

# DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO

## 2025-2026 IMPACT REPORT

The Past Year in Review



# Welcome From the Bishop



RILEY GREIF | WKC

## *Where Do You Find Yourself in the Story of the Diocese of Owensboro?*

June 1, 2026

The word Gospel means “Good News.”

Matthew, Mark, Luke and John recorded the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But every generation must continue to tell the Good News of Jesus Christ.

We all know that when we tune into the news of the day, be that television, radio, newspapers, or social media, most of what we hear or read is anything but good news.

As Christians, followers of Jesus Christ, we must be proclaimers of Good News, and just as importantly be hearers of Good News. We must never allow the disappointing and the disheartening to define our world where we must see the grace of God manifest.

Last year as the Diocese of Owensboro presented its annual Impact Report, the worldwide Catholic Church had just received a new Holy Father, Pope Leo XIV. In the year that has passed we have grown accustomed to his graceful speech and genuine kindness.

Any themes of Good News that Pope Leo has presented have built upon those of his predecessors of recent decades. As he travels he visits places the world has so often forgotten, lands and peoples scarred by oppression, poverty, and neglect.

Pope Leo continues the challenges that Pope Francis presented to us that the Catholic Church would seek to care for the least among us. In our world we see so many forced to live in lands of war, and we see millions striving to find new homes as they leave behind persecution and oppression.

Our mission in the Diocese of Owensboro is to share the Good News of Jesus Christ by imitating the good works of Jesus Christ. Much has been written this year about the increase in adult converts in the Catholic Church in the United States, and our diocese shares in this exciting story.

Thank you to all who are active missionary disciples as catechists, lectors, extraordinary ministers of Holy Communion, those who in his past year visit the sick and the homebound, who carry the light of Christ forth from our parishes.

In this past year our Catholic Charities, our Office of Hispanic/Latino Ministry, and our parishes have been a haven for many of our immigrant and refugee families. Though we may all serve in different aspects of this mission, we can all take comfort that our Catholic Church community seeks to serve as Jesus did.

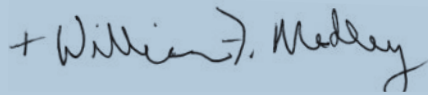
This 2025-2026 Impact Report of our local Church’s mission is a story of which we can

Welcome continued from page 2

all be proud. It is a story we are all called to join. Where do you find yourself in our story?

I am so proud of the Diocese of Owensboro and I thank God for our good and holy people. Be assured of my prayers for you and I kindly ask that you pray for me.

Sincerely yours in Christ's love,



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



THE WESTERN KENTUCKY  **Catholic**

Official newspaper of the Diocese of Owensboro  
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**Telephone** | (270) 683-1545

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**Publisher** | Bishop William F. Medley


**Editor** | Elizabeth Wong Barnstead

**Contributors** | Riley Greif, Rachel Hall

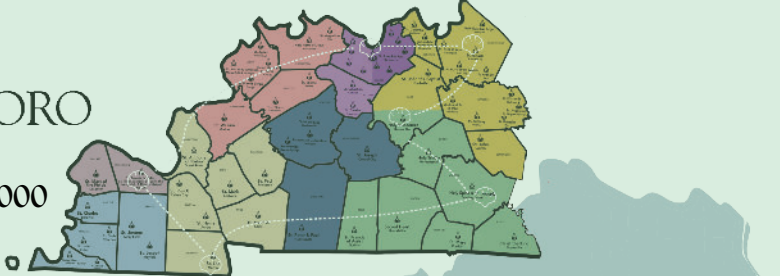
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Owensboro, KY 42301 phone: 270-683-1545




## Diocese of OWENSBORO




**Total Catholic Population: 51,000**

**78**  
Parishes 

**69** Diocesan  
Priests 

6 Religious Priests  
Serving Our  
Diocese


**95** Sisters 


43  
Permanent  
Deacons


7 Seminarians


8 FOCUS  
Missionaries


1,400 + Lay  
Ministers


**675** Infant  
Baptisms 

**830** First  
Communions 


797  
Confirmations 

201   
Marriages


**527**  
Deaths 

11,000   
Assisted Annually Through  
Catholic Charities

**42,000+** Served  
Annually


**17** Catholic  
schools 

**1,000+**  
Students

1 Catholic  
University 

2 Newman  
Centers

3 Chaplains



1 Youth Camp/  
Retreat center

**500** Campers

**Our Diocese at a glance**

**These statistics reflect the 2025 calendar year**

## Catholic Foundation of Western Kentucky

### *A Lasting Gift of Faith: The Power of Endowments*

For generations, our Catholic parishes, schools, and ministries have been a faithful presence in our lives – guiding us in faith, forming our children, and walking beside us through life’s joys and challenges. From the classrooms that shaped us to the pews where we encounter Christ, these blessings exist because of the generosity of those who came before us. Now, it is our turn.

An endowment is one of the most meaningful ways to ensure that the faith we cherish today continues to flourish for our children, grandchildren, and generations yet to come. Unlike a one-time gift, an endowment is designed to grow over time, providing lasting support to the parish, school, seminarian education, or ministry you hold dear. It becomes a living legacy – one that continues to give, year after year.

Imagine the impact your gift could have: supporting Catholic education, strengthening parish life, or helping young people encounter Christ at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and beyond. Your generosity today becomes a source of hope and stability for tomorrow. Endowments are truly a win-win. They offer meaningful tax benefits to you and your family, while also ensuring ongoing support for the ministries you love. More importantly, they reflect our call as faithful stewards – caring for the gifts God has entrusted to us and ensuring they continue to bear fruit. If you have ever wondered how you can make a lasting difference, this is a powerful and prayerful way to do so. It is not just a gift: it is a lasting legacy of faith and generosity.

I would be honored to visit your parish or school to share more about how endowments work and how simple it can be to begin. Please feel free to call or email me if you would like to schedule a visit or learn more. I can be reached at (270) 852-8348 or [valeria.vessels@pastoral.org](mailto:valeria.vessels@pastoral.org).

Valeria Vessels, Executive Director  
Catholic Foundation of Western Kentucky and Stewardship

### Endowment Account Balances as of June 30, 2025

<i>Account Name</i>	<i>Balance</i>
Annuities	804,809
Blessed Sacrament Chapel	29,753
Brady (Catholic Education)	128,425
Christ the King School	59,770
Christ the King, Madisonville	504,039
Catholic Education Fund	1,736,571
Gasper River Catholic Retreat Center	144,877
Holy Name School	2,637,611
General Diocesan Support	14,269,671
Immaculate Conception, Hawesville	58,805
Owensboro Catholic High School	8,399,058
OCHS Athletic Endowment	1,305,191
Owensboro Catholic High School	2,328,859
St. Alphonsus Cemetery	280,711
John Paul II Catholic School	387,435
St. Ann Cemetery Fund	188,877
St. Charles Cemetery, Bardwell	56,724
St. Charles, Livermore	82,249
St. Columba, Lewisport	60,430
St. Denis Cemetery	186,118
St. Edward	52,601
St. John Cemetery, Sunfish	340,929
St. Joseph School, Bowling Green	828,761
St. Joseph, Bowling Green	169,793
St. Joseph, Central City	362,321
,St. Mary, Franklin	44,944
St. Paul,	26,118

*Continues on page 5*

Endowment continued from page 4

Account Name	Balance
St. Peter of Alcantara	262,037
St. Pius Tenth, Owensboro	53,931
St. Romuald Cemetery, Hardinsburg	459,721
St. Romuald School, Hardinsburg	61,704
St. Sebastian Cemetery	13,010
St. Thomas More, Paducah	2,038,587
Sts. Peter & Paul, Hopkinsville	498,238
Anne Garnett Mem. Endowment	74,512
Holy Name Catholic Grade School	2,627,110
Holy Name Catholic Cemetery	1,287,958
Holy Name Catholic Church	1,287,962
..... <b>\$44,140,220.00</b>	



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**Board Members, Catholic Foundation of Western Kentucky**

- Bishop William F. Medley*
- Lonnie Crowdus, President*
- Julie Garvin, Vice President*
- Fr. Pat Reynolds, Vicar General*
- Tom Lilly, Secretary*

*Voting Board Members: Travis Girten, Scott McCain, Harold Staples, Al Thompson, Kenny Buckman, Amy Jackson, Harold Staples, Mark Thompson*

*All Major Funds are represented on the Board. For more information about the Foundation or its Board Members, call Valeria Vessels at (270) 852-8348.*



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# A Visible Sign of Gratitude for Years to Come: Announcing the Roncalli Home for Priests



PHOTOS COURTESY OF BILL BLINCOE



On January 6, 2026 Fr. Anthony Shonis tours the grounds with Bill Blincoe, project manager, of the site where the Roncalli Home is under construction.

BY VALERIA VESSELS

The Diocese of Owensboro is honored to announce the official name of its new senior priest apartments: the *Roncalli Home for Priests*. This name, chosen by Bishop William F. Medley and recently shared with the Priests' Council, carries both historical and spiritual significance for our diocesan family. The name "Roncalli" comes from the family name of Pope St. John XXIII – a beloved shepherd of the Church remembered for his warmth, humility and his genuine love for the priesthood. He convened the Second Vatican Council, calling the Church to renewal while remaining rooted in Christ's mission.

In a further tribute, the chapel within the first residence will be named the *Saint John XXIII Chapel*, providing a sacred space for prayer, reflection, and continued devotion for our senior priest. As additional buildings are added in the future, each chapel will carry its own unique name, further enriching the spiritual life of this growing community.

The Roncalli Home for Priests stands as more

than a residence: it is a visible sign of gratitude for the faithful service of our priests who have devoted their lives to the people of western Kentucky. After years of celebrating the sacraments, guiding parish communities, and walking with families through life's joys and sorrows, this home offers them dignity, comfort, and community in their senior years.

