

2022-2023



Impact



Report

DIOCESE OF OWENSBORO







"God looks with joy upon all those who serve the needy. This is how goodness grows: in the simplicity of hands and hearts stretched out to others and in the courage of the small steps that approach those who are at most vulnerable in the name of Jesus."

Pope Francis | June 27, 2023 | Tweet

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

I recognized that whatever God does will endure forever; there is no adding to it, or taking from it. Thus has God done that he may be revered.

ECCLESIASTES 3:14

There are many numbers in this year's Impact Report. Their purpose is to attempt to provide some indication of the lives that have been touched and the resources invested by the Diocese of Owensboro, seeking to be a light to western Kentucky. Of course, it would be impossible to tell every story or include every important number, and it's impossible to fully describe how these resources change the world around us. But I strongly believe we are instruments of this change. When we invest our resources into religious education and faith formation, into parish ministries, into serving the marginalized, into beautiful liturgies and prayer and other works of the Church, we are also making an impact on the entire world. God uses the grace from our prayer and good works in ways we may never see, but we may be confident that they serve a powerful purpose in building up the Kingdom.

Thank you for making these numbers possible. Thank you for the work you do in your homes and your

communities to live out and pass on the teachings of Jesus Christ and our

Catholic faith. Your ongoing prayers and generosity provide important

resources for our efforts.

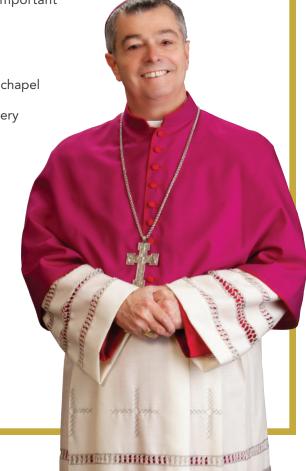
We have hundreds of prayer petitions at the foot of the altar in the chapel of the McRaith Catholic Center, where Mass is celebrated nearly every day. I thank you for entrusting us with your prayers – and I ask you to please remember me in your prayers as well.

May God Bless You All,

Most Reverend William F. Medley, D.D.

Bishop, Diocese of Owensboro

+ William). Medley



Our Diocese AT A GLANCE

Below statistics reflect the 2022 calendar year





78
Parishes

654
Infant baptisms

749
First Communions

645
Confirmations

112

68

Diocesan priests

43

Permanent deacons

Serving our diocese



109

Sisters

108

Lay ministers

3

Seminarians



17

3,462
Students

356
Teachers



Catholic university

1,000+

11,000
assisted annually through Catholic Charities



197Marriages



Youth camp/
retreat center

5 Z Staff/volunteers

450+



Catholic hospital

43,000+

L
Newman Centers

2 Chaplains

FOCUS missionaries

559 Deaths

Unleashing the Power of Stewardship: Sharing the Gift of the Holy Spirit

In the beautiful Sacrament of Baptism, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, who bestows upon us various "spiritual gifts." As Catholics, we are called to embrace these gifts and exercise Stewardship by using them to serve our Church, family, and community.

Many of us are not aware of our gifts or abilities – which sadly prevents these gifts from being utilized for the service of God. Maybe we only consider our gifts to be "hobbies." I urge you to turn that vision around. Ask yourself: "How can my parish utilize what I have to offer?"

For instance, one day when I was making flowers for my father's gravesite, I posted a picture on social media and was astounded when my parish approached me, requesting my assistance in creating and designing liturgical arrangements. I served my community in that capacity for 25 years!

Our parishes need you - yes, you! God blessed you with the Holy Spirit at your baptism and gave each of us unique talents and gifts to be shared. You may recognize these words that are spoken often in your parish through stewardship programs, "time, talent, and treasure," which I like to refer to as Prayer, Service and Generosity. St. Paul reminds us of the diversity of spiritual gifts in his letter to the Corinthians: "There are different kinds of spiritual gifts but the same Spirit; there are varieties of services, there are varieties of activities, there are different forms of service but the same Lord" (1 Cor. 12:4-5).

As the director of Stewardship & Development for the Diocese of Owensboro, I invite you to recognize the gifts God gave you. Let us be faithful stewards, embracing the diversity of "spiritual gifts," and spreading the love of Christ through our actions, as we make a positive difference in the lives of others and transform the world around us.

Valeria Vessels

Director of the Office of Stewardship & Development

Disciples Response Fund Annual Appeal

Your generosity provides us with opportunities to be a witness for Christ and carry out His mission. During the DRF period of October 2021 to September 2022, your gifts changed thousands of lives.



\$591,159.33





Generosity blesses everyone!

