. Outgrowing their original space in the year 1951, together with the Ursuline Sisters' St. Joseph

High School, it combined to one location at 1524 West Parish Avenue, where leadership decided to change the name to Owensboro Catholic High.

"It was mostly religious there for years," said Marylin Pace, who started a year after Harold Staples and retired as librarian after 50 years in 2023. "The Sisters of Charity lived there on the third floor and ran the school. They were committed. A lot of sacrifice."

To that sacrifice she spoke of the sisters in their wool habits, "It was '92 before central air was put in." To make best out of the situation, they took advantage of the days when they could use the fresh air.

Pace went on, "When the weather was nice,

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*Continues on page 14*

*OCS continued from page 13*

Mass was in the courtyard with the altar on the steps. We would line the kids up along the steps. Everyone enjoyed it.”

It was Sr. Ann Whitehead, an English teacher at the school, who convinced Staples, a fresh graduate, to interview with principal Fr. Gerald Calhoun. Within a week, he was moving to a town he knew little of with his young wife. Quickly, “it became our family.”

Staples was quick to credit others for the school’s success, a repeated theme in interviews. There was a legacy of leadership, and it left a lasting impression on those who followed. In a testament to the late Fr. J. Edward Bradley, “he was principal and brought a new level of professionalism to the school.”

“The focus became on education,” said Staples. “And has continued to build ever greater. Whenever parents send their kids to Catholic, a good education is just expected.”

“Increasing consistently as an attempt to compete with the world,” Staples reflected on how the school has changed over the years, “the scope of education has come a long way.”

Pace echoed the sentiment of change, “First year there we bought a VCR, and the first camera recorder. In the 80s came our first computer.” Eventually the library expanded into a full media room.

Pace held off retirement and saw the Covid-19 pandemic through, with the adjustments to education, which meant Chromebooks for every kid: “They had to be labeled and organized into bags, all sanitized. Marked and checked out before the school shut down.”

For many, Owensboro Catholic High School is more than a place of learning; it is a lifelong

community.

“It’s a family,” said Staples, giving the example of seeing the generations of past students filing in and filling a football stadium. “Friday nights at the football game, wearing their green and gold.”

Pace understands this well. Her father, Harold Mischel, was with the school system himself for 47 years and best known for his years as the athletic director. As a little girl, following him and OCHS sports, Pace said, “Mom took the six of us on a passenger train to Louisville to go watch tournaments. It was just what we did.”

Ann Flaherty, who began in the school system in 1982 and later became superintendent of the Diocese of Owensboro’s Catholic Schools Office, said, “To have a school that excels in academics, extracurricular activities and athletics that is so deeply grounded in the Catholic faith makes it a gift beyond belief!”

She credited Staples for his mentorship, “He worked round the clock, seven days a week for OCHS. He is the one that trained and encouraged me to take the next step in administration.”

Flaherty, who had moved from North Carolina, was so impressed with a school that treasured families and faith, “To be able to immerse students in an environment that encompasses all that Jesus taught through word and action, helps to form not only the young men and women that parents send us, but also deeply affects the faculty and staff who then become great witnesses of Christ’s love through sacrifice.”

“Because of the witness of faculty, staff and coaches in the classrooms, halls and playing fields my faith caught fire! And for that and my time

serving at OCHS I will be eternally grateful,” she said.

Fr. Brandon Williams, from the senior class of 1998, “graduated in May and went into seminary in August,” he said. “My parents sacrificed. Took their vocation as Catholic, Christian parents serious. They knew that the Owensboro Catholic School system would assist them to help us grow our faith.”

Fr. Williams is now the pastor at Blessed Mother Parish in Owensboro and chaplain at the OCS 4-6 Campus. “I am so honored and grateful their parents chose to put their faith into their education. To help form their children’s faith.”

“I am reminded of what I am today because of my parents and school. I am grateful to both, as a Christian man and as a priest,” he said.

“It is my hope and prayer,” Flaherty said, “that the seeds of faith be planted in the students’ hearts, minds and souls, and that their love of Jesus bear fruit not only for them, but for those whom they encounter.”

For Staples, the mission has always been simple, but profound. “The goal,” he said, was to “get these kids to heaven.”

Each morning, over the intercom he would begin the day with a Gospel reading and a prayer. He would ask the students to pray for what he called, “the school family.”

When asked his hopes for the next 75 years, Staples kept it simple, “When I retired, I prayed that they would continue to improve, get better.”

It is a prayer he never stopped saying.

Even now, he still begins his day with the same intention, holding the Owensboro Catholic School family in his heart.

Staples ended with, “And I still do.” ■



COURTESY OF EMILY GIRTEN

The John Paul II School Knights won this year's diocesan tournament, which took place in January. They recently received their trophy, as is seen in this photo of the seventh and eighth grade players with coaches Derek Mills, Shawn Greenwell, Kirk Greenwell, and Jerri Floyd.

## JPII School earns winning title for diocesan basketball tournament

BY EMILY GIRTEN, SPECIAL TO THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

John Paul II School's Knights basketball team won the diocesan basketball tournament earlier this past January and recently received their banner and trophy. The eighth grade team ended with a record of 14-6, seventh grade had a record of 8-0, and sixth had a record of 9-5 for an overall team record of 31-11. The Knights are coached by Kirk Greenwell, Jerri Floyd, Derek Mills, and Shawn Greenwell.

The diocesan tournament, which is open to the teams of all 17 Catholic schools in the Diocese of Owensboro, saw participants this year from John Paul II School in Morganfield, St. Joseph Catholic School in Bowling Green, St. Romuald Interparochial School in Hardinsburg, and St. Mary of the Woods School in Whitesville. The tournament was hosted in Whitesville this year. ■

*WKC staff contributed to this report.*

## OCS announces plans for a preschool program

*Small cohort to begin in fall 2026*

BY WKC STAFF

Owensboro Catholic Schools (OCS), in collaboration with St. Pius X Parish in Owensboro, recently announced plans to introduce a preschool program beginning with a small cohort in fall 2026.

The current daycare facilities will be transitioned to house the preschool, with the goal of having a fully staffed and enrolled preschool by the following year in fall 2027.

St. Pius's pastor, Fr. Larry Hostetter, wrote in a letter to the parish that conversations and discernment had led to this decision, and that the expectation is to continue daycare services until the end of June.

Fr. Hostetter wrote that the St. Pius daycare is operating at a deficit and that it has been "increasingly difficult to keep staff and to operate in line with state requirements, while also keeping costs low for parents."

He said data indicates that students who attend preschool have been shown to have an educational advantage, and that having an OCS preschool program will provide "a seamless and effective way of moving preschool age children into kindergarten programs (at OCS)."

In a statement sent out to the school community, OCS said additional details will be shared as the program grows.

"OCS is committed to strengthening Catholic education at every level and beyond," said the statement. "The addition of a preschool program allows us to begin serving students earlier and supporting families for the long term." ■

*Inquiries may be sent to Jenny Glenn in the OCS Central Office at [jenny.glenn@owensborocatholic.org](mailto:jenny.glenn@owensborocatholic.org) or (270) 686-8896.*

## Divine Mercy Sunday Service

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# The Gospel before politics: Why Christians must choose human dignity over ideology: Part I

## *Scripture and the Church's teaching on the dignity of every person*

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

*Note: This article will be presented in two parts. In this first installment, we examine the biblical and theological foundations for the Church's teaching on the dignity of every human person. Scripture and Catholic social teaching provide the framework that guides how Christians approach questions of public life and social responsibility. Next month's second part will look at how these principles are being applied in the contemporary Church through the witness of the pope and the teaching of the bishops.*

For Christians, the moral framework by which we evaluate public life does not come from political parties, ideologies, or cultural movements. It comes from the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Throughout Scripture, God repeatedly commands his people to care for the vulnerable, the outsider, and the stranger. In the Old Testament, Israel is reminded of its own history as migrants: "You shall not oppress the alien; you yourselves know how it feels to be aliens, because you were aliens in the land of Egypt." (Exodus 23:9)

This command flows from a deeper theological truth: every human person is created in the image and likeness of God (Genesis 1:27). Because of this, human dignity is not granted by governments or societies; it is inherent to the human person.

Jesus intensifies this teaching in the Gospel. In

the final judgment scene of Matthew 25, Christ identifies himself directly with the vulnerable: "I was hungry and you gave me food... a stranger and you welcomed me."



OSV NEWS PHOTO/CARLOS A. MORENO

An elderly woman reacts after receiving a gallon of milk during a Christmas event Dec. 21, 2025, in Tijuana in the Mexican state of Baja California. During the event volunteers gave away a variety of different items like blankets, shoes, food and toys to roughly 500 needy people at the House of the Poor, a private charitable institution run by the Franciscan Missionaries of Our Lady of Peace.