This milestone would not have been possible without the extraordinary generosity of our donors, the dedication of our committees, and the many individuals who have worked tirelessly over the years to bring this vision to life. From early planning conversations to construction progress, countless hands and hearts have contributed to this moment. We are deeply grateful to each person who believed in this mission and helped make it a reality. The home is bricked, under roof and continuing the interior work.

As we look ahead, the Roncalli Home for Priests will stand as a lasting testament to faith, stewardship, and love for those who have served so faithfully. It is a blessing for our diocese today and for generations to come. ■

Valeria Vessels is the Executive Director of the Catholic Foundation of Western Kentucky and the director of the Office of Stewardship and Development in the Diocese of Owensboro. She may be reached at [valeria.vessels@pastoral.org](mailto:valeria.vessels@pastoral.org).



The Campaign for Senior Priest Apartments  
DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO

## Roncalli Home Project Update (As of March 31, 2026)

### Funds Raised

Total Pledged	\$2,119,621
Parish Assessments Due	\$794,421
Less - Total Assessments Received	\$(79,019)
Less - Total Received	\$(1,309,958)
<b>Total Remaining to Collect</b>	<b>\$1,525,065</b>

### Expenses

Construction in Progress	\$880,388
Professional & Technical	\$63,222
Other Misc. Expense	\$5,445
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$949,055</b>

**Net Remaining Cash (Received less Expense)**  
**\$576,010**

## Behind the Scenes with the Office of Worship



### Glorifying God and Sanctifying Humanity

RILEY GREIF | WKC

BY DCN. KEN BENNETT, OFFICE OF WORSHIP

Did you know that in our diocese, the Rite of Election is not a single event?

To accommodate as many as possible, there are three celebrations each Lent: one at a parish in the western part of the diocese and two at the Cathedral. Preparation for the Rite begins 10 months in advance, with the identification of the host parish in the west, and continues as that parish prepares for the liturgy. Meanwhile, the Office of Worship collects the names of those who will participate in the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion from each parish and prepares binders containing scripts, roll calls, and prayers of petition, along with a worship aid and seating charts.

Meanwhile, we are preparing for the two celebrations at the Cathedral. Although the liturgy is the same, one is in English and the other is bilingual (English and Spanish). Once the Rite of Election is complete, a letter from Bishop Medley is

prepared and mailed to each of the Elect, including a personal invitation to the Chrism Mass.

The Chrism Mass is the largest diocesan liturgy, and preparation for next year's Chrism Mass begins as soon as this year's is complete. The Owensboro Sportscenter must be booked, and oils purchased. More than 300 oil bottles must be properly labeled, and 12 people are needed to fill them during the Chrism Mass.

Movers to transport items to and from the Sportscenter are booked months in advance and setup requires an entire day. Many other tasks are necessary, and none of this could be accomplished without many people from around the diocese serving in the liturgical ministries of lector, altar server, and hospitality, along with communion ushers, oil preppers, and those helping with setup, teardown, and transportation.

The Rite of Election and Chrism Mass are samplings of several liturgies the Office of Worship prepares throughout the year. Other major liturgies,

**OCIA Numbers Increase:** *The Office of Worship has observed more and more individuals entering the Church over the past few years. Please pray for all coming into full communion, that they may continue to follow God's voice as they live out their Catholic faith!*

#### 2026

Catechumens = 155  
Candidates = 296  
Total = 451

#### 2025

Catechumens = 94  
Candidates = 177  
Total = 271

#### 2024

Catechumens = 96  
Candidates = 161  
Total = 257

#### 2023

Catechumens = 67  
Candidates = 29  
Total = 196

*Continues on page 8*

*Office of Worship continued from page 7*

such as an altar dedication or ordination, also take place.

Our office always seeks to prepare a beautiful liturgy that brings the faithful into full and active participation through the Word of God, music, environment, hospitality, and special attention to the needs of a particular community, such as language.

Much of the work is coordinated with other parishes and offices, and most of it is behind the scenes, but it is more than mere tasks. In keeping with *Sacrosanctum Concilium* (Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy), the goal is the glorification of God and the sanctification of humanity. ■



RILEY GREIF | WKC

## The Mercy of the Church

BY LOUANNE SEIBERT, TRIBUNAL

One of the ways the Church addresses the needs of divorced Catholics and non-Catholics who wish to marry a Catholic is through the ministry offered by the diocesan Tribunal.

This ministry is designed to help individuals in the healing process by seeking clarification regarding the sacramental validity of a previous marriage. The Diocese of Owensboro’s Tribunal accepted 40 formal cases for the year 2025 and rendered 23 Definitive Sentences. There were six cases suspended either by the parties or the Tribunal for lack of participation.

In addition, seven Privilege of Faith and four Pauline Privileges were accepted with three Decisions being rendered. Six Ligamen (previous bond) cases were accepted, and Decisions were rendered for all. Two appeal cases were received from the Diocese of Covington Tribunal.

Positive feedback continued regarding the monthly “Tribunal Explains” series in *The Western Kentucky Catholic* and on social media, which educates the faithful on common misconceptions regarding the annulment process. A two-part training session on the annulment process was held for the current class of permanent deacons. To date in 2026, the Tribunal has accepted 26 new cases, and 41 cases remain in process from previous years. ■

*To learn more, contact [tribunal@pastoral.org](mailto:tribunal@pastoral.org).*



COURTESY OF FR. COREY BRUNS

## Letting Down Our Nets: Trusting the Lord to Send Our Diocese More Holy Vocations

BY FR. COREY D. BRUNS, OFFICE OF VOCATIONS

“Pray, hope, and don’t worry. Worry is useless. God is merciful and will hear your prayer” is a spiritual motto attributed to Padre Pio that has “unofficially” been the motto of the Office of Vocations this past year.

Statistically speaking, we as a diocese need to have a minimum of 14 men in seminary each year to maintain our current number of priests in active ministry. We started the fall semester off with the acceptance of three men to seminary, moving our numbers from four to seven – only half of the numbers the statistics say we need to be “healthy” vocationally-speaking. That’s where worry could have come into play, but with hope and trust in God’s mercy, we as a diocese have turned to the Lord more intentionally with prayer and sacrifice this year for an increase in good and holy vocations

to marriage, priesthood, and consecrated life – and God is answering our prayers.

The Lord of the Harvest is turning the worry into joy as we see more men have the courage to stand firm in hope and respond to the invitation of the Lord in their life and discern their vocation more intentionally. Twenty-one men participated in Come & See weekends to our seminaries, where they asked the question of God: “Are you calling me to be a priest?” Thirty college men joined the Office of Vocations at the SEEK Conference for a meal and visit with Bishop Medley as we seek to form relationships and begin the conversation of vocation in people’s lives.

We visited six of our schools for vocation visits and participated in three Newman Nights with our college students at Western Kentucky University and Murray State University. An average of 35 people gather weekly at Sts. Joseph & Paul Parish in Owensboro for Vocation Tuesday to simply pray

a Holy Hour and celebrate Mass as we intentionally ask the Lord to grant us many more holy vocations. Seven men will have begun and completed the application process for seminary for our diocese by the end of June, moving us from eight men in seminary formation to 15.

These numbers are inspiring and humbling as we continue to build a culture of vocations within our diocese, firmly rooted in prayer and relationship with the Lord and one another, full of hope in the future our merciful God is giving us in calling forth more shepherds for his Church – lacking in worry, because at the end of the day, worry is truly useless.

God is the captain of this ship and we are sailing to deeper waters to let down our nets for a catch! ■

*To learn more about discernment in the Diocese of Owensboro, check out the newly refreshed website:*  
**[owensborovocations.com](http://owensborovocations.com)**



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC

## Behind the Scenes with the Office of Music:

*Creating a Liturgy That is Prayerful, Unified, and Worthy of the Moment*



RILEY GREIF | WKC

BY HEATHER GREENE, OFFICE OF MUSIC

When the faithful gather for major diocesan celebrations such as the Chrism Mass and the Rite of Election and Call to Continuing Conversion, the beauty of the liturgy can feel effortless. In reality, there are months of preparation that help make that possible.

The work of the Office of Music usually begins four to five months in advance, starting with a careful look at the rituals and readings so that each musical choice reflects the meaning of the celebration. From there, music is located, ordered, and often adapted. Instrumentation is also thoughtfully considered. Some liturgies are best supported by brass and timpani, while others are better suited for strings or winds. In many cases, additional instrumental parts are arranged or even composed to fit the musicians who will be serving.

For large celebrations like the Chrism Mass, this preparation brings together about 24 to 25 musicians from across the diocese. Music is sent out well ahead of time so that when musicians gather, many of whom do not regularly perform together, they can focus not just on playing well, but on praying together.

This year's Chrism Mass included two premieres. "The Quiet Way," commissioned for the occasion and written by Matt Gray of Immaculate Parish in Owensboro, was inspired by the life of St. Francis of Assisi. "May We Be One," a communion hymn by Brett Ballard, longtime diocesan musician and recently retired professor from Brescia University, was also introduced. Being able to share the work of musicians from within our own diocese is always a special part of these celebrations.

At its heart, the work of the Office of Music is not simply about preparing music. It is about supporting the prayer of the Church. Much of this work happens quietly behind the scenes, but its purpose becomes clear when music helps bring people together and deepen the experience of worship. In the end, the goal is simple: to help create a liturgy that is prayerful, unified, and worthy of the moment. ■

# Jubilee Year: Communications and Hope

BY ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD, THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

So much has changed since we kicked off the Jubilee Year of Hope 2025.

On Dec. 24, 2024, Pope Francis was taken in a wheelchair to the Holy Door of St. Peter's Basilica at the Vatican, where he paused in prayer before knocking on the door, which was then opened to inaugurate the Holy Year 2025.