Below are just a few of the many mission and vocation collections that the diocese coordinates to assist ministries in and out of the diocese. God can do powerful things with our generosity!

\$308,511

St. Benedict's Homeless Shelter

\$54,439

Our Sister Diocese of Mandeville, Jamaica

\$280,580 **Eastern Kentucky Flood Relief**

\$30,036

Retired Religious

Catholic Relief

Services & Rice Bowl

\$42,805 **Brescia University**

Seminarian Fund

Catholic Campaign for **Human Development**

Home Missions



Bishop William F. Medley speaks about the chalice of Bishop Francis R. Cotton, the first bishop of Owensboro. The chalice was used at this year's Chrism Mass on April 4, 2023.

RILEY GREIF | OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

Diocesan Archives: A Connection to the Past

After its recent discovery by the Archives, Bishop Francis R. Cotton's chalice was loaned to Bishop William F. Medley for the diocese's Chrism Mass this past April. As Bishop Medley raised the chalice, filled with the Blood of our Savior, there was a visible line of apostolic succession. Three of our shepherds – Jesus our Good Shepherd; our first bishop and shepherd; and our current bishop and shepherd – were all present before the altar, guiding the flock to safety, unhampered by time or space.

Throughout history, two things have often been used to establish the legitimacy of rule: lineage and Divine Will. The Catholic Church has both of these. The Archives endeavors to connect every Catholic in the diocese with their noble bloodline – that of their heritage as sons and daughters of God.

Among its many responsibilities, the Archives opens its doors and provides information for researchers, educates the faithful through its monthly articles in The Western Kentucky Catholic newspaper, and offers the use of artifacts for public displays and loan through the loan program, which provides relics to churches and schools for veneration.

There are few things more comforting for a parishioner than requesting sacramental records or other seemingly-unattainable knowledge from the Archives, and quickly being greeted with the requested information. What drives the Archives is the knowledge that there is great power in the past: the knowledge that the great deeds and Godly toil of our forebears are not lost to history but echo throughout it.

Edward Wilson

Archivist



'Create in Me a Clean Heart, O God'

Parents are concerned about the effects of pornography on their children and teens. We're just not sure what to do about it.

CleanHeartInitiative.com, (inspired by Psalm 51's "create in me a clean heart" passage), equips parents to have conversations with their children early and often about the effects of pornography and offers resources like internet filtering to keep kids safer online. The site also serves as a guide for those struggling with pornography, walking them toward their first steps on the journey toward freedom and recovery.

The Office of Marriage & Family Life launched the Clean Heart Initiative in 2019 as a strategic plan to combat the prevalence of pornography. That was, of course, just a few months before the pandemic shut parishes down. This October, we are relaunching the Clean Heart Initiative with a concerted effort called "Safe Haven Sunday," where the issue of pornography is talked about in the homily at all weekend Masses at participating parishes, and parents are presented with booklets and informational material to take home with them.

During the week after Safe Haven Sunday, follow-up parent workshops will be offered as well as webinars for those who are struggling with pornography, to help them break the addiction cycle.

The central resource for Clean Heart Initiative is a custom website developed by the Office of Communications that accompanies visitors through the site until they find the particular resource that is most useful for them. CleanHeartInitiative.com is an effort to make resources and information available to parents and those wanting freedom from pornography addiction in one place in an easy-to-find format. It serves as an anonymous, 24/7 source for help, encouragement, and practical resources. Since its launch, the site is consistently being used every month as more and more parishioners hear about it and help spread the word.

Danny May

Director of the Office of Marriage & Family Life

Catholic Schools Foster a Spirit of Evangelization

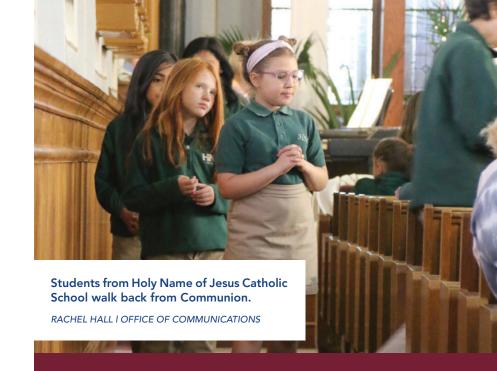
Through our Catholic schools in the Diocese of Owensboro, we strive to inspire our students to live lives of faith, service, and excellence. Through our mission, we are continually looking to create communities of learners who are committed to embracing and sharing the Gospel message as young Missionary Disciples.

Through the daily formation of the Catholic faith in our school buildings, we work to help students become leaders who bring Christ's love and compassion to the world around them. As leaders in our school communities. our faculty and staff work to create a culture of faith, foster a spirit of service, cultivate excellence in education, develop leadership skills, build a strong and supportive community, promote justice, and emphasize the importance of lifelong learning.