The striking implication of this passage is that how we treat the vulnerable is how we treat Christ himself.

For this reason, the Church's social teaching is not a political program but a moral application of the Gospel. The Second Vatican Council articulated this clearly in *Gaudium et Spes*, which states: "Every type of discrimination... based on race, color, social

condition, language or religion must be overcome and eradicated as contrary to God's intent." (GS 29)

The Council fathers insisted that the dignity of the human person must be the foundation of every social and political system. They also reminded the faithful that the goods of the earth are meant for all people: "God intended the earth and all it contains for the use of every human being and people." (GS 69)

Because of these principles, the Church teaches that the dignity of the human person must always take precedence over economic interests, political strategies, or ideological agendas.

When the Church speaks about issues such as immigration, poverty, racism, or the protection of human life, it is not engaging in partisan politics. Rather, it is doing what the Church has always done: proclaiming the moral demands of the Gospel in the public square.

Christians therefore cannot allow political ideologies – whether on the left or the right – to replace the moral vision of Jesus Christ. The baptized belong first to the Kingdom of God, not to any political tribe. ■

*Dcn. Jay W. VanHoosier is the director of faith formation for the Diocese of Owensboro. For more information visit [owensborodiocese.org/faith-formation](http://owensborodiocese.org/faith-formation), email [jay.vanhoosier@pastoral.org](mailto:jay.vanhoosier@pastoral.org) or call (270) 852-8324.*

# Pope Leo speaks: Lumen Gentium

BY DR. JEFF ANDRINI, EVANGELIZATION & DISCIPLESHIP

Lumen Gentium is Latin for “Light of the Nations,” and is the Dogmatic Constitution on the Church from the Second Vatican Council in 1964. There was overwhelming approval for this Constitution with a final vote of yes from 2,151 bishops and no from 5.

Pope Leo XIV is asking us to re-read the documents of Vatican II with a renewed sense of wonder for what the Holy Spirit was saying to the Church. These are all available online or in print. In case the original documents see too dense, consider ordering one or more of the “Vatican II in Plain English” books by Bill Huebsch.

During his General Audience on Feb. 18, 2026, Pope Leo XIV centered his catechesis on the “mystery” of the Church as presented in the Lumen Gentium. He explained that the Church is not a mere human institution but a “sacrament” – both a visible sign and an active instrument – of God’s plan to reconcile a fragmented humanity and unite all people to Himself through Christ. The Church is both a passive expression of what God wants for humanity (unity and peace) and an active participant. God does not just work on us; but involves us. This makes every member of the Church a “tool” God uses to bring people together.

Drawing on the document’s first chapter, the pope emphasized that this unity is uniquely experienced in the liturgical celebration, where earthly differences are relativized by the love of Christ. He concluded by reminding the faithful that because the Risen Lord remains active in the world, the Church serves

as a sanctifying presence that makes the “previously hidden” plan of salvation perceptible to a world still marked by division.

He went on to explain that what matters in the liturgy isn’t one’s social status, race, or wealth, but the fact that everyone is “drawn by the love of Christ” who broke down the wall of separation between groups. He reminded the crowd that the word Ekklesia (Church) literally means, “those called together.” Therefore, the very existence of the Church is a counter-statement to a world that keeps pulling people apart.

Vatican II is not just some event that happened 60+ years ago, it is a moment in the Church where the Holy Spirit shed new light on the mission of the Church in our modern age and offered concrete ideas for how the Church is called to be engaged in the world. Pope Leo is asking the world to reread these documents and recognize how the Spirit is leading the Church in new ways for our contemporary world. The Church is a “sacrament” to the world and as such, can lead the way in proclaiming God’s love, mercy and truth to a hurting, alienated and desperate world.

For more information on Pope Leo’s reflections this year, tune into Fr. Larry Hostetter’s website and his Friday reflections on the Pope’s Wednesday General Audiences at <https://libguides.brescia.edu/CARITAS/PopeLeo>. ■

In Christ’s peace,  
Jeff

*Dr. Jeff Andrini is the director of the Office of Evangelization and Discipleship. Contact him at [jeff.andrini@pastoral.org](mailto:jeff.andrini@pastoral.org).*



CNS PHOTO/VATICAN MEDIA  
Pope Leo XIV greets a child holding the flag of Malta during a parish visit to the Church of the Sacred Heart of Jesus in Rome, Italy, on March 15, 2026.

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# Why Safe Environment training matters

## *How a volunteer who spoke up prevented a child from further harm*

BY JANICE HENDRICKS, OFFICE OF SAFE ENVIRONMENT

*Editor's note: Trigger warning – please be aware that the following story shares details of child abuse.*

A recent conversation with a parent in our own diocese shows just how important the Diocese of Owensboro's Safe Environment program truly is. She said something she learned in her training prompted her to make the difficult decision to contact authorities – and that decision wound up helping a child who was being abused.

Consider this real scenario. This person's child had returned home from a playdate and casually asked their mother some questions. Questions which the Safe Environment training video stated were red flag statements, such as: "Mom, why would someone put a baby doll down their pants?" and one or two others.

At first, the mother brushed it off as childish silliness. But later, the question resurfaced in her mind when she remembered the Safe Environment video she had watched in order to serve as a parish volunteer. Something about the comments didn't sit right. She felt she needed to mention it to the parents of her child's friend.

It was a tragic revelation for the family when it was ultimately discovered that this child was in fact being abused. But because this mother had listened to her intuition, and because the training had equipped her to recognize concerning behavior, she spoke up.

Her courage prevented further harm.

Safe Environment training is not enjoyable. It is uncomfortable and even disturbing at times, and it is something that nobody wants to do. It shows how predators slowly and deliberately work their way into a child's life. Because sometimes it's difficult to distinguish between the genuinely caring adults who provide outstanding mentorship to children and someone whose behavior is problematic.



OSV NEWS PHOTO/JAY SOLDNER, THE LEAVEN  
 Jenifer Valenti, left, director of the Office for Protection and Care of the Archdiocese of Kansas City, Kan., and Melanie Savner, an administrative assistant in the office, plant blue pinwheels April 3, 2023, to commemorate National Child Abuse Prevention Month, which is observed each April.

But stories like the one shared above demonstrate exactly why we must be well-versed at recognizing the signs, setting boundaries, and monitoring who has access to our children: in our homes, our parishes, and our communities.

The Safe Environment training program cannot

cover every possible scenario, but it does give us valuable insight into how abuse often begins and how we can intervene early. The training, which the diocese requires every volunteer and employee to take seriously, asks about 75 minutes of their time every five years when their certifications must be renewed.

And the program has made a difference for the children it is designed to protect. ■

*Janice Hendricks is the coordinator for the Office of Safe Environment in the Diocese of Owensboro. Learn more at [owensborodiocese.org/safe](https://owensborodiocese.org/safe).*

*To report suspected abuse, call the Kentucky Child Protection Hot Line at 877-597-2331 or contact your local Commonwealth Attorney. To report abuse to the diocese, current or past, by anyone acting in the name of the Church, call Scott Ingram, Pastoral Assistance Coordinator (English), at (270) 852-8380, or Miguel Quintanilla, Pastoral Assistance Coordinator (Spanish), at (270) 880-8360.*

### Do you need help?

KASAP (Kentucky Association of Sexual Assault Programs) 24-hour Rape Crisis Line:  
 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

New Beginnings Sexual Assault Support –  
 (270) 926-7273, <https://nbowensboro.org>

Suicide and Crisis Lifeline: Call/text 988

## Ten years later: A Catholic convert reflects on her favorite experiences of the faith over the past decade

BY LAURA RIGSBY, SPECIAL TO THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

It's been ten years since I smelled of Sacred Chrism.

Ten years ago, for the first time, I received the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ truly present in the Eucharist.

As I reflect on the past decade, several highlights shine bright in my memory:

1. Serving the Diocese of Owensboro as digital media specialist during my first five years. It was during these formative years that I cultivated lasting friendships with peers, elders and even priests who helped me grow and mature in my newfound Catholic faith.

2. Celebrating the Sacrament of Matrimony. When I remember that the first “meal” we shared as husband and wife was the Eucharist, I remember it was Jesus himself who elevated marriage to a Sacrament at Cana. We strive to keep him at the center of our family.

3. Meeting Pope Francis after the Sposi Novelli (newlywed blessing) at his general audience. I am someone who usually has a lot to say, but looking into the eyes of the successor of St. Peter rendered me nearly speechless.