Neena Gaynor, in writing the first reflection of The Western Kentucky Catholic's yearlong Pilgrims of Hope blog series, commented that "... I feel the collective curiosity of the world waiting, wondering what the future holds."

We in the Office of Communications wondered what the future held in store, too, while we were commissioned to create printed materials and a webpage to help the faithful of the Diocese of Owensboro observe the Jubilee.

Bishop Medley had designated six pilgrimage sites throughout the diocese to be places of prayer and opportunities to obtain a plenary indulgence during the Year of Hope: St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro, St. Romuald Parish in Hardinsburg, Holy Redeemer Parish in Beaver Dam, the Diocesan Shrine of Mary at St. Joseph Parish in Bowling Green, St. Leo Parish in Murray, and St. Francis de Sales Parish in Paducah.



Through consultation with the Office of the Bishop and the Office of Worship, we designed a poster to distribute among the parishes with information about the Jubilee, as well as "passports" that pilgrims in our diocese could carry with them when they visited a pilgrimage site. We also designed the stamps unique to each site - which were made avail-

able for pilgrims to stamp their passports - as well as the prayer cards dedicated to all the pilgrimage sites. Lastly, our office created limited-edition tote bags featuring the names of the sites and the crest of the diocese and the Vatican's Jubilee logo.

We were thrilled when many diocesan pilgrims completed their visits to all six sites; after they sent in

*Continues on page 12*

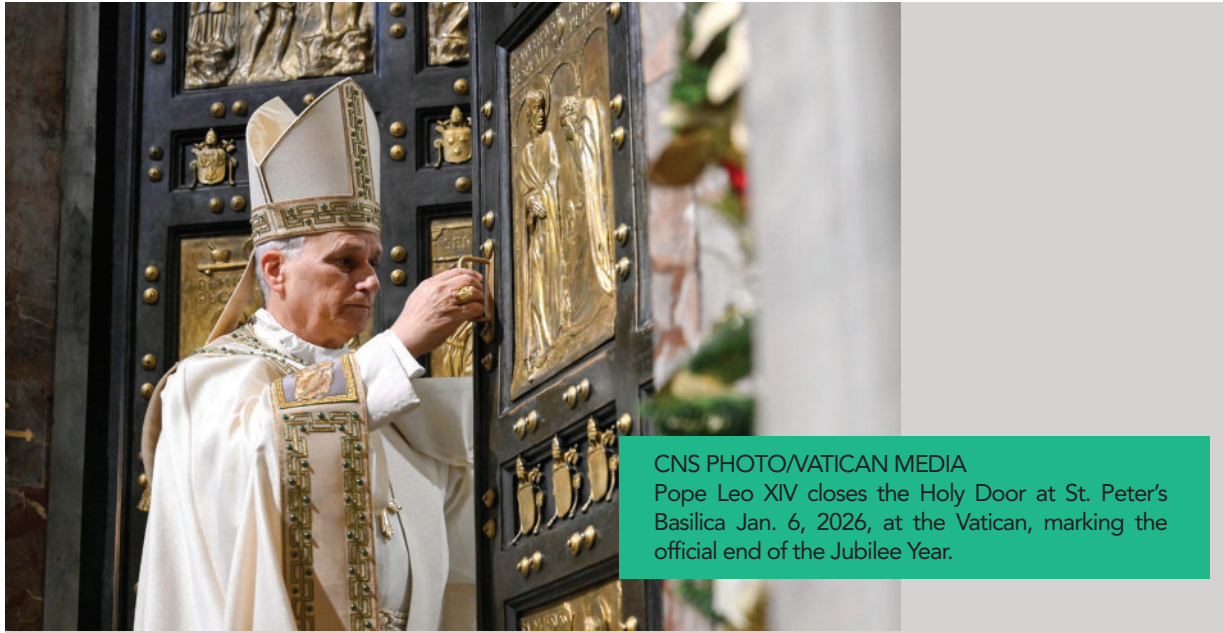
## Faith, Laughter, and Fellowship: Paducah Parishioner Thankful for Pilgrimage Journey with Friends

BY BRENDA RICHARDS-SPEES, ST. FRANCIS DE SALES PARISH

*Editor's note: Brenda Richards-Spees is a parishioner of St. Francis de Sales Parish in Paducah, and recently shared about her experience of making a pilgrimage to the six Jubilee of Hope sites throughout the Diocese of Owensboro.*

I really enjoyed making the pilgrimage with an awesome group of ladies. We even had one overnight adventure! Laura Gregory Shaw and I were the only ones able to make all six pilgrimages, but others were along for the ride. A longtime friend and former classmate who now lives in Owensboro met us on most pilgrimages too. We would catch up with her usually after we met at the pilgrimage parish. The car rides to the parishes were full of fun and lots of laughter and always accompanied by good food and fellowship. The support from each parish was very welcoming to their parish and community. I was especially grateful to talk to Fr. Chris Kight in Bowling Green because I was one of his teachers when he was little. I could rattle on for hours about what a wonderful experience this was! ■

*Jubilee continued from page 11*



CNS PHOTO/VATICAN MEDIA  
Pope Leo XIV closes the Holy Door at St. Peter's Basilica Jan. 6, 2026, at the Vatican, marking the official end of the Jubilee Year.

pictures of their stamped passports, we gifted them a Jubilee tote bag with a few goodies tucked inside.

Our primary focus in 2025 was on the Jubilee, but that didn't mean we overlooked our many other projects! Over the course of the year, we saw 739 new followers on the diocese's Facebook page, 392 new followers on our Instagram, and 112 new subscribers on our YouTube channel. We mailed the WKC to 20,000-plus recipients each month. We produced nine videos in English and nine in Spanish for the Office of Evangelization & Discipleship's "In the Word with Bishop Medley" small group video series.

In spring 2025, following the death of Pope Francis on Easter Monday, we kept the faithful updated and informed about what would happen next, such as the conclave and election of our next Holy Father. On May 8, the day that Pope Leo XIV was elected, our office coordinated a press conference that day with local media, providing Bishop Medley with the chance to speak to all people – not just those in our

pews – about the hopeful anticipation with our new pope from the United States.

That fall, digital media specialist Riley Greif, while covering our diocesan youths' attendance at the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis, was among the thousands watching a live, digital encounter with Pope Leo held in Lucas Oil Stadium.

The fact that the pope chose to interact digitally with the youth of the U.S., answering their genuine questions and sharing his thoughtful wisdom in real-time, was just the beginning of our 267th pontiff's support of evangelization through media. As he shared in a May 12, 2025, audience with representatives of the media: "Today, one of the most important challenges is to promote communication that can bring us out of the 'Tower of Babel' in which we sometimes find ourselves, out of the confusion of loveless languages that are often ideological or partisan. Therefore, your service, with the words you use

## Media Literacy to Help the Common Good

BY ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD, THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

In spring 2025, the Office of Communications was invited to speak before the Parish Catechetical Leaders (PCL) during their gathering at the McRaith Catholic Center. During our presentation, we discussed the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) and how to increase your media literacy. AI refers to the simulation of human intelligence in machines that are programmed to think and learn like a human would. However, with the world of AI comes the need for greater awareness of what is true or not. We showed the PCL participants several "deepfakes" (realistic-looking AI-generated photos), such as one that depicted Pope Francis in a luxury coat. We led participants in an exercise of cognitive reflection and rational thought, geared to helping them double-check an initial impulse, and engage in more careful calculation to ensure accuracy (such as not "liking" or sharing a news post on social media until you are sure it's true). The conversation continues to this day, and we are learning more ourselves as Pope Leo XIV leads the way.

If you'd like to discuss AI ethics or have questions about how to become more media literate in your own parish or school community, please contact [communications@pastoral.org](mailto:communications@pastoral.org). ■

*Continues on page 13*

*Jubilee continued from page 12*

and the style you adopt, is crucial.”

The Jubilee of Hope concluded on Dec. 28, 2025, but we will continue to follow the Holy Father’s call to move forward, using our gifts and tools of communication, into a hope-filled future. ■

*The Office of Communications is made up of Rachel Hall, communications director; of Elizabeth Wong Barnstead, editor of The Western Kentucky Catholic; and Riley Greif, digital media specialist.*



**RILEY GREIF | WKC**  
Parishioners of Holy Spirit in Bowling Green make a jubilee pilgrimage to St. Stephen Cathedral and experience a tour on Sept. 30, 2025.

## Office of Communications

Western Kentucky Catholic Recipients **20,000+**  
In the Know Newsletter Subscribers **5,300+**

YouTube: Diocese of Owensboro  
**@dioceseofowensboro7623**



Websites: **4**  
Site Visits

owensborodiocese.org **245,00**  
owensborovocations.com (New in 2026) **700**  
cleanheartinitiative.org **12,000**  
westernkycatholic.com **59,000**



New Subscribers **112**

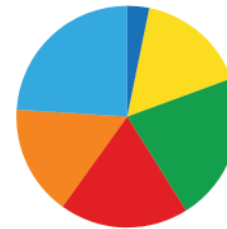


New YouTube Videos **48**



Top Video Views **3,810**

### Facebook Demographics



Age 18-24 **3.2%**  
Age 25-34 **16.2%**  
Age 35-44 **21.7%**  
Age 45-54 **18.8%**  
Age 55-64 **16.1%**  
Age 65+ **24%**

### Facebook Page

New Followers **739**  
Total Followers **7,600**

#### Top Post

Views **52,669**  
Interactions **155**  
Shares **188**

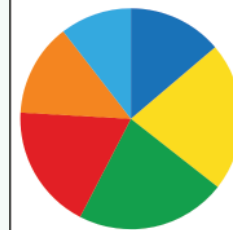
### Instagram Page

New Followers **392**  
Total Followers **2,625**

#### Top Post

Views **4,100**  
Likes **162**  
Shares **4**

### Instagram Demographics



Age 18-24 **13.8%**  
Age 25-34 **21.8%**  
Age 35-44 **22%**  
Age 45-54 **18.3%**  
Age 55-64 **13.6%**  
Age 65+ **10.5%**

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**[owensborodiocese.org/e-newsletter/](https://owensborodiocese.org/e-newsletter/)**

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## How Gasper River Changed My Faith: A Testimony From a Camper

BY CECILIA EBELHAR, SPECIAL TO THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

*A note from Ben Warrell, director: We received this essay from a St. Joseph Catholic School student about her experiences at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp. The Holy Spirit is doing amazing things through the ministry at camp. We cannot express enough how much we appreciate all those who support and pray for our diocesan camp. Because you pray, because you give, young people like Cecilia are encountering the risen Jesus in beautiful ways and living out their faith once they leave camp.*

Can one week really change your life?