This discovery begins with, but goes well beyond, attending school Mass each week. Our students are immersed in numerous rich traditions of our Catholic faith such as Adoration, participating in the living rosary, student prayer days, days of service, and retreats. By inviting and bringing in students' family members to many of these events, we also foster the spirit of evangelization in our communities. These are opportunities for our students to see and live out their faith in a world that so desperately needs it!

David Kessler

Superintendent of the **Catholic Schools Office**



Schools

Schools

Elementary Schools

d 351

Teachers

 $\frac{1}{2}$ 3,462 Students

666 Non-Catholic

283

Minority

22.8 Average 2022 ACT

Catholic Charities Feels Love of Holy Spirit in Accompanying Afghan **Families**

I had a mentor in law school who said: find an area of law to practice that you love, that enlightens your passion, and you'll never work a day in your life. I can't say I don't feel like I work, but I will say that working with the Afghan families through Catholic Charities' resettlement efforts has made me understand that quote.

Starting November 2021, our diocese became the new home for some 500 Afghan arrivals fleeing Taliban rule. Many of those resettled had worked for our military, in the former (now overthrown) Afghan government, or in jobs that the Taliban see as treasonous. Through donations and grants, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Owensboro can provide free legal services to all Afghan individuals and families who were resettled in western Kentucky. Our office filed 933 applications with the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services just last year.

I am fully invested in the outcome of each case, maybe because I am the daughter of an immigrant and therefore close enough to know the ramifications. I take losses as hard as the client, but I take the wins like it's the birth of a child... because that's how momentous it is. Maybe it's because in the Afghan youth I see my own kids: I've attended their soccer games, broke fast with them at Iftar, fasted with them on drives to Chicago, spoken openly about our faith traditions, and celebrated scholarships and graduations.

It's broken me and fulfilled me and humbled me. When you accompany and advocate for people intimately, you get to bring the love of the Holy Spirit into their lives.

Susan Montalvo-Gesser

Director of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Owensboro



Susan Montalvo-Gesser (purple Catholic Charities shirt) greets Zuhal Shafaq after the Shafaq family's arrival to their new home in Owensboro on April 2, 2023.

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\$11,687.75 **Utilities**

\$31,754.58 Rent

531 **Emergency Shelter Capacity**

Transition Housing Capacity

Disaster Relief

\$6 million+ Spent on Housing

People Helped

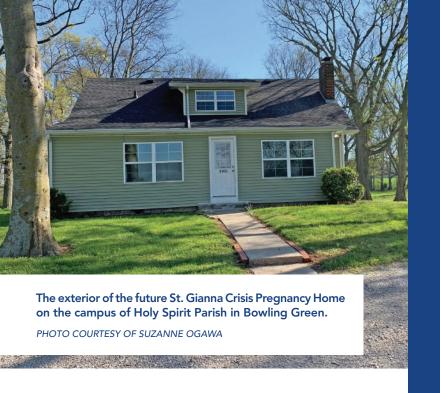
Refugees

Resettled

Cases Opened with USCIS

Volunteers

U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services



A New Home for Moms in Need

After the Dobbs decision on June 24, 2022, which effectively overturned Roe v. Wade, a group of Holy Spirit and St. Joseph parishioners were called to start a women's crisis pregnancy home in Bowling Green. After praying bi-weekly group rosaries, visiting homes across the country, researching the needs in our community, and with the blessing of Bishop William F. Medley, we will soon be operating St. Gianna Crisis Pregnancy Home, under Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Owensboro, out of the former farmhouse on Holy Spirit's campus.

Our mission is to strive to help the homeless pregnant woman who has chosen life for her child. Our goal is to provide a safe environment where she can achieve a healthy pregnancy while addressing her emotional, financial, spiritual, and educational needs for future independent living.

We are currently assessing the renovation needs for the home to safely and comfortably accommodate up to six pregnant women and a house mother. Our tentative goal is to open the home to residents this fall. We are also preparing volunteer roles and responsibilities, as well as working on our fundraiser at La Gala in Bowling Green on April 20, 2024.

Suzanne Ogawa

St. Gianna Crisis Pregnancy Home

Welcoming All as Christ

This year, St. Benedict's Homeless Shelter has been able to shelter 500 men and 127 women and families; accompany 32 men into transitional homes, and through our various programs and facilities care for 12 pregnant women preparing to give birth.

St. Benedict's was able to provide every one of these individuals with food, clothing, shelter, showers, laundry services, employment services, and new life skills services that helped them during their transition to self-sufficiency.