4. Being asked to sponsor a candidate for Confirmation. A few years after my own Confirmation I acted as sponsor for another young woman who was coming into full communion

with the Church. It was a great gift to share this “full circle” moment with her.

5. Witnessing priestly ordinations. These men sacrifice their entire selves for love of Jesus and His Church. Be a friend to our priests. Support our seminarians. Pray for them every day. Without them, we don't have the Eucharist. Without the Eucharist, we don't have life within us (John 6:53).



COURTESY OF ST. JOSEPH PARISH

Those entering the Catholic Church at the Easter Vigil at St. Joseph Parish in Bowling Green on March 26, 2016, are seen holding lit candles while standing in the sanctuary. Laura Rigsby (then-Clarke) is seen on the left in a blue dress.

6. Cantoring for countless liturgies. Our Lord created me with a song in my heart, and it brings me endless joy to use the gift of music to aid in his worship.

7. The birth and baptism of our son. I was always touched by Hannah's promise that if she were

given a son, she would offer him back to the Lord. I always strive to do the same with mine. After all, our children are God's before they are ours.

8. Kneeling on the sidewalk as the National Eucharistic Revival procession passed through downtown Bowling Green. As I knelt I imagined it might feel similar to seeing Jesus pass through a village in ancient Judea.

9. Anticipating white smoke during a Conclave for the first time as a Catholic. I had never truly experienced the death of one pontiff and subsequent election of the next. Embracing the universal Church makes you part of a universal family, and like any family, we mourn together, pray together and rejoice together!

10. Accompanying a friend from curious to Confirmation. Most recently, a friend who had been curious about Catholicism for quite some time began to ask questions about what we believe and why. Soon she and her husband were enrolled in OCIA. At the time of writing, they are preparing to enter the Catholic Church at Easter Vigil with my husband and me as their sponsors.

God very intentionally gives us opportunities to share our faith with others. This Easter season, I challenge you to know your faith well and be willing to confidently share it when those opportunities arise! ■

*Laura Rigsby is a parishioner of St. Joseph Catholic Church in Bowling Green, Ky.*

## Ursuline Sisters elect new Leadership Council

*Elected sisters will be installed in July; Sr. Sharon Sullivan chosen to return as congregational leader*

### PRESS RELEASE

The Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph have elected their Leadership Council that will serve from 2026-2030. During meetings from March 12-14, 2026, delegates chose Sr. Sharon Sullivan to return as congregational leader. Three new members of the Council will join her. Sr. Alicia Coomes was chosen as assistant congregational leader, while Sr. Judith Nell Riney and Sr. Lorraine Lauter were each elected as councilors. The new Council will be installed during a ceremony on July 19, 2026.

Sr. Sharon Sullivan served as congregational leader from 2010-16. She was re-elected to the same position in 2022, after the community changed the term to four years, with the possibility of serving an additional four-year term. The native Texan is in her 44th year as an Ursuline Sister, with most of her time spent in ministry at Brescia University, where she was a professor and coordinator of special education, and academic dean.

Sr. Alicia Coomes is in her 47th year of religious life. All of the Henderson, Ky., native's ministry has been in Kentucky. Since 2022 she has served as pastoral care associate at both St. Peter of Alcantara Church in Stanley, and St. Augustine in Reed. From 2010-18, she was pastoral associate for St. William Parish, Marion; St. Francis Borgia Parish, Sturgis; and St. Ambrose Parish, Henshaw. She also served elsewhere in parish ministry in Bowling

Green, LaCenter and Owensboro. She has used her nursing training to serve the Sisters at Maple Mount many times through the years and also served the community as director of Vocation Ministry (2007-10), director of the Temporary Professed (2009-12), director of Local Community Life and coordinator of pastoral care (2021-22). This is her first elected office.

Sr. Judith Nell Riney is serving in her 59th year as an Ursuline. The Daviess County native previously served as an elected councilor from 2016-22. She retired in 2025 as director of library services at Brescia University after 45 years in the role. She has been serving where needed in Owensboro while discerning her next ministry.

Sr. Lorraine Lauter is serving in her 47th year as an Ursuline. A Florida native, she grew up in Louisville. She has served as executive director of Water By Women (previously Water With Blessings) in Louisville from 2012 to the present. Water By Women works to provide filters and training to women across the globe so they can bring clean drinking water to their areas. Sr. Lorraine has also served as a teacher, a parish minister, and was executive director of Migrant Immigrant Shelter and Support in Owensboro from 2002-2006. This is her first elected office. ■

Contact Dan Heckel, director of Mission Advancement and Communications at [dan.heckel@maplemount.org](mailto:dan.heckel@maplemount.org), (270) 229-2007



COURTESY OF KHAIBAR SHAFQAQ

(Left to right) Fr. John Thomas, Dr. Kaleek Aseedu, and Khaibar Shafaq pause for a group picture on Feb. 27 during the Faith Fest Spring gathering at the Islamic Center of Owensboro.

## Interfaith leaders share about virtue of fasting during Faith Fest celebration

BY WKC STAFF

In the afternoon of Feb. 27, an interfaith gathering was held at the Islamic Center of Owensboro as part of Owensboro's springtime Faith Fest celebration.

Hosted by the Owensboro-Daviess County Ministerial Association and the Owensboro Interfaith Center, the event featured reflections

*Continues on page 21*

## Interfaith continued from page 20

from Dr. Kaleek Aseedu, a local physician, and Fr. John Thomas, the rector of St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro. All were welcome to attend the presentation.

Khaibar Shafaq, director of migration and refugee services for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Owensboro, shared the following:

“What a meaningful and inspiring afternoon we shared at Faith Fest Spring at the Islamic Center of Owensboro. As Ramadan and Lent begin around the same time this year, our community had a beautiful opportunity to reflect together on fasting, prayer, and spiritual renewal across our faith traditions.

“Dr. Kaleek Aseedu spoke about fasting as the third pillar of Islam – not simply abstaining from food, but disciplining the soul, deepening awareness of God, and growing in compassion for those in need. Fr. John Thomas reflected on Lent as a season of conversion and renewal. Referencing Pope Leo XIV’s message for Lent, he reminded us that fasting must lead to kindness and care for others. As he shared: ‘No matter how much time you spend fasting – even if you sleep on a hard floor, eat ashes, and sigh continually – if you do no good to others, you do nothing great.’

“While our traditions differ, the spiritual goal remains very similar: to draw closer to God and to treat our neighbors with greater kindness, humility, and dignity. Seeing people of different faiths come together in friendship and respect was truly inspiring and reflects the very best of our Owensboro community.”

Also present at the event were Rev. Dr. Claudia Ramisch, Rev. Rhondalyn Randolph, Owensboro judge-executive Charlie Castlen, and other community leaders. ■

## Eagle Scout refurbishes memorial at St. Mary High School

BY SHERI BABBS, SPECIAL TO THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

Cooper Richison, son of AJ and Miranda Richison, celebrated earning his Eagle Rank through Scouting America with a Court of Honor at St. Thomas More Parish in Paducah on March 8. Cooper, a senior at St. Mary High School, refurbished and upgraded the memorial for deceased staff and teachers on the St. Mary High School grounds. The project included cleaning of the monument, the addition of a St. Joseph statue, and adding pavers to accentuate the memorial. Cooper started his scouting career with Pack 2007 and progressed through the ranks to complete his Eagle Rank with Troop 2007. St. Thomas More in Paducah is the charter organization for Pack 2007 and Scout 2007. Cooper has served Troop 2007 as the Senior Patrol Leader and guided the troop through an explosion of growth. Cooper exemplifies the Scout Slogan of “Do a good turn daily.” Cooper will attend Universal Technical Institute in Mooresville, North Carolina, in the fall. ■



COURTESY OF SHERI BABBS  
Cooper Richison is seen with a St. Joseph statue which he added to a memorial on St. Mary High School grounds as part of his Eagle Scout Project.





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### Feeding hungry neighbors in Bowling Green – together

BY JENNIFER BAILEY, SPECIAL TO THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

In Bowling Green, hunger reaches older adults, working parents trying to stretch a paycheck, families with children, and neighbors with no paycheck at all. The response does not rest on one person or one ministry. It moves through a network of organizations whose stories intertwine each week through food, service, and compassion.

At Holy Spirit St. Vincent de Paul, Diane Ewan sees that need up close. As a translator at the pantry, she meets people from many backgrounds who come seeking food and relief. She spoke of working poor families, single mothers, young families, unhoused neighbors, and people facing hardship from every walk of life.

For Diane, the pantry offers more than groceries. It offers dignity, safety, and a place where people feel seen.