For me, the answer is yes. Ever since I was born, my Catholic faith has always been a big part of my life. My parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and extended family are all Catholic. My family has always been present at 9 a.m. Mass every Sunday, no matter what, and if we're sick we watch livestream Mass at home. I go to a Catholic school, and every night my family prays together. I see my godparents often, and on Easter Sunday I go to church with my cousins, grandparents, aunts and uncles.

Despite all of this, as a younger kid I never really

had a personal relationship with God. I always heard my older cousins talk about a summer church camp called Gasper River, and they always tried to convince me to go. I had never been away from home for a week with people I didn't know, so I was hesitant. Finally, they persuaded me to try it, and during the summer I was going into fifth grade, I went for the first time.

When I arrived at Gasper on a hot Sunday in June, I was pretty nervous. I had a general idea of what to expect because of what my cousins had told me, but I had no idea how much my faith life would be changed by the end of the week. I was relieved when I saw several of my friends were there too, and they were in the same cabin as me. Throughout the next few days, I began to see why my cousins loved Gasper River so much. I started out nervous to meet new people and be in an unfamiliar environment, but almost immediately I felt relaxed around all the kids. Everyone shared the same beliefs as me, and they were very kind and fun to be around. I enjoyed the outdoor activities a lot, while at the same time learning so much about my faith. However I had no idea how much my life would really be changed until two days before the end of camp.

Two days before the end of camp, we were



COURTESY OF GASPER RIVER Youth from Holy Spirit Parish in Bowling Green are seen attending Quest 1 Camp in summer 2025. Cecilia Ebelhar is second from the left.

### Making a Difference Through Giving

**Several donors allowed us to purchase a new ATV for camp**

**A new Goalrilla Basketball Goal, new life jackets, new athletic balls and lots of needed office supplies were donated from our wishlist**

**We received a new and much needed 14 passenger van from Sts. Joseph and Paul in Owensboro that will greatly impact the ministry at camp and during retreat season.**

**We have also received almost \$10,000 in donations for Knights of Columb**

*Continues on page 15*

*Gasper continued from page 14*



COURTESY OF GASPER RIVER Youth from Holy Spirit Parish in Bowling Green are seen attending Quest 1 Camp in summer 2025. Cecilia Ebelhar is second from the left.

not just another fish in the sea; Jesus loves me and He sees me. This summer will be my fifth summer going to camp, and every time I go I leave having a better relationship with Jesus and my faith.

At Gasper River, everything we do points to Jesus.

After we finish any outdoor activity (zipline, river, giant swing, rappelling, low elements, and other things), we talk about how it relates to our faith life and our relationship with God. We have daily Mass, and we always have a day for confession and

going to have Eucharistic Adoration. I had been to Adoration many times in my life, but never at camp, so I didn't quite know what to expect. We walked into the cabin, and our counselors gave us a short talk about the meaning of Adoration, then the priest brought out the monstrance with the Eucharist. Within a few minutes of staring at the Eucharist on the altar, I felt a powerful realization that that is Jesus sitting up there on the altar, and He loves me. It is really Jesus up there, I thought. He died for me. He loves me even though I have sinned so much. Nothing else matters, He is the only thing in the world that matters. As I was sitting there on the floor, I finally felt the power of Jesus' love. And I started crying. I didn't quite know why, I just had so much emotion because even though I had been to Adoration many times before, it finally hit me that it is really Jesus present in the room with us. I realized I wasn't the only one filled with emotion. Almost every kid in the room was crying.

Every year, there is a different theme for summer camp that we learn about and discuss all week. My first year, the theme was: He came for me. It was about the woman at the well and how Jesus came just for her. In a way, I saw myself in her. It helped me realize that I'm

Adoration. We also do prayer tracks, where we learn different forms of prayer and how to use them, and right after we get to camp we form small groups. You go to all activities with your small group, and have Bible studies and discussions led by a counselor. All the counselors at camp are always so kind and fun to be around, and they want to help you grow in your faith.

As you can see, Gasper River has changed my perspective on my faith so much since the first time I went. I learned how joyful it is to be Catholic, how valuable the Eucharist is in my faith life, and how to be a follower of Christ. It taught me that being



Catholic isn't just going to Mass every Sunday; it's loving Jesus and having a relationship with Him.

So if you're like I was in fourth grade, being Catholic but not fully knowing Jesus, I would encourage you to go to Gasper River this summer, and see how you can be changed by Jesus. ■

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

*We had so much generosity and support from so many this year!*

**4 Volunteer Teams = 1 Refreshed Camp!**

**2 new staircases built for improved river and zipline safety.**

**1 new volleyball court upgrade.**

**100% of program areas beautified with fresh paint, gardening, and mulch.**




*Save The Date*

**Championing the Faith Pilgrimage to Chicago and Wisconsin with Chaplain, Fr. Carl McCarthy**  
**August 30 - September 4, 2026**



**HIGHLIGHTS:**

- National Shrine of Our Lady of Champion
- Holy Name Cathedral
- National Shrine of Saint Jude
- Childhood home of Pope Leo
- Catholic History and Inspiration of the Upper Midwest
- Daily Mass
- Daily Reflective Prayer time
- Spiritual Direction & Much More!

**For complete details & pricing visit:**  
[www.faithintravel.com/trips](http://www.faithintravel.com/trips)  
or call RoseMary at  
**(270) 952-2911**

# Answering God's Call Through the Disciples Response Fund

BY VALERIA VESSELS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE CATHOLIC FOUNDATION WESTERN KENTUCKY AND THE OFFICE OF STEWARDSHIP & DEVELOPMENT


The generosity of our faithful donors through the Disciples Response Fund continues to be a beautiful witness of faith, love, and stewardship across western Kentucky. This year, we were blessed by the support of 1,850 generous donors who pledged a total of \$419,314.35 to help carry out the mission of the Church. Through your prayers, sacrifices, and financial support, countless lives are being touched every day. Your gifts help provide opportunities for our youth to encounter Christ at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center, support the education and formation of our seminarians, and strengthen ministries that guide individuals and families deeper into their faith journey.

Because of your generosity, important ministries continue to flourish throughout the Diocese of Owensboro. The Sophia Awards celebration, programs for marriage preparation, and supporting parishes through grant application assistance, along with events for religious education, evangelization, and youth ministry, are helping strengthen our parishes and communities each day.

One of the greatest blessings we have witnessed this year is the growth in those discerning vocations to the priesthood. The diocese is set to double the number of men answering God's call to serve his people. With this incredible blessing also comes a significant financial responsibility, as the cost of seminarian education for the coming year has risen to nearly \$975,000. While the diocese remains committed to supporting these young men, the Disciples Response Fund helps provide important assistance in forming the next generation of faithful shepherds for our Church.

The Holy Spirit continues to guide and inspire the hearts of our faithful donors, calling each of us to share our blessings for the good of God's Church. Through your love for the Catholic faith and your generous spirit, you are helping ensure that our parishes, schools, and ministries remain strong for future generations.


Thank you for being a part of carrying out the mission of Jesus Christ throughout the Diocese of Owensboro. Your faithful support of the Disciples Response Fund is truly making a lasting and meaningful difference in the lives of others. ■



**Disciples Response Fund**

*These contributions inspire, educate and provide vital resources. Extending compassionate care to the poor and marginalized in our communities, your generosity helps us witness Christ and carry out His mission.*

**\$419,314 Raised**

**1,850 Donors** 

# Responsibly and Efficiently Supporting Our Local Church

BY TOM LILLY, CHANCELLOR



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC

Numbers on a piece of paper never fully reflect the effort, prayer and humanity behind serving the Church and the people of western Kentucky. The figures associated with the diocesan budget represent another year of providing important resources to parishes, schools and ministries that serve more than 20,000 Catholic families across the Diocese of Owensboro.

These financial numbers are reviewed annually by the Diocesan Finance Council and are subject to an independent annual audit. The diocesan finance team manages hundreds of accounts, records detailed designations, and provides education and guidance to parishes and schools regarding accounting practices. Their work helps ensure that diocesan resources are administered efficiently and responsibly.

These dollars also support a growing number

of seminarians, provide services to the homeless, strengthen marriages and families, and assist parishes and schools in their efforts of education and evangelization.

The largest source of revenue in the diocese’s \$10.2 million budget is the \$3.7 million generated through a cathedraticum, or parish assessment. Only about 50% of the money generated throughout the diocese is considered “assessable,” and that percentage has remained unchanged for the past seven years. The diocese is somewhat unique in that it does not assess contributions designated for Catholic schools or religious education programs. In addition, other Catholic ministries, including schools, are not charged a cathedraticum.

The diocese also generated \$2.5 million through its investment portfolio and received \$2.7 million in contributions, bequests and grants.