Both St. Benedict's and the Daniel Pitino Shelter – which operate under the auspices of the Diocese of Owensboro – have recently streamlined and coordinated services together on a broader scale by sharing an executive director. This removed many barriers to housing and supportive services, increased efforts across the board, strengthened both agencies' personnel, removed gaps and lapses in services, and created a unified community presence.

Although both agencies are independent of one another, working diligently and intentionally together for the common goal of ending homelessness is being achieved!

Harry Pedigo

Executive Director of St. Benedict's Homeless Shelter and the Daniel Pitino Shelter

Orlando holds the keys to his first-ever home. Orlando's life was positively impacted by the mission of St. Benedict's and Daniel Pitino during his transition to self-sufficiency.

PHOTO COURTESY OF HARRY PEDIGO



Powerful Year of Growth at Gasper River

At Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center, we continue to not have a "down" season anymore! In previous years, we've had light bookings in December, January, and February. That is no longer the case as those months have become just as full as the other retreat months.

Over the past year, we hosted 95 retreat groups – of 55 different organizations – consisting of close to 3,000 people. This is an increase from our previous year. Of the 300 days of our retreat season, we had people onsite for 184 of those days. Of the 95 groups, 79 were Catholic groups and 16 non-Catholic groups. Fifty-one groups were overnight retreats and 44 were day retreats. Of the 95 retreat groups, 59 used at least one of our program activities while onsite. Two-thirds of those groups used more than one activity during their stay. We also served 5,800 meals during our retreat season. Retreat season includes our Christmas/New Year's Camp, which had 40 high schoolers ending the year 2022 and beginning the New Year 2023 here at camp.

The 2022 summer camp program* was fantastic. We served well over 450 campers, had 16 staff working summer camp, had 36 volunteers and seven staff in training. During summer camp, we served over 13,500 meals and led ropes course and river activities daily.

In addition, we visited six Catholic schools in our diocese and led retreat days at their facilities. We visited six parishes and promoted camp to parish families, attended YOUTH 2000 to help with the programming and camp promotion, and hosted the Lazarus Retreat in collaboration with the Office of Youth Ministry.

It was a great year for growth, outreach, and evangelization at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center!

Ben Warrell

Director of Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp & Retreat Center

*This report was published before the 2023 camp season had ended, and so it is not included in this year's statistics.



95

Retreat groups

450

Summer Campers



Meals





To All the Nations

"Ad-Gentes" is Latin for "to the nations." Within our universal Catholic Church, this expression of "Ad-Gentes" has commonly been used as a helpful expression in pointing us toward brave men and women who have been called to be missionaries. These missionaries are willing to leave behind so much – especially family, their own culture, and comforts to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ abroad. This is part of the name for the religious order of our four Mexican sisters serving in three different parishes of our diocese: Missionaries of the Sacred Heart of Jesus "Ad-Gentes."

Indeed, we are truly blessed to have these four missionaries serving and accompanying in a particular way the Hispanic/Latino immigrant communities of our diocese. The impact these missionaries have in our communities is huge – and not only because of the activities we often hear about, such as catechesis, liturgy needs, sacramental prep, and more. For these women are willing to walk closely with, serve, and accompany through sorrows and joys a community that often doesn't necessarily feel part of a community. These sisters' impact is crucial because for many immigrants who still live in the shadows of society, it is immensely important to have missionaries willing to share the love of the Sacred Heart of Jesus as part of their own charism. Thank you, missionaries!

Deacon Chris Gutiérrez

Director of the Office of Hispanic/Latino Ministry



14

Parishes with Hispanic/Latino Ministry

8

Hispanic/Latino deacons



22

Weekly Masses celebrated in Spanish

4

Hispanic/Latino priests

5

Hispanic/Latina religious sisters

Campus and Young Adult Ministry Efforts Continue to Grow

Young adult ministry in our diocese seeks to serve the 18-to-39-year-old demographic. This age range encompasses a large variety of people and seasons of life. The goal of these ministry efforts is to support faith and help form lasting connections with parish communities.

We have always worked to have a strong ministry presence serving our campuses and Newman Centers in the Diocese of Owensboro, and in the last decade, we have added FOCUS (Fellowship of Catholic University Students) missionary teams to Western Kentucky University and Murray State University. The ministry on those campuses and the missionary work of FOCUS continues to bear lasting fruit in our diocese. We hear story after story from young adults in our parishes of the impact of these ministries.

Recently, Fr. Mike Williams joined Sister Pam Mueller on the campus ministry staff at Brescia University, and Fr. Jason McClure became the chaplain of the Newman Center at Western Kentucky University.