“They provide not only food, but a place where people feel safe, listened to, and recognized,” she said.

Her words point to the heart of this work. Hunger is about empty shelves and empty stomachs, but also fear, stress, transportation, language barriers, and the daily strain of trying to hold life together. Diane described families sharing one rented car for the day so they could visit the pantry, attend appointments, and handle errands. She said many people misunderstand hunger. In her experience, many neighbors seeking help are working hard and still struggling.

A few miles away, MEALS, Inc. meets hunger in a different way. Bill Oldham, past president of the organization and a leader in its Saturday Meals program,

described a ministry built on care and consistency. Since 1992, Saturday Meals has delivered a hot meal every Saturday to neighbors in Bowling Green through volunteers alone.

“We have no paid staff,” Oldham said.

Twelve churches, including Holy Spirit and St. Joseph, along with one local business, rotate volunteers, kitchen help, and delivery drivers. Every Saturday morning, people show up early to cook, pack, and deliver meals. Oldham said the goal is to feed people and remind them they matter.

“I feel like we are sending a message that you are valued,” he said.

That same spirit is at the heart of St. Teresa Thrift Store and Ministries. Its mission is to support organizations that feed the hungry and care for neighbors in need.

In 2025, Holy Spirit St. Vincent de Paul, St. Joseph St. Vincent de Paul, and MEALS, Inc. together received more than \$130,000 in grants from St. Teresa Thrift Store and Ministries. Holy Spirit International Outreach also helps feed neighbors by providing culturally familiar food staples for refugee families.

Together, these ministries serve neighbors facing hardship through food assistance and other basic support.

In Bowling Green, feeding the hungry is shared work. It moves through the volunteer packing a box, the driver delivering a meal, the donor dropping off goods, and the neighbor receiving help. In each place, the stories intertwine. When this work is done well, it tells every neighbor the same thing. You are seen. You matter.

You are not alone. ■

Learn more at [www.stteresaministries.org](http://www.stteresaministries.org).



COURTESY OF BILL OLDHAM

Volunteers bag bread and other donated items for MEALS, Inc. Saturday Meals recipients in Bowling Green in December 2025.



COURTESY OF BILL OLDHAM

In December 2025, volunteers prepare and plate meals for MEALS, Inc. Saturday Meals, which serves neighbors facing food insecurity in Bowling Green.

# A call to journey with Christ beyond the Lenten season

BY BELINDA ABELL, SPECIAL TO THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

Lent is ending and we will soon be celebrating Easter. It is a perfect time to continue your Lenten journey with Jesus Christ. We are all called to live a life like Jesus but how? The Society of St. Vincent de Paul would like to invite you to discover if becoming a Vincentian could be your path to living a life like Jesus.

Serving God as a Vincentian is a unique and deeply personal calling. Members of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul are not only volunteers, Vincentians and staff performing acts of charity; they are disciples striving to encounter Christ through service to the marginalized, suffering, and forgotten. Inspired by the example of St. Vincent de Paul and the founding vision of Blessed Frédéric Ozanam, Vincentians live out their faith through humble, compassionate action.

At the heart of Vincentian spirituality is the belief that Christ is present in those who are poor and marginalized. When Vincentians visit families, deliver food, assist with rent or utilities, or simply sit and listen, they are not merely offering aid – they are encountering Jesus himself.

“Every home visit becomes a sacred moment where dignity, compassion, and respect are extended to a neighbor in need,” added Lurna Strehl, SVdP Diocesan Second Vice President and parishioner of Sts. Joseph and Paul in Owensboro.

“Serving God in this way requires more than generosity; it requires a change in perspective.

Vincentians learn to look beyond circumstances and see the person – someone created and loved by God,” said James Dale, SVdP Diocesan President and parishioner of St. Mary in Franklin.

The Vincentian mission is not simply about providing material help. It is about building relationships. Blessed Frédéric Ozanam believed charity should be personal and rooted in friendship. When Vincentians walk alongside those they serve, they offer hope, encouragement, and the reminder that no one is alone in their struggles. This personal approach reflects the Gospel message to love one another as Christ loves us.

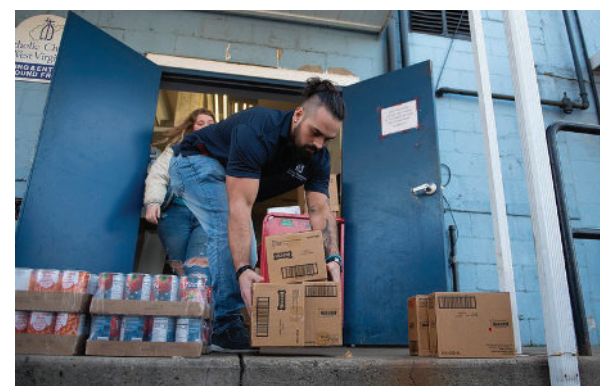
Serving God as a Vincentian is also a journey of spiritual growth. Members gather in prayer, reflection, and fellowship, strengthening one another in faith. Through service, Vincentians often discover that those they help also help them grow – teaching humility, gratitude, patience, and trust in God. Many Vincentians say they receive far more than they give.

Being a Vincentian means bringing the Gospel into the everyday realities of life. Whether through food pantries, thrift stores, disaster relief, or financial assistance, the work of the Society reflects Christ’s call to care for “the least of these.” Yet the mission goes beyond programs or services. It is about living a life of compassion, standing with those who struggle, and serving God through acts of love.

The Vincentian vocation reminds us that holiness is not reserved for extraordinary moments but found in simple acts of kindness. Each time a Vincentian listens without judgment, offers help without expectation, or prays with someone in need, they bring the light of Christ into the world. SVdP Western District President and parishioner of St. Thomas More in Paducah, Diane Stoverink, believes “to serve as a Vincentian is to answer God’s call to love – one person, one family,


and one act of mercy at a time.”

To learn more about the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, contact your local SVdP Parish Conference or view our website at [svdpwky.org](http://svdpwky.org). To establish a parish conference, contact Richard Remp Morris at (270) 315-5747. ■




OSV NEWS PHOTO/COURTESY SOCIETY OF ST. VINCENT DE PAUL USA

A volunteer with the Society of St. Vincent de Paul USA is pictured in an undated photo unloading aid for people in need.



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# April Wedding Anniversaries

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

**A note from the WKC: Make sure your anniversary is listed!** The WKC recognizes 5<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup>, 25<sup>th</sup>, 40<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> and over 50 anniversaries being celebrated for the month printed. In order to appear in the WKC's monthly anniversaries, you must be listed by your parish. Please contact your parish directly to make sure your anniversary is on file with them.

### **Blessed Mother,**

#### **Owensboro**

Bobby & Patricia Rafferty, 63  
 Danny & Patty Merimee, 58  
 Darrell & Sharon Payne, 54  
 David & Leiann Lashbrook, 40  
 Dennis & Kim Barnett, 40  
 Louis & Mary Aull, 65  
 Marty & Sally Cravens, 40  
 Robert & Pat Risch, 59  
 Steve & Trisha Frey, 40  
 Tony & Carolyn Clark, 57

### **Christ the King,**

#### **Madisonville**

John & Diane Clark, 57  
 Joseph & Martha Thomas, 40  
 William & Rebecca Markham, 60

### **Holy Name of Jesus,**

#### **Henderson**

Carl & Reba Grossman, 53  
 Clifford & Helen Romain, 57  
 David & Bonnie Bartley, 55  
 Dick & Sheila Beaven, 54  
 Doug & Tammy Wathen, 10  
 Isaac & Ashton Vaughan, 10  
 Jack & Reiko Adams, 55  
 Joseph & Mary Shelman, 50  
 Michael & Shanon Thomson, 25  
 Odell & Karen Rhoades, 10  
 Richard & Donna DeMar, 25  
 Rick & April Vindhurst, 25  
 Robert & Chelsie Konsler, 10  
 Ronald & Brenda Sauer, 59  
 Tom & Peg Lewis, 58

### **Holy Redeemer, Beaver Dam**

Tim & Mary Stenberg, 52

### **Holy Spirit, Bowling Green**

Chris & Cynthia Hill, 50  
 David & Karen Lewis, 10  
 Everett & Mary Leasor, 60  
 James & Helen Bailey, 70  
 James & Kathy Adams, 58