The seminarian budget may more than triple this coming year due to the increasing number of young men studying for the priesthood. While expenses are approaching \$1 million, diocesan leaders view this growth as encouraging news for the future of the Church.

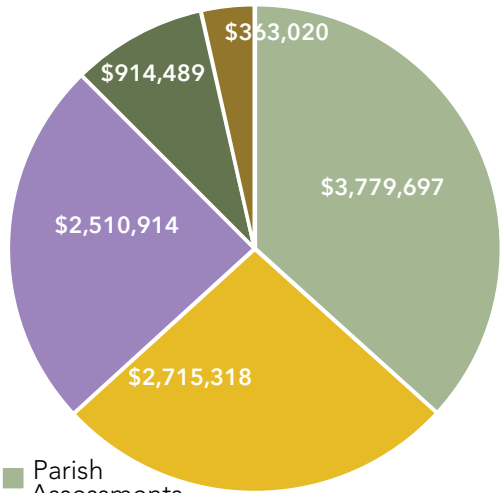
Last year the diocese subsidized employee benefits by \$1 million to offset the cost of healthcare. Nearly \$2 million in disaster relief funding represents continued partnerships with other relief organizations to build homes for families affected by floods and tornadoes throughout the region. The diocese also subsidizes the work of Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center, where several hundred children are served each year.

Ultimately, these funds provide fuel for a mission rooted in serving Jesus Christ. ■

*Here are some of the many mission and vocation collections the diocese coordinates to support ministries near and far. God works powerfully through our generosity!*

\$48,412	Retired Religious	\$28,092	Peter’s Pence	\$18,925
CRS & Rice Bowl	\$46,291	\$30,345	Home Missions	\$16,919
Mandeville Jamacia	Brescia	Seminarian Fund		
\$49,782				
..... St Benedict’s	\$310,529	..... Hurricane Relief	\$191,937	

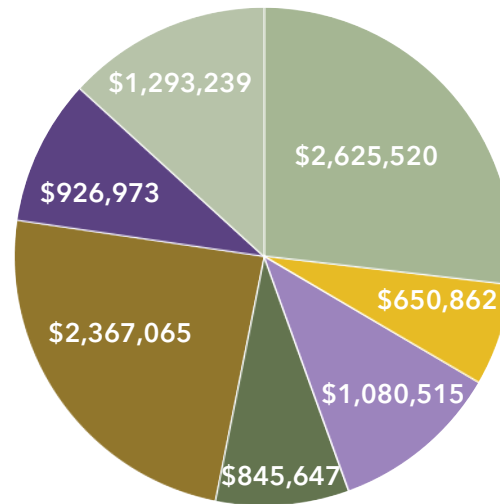
### Operating Income Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2025



- Parish Assessments
- Contributions, Bequests & Grants
- Investment Income
- Program & Service Fee Income
- Other

Asset Type	Amount
Parish Assessments	\$ 3,779,697
Contributions, Bequests & Grants	\$ 2,715,318
Investment Income	\$ 2,510,914
Program & Service Fee Income	\$ 914,489
Other	\$ 363,020

### Operating Expenses by Ministry Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 2025



Asset Type	Amount
Ministry & Administrative Support	\$ 2,625,520
Faith Formation	\$ 650,862
Evangelization	\$ 1,080,515
Vocations	\$ 845,647
Parish Grants & Charitable Works	\$ 2,367,065
Youth, Young Adult & Campus Ministry	\$ 926,973
Disaster Relief	\$ 1,293,239

### Operating Expenses by Ministry

- Ministry & Administrative Support
  - Bishop
  - Review Board
  - Chancellor
  - Finance
  - HR
  - McRaith Catholic Center
  - Diocesan Properties
  - Technology
- Faith Formation
  - Faith Formation
  - Catholic Schools Office
  - Continuing Education of Priests
- Evangelization
  - Evangelization
  - Communications
  - Worship
  - Music
  - Marriage & Family Life
- Vocations
  - Seminarians
  - International Priest
  - Diaconate Programs
- Parish Grants & Charitable Works
  - Stewardship
  - Annual Appeal
  - Catholic Charities
  - Hispanic Ministry
  - Black Catholic Ministry
  - St. Benedict's and Other Entities
- Youth, Young Adult & Campus Ministry
  - Safe Environment
  - Campus Ministry
  - Youth Ministry
  - Marian Shrine (Youth 2000)
- Disaster Relief
  - Tornado Relief
  - Flood Relief

As a part of the Diocese of Owensboro's ongoing commitment to communication and accountability, this report presents a brief summary of the financial operations of the Chancery for fiscal year ended June 30, 2025. The information presented has been derived from the audited financial statements and does not include activities of parishes, missions, and schools of the Diocese. The complete audited financial statements are available for public inspection at [www.owensborodiocese.org](http://www.owensborodiocese.org).

## Educator of the Year's Catholic School Experiences 'Foundational' to Her Faith

BY KILEY LEONARD, ST. JOSEPH INTERPAROCHIAL SCHOOL

*Editor's note: On July 25, 2025, Kiley Leonard, middle school language arts teacher serving St. Joseph Interparochial School in Bowling Green, was presented with the Outstanding Catholic School Educator of the Year Award during the annual Celebration of Catholic Schools. We caught up with her recently, and hope you enjoy this interview!*

*How long have you been a teacher?*

I have been teaching for 18 years.

*What is your favorite aspect of being a middle school language arts teacher at St. Joseph?*

I love the creative freedom that comes with being a language arts teacher. Over the years, I have been able to curate a curriculum that I sincerely enjoy teaching. More than anything, my favorite aspect of my job is reading a piece of writing that a student is proud to submit or sharing in the love of a book together.

*What about your students inspires you and gives you hope for the future?*

The students I have encountered over the years have each embodied something special. They give me hope for our future because so many of them are resilient, generous, and sincere. Year after year I work with students who give their very best, who share their faith, and who take care of each other.


*How has being a Catholic educator helped you grow in your own faith?*

I am fortunate to have spent my entire career in education in Catholic schools. My years as both a student and a teacher have been foundational in my Catholic faith. I value the opportunity to pray for and with my students, and they have taught me so much in return about their trust in God. ■



RACHEL HALL | WKC


Kiley Leonard receives the 2025 Educator of the Year award from superintendent David Kessler in July 2025.



**Summer of 2025** Diocese  
Catholic Schools Food Service

**41 Summer Feeding Sites**

Breakfast – 35,045	⋮	<b>78,673</b>
Lunch – 38,497	⋮	<b>Total meals</b>
Supper – 5,131	⋮	<b>served</b>



These meals were served across Western Kentucky, in multiple counties where we operate schools under the National School Lunch and Summer Feeding Program.

**17 Schools**

**3 High Schools**

**14 Grade Schools**

**21.4 Average 2025 ACT**

**320 Teachers**

**3,694 Students**

**394 Minority | 761 Non-Catholic**

*"I am fortunate to have spent my entire career in education in Catholic schools. My years as both a student and a teacher have been foundational in my Catholic faith. I value the opportunity to pray for and with my students, and they have taught me so much in return about their trust in God."*

-Kiley Leonard, middle school language arts teacher serving St. Joseph Interparochial School in Bowling Green



RACHEL HALL | WKC

Charlotte Conkright reads at the Ash Wednesday Mass for Owensboro Catholic 4-6 Campus at Blessed Mother Parish in Owensboro on March 5, 2025. Catholic schools engage with the liturgical year to help students enter fully into the Church's life, year-round.



RACHEL HALL | WKC

The annual Celebration of Catholic Schools took place in Madsionville at Christ the King on July 25, 2025 where teachers from all over the diocese come together to celebrate and prepare for a new school year.



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC

Bishop William F. Medley greets a student and principal Stephanie Blankenberger from Sts. Peter and Paul School in Hopkinsville at the Diocese of Owensboro's Rainbow Mass in 2024. The Mass takes place every other year and returns Sept. 16, 2026.

**Want to learn more about Catholic education in the Diocese of Owensboro?  
Check out: [owensborodiocese.org/catholic-schools/](https://owensborodiocese.org/catholic-schools/)**

## Increasing Zeal in the Service of God By Preserving Our History

BY EDWARD WILSON, ARCHIVES

*"The past of the Church in our State had been an era of true christian [sic] heroism...if faithfully chronicled and set before the eyes of their successors and descendants, [it] would furnish both with motives for increased zeal in the service of God."* -Benedict J. Webb, *The Centenary of Catholicity in Kentucky*, 1884.

In the past 12 months, the Diocese of Owensboro's archives has worked 222 requests from the community and 107 photographs have been sent out for photograph request. No request is too small or too large.

Fulfilling a request can mean manually searching tens of thousands of records or it can mean simply chatting about the history of your parish. We do each with a passion for our past. Daily, we assist priests, vowed religious, parish staff and parishioners. We provide blueprints for construction projects, find unknown

**Continues on page 21**

Archives continued from page 20



sacramental information, compile exhaustive lists for parish histories and almost anything an inquiring Catholic can dream up.

The aforementioned tasks are only the community actions of the archives; they do not even speak to our preservation work. Each year we ingest and process tens of thousands of documents. We oversee the preservation of hundreds of thousands of documents, tens of thousands of photographs and copious amounts of media including newspapers, reel to reel tapes, VHSs, DVDs, CDs, cassette tapes, microfilm, and much more.

We also produce a monthly article for *The Western Kentucky Catholic* to both entertain and connect our community to our past. Just as sure as our predecessors advocate for us from Heaven, their earthly toil guides us from the archives. ■

COURTESY OF ARCHIVES

Shown are several items in the Diocese of Owensboro's archives: A painting of Bishop Francis R. Cotton; a photo of the first novices of Mount Saint Joseph; the chalice of Fr. Edward Fitzgerald; and an early crucifix.