### **Holy Trinity, Morgantown**

Robert & Kathy Coomes, 10

### **Immaculate Conception,**

#### **Earlington**

John & Velma Davis, 58

### **Immaculate Conception,**

### **Hawesville**

Clayton & Gloria Gray, 64  
 John & Marlene Wheatley, 53

### **Immaculate, Owensboro**

Charles & Mary Lois Payne, 65  
 David & Mary Jane Strehl, 57  
 Don & Mary Weaver, 62  
 James & Mary Basham, 54  
 Joel & Kaitlyn Blankendaal, 10  
 Rex & Peggy Robinson, 62  
 Todd & Pat Stelmach, 57

### **Our Lady of Lourdes,**

#### **Owensboro**

Bill & Deborah Glenn, 56  
 Brad & Beverly Hamilton, 66  
 Gregory & Deborah Arnold, 56  
 Norm & Katina Hayden, 25  
 Paul & Mary Sliwa, 40  
 Thomas & Beth Hutchison, 25  
 Tony & Eileen Mattingly, 54  
 Tyler & Trina Smith, 10

### **Precious Blood, Owensboro**

Bill & Marcia Millay, 50  
 Michael & Brenda Swift, 58  
 Mike & Jan Martin, 52  
 Thomas & Chelsea Weis, 10

### **Sacred Heart, Russellville**

Philip & Connie Montooth, 52

### **Sacred Heart, Waverly**

Mike & Barbara Davis, 57

### **St. Agnes, Uniontown**

Benny & Rita French, 72  
 Bill & Charlene Hite, 57  
 Dickie & Cheryl Berry, 54  
 Harold & Diane Lynn, 55  
 Lark & Sharon Buckman, 56  
 Larry & Vickie Rhodes, 58  
 Pete & Laura Hagan, 52

### **St. Alphonsus, St. Joseph**

Bruce & Sheila Blandford, 55  
 Donald & Ginny Peters, 64  
 Mark & Suzanne Blandford, 40

### **St. Ann, Morganfield**

Mike & Cathy Greenwell, 57  
 Richard & Becky Nalley, 50  
 Roger & Cindy Wells, 53  
 Ronald & Ellen Mattingly, 60

### **St. Anthony, Axtel**

Mike & Janet Alexander, 51

Russell Edwin & Brenda Hinton, 53

### **St. Anthony, Browns Valley**

Joseph & Sharon Wink, 57  
 Mike & Donna Koger, 56

### **St. Anthony, Peonia**

Tom & Bonnie Osbourne, 57

### **St. Augustine, Reed**

Hershel & Barbara Smith, 57  
 Tony & Christa Hundley, 52

### **St. Charles, Livermore**

John & Marsha Logsdon, 58  
 Ron & Patty Humphrey, 54

### **St. Francis Borgia, Sturgis**

Roger & Irene Price, 58

### **St. Francis de Sales, Paducah**

David & Andrea Berschied, 54  
 David & Courtney Burkeen, 10  
 James & Velda Carbonel, 62  
 John & Cindy Davis, 51  
 Jonathan & Staci Bachuss, 10  
 Larry & LaDonna Roberts, 56  
 Mark & Brenda Metzger, 25  
 Philip & Marilyn Wright, 54

### **St. Jerome, Fancy Farm**

Joseph E & Joyce Toon, 57  
 Patrick & Madison Cole, 10  
 Philip & Evie Elder, 50  
 Robert & Marilyn Thompson, 54

### **St. John the Evangelist,**

#### **Paducah**

Arvil & Ruth McKendree, 52

### **St. John the Evangelist, Sunfish**

Glenn & Lou Logsdon, 25

### **St. Joseph, Bowling Green**

Joseph & Lizette Muchina, 5  
 Michael & Darlene Fuqua, 55

### **St. Joseph, Central City**

Grant & Brenda Phillips, 60

### **St. Joseph, Leitchfield**

Tony & Sue King, 40

### **St. Joseph, Mayfield**

Darvin & Pam Towery, 40  
 Joe & Evelyn Jolley, 62

### **St. Leo, Murray**

Bill & Trish Johnson, 52  
 Douglas & Vicky Lambert, 60  
 Ed & Marilyn Wolf, 63

### **St. Martin, Rome**

Richard & Anita Dixon, 63  
 Thomas & Teri Murphy, 51  
 Walker & Michaeline Chandler, 10

### **St. Mary Magdalene,**

#### **Sorgho**

Gerald & Betty Bartley, 63

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

#### **Whitesville**

Jesse & Ashley Roberts, 10  
 Lon & Janice Clark, 40  
 Michael & Kathy Turner, 52  
 Michael & Marie Bartlett, 51  
 Norma & Robert Ward, 58  
 Randy & Pam Howard, 50  
 Ray & Patty Hamilton, 60  
 Roger & Brenda Hagan, 57  
 Tommy & Joyce Higdon, 61  
 Wayne & Doris Rhodes, 56

### **St. Mary, Franklin**

Daryll & Gail Hall, 40  
 Earl & Sheila Harrington, 52  
 Mike & Betty Glodoski, 52  
 Richard & Vicki Hearn, 53  
 Roberto & Myrna Sibrian, 10  
 Tom & Regina Cozzy, 74

### **St. Michael, Sebree**

Tommy & Pamela McCarty, 55

### **St. Paul, Princeton**

Herman & Beth Berton, 65  
 William & Teresa Wurts, 50

### **St. Peter of Antioch, Waverly**

Fred & Phyllis Crowdus, 56  
 Johnny & Teresa Wolfe, 10

### **St. Pius X, Calvert City**

Jim & Rose Drury, 67

### **St. Pius X, Owensboro**

Andrew & Amanda Hoffman, 10  
 Bernard & Elsie Galloway, 62  
 Charles & Lois Hoskins, 62  
 Stephen & Anna Carrico, 51

### **St. Romuald, Hardinsburg**

Buddy & Kay Payne, 51  
 Carl & Thelma Jarboe, 65  
 Charlie & Robin Henning, 40  
 Jerry & Pat Sturgeon, 58  
 John & Helen O'Reilly, 67  
 Larry & Martha Severs, 54

Robert & Kelly Meador, 25

### **St. Rose of Lima, Cloverport**

Larry & Dana Mattingly, 10  
 Tommy & Barbara Smith, 57

### **St. Sebastian, Calhoun**

Ralph & Judy Ward, 65

### **St. Stephen Cathedral,**

#### **Owensboro**

Charles & Mary Ann Medley, 56  
 Kevin & Deborah Carrico, 40  
 Mark & Martha Sims, 52  
 Ronald & Phyllis Calvert, 53

### **St. Stephen, Cadiz**

Jan & Marsha Petro, 50  
 John & Paula Hall, 61  
 Kenneth & Barbara Powers, 61  
 Paul & Dawn Cunningham, 66  
 Robert & Alyce Chmielewski, 63

### **St. Thomas More, Paducah**

Heath & Angela Schipp, 25  
 Jim & Mary Bumpous, 62  
 Steve & Earline Wurth, 62

### **St. William, Knottsville**

Bruce & Sandy Whitehouse, 56  
 David & Marilyn Fulkerson, 50  
 Gary & Donna Thompson, 51  
 J. Noel & Theresa Ballard, 50  
 Roger & Mary Ann Adams, 63  
 Ronnie & Rebecca Howard, 54  
 Thomas & Sandra Roby, 25  
 Wendell & Mary Jane Wood, 40  
 William & Jennifer Howard, 25

### **St. William, Marion**

Dr. Michael & Nancy Gavin, 51

### **Sts. Joseph & Paul, Owensboro**

Clay & Brittany Mulligan, 5  
 Jim & Sharon Embry, 54  
 Joe & Beverly Maxwell, 54  
 John & Esther Blandford, 56  
 Joseph & Brenda Bean, 54  
 Larry & Debbie Simon, 51  
 Paul & Joyce Lambert, 62  
 Russell & Sheila Roby, 52  
 Stephen & Diane Lindsey, 53  
 Tony & Jane Lindow, 40

### **Sts. Peter & Paul, Hopkinsville**

Bill & Harriette Hancock, 71  
 Clifford & Carol Simpson, 65  
 Hugh & Kathy Lewis, 50  
 Kevin & Julia Felton, 52

## Discovered in the safe: The mourning locket of Thomas Fitzgerald



COURTESY OF ARCHIVES

The mourning locket depicting Thomas Fitzgerald. The reverse side of the locket contains an encapsulated lock of Fitzgerald's hair.

BY EDWARD WILSON, ARCHIVES

Four years ago, the archives opened a safe that had remained locked for over a decade. Several incredible items were revealed. However, this mourning locket with a 19th century portrait and a lock of hair on

its reverse was perhaps the most eye-catching and intriguing.