## Committing to Creating Safe Spaces Within Our Church

BY JANICE HENDRICKS, OFFICE OF SAFE ENVIRONMENT

As the Safe Environment Coordinator for Diocese of Owensboro, I am greatly blessed to walk alongside the many dedicated individuals who serve across the 96 locations entrusted to our care. In each place the mission of Christ is lived out in quiet, faithful and life-giving ways. Serving the churches, schools, shelters, sisters and priests is not just a responsibility; rather it is a ministry of trust, compassion, and faith.

Each April, we make this ministry more visible within our communities. Pinwheels and signs placed at our schools and churches serve as gentle yet important reminders of our shared call to protect children from abuse. We gather in prayer for survivors within the Church, and ecumenically as well, embracing all who have suffered from sexual abuse. This time of prayer is both peaceful and profound, as we entrust to God those who carry deep wounds, asking for healing, comfort, and hope. Through these moments, and through reflections shared in *The Western Kentucky Catholic*, the light of this ministry is brought more fully into view.

The work continues throughout the year, often unseen, school leaders, employees, volunteers, and ministry coordinators continue this mission with quiet faithfulness. United in purpose, we share this commitment to creating a safe space, where faith can grow and all people are safe. Together we continue this ministry to make a difference in our diocese and in our Holy Catholic Church. ■

### Statistics from CMGconnect, our training and background check program:

Active Priests, Sisters, Employees & Volunteers plus others: 5,693

Active Background Checks Completed: 6,821

Background checks manually entered: 2,118

Training completed: 11,165

RACHEL HALL | WKC

## Lives Renewed: *How the Office of Faith Formation Helps to Form and Accompany*

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

Over the past year, the diocesan Office of Faith Formation has embraced its mission with renewed purpose, fostering a culture of discipleship and ongoing conversion throughout the local Church.

Through dynamic support of parish leaders, catechists, and clergy, engaging formation opportunities, and comprehensive catechist development, the office has strengthened the spiritual life of faith communities across the diocese. From leading retreats that inspire both youth and adults, to accompanying those seeking full communion with the Church, the mission remains clear: to form and accompany.

A highlight of this work is our office's ongoing commitment to collaboration and support. Through regular gatherings, training sessions, and formation days, those serving in ministry are equipped both spiritually and professionally, ensuring that catechetical efforts remain faithful to Catholic teaching while responsive to pastoral needs. This shared work fosters unity, encouragement, and a deeper sense of mission across the diocese.

Looking back, the Office of Faith Formation celebrates not simply programs offered, but lives renewed – individuals strengthened in faith and equipped to live as missionary disciples. This year stands as a testament to what hope in Christ and a commitment to formation can accomplish within our diocesan community. ■



COURTESY OF JENNIFER DANHAUER



## Catholic Leaders Grow in Virtue Through Diocesan Certification Program

Growing Catholic Leaders is a transformational leadership initiative designed to equip leaders across the Diocese of Owensboro with the knowledge, skills, and spiritual foundation necessary to lead with integrity, wisdom, and faith. During the 2025-2026 year, Dr. Jason Winkle, founder of Serviam Leadership Group, led the nine-month Diocesan Leadership Academy Certificate Program on the campus of Brescia University.

Created by Dr. Winkle in partnership with diocesan leadership, the academy was rooted in Sacred Scripture, Church teaching, and virtue-centric leadership principles. Through a dynamic and engaging curriculum, participants explored topics such as communication, rapport-building, decision-making, emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, organizational culture, and servant leadership through a distinctly Catholic lens.

The program emphasized not only practical leadership skills, but also the deeper moral, spiritual, and anthropological foundations necessary for authentic Christian leadership.

Representing parishes, schools, and diocesan organizations across western Kentucky, 30 participants engaged in meaningful dialogue, collaborative learning, case studies, and personal reflection designed to strengthen their capacity to lead faithfully within the Church and their communities. ■

## Belonging, Supporting, and Loving: Foster/ Adoption Support Ministry Flourishes Across Diocese



RACHEL HALL | WKC

A Springs of Love picnic is held in September 2025.

*A note from Danny May, director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life:*

*Katie Battle, a parishioner of Christ the King in Madisonville, shares about one of the most impactful stories of the year that we've seen in our office. To learn more, visit <https://owensborodiocese.org/adoption-support>.*

Did you know there are nearly 9,000 children in foster care in Kentucky? Foster and adoptive parents open their hearts and homes to these children, but they cannot walk this path alone. They need encouragement, prayer, and practical support from their communities. This is where Springs of Love Catholic foster and adoption support ministry is so helpful.

Springs of Love recently began in the Diocese of Owensboro, starting with a Mass and picnic in September 2025, out of which three local chapters were formed. The ministry accompanies couples discerning foster care or adoption, supports families already on this journey, and connects them with parishioners who want to help.

“In less than a year, I’ve been filled with hope watching this community grow across the diocese,” said Christ the King parishioner and chapter coordinator, Katie Battle. “What amazes me most is how that support is coming from so many different places, as people continue to find ways to help. The Knights of Columbus in Madisonville and Bowling Green have been incredible in supporting events and raising awareness, and now a parish men’s group in Owensboro offered support for Foster Care Awareness Month in May. Through the support from the Office of Marriage and Family, we’ve been able to stay connected with families and share resources like the ‘Building Belonging’ small group series for foster and adoptive parents.” ■

## ‘The Little Nudge I Needed’ – How My Small Group Helped Deepen My Faith

*A note from Dr. Jeff Andrini, director of the Office of Evangelization and Discipleship:*

*Here is one of many stories of faith and community growth through our Acts 2:42 Small Groups. The goal of our office is to have at least one small group in each of our 78 parishes and to keep providing excellent resources to make these groups grow and flourish! Contact [jeff.andrini@pastoral.org](mailto:jeff.andrini@pastoral.org) to get involved.*

BY MARY KELLER, ST. PETER OF ALCANTARA  
PARISH, STANLEY

Three years ago, I saw in my church bulletin that sign-ups would be held for a group called Acts 2:42. Although I knew nothing about what this entailed, I would sign up and if I didn’t like it, I would turn in my book and not attend the meetings again. Yes,

that was three years ago and we are still meeting monthly!

I just want to share how meaningful our Acts 2:42 group is. It is more than just a time to read Scripture – it is a place where genuine friendships are formed and where we grow together in faith. Each time we gather, we learn not only from the Word, but also from one another. Our group is also a source of encouragement, in both good times and challenging

times. We support each other, pray for one another and remind each other that we are not alone – that Christ is always our center. Most importantly, it has helped us carry our faith into our everyday lives, guiding how we think, act, and care for others.

My faith has truly deepened and I am so happy that I attended that first meeting. God gave me that little nudge that I needed. ■



## Campus Ministry Woven into Students' Daily Lives by 'Ministry of Presence'

BY CHARLIE HARDESTY, OFFICE OF YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

Across the Diocese of Owensboro, campus ministry is thriving and transforming lives through presence, community, and encounter with Christ.

At Brescia University in Owensboro, ministry is woven into the daily rhythm of student life. This means it is common to see chaplain Fr. Mike Williams and director of campus ministry Sr. Pam Mueller, OSU, at student life events while also accompanying students and offering consistent opportunities for Mass, Adoration, and service. This ministry of presence builds trust and opens doors for deeper spiritual growth with the students they encounter daily.

At Western Kentucky University's St. Thomas Aquinas Newman Center in Bowling Green, chaplain Fr. Jason McClure has hired Katie Bickers as a full-time campus minister to serve alongside the mission team from FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students). This year more than 100 students actively participated in the Newman Center, with 10 entering full communion with the Church. Katie said: "Seeing these students choosing to live their faith fully alive in the college world is one of the most encouraging and inspiring experiences we get to



PHOTOS COURTESY OF CAMPUS MINISTRIES

## Campus and Young Adults in 2025

Around 100 students from WKU, Murray State, and Brescia attended the SEEK Conference in January

WKU and Murray State came together for a



10 young adults participated in the spring or fall Journey Hike Retreat

BG Catholic, OBKY Catholic, & Paducah-Lakes Area Catholic Young Adults offer regular events



witness each day here at WKU’s Newman Center.”

Meanwhile, at Murray State University in Murray, Philomena Hempel shifted from part-time to full-time campus minister this year to collaborate with the mission team from FOCUS and they have seen a surge of engagement which has created a dynamic culture of discipleship. With 22 weekly Bible studies and over 100 consistent participants, students are leading, inviting, and growing together. They were excited to welcome nine students into the Church, including one who encountered Christianity for the first time through a peer’s invitation. Philomena added, “The students are thirsty to learn more, and are asking about further opportunities for formation, service, and meaningful time to come together as a community.”

As a diocese, we support these ministries through funding these campus ministry efforts and the work of FOCUS each year. This is no small investment, but certainly one that yields incredible fruit.

These ministries reveal a powerful truth: when young adults are invited into authentic community and sacramental life, they respond with openness, leadership, and a deep desire to follow Christ. ■

Please pray for our campus ministry efforts and if you are interested in supporting any or all these campus ministry efforts more intentionally, please consider giving via the information below.

Campus Ministry at  
Brescia University: .  
Donations earmarked to  
“Campus Ministry.”



St. Thomas Aquinas  
Newman Center at  
WKU:



Newman Center  
at Murray State  
University:



## Youth in 2025

4 youth ministry leaders attended ProjectYM’s Thriveanooga Formation.