I set out to get the fullest story possible on the item. The paperwork attached with it stated that it depicted Rev. Thomas Fitzgerald and was owned by Fr. Martin Nahstoll. I searched priests that served our area, as well as several adjacent areas of the period. There was no Rev. Thomas Fitzgerald. There was also no mention of him in the file of Fr. Nahstoll.

I decided to check some period newspapers. Here I found several references to Captain Thomas Fitzgerald. Capt. Fitzgerald was famed on the Ohio River. This made sense, as I was not convinced that this very well-to-do looking man was clergy. I

looked for any reference photographs of Capt. Fitzgerald. I could find none. I decided to reach out to the Ohio River Museum thinking that perhaps they had reference images of the good captain. The museum was closed for construction and remains closed as of writing this article.

I was fairly certain that this was “Capt.” Fitzgerald and not “Fr.” Fitzgerald and in my August 2022 article in the WKC I teased the locket, stating that we had an item, “having to do with 19th-century steamboat captains.” However, the trail soon ran cold.

Over the next few years, I would return to the locket, but short of old newspapers mentioning Capt. Fitzgerald, there was nothing to connect any provenance to the item. However, things changed this past February while reorganizing our deceased priests record group.

After reorganizing every file in the record group, there were several pre-diocesan priests' folders and an unlabeled folder that needed to be reviewed. The unlabeled folder turned out to be research conducted by Fr. Nahstoll. As I was going through this research, I came to a photocopy of a familiar face: it was Thomas Fitzgerald, but sadly, the back was not labeled. Luckily there were two other portraits with it: Fr. Beda O'Connor, OSB; and a priest I recognized on sight – Fr. Roman Weinzapfel, an important 19th-century priest, who, like Fr. O'Connor, is buried at Saint Meinrad.

(Fr. Weinzapfel, a German immigrant priest, had been imprisoned after a prejudiced and xenophobic accusation was made against him, amid the turbulent anti-immigrant sentiment of the time.

His name was ultimately cleared.)

I reached out to Saint Meinrad's archives and asked if they had any information on Thomas Fitzgerald.

Br. Stanley Rother got back to me. After searching an old descriptive inventory, he found a reference to Thomas Fitzgerald. The reference stated that Fr. Weinzapfel stayed with Thomas after being released from his wrongful imprisonment. Br. Stanley sent me the reference and I noticed a notation referring to Thomas's house being depicted in “A Trip Thru Indiana in 1840.” (After tracking the book down, I found it was actually titled “A Tour Through Indiana in 1840.”) The section displaying the Fitzgerald house detailed the book's author, John Parsons, being hosted by Captain Thomas Fitzgerald. And just like that, the mystery was solved.

After four years, we now know the complete story of the locket. It has been concluded that while conducting detailed research on the case of Fr. Weinzapfel, Fr. Martin Nahstoll came across this mourning locket depicting Capt. Thomas Fitzgerald who housed Fr. Weinzapfel in the aftermath of his imprisonment.

Capt. Fitzgerald is a testament to the age-old adage that if you are kind to a priest, it will likely be remembered and mentioned 180 years later in a local diocesan newspaper. ■

*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](mailto:edward.wilson@pastoral.org).*

## APRIL 2026 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.

**A message from the Office of Stewardship and Development**

A thoughtful plan today can bless the Church in ways that echo long into the future. Remembering your parish in your estate costs nothing during your lifetime, yet it strengthens the mission of Christ for years to come. For more information on how to make this type of gift, contact Valeria Vessels, Director of Development, Diocese of Owensboro, at (270) 852-8348 or [valeria.vessels@pastoral.org](mailto:valeria.vessels@pastoral.org).

**Join Ursuline Sisters for Adoration on Fridays and first Sundays**

The Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph invite the public to join them for Eucharistic Adoration on the first Sunday of the month 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 also have Eucharistic Adoration on Fridays from 4 p.m. to 5 p.m., and the public is welcome to attend. 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/>

**April 18 Trivia Night at Our Lady of Lourdes**

Our Lady of Lourdes Parish will be sponsoring its Fourth Annual Trivia Night on April 18 in the parish hall. The evening begins at 5:30 p.m. with a social time and dinner. The dinner will consist of BBQ pork or chicken and burgoo with sides of baked beans and coleslaw. Lemonade and tea will be included in the price, but a cash bar for beer and wine will be available as well. At 7 p.m. trivia will begin. In addition to the trivia, there will be a silent auction and a 50/50 pot. Door prizes will also be a part of the festivities. The price of tickets is \$30

per person. All proceeds will go to the church. The funds raised from previous year's event were used to purchase new cassocks for the altar servers. This year's monies will be used to purchase new chalices and to sponsor an ice cream social. Please join us for an evening of fun and trivia. To learn more call the parish office at (270) 684-5369.

**Brescia University spring concert April 30**

The Brescia University music department invites you to its spring music showcase featuring the Brescia choir, band, and handbell choir, directed by Dr. Sharon Hudson, featuring music from classic musicals as well as uplifting songs of praise. April 30, at 7 p.m. in Taylor Lecture Hall, Roberts Science Center. Reception to follow. Questions: [sharon.hudson@brescia.edu](mailto:sharon.hudson@brescia.edu).

**Upcoming Rachel's Vineyard retreats for healing after abortion**

If you are suffering from grief or trauma from an abortion, come experience the healing love of Jesus Christ on a Rachel's Vineyard weekend retreat during this Year of St. Francis of Assisi! There will be three Catholic retreats offered during May, June, and October 2026, sponsored by Rachel's Vineyard of Bowling Green. Our retreats will be offered in the Louisville; Cullman, Alabama; and Owensboro areas. We also are sponsoring two Interdenominational events in Middle Tennessee. Our weekend retreats will combine discussions, spiritual exercises, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, a Memorial Service and a Mass of Entrustment of our Children to Jesus. Participation is strictly confidential and offers a beautiful opportunity to experience God's love, forgiveness and compassion. For more information or registration contact us on our confidential hotline (270-474-4707) or email ([retreats@hope-afterabortionky.com](mailto:retreats@hope-afterabortionky.com)). The cost is \$250 for meals, private room, and all retreat materials. If you have a financial burden, assistance is available – no one is ever turned away due to financial need! More information is available on our website: [HopeAfterAbortionKY.com](http://HopeAfterAbortionKY.com). For a complete listing of retreat dates and locations contact 1-877-HOPE-4-ME or visit the Rachel's Vineyard website at [www.rachelsvineyard.org](http://www.rachelsvineyard.org).

**Nominate the 2025-2026 Outstanding Catholic School Educator of the Year**

The Catholic Schools Office and the Principals and Administrators of Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools (PACCESS) are again asking for nominations for Outstanding Catholic School Educator of the Year. The winner will be announced at the 2026 Celebration of Catholic Schools event. Anyone, with the exception of an immediate family member, may nominate an educator for the award. All information concerning nominees will be kept confidential, including the name of the person submitting the nomination. The educator must currently be employed in the Diocese of Owensboro and must have taught for a minimum of five years in the diocesan schools. The outstanding Catholic School Educator must be a role model as an outstanding human being; have a major influence in the lives of students; show concern with the faith development as well as the physical, mental and emotional development of students; and encourage students to improve their abilities and talents. The deadline for nominations is July 1, 2026. A committee will serve as judges. For the nomination form, visit <https://owensborodiocese.org/educator-award/>.

**The Ursuline Sisters want to know about Acts of Kindness you have Witnessed**

The Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph are reimagining our Kindness Campaign that began six years ago, when we mailed cards to individuals. Our new campaign involves sharing the stories of those who have shown an act of kindness to you or someone you know. Each month, these will be included in our e-mail newsletter "The Pilgrimage." The Bible emphasizes hospitality as a virtue, encouraging people to welcome strangers and "love thy neighbor." We are called to show kindness to all of God's children. No matter how small, an act of kindness can make an impact in someone's life, so never underestimate the difference you can make. The Ursuline Sisters challenge themselves to "Answer the darkness by being light, and to give witness that is public." We believe that love and kindness prevail, and it begins with each of us. Please submit your stories at this link: <https://ursulinesmsj.org/kindness-campaign/> To sign up to receive our Pilgrimage emails and read these stories, along with our other news, visit this page: <https://ursulinesmsj.org/subscribe/> We hope you will be inspired to show kindness to someone else.

## UPCOMING EVENTS

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

Need a meeting space for up to 200 people? Or this site can seat up to 395 people if you don't need to use tables. 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. There is a stage and a basketball court on site. It's perfect for hosting receptions, parties, reunions, etc. The fee for a full day rental is \$300, which includes access to Maple Hall the day prior to the event. The use of 6-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](mailto:ap@maplemount.org) or call 270-229-4170 from Monday through Friday 8 a.m.-4:30 p.m. You can find out more on this webpage: <https://ursulinesmsj.org/renting-maple-hall/>

### Vendor space available at St. Henry for 400-mile yard sale

Location: St. Henry Catholic Church, 16097 U.S. Highway 68 East, Hardin, KY. Dates and times: June 4, 7 a.m.-5 p.m.; June 5, 7 a.m.-5 p.m.; June 6, 7 a.m.-2 p.m. Vendor details: 10x10 space, \$40 per spot plus \$25 refundable cleanup deposit. Spots are limited; first-come, first-served. For more information or to reserve your spot: Janet Seego, (630) 253-0681, [jseego@comcast.net](mailto:jseego@comcast.net).

### 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/>. You are also invited to visit <https://www.awakecommunity.org/>, a community of abuse survivors, concerned Catholics, and allies responding to the wounds of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church.

## You are invited to SACRED BEAUTY OF ITALY

with Fr. John M. Thomas

SEPTEMBER 28 - OCTOBER 8, 2026

Join Fr. John Thomas on a Pilgrimage to Italy

- Assisi, Siena, Florence, Pisa, Orvieto & Rome
- Celebrate the Jubilee Year of St. Francis
- Visit Castel Gandolfo & attend a Papal Audience with Pope Leo
- Discover Italy's sacred sites, art & faith

For details & to register: <https://tri.ps/NbnDf>



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MARK 16:18  
"...THEY WILL LAY HANDS ON THE SICK  
AND THEY WILL RECOVER"

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CLINT CAMPBELL  
LAURA SHOULDERS  
[encounterschool.org/louisville](http://encounterschool.org/louisville)

6:45 PM Praise & Worship  
7:30 PM Welcome & Gospel Message  
8:00 PM Corporate Prayer & Testimonies  
8:30 PM Individual Ministry

Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph

## Quilt Club

**We still have Quilt Club tickets!**  
It's not too late to get your 2026-2027 Quilt Club ticket! **Enter by April 30** to get 11 chances to win a beautiful handmade quilt. Drawings occur on the first Friday of each month. Only 2,500 tickets will be sold.

Contact Carol Braden-Clarke:  
**270-229-2008**  
[carol.braden-clark@maplemount.org](mailto:carol.braden-clark@maplemount.org)  
Order online: [ursulinesmsj.org/quilt-club](http://ursulinesmsj.org/quilt-club)

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## Un Mensaje del Obispo Medley

### *Hagan esto en memoria mía: Una invitación a la mesa del Señor*

*Hermanos: Yo recibí del Señor lo mismo que les he transmitido: que el Señor Jesús, la noche en que iba a ser entregado, tomó pan en sus manos, y pronunciando la acción de gracias, lo partió y dijo: “Esto es mi cuerpo, que se entrega por ustedes. Hagan esto en memoria mía”.*

*Lo mismo hizo con el cáliz después de cenar, diciendo: “Este cáliz es la nueva alianza que se sella con mi sangre. Hagan esto en memoria mía siempre que beban de él”. Por eso, cada vez que ustedes comen de este pan y beben de este cáliz, proclaman la muerte del Señor, hasta que vuelva.*

- 1 Corintios 11, 23-26

Este pasaje, junto con el relato del Evangelio de Juan sobre Jesús lavando los pies de sus discípulos, constituye el núcleo de la liturgia de la Iglesia el Jueves Santo. La institución de la Sagrada Eucaristía, presentada junto con el modelo de servicio de Jesús, es la historia del Jueves Santo.

Jesús presenta tres mandamientos: tomen y coman, tomen y beban, y hagan esto en memoria mía. Aquí estamos, en 2026, cumpliendo estos mandamientos en todas las naciones de la tierra. La Eucaristía se celebra todos los días del año, excepto el Viernes Santo, cuando la Iglesia recuerda la pasión y muerte del Señor. Pero incluso en este día se ofrece la Eucaristía a los fieles con el Pan Sagrado que fue consagrado el Jueves Santo.

Desde los tiempos apostólicos, la Iglesia ha sostenido que celebramos esta memoria principalmente el domingo, el Día del Señor, el día en que conmemoramos la Resurrección del Señor. Desde

sus inicios, los cristianos consideraron que compartir el pan, el vino y la memoria era una seria obligación para todos los creyentes.

Consideramos esta conmemoración como nuestra obligación dominical. Quizás deberíamos hacer hincapié en el privilegio más que en la obligación. Pero en la vida hay muchas obligaciones y para los católicos no hay mejor manera de “santificar las fiestas” que acercarse a la mesa del Señor y recibir la Sagrada Comunión.

Siempre cuando hay un sacerdote disponible, ha existido una larga tradición de celebrar la Misa cada día en iglesias parroquiales, conventos y monasterios. Siempre que este privilegio ha sido posible, ha habido fieles que han tenido por costumbre recibir la Sagrada Comunión diariamente, a menudo conocidos como “comulgantes diarios”. En la mayoría de los lugares, estos fieles son personas cuyas responsabilidades en la vida se han reducido; han completado sus años de crianza de los hijos y, a menudo, incluso su carrera laboral. Aunque en la mayoría de las parroquias el número de comulgantes diarios es pequeño, estos fieles representan verdaderos tesoros de oración para toda la parroquia, e incluso para toda la Iglesia.

Si su estilo de vida les permite a ustedes disfrutar de más tiempo libre, ¿considerarían la posibilidad de comulgar diariamente en sus parroquias?

En las próximas semanas, las parroquias celebrarán uno de los acontecimientos más alegres de su año litúrgico, cuando los niños —por lo general, alumnos de segundo grado— reciban su Prime-

#### CALENDARIO DEL OBISPO MEDLEY ABRIL 2026

2 de abril	6 PM   Misa de la Cena del Señor del Jueves Santo – Catedral de San Esteban
3 de abril	3 PM   Viernes Santo de la Pasión del Señor – Catedral de San Esteban
4 de abril	8 PM   Vigilia Pascual en la Noche Santa – Catedral de San Esteban
11 de abril	10 AM   Dedicación del Altar – Parroquia Santísima Madre, Owensboro
	5 PM   Dedicación del altar – Parroquia Santa María, Franklin
12 de abril	11 AM   Confirmación – Parroquia Cristo Rey, Scottsville
14 de abril	6 PM   Confirmación – Parroquia San Antonio el Abad, Axtel
15 de abril	6:30 PM   Confirmación – Parroquia Santísima Madre, Owensboro
16 de abril	8 AM   Conversaciones con los “Seniors” – Escuela Preparatoria Trinidad, Whitesville
	12 PM   Reunión con ministros hispanos y el Obispo José María García Maldonado – Monasterio Pasionista
	6 PM   Vísperas por la protección y sanación de las personas afectadas por el abuso sexual en la Iglesia – Catedral de San Esteban

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## Continuado de la página 28

ra Comunión. En algunas parroquias de nuestra diócesis, esto podría tratarse de tan solo uno o dos niños o niñas. En las parroquias más grandes, esto podría significar varias docenas de niños. Si observamos fotografías de Primeras Comuniones de generaciones anteriores, veremos con frecuencia a niños muy felices, niños contentos de haber completado un rito de paso al poder unirse a sus padres y hermanos mayores en el privilegio de recibir regularmente el Cuerpo y la Sangre de Cristo.

Como párroco, siempre me dejó perplejo que este rito de paso de recibir la Primera Comunión fuera seguido por una asistencia muy infrecuente a la Misa. Por supuesto, esto no es responsabilidad de niños de siete u ocho años. Solo pueden asistir a la Misa si alguien los lleva. Por lo tanto, quisiera recordarles a los padres que no solo tienen la obligación personal de “santificar las fiestas” participando en la Eucaristía, sino que también tienen la obligación moral de asegurar la presencia y participación de sus hijos.

Si un niño le recuerda a un padre que tiene hambre, la respuesta no es: “¿de qué estás hablando? Comiste en la Navidad y en la Pascua”. Los niños tienen hambre de conocer a Jesús más perfectamente, y sus padres deben asegurarse de que sean alimentados.

Los mandamientos de Jesús: tomen y coman, tomen y beban, y hagan esto en memoria mía.

¡Que Dios les bendiga a ustedes siempre!