11 youth ministry leaders attended YM Overnight Retreat and Formation

49 youth & adults participated in the seventh Lazarus Retreat



260 Youth and  
Adults attended  
the National  
Catholic Youth  
Conference

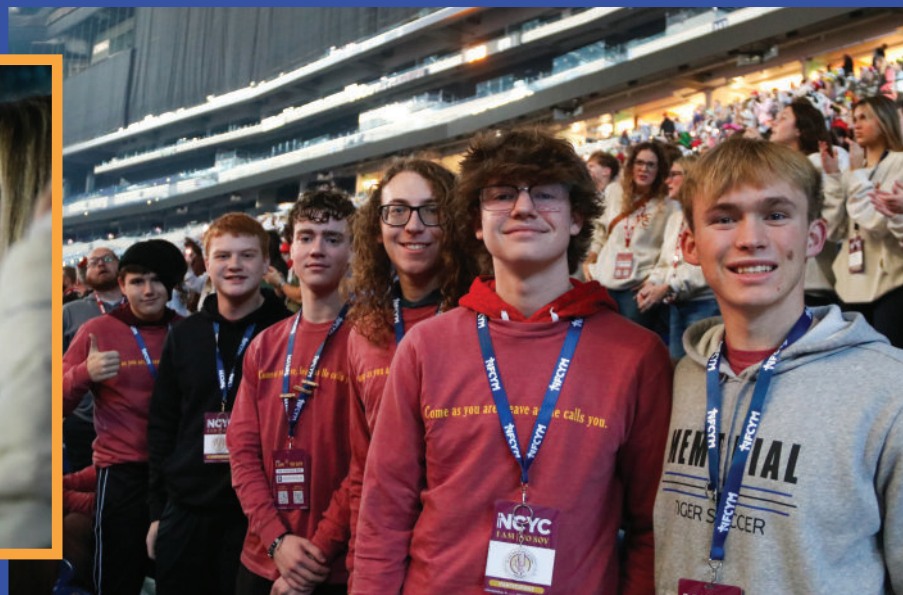
RILEY GREIF | WKC



550 youth & adults  
participated in the 28th  
annual YOUTH 2000  
retreat

RILEY GREIF | WKC

# More Highlights From the 2025 National Catholic Youth Conference



PHOTOS BY RILEY GREIF | WKC

## SHOW UP. BUILD HOPE.

SAVE THE DATES



**JULY 26, 27TH & 28TH  
COMING TO OWENSBORO**

Location: Owensboro Convention Center  
501 West 2nd St.  
Owensboro, KY 42301

### Dress for Less Gala



Catholic  
Charities  
DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO

**Sunday, July 26<sup>th</sup>, 2026**

Doors open 5PM, event to start 6PM

Have the opportunity to tour the museum and get inspired. Available to the public these times below.

July 26 from 2PM-6PM

July 27 from 10AM-6PM

July 28 from 10AM-2PM

**LEARN MORE ABOUT THE THE MUSEUM  
AT [PEOPLEOFHOPE.US](https://peopleofhope.us)**

## The Good News: Engagement, Service, and Welcome

BY SUSAN MONTALVO-GESSER, CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF THE DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO

Our Good News is that we are resilient and continue to be neighbors to the marginalized in our diocese. Despite limited resources and more need as each day goes by, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Owensboro accompanies the suffering and the poor, for they are the gift Christ gave us.

It has been a little over five years since our diocese and four counties in the neighboring Archdiocese of Louisville were hit with the Quad-State Tornadoes of December 2021. At that time, we were informed by experts that recovery would take five to six years. We are building our final homes and will dedicate the last two homes in Mayfield this summer.

In the beginning of 2025, we had anticipated resettling a large number of refugees through our new Refugee Resettlement Program, which would enhance the immigration legal services work we had been doing to accompany the stranger. When the federal administration ended nearly all refugee resettlement that year, we continued

to be part of talks with national leaders at Catholic Charities USA and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops on how to retain the knowledge of refugee experts for a future in which our nation will once again welcome those in need.

We have engaged people through community conversations held in Daviess and Henderson Counties, which gave us better language to see what local people identify as the salient issues in their communities. In these conversations, we learned there is a disconnect between leaders and community members, neighbors who want to be involved and those who are asked, and people who want to do good but do not know where to begin.

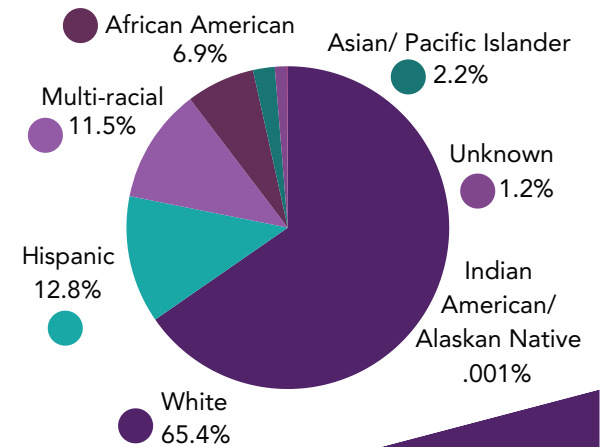
On that effort, we are excited to bring Catholic Charities' national People of Hope Traveling Museum to our diocese from July 26-28. It will be parked in front of the Owensboro Convention Center and we hope whole busloads, minivans, and parish members will come to explore the museum and take advantage of the opportunity to engage in Catholic Charities' mission.

Even when we are in the Garden of Gethsemane, we are an Easter people – because Christ has shown us how to suffer and rise again. ■



### People assisted in 2025: 7,345

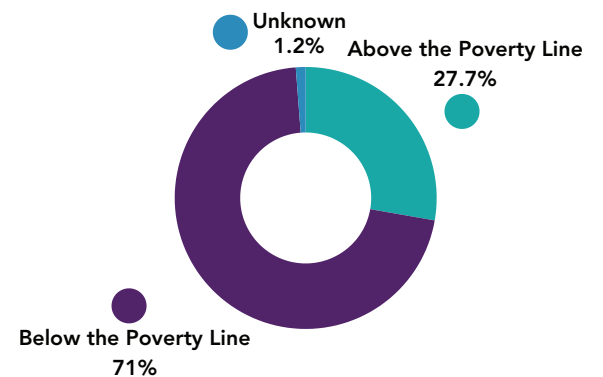
#### Race identified by those assisted:



**1,900** Survivors of natural disasters assisted

**483** Individual's basic needs and close emergency financial gaps met

#### Assisted Individual income level:



**RACHEL HALL | WKC**  
Fr. Larry Hostetter carries a box to his truck in the drizzling rain. Packages of food were donated from Catholic Charities USA during the government shut down to help with our local food pantries as they saw an influx of people in need.

## Disaster Recovery: Walking the Long Road to Recovery with Local Families

BY KATINA HAYDEN, CATHOLIC CHARITIES OF THE DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO

Recovering from a disaster is not easy but luckily, members of national and Kentucky VOAD (Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster) all have their niche to help families with their recovery.

Catholic Charities is known nationally for its case management: we are the people who help the disaster survivor navigate insurance, government programs, long-term recovery groups, funding sources, and volunteer skilled labor organizations.

Western Kentucky has had a variety of disasters since 2021 such as tornadoes, floods, straight-line winds, and hail with some being federally declared disasters and other disasters being confirmed by county emergency management officials. It has not been easy for anyone but the friends and the partnerships we have made along the way are helping us finish the disaster recovery from the 2021 tornadoes by early summer of 2026. We completed the disaster recovery from the 2022, 2023, and 2024 storms by fall of 2025.

The disaster recovery from the 2025 hailstorms, floods, and tornadoes, however, have had more struggles than other disasters. The recovery from numerous disasters in 2025 has been stressful on the families because of two federal government shutdowns limiting the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) process. FEMA typically provides not only aid for the insured but the underinsured too. As inflation has risen, families have had to make choices to pay insurance premiums or lower their coverage – in hindsight, many regret this decision, but when you are struggling to pay immediate needs such as medications or insurance, you make decisions for your current survival versus what might happen.

Typically, after a disaster, Catholic Charities partners with other agencies such as Kentucky Emergency Management, County Emergency Management, FEMA, and Kentucky VOAD members, but after the 2025 disasters we became much closer to these organizations so we could get families into safe, sanitary, and secure places to live because of the limited resources in 2025.

We received calls and texts from KYEM and FEMA more so than in past

disasters because funding and volunteer labor was more strained. Unfortunately, not everyone is in a safe, sanitary, and secure place to live because of funding shortages and lack of skilled volunteer organizations. But in 2025, we worked with almost 500 families and are still working with many of these families because of limited resources to meet their needs.

It may be slow, but we will continue to advocate for those without safe, sanitary, and secure places to live. Thank you for your prayers and support in the recovery of our communities within western Kentucky. ■

### Assistance Provided



Meet basic needs and close emergency financial gaps	483
Increase access to nutritious food	422
Increase income and financial self-sufficiency	308
Increase access to stable, affordable housing	299
Recovery from natural or man-made disasters	1900
Prevent/end homelessness or reduce harm for people experiencing homelessness	308
Increase access to healthcare and improve physical and mental well-being	799
Welcome and integrate immigrants, refugees, and asylees	1501
Facilitate recovery or reduce harm from addiction and serious mental illness	299
Cultivate children's emotional and intellectual development	19
Promote strong family functioning	300
Improve quality of life for individuals with physical and neurodevelopmental disabilities	212
Develop and promote Catholic identity and strategic engagement with parishes	425
Other	70

# Hispanic/Latino Ministry Keeping Hope Alive



BY DCN. CHRIS GUTIÉRREZ, OFFICE OF HISPANIC/LATINO MINISTRY

It is always impressive to witness the desire and involvement of our many Hispanic/Latino Catholics participating in retreats led by the local ecclesial movements within our diocese. To date, these retreats average almost a hundred participants each time.

Two of our main ecclesial movements in Spanish, which are present and very active in

our diocese, are Christ Renews his Parish and the Charismatic Renewal. Both continue to have amazing and transformative impacts in our diocese. Many of us continue to see the vibrant faith and commitment of those who serve, and the transformation and embracing of the faith of those who live the post-retreat experience.