**Obispo William F. Medley**  
Diócesis de Owensboro

18 de abril	5 PM   Confirmación – Parroquia San Tomás Moro, Paducah
19 de abril	10:30 AM   Confirmación – Parroquia Preciosa Sangre, Owensboro
	2 PM   Confirmación – Parroquia Santa María del Bosque, Whitesville
22 de abril	10 AM   Reunión del personal – Centro Católico McRaith, Owensboro
	6 PM   Confirmación – Parroquia Inmaculada Concepción, Hawesville
23 de abril	8 AM   Misa Escolar – Escuela Santo Nombre de Jesús, Henderson
	6 PM   Confirmación – Parroquia San Lorenzo, Philpot
25 de abril	5 PM   Confirmación – Parroquia de San Pío X, Owensboro
26 de abril	1:30 PM   Confirmación – Parroquia San José, Mayfield
	5 PM   Confirmación – Parroquia San León, Murray
27 de abril	6 PM   Noche de agradecimiento para los líderes catequéticos y ministros de pastoral juvenil parroquiales – Centro Católico McRaith
29 de abril	10 AM   Misa escolar y conversaciones con los “Seniors” – Escuela Preparatoria Santa María, Paducah
	6:30 PM   Confirmación – Parroquia San Jerónimo, Fancy Farm
30 de abril	11:30 AM   Misa para “Hechos para la Misión” – Parroquia San Pío X, Owensboro
	6 PM tiempo del este   Confirmación – Parroquia Santos Ángeles Custodios, Irvington



RILEY GREIF | WKC

Una joven sirve como lectora durante la Misa dominical en el retiro Youth 2000 de la Universidad de Brescia el 15 de marzo de 2026.

## El retiro Youth 2000 celebra 29 años de encuentro con Cristo en la Eucaristía

POR EL PERSONAL DE WKC

Del 13 al 15 de marzo de 2026, adolescentes y jóvenes de toda la Diócesis de Owensboro se reunieron para asistir a un retiro juvenil favorito que se ha ofrecido cada año durante 29 años. El retiro, llamado Youth 2000 debido a su fundación cuando el mundo se acercaba al tercer milenio, se lleva a cabo en la Universidad de Brescia en Owensboro y

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está dirigido por los Frailes Franciscanos de la Renovación, gracias a los esfuerzos del Comité del Santuario Mariano de la diócesis y la Oficina de Ministerio con Adolescentes y Jóvenes Adultos. Con charlas, paneles de discusión, música, Misa, confesión y adoración, el evento Youth 2000 atrajo aproximadamente a 594 inscripciones este año. ■



RILEY GREIF | WKC

El Obispo William F. Medley imparte la homilía al celebrar la Misa dominical en el retiro Youth 2000 el 15 de marzo de 2026 en la Universidad de Brescia.



RILEY GREIF | WKC

El Santísimo Sacramento se expone en una custodia durante la Adoración en el retiro Youth 2000, que tuvo lugar este año del 13 al 15 de marzo de 2026.

## Vivir la fe: El co-coordinador de la Oficina de Culto percibe el “movimiento del Espíritu Santo” en el aumento de la asistencia al Rito de Elección

POR ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD, EL CATÓLICO DE KENTUCKY OCCIDENTAL

Con un total de 451 candidatos y catecúmenos que asistieron a los Ritos de Elección y Llamado a la Conversión Continua celebrados de la Diócesis de Owensboro, el Diácono Ken Bennett piensa que “algo está pasando”.

“La gente busca algo real, algo en lo que aferrarse”, dijo el Diácono Bennett, co-coordinador de la Oficina de Culto de la diócesis, afirmó que la asistencia había aumentado en aproximadamente un 65% este año, en comparación con 2025.

Este año, se celebró uno de los ritos el 15 de febrero en la Parroquia Santo Tomás Moro en Paducah, y dos más, por la tarde del 22 de febrero, en la Catedral de San Esteban en Owensboro.

El Diácono Bennett dijo que el año pasado asistieron un total de 271 candidatos y catecúmenos, en 2024 fueron 257 y en 2023 hubo un total de 196.

Añadió que estas cifras no reflejan el número total de personas que participan en los programas de RICA (Rito de la Iniciación Cristiana de Adultos) que serán recibidos en la Iglesia católica durante la Vigilia Pascual de este año. Explicó que algunas personas podrían optar por retirarse antes de la Vigilia Pascual, y otras, que si planean ser recibidos en la Iglesia, podrían no haber asistido a las celebraciones debido a conflictos de agenda.

El Diácono Bennett añadió que durante estos



RACHEL HALL | WKC

Individuos se paran durante el Rito de Elección y Llamado a la Conversión Continua celebrado en la Parroquia Santo Tomás Moro en Paducah el 15 de febrero de 2026.

tres ritos hubo un número significativo de personas procedentes de Latinoamérica y Myanmar. También observó que varias familias asistían juntas.

“Las cosas han estado muy agitadas (en la sociedad) durante los últimos años, y creo que, a pesar de lo que nos dicen sobre lo divididos que estamos, creo que la gente busca esa unidad, algo espiritual”, dijo el Diácono Bennett. “Están buscando algo en lo que creer”.

“Creo que las cosas suben y bajan”, dijo el Diácono Bennett, haciendo hincapié en que, durante este período de notable crecimiento, esto no garantiza que esta fase sea permanente.

Sin embargo, “la gente sabe que cuando las cosas se ponen difíciles o se sienten inseguros, la Iglesia es el lugar al que acudir”, dijo.

Elogió a las parroquias por acoger a todas las personas que buscan a Cristo en el transcurso de sus vidas.

“Nuestros párrocos están haciendo las cosas bien, nuestros programas de RICA están haciendo las cosas bien y la gente en las bancas de las iglesias están haciendo las cosas bien”, dijo. “Hay algo que atrae a la gente hacia nosotros, porque es una fe viva”. ■

## La respuesta de la Iglesia a las acusaciones contra Chávez tendrá un impacto de gran alcance or sobreviviente de abuso

LOS ÁNGELES (OSV News) ~ Las recién reveladas acusaciones de abuso sexual en torno al difunto líder de los derechos civiles César Chávez -dadas a conocer en una investigación publicada el 18 de marzo por The New York Times- han suscitado un llamado para que la Iglesia "honre nuestras historias", según declaró a OSV News un sobreviviente latino de abuso clerical. Dado que Chávez dejó una profunda huella en los esfuerzos de justicia social católica en los Estados Unidos -hablando abiertamente sobre su fe, colaborando con los obispos católicos de la nación e incluso siendo propuesto por algunos católicos como posible santo-, dicho llamado adquiere un significado aún más profundo, señalaron varios sobrevivientes. Los recientes informes sobre Chávez han resultado "profundamente perturbadores y dolorosos", afirmó Vince Pérez, un sobreviviente de abuso clerical que, durante su adolescencia, conoció a Chávez en varias ocasiones y lo admiraba. Pérez sostuvo que es "fundamental" que los líderes de la Iglesia y de la comunidad eviten minimizar o desviar la atención de las acusaciones formuladas contra Chávez. Otra sobreviviente de abuso clerical, Deborah Rodríguez -pediatra que se apoya en su fe católica para brindar apoyo a otros sobrevivientes a través de diversos ministerios-, declaró a OSV News que, a su juicio, la Iglesia Católica debe, en primer lugar, "reconocer que esto ha sucedido", especialmente "en comunidades como la mía, donde tenemos una comunidad predominantemente hispanohablante". Rodríguez añadió que los líderes pastorales deberían ofrecer recursos a los sobrevivientes de manera proactiva, demostrando así que "si necesitas buscar ayuda, la Iglesia es un lugar seguro para ello". ■

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CNS PHOTO/VATICAN MEDIA

Pope Leo XIV greets newlywed couples who came for a blessing at his weekly general audience in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Nov. 19, 2025.

## Pope Leo XIV calls bishops to Rome to discuss marriage and family in October

BY OSV NEWS

VATICAN CITY (OSV News) – Pope Leo XIV announced March 19 that he will convene the presidents of all bishops' conferences in Rome this October to deepen the Church's reflection on marriage and family in light of "Amoris Laetitia." The pope issued the invitation at the end of a message marking the 10th anniversary of the signing of "Amoris Laetitia," Pope Francis' post-synodal apostolic exhortation on the pastoral care of families published after the 2014 and 2015 Synods on the Family. "Our era is marked by rapid changes which make it necessary, even more than ten years ago, to give particular pastoral attention to families, to whom the Lord entrusts the task of participating in the Church's mission of proclaiming and witnessing to the Gospel," Pope Leo said. The pope said he is calling the bishops' to Rome "in an effort to proceed, in mutual listening, to a synodal discernment on the steps to be taken in order to proclaim the Gospel to families today, in light of Amoris Laetitia and taking into account what is currently being done in the local Churches." "I entrust this journey to the intercession of Saint Joseph, guardian of the Holy Family of Nazareth," Pope Leo said. ■