Despite the extraordinarily difficult time immigrant communities are facing in our community currently, I can attest to the deep, vibrant, and committed faith of Hispanic Catholics across our diocese's 14 parishes

with Hispanic/Latino ministry.

We in the Office of Hispanic/Latino Ministry for the Diocese of Owensboro are grateful to Bishop Medley and various diocesan offices and colleagues for their closeness and unwavering support of our mission. Thank you also to the many of you in our dioceses and parishes who have been close to us and continue to generously support this ministry, especially many of our priests, lay leaders and many more of you.

We thank God and the many good people in our diocese for your prayers and support. ■



## Helping Young Latinos Become Leaders

BY SUSANA SOLORZA, COORDINATOR OF PASTORAL JUVENIL

Young Hispanic/Latino parishioners are looking to grow in their leadership presence within their parishes and our diocese, and out into the world. In this turbulent political time, they are not shying away from finding ways to help their community. This leadership formation comes with working with Southeastern Pastoral Institute (SEPI) and Instituto Fe y Vida.

The number of Spanish-speaking parents impacted by our family ministry has gone up with family retreats, marriage ministry and mental health and parenting workshops.

The number of bilingual students participating in youth ministry events and retreats has continued to grow, as well as the parents and chaperones helping make these events possible for their young people. ■

Learn more at <https://owensborodiocese.org/ministerio-hispano/pastoral-juvenil/>.

## ¿De qué manera se encuentran ustedes en la historia de la Diócesis de Owensboro?

### Un Mensaje del Obispo Medley



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC

La palabra Evangelio significa “la Buena Nueva”. Mateo, Marcos, Lucas y Juan registraron el Evangelio de Jesucristo. Pero cada generación debe seguir anunciando la Buena Nueva de Jesucristo.

Todos sabemos que cuando escuchamos las noticias del día, ya sea en la televisión, la radio, los periódicos o las redes sociales, la mayor parte de lo que oímos o leemos no son buenas noticias.

Como cristianos, seguidores de Jesucristo, debemos ser proclamadores de la Buena Nueva y –de igual importancia– ser oyentes de la Buena Nueva. Jamás debemos permitir que la decepción y el desaliento definan nuestro mundo, donde debemos ver manifestarse la gracia de Dios.

El año pasado, cuando la Diócesis de Owensboro presentó su Informe de Impacto anual, la Iglesia católica universal acababa de recibir a un nuevo Santo Padre, el Papa León XIV. En el año transcurrido nos hemos acostumbrado a su elocuencia y a su genuina amabilidad.

Todos los temas de la Buena Nueva que ha presentado el Papa León se basan en los de sus predecesores de las últimas décadas. En sus viajes visita lugares que el mundo a menudo ha olvidado, tierras y pueblos marcados por la opresión, la pobreza y el abandono.

El Papa León continúa con los retos que nos planteó el Papa Francisco, en el sentido de que la Iglesia católica debe cuidar de los más necesitados entre nosotros. En nuestro mundo vemos a muchísimas personas obligadas a vivir en zonas de guerra y a millones esforzándose por encontrar nuevos hogares mientras huyen de la persecución y la opresión.

Nuestra misión en la Diócesis de Owensboro es compartir la Buena Nueva de Jesucristo, imitando sus buenas obras. Mucho se ha escrito este año sobre el aumento de conversos adultos en la Iglesia católica en los Estados Unidos, y nuestra diócesis participa de esta emocionante historia.

Gracias a todos los discípulos misioneros que han sido activos este año como catequistas, lectores, ministros extraordinarios de la Sagrada Comunión, acompañantes de los enfermos y de quienes no pueden salir de casa, y portadores de la luz de Cristo desde nuestras parroquias.

Durante el último año, nuestras Caridades Católicas, la Oficina de Ministerio Hispano/Latino y las parroquias han sido refugios para muchas de nuestras familias inmigrantes y refugiadas. Aunque todos participemos en diferentes aspectos de esta misión, podemos consolarnos sabiendo que nuestra comunidad de la Iglesia católica busca servir como lo hizo Jesús.

Este informe de impacto de 2025-2026 sobre la misión de nuestra iglesia local es una historia de la que todos podemos sentirnos orgullosos. Es una historia a la que todos estamos llamados a unirnos. ¿De qué manera se encuentran ustedes en nuestra historia?

Estoy muy orgulloso de la Diócesis de Owensboro y doy gracias a Dios por nuestra gente buena y santa. Tengan la seguridad de que rezo por todos ustedes y les pido amablemente que recen por mí.

Sinceramente suyo en el amor de Cristo,

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

## El Ministerio Hispano/Latino mantiene viva la esperanza



POR EL DIÁCONO CRISTÓBAL GUTIÉRREZ, OFICINA DEL MINISTERIO HISPANO/LATINO

FOTOS POR CORTESÍA DEL DIÁCONO CRISTÓBAL GUTIÉRREZ

Siempre resulta impresionante presenciar el interés y el compromiso de nuestros numerosos católicos hispanos/latinos que participan en retiros dirigidos por los movimientos eclesiales locales dentro de nuestra diócesis. Hasta la fecha, estos retiros reúnen, en promedio, a casi cien participantes en cada ocasión.

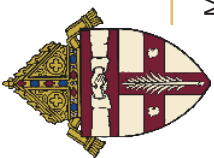
Dos de nuestros principales movimientos eclesiales en español, que están presentes y son muy activos en nuestra diócesis, son Cristo Renueva su Parroquia y la Renovación Carismática. Ambos siguen teniendo un impacto asombroso y transformador en nuestra diócesis. Muchos de nosotros seguimos siendo testigos de la fe vibrante y el compromiso de quienes sirven, así como de la transformación y la aceptación de la fe por parte de quienes viven la experiencia posterior al retiro.

A pesar de la extraordinaria dificultad que atraviesan actualmente las comunidades inmigrantes en nuestras comunidades, puedo afirmar que la fe de los católicos hispanos en las 14 parroquias de nuestra diócesis con ministerio hispano/latino sigue siendo profunda, vibrante y comprometida.

Desde la Oficina del Ministerio Hispano/Latino de la Diócesis de Owensboro, agradecemos al Obispo Medley y a las diversas oficinas diocesanas y colegas por su cercanía y apoyo inquebrantable a nuestra misión. Gracias también a todos ustedes en nuestras diócesis y parroquias que han estado cerca de nosotros y continúan apoyando generosamente este ministerio, especialmente a muchos de nuestros sacerdotes, líderes laicos y muchos más de ustedes.

Damos gracias a Dios y a las muchas buenas personas de nuestra diócesis por sus oraciones y apoyo. ■





Diocese of  
**OWENSBORO**

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## Echando nuestras redes: *Confiado en que el Señor enviará a nuestra diócesis más vocaciones santas*



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC

POR EL PADRE COREY D. BRUNS, OFICINA DE VOCACIONES

“Ora, ten esperanza y no te preocupes. La preocupación es inútil. Dios es misericordioso y escuchará tu oración” es un lema espiritual atribuido al Padre Pío que ha sido el lema “extraoficial” de la Oficina de Vocaciones durante el último año.

Estadísticamente hablando, como diócesis necesitamos tener un mínimo de 14 hombres en el seminario cada año para mantener nuestro número actual de sacerdotes en ministerio activo. Comenzamos el semestre de otoño con la admisión de tres hombres al seminario, lo que elevó nuestro número de cuatro a siete, apenas la mitad del número que, según las estadísticas, necesitamos para tener una situación vocacional “saludable”. Ahí es donde podría haber surgido la preocupación, pero con esperanza y confianza en la misericordia de Dios, como diócesis nos hemos vuelto más intencionalmente al Señor con oración y sacrificio este año para un aumento de vocaciones buenas y santas al matrimonio, al sacerdocio y a la vida consagrada, y Dios está respondiendo a nuestras oraciones.

El Señor de la cosecha está transformando la preocupación en alegría, al ver que cada vez más hombres tienen el valor de mantenerse firmes en la esperanza, responder a la invitación del Señor en sus vidas y discernir su vocación con mayor intencionalidad. Veintiún hombres participaron en fines de semana de “Vengan y verán” en nuestros seminarios, donde le hicieron la pregunta a Dios: “¿Me estás llamando a ser

sacerdote?” Treinta estudiantes universitarios se unieron a la Oficina de Vocaciones en la Conferencia SEEK para compartir una comida y conversar con el Obispo Medley, con el objetivo de establecer relaciones e iniciar el diálogo sobre la vocación en la vida de las personas.

Visitamos seis de nuestras escuelas para realizar visitas vocacionales y participamos en tres Noches Newman con nuestros estudiantes universitarios en la Universidad de Western Kentucky y la Universidad Estatal de Murray. Un promedio de 35 personas se reúne semanalmente en la Parroquia Santos José y Pablo en Owensboro para el Martes de Vocaciones para simplemente rezar en una Hora Santa y celebrar la Misa, pidiendo intencionalmente al Señor que nos conceda muchas más vocaciones santas. Para finales de junio, siete hombres habrán iniciado y completado el proceso de solicitud para ingresar al seminario de nuestra diócesis, lo que nos permitirá pasar de ocho hombres en formación en el seminario a quince.

Estas cifras son inspiradoras y nos llenan de humildad mientras seguimos construyendo una cultura de vocaciones dentro de nuestra diócesis, firmemente arraigada en la oración y en la relación con el Señor y entre nosotros; una cultura llena de esperanza en el futuro que nuestro Dios misericordioso nos está dando al llamar a más pastores para su Iglesia—sin preocupación—porque, al fin y al cabo, la preocupación es verdaderamente inútil.

¡Dios es el capitán de este barco y navegamos hacia aguas más profundas para echar nuestras redes y pescar! ■