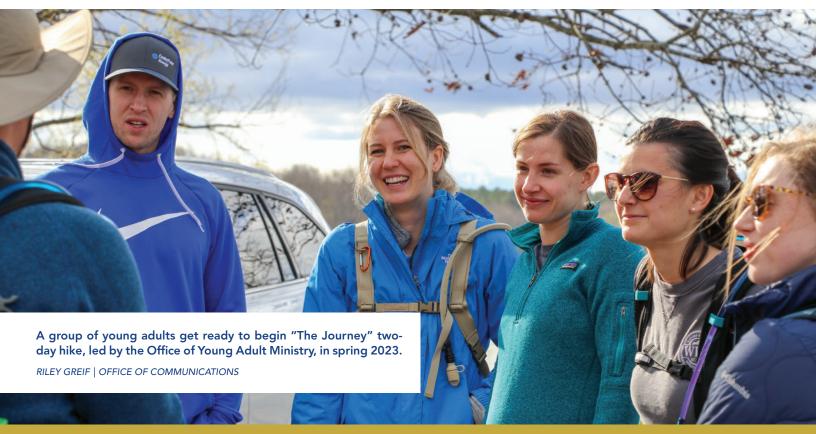
In the past five years, we have begun to see a strong effort and identity in young adult ministry in Bowling Green, Owensboro, and Paducah. Funded by a grant from the Saint Meinrad Young Adult Initiative, BG Catholics (which originally served Holy Spirit Parish but is now a collaboration with St. Joseph Parish) has been serving the Bowling Green area for the past five years. This group consistently gathers for Theology on Tap, holy hours, retreats, and fellowship. For the past year and a half, OBKY Catholic in Owensboro has formed a peer-led ministry that offers the same types of events to gather local young adults. Paducah is currently working on a similar leadership structure and will launch their gatherings this summer.

The Office of Young Adult Ministry has begun to focus again on retreat opportunities for young adults, offering a new hike retreat in the fall and spring called "The Journey," and a summer retreat at the Passionist Monastery in Whitesville.

Little by little, we are continuing to gather and serve our young adults throughout the diocese in new and exciting ways.

Charlie Hardesty

Director of the Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry





Seminarian Christopher French graduated from Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis this past May. Pictured are (left) Fr. Jerry Riney, his childhood pastor, and Fr. Daniel Dillard, diocesan vocations director.

PHOTO COURTESY OF VOCATIONS OFFICE

Seminarian Graduates from College Seminary as 'Better Man and Better Christian'

"Four more years!"

This thought ran through my mind as I crossed the stage to receive my diploma at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis this past May. Just four more years of studies and, God willing, I will be ordained to the priesthood.

This thought didn't take me out of the present moment, but rather enriched it and made me reflect on how I had gotten to this point. Just four years ago, I graduated high school and entered Western Kentucky University in Bowling Green, thinking I would become an electrical engineer. Of course, God had other plans.

At first, those plans weren't clear to me, but I knew I should at least give seminary the "good ol' college try." I am glad did. In three years at college seminary, I have grown a lot in my faith. Those years weren't always the easiest, nor were they perfect, but they were some of the happiest times of my life. Now I am leaving Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary and I would say that I am leaving a better man, a better brother, a better son, and a better Christian.

As I move on to Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology for those next four years of study, I am excited to see all that God has in store for me there.

"And I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." (Phil. 1:6)

Christopher French

Seminarian for the Diocese of Owensboro

Care and Share: Impactful Youth Ministry

I was recently a part of a formation experience in youth ministry where much of the focus rested on the mental health concerns of young people. The CDC in their 2021 Youth Risk Behavior Survey had shared that of high school students surveyed, 42% felt persistently sad or hopeless, 22% seriously considered attempting suicide, and 10% have attempted suicide.

This is an alarming trend among our young people. But the good news, according to the report, was that youth are resilient and that connectedness – especially with caring adults – significantly fights this mental health crisis.

The Fuller Youth Institute has been championing the strategy for many years that each young person in our parish communities should be able to name at least five adults outside of their family that cares about them and their faith in Jesus Christ.

There is much work to do in our diocese to continue to grow and produce youth ministry opportunities for every young person to encounter Jesus Christ, come to know Him in a life changing way that leads to discipleship, and learn what it means to share that faith with others. Amid that is the need for a renewed effort on behalf of all parish adults to care about the young people around them and share with them the hope they have found in Jesus Christ.

Charlie Hardesty

Director of the Office of Youth & Young Adult Ministry

Youth participate in Mass during YOUTH 2000 at Brescia University in March 2023.

RACHEL HALL | OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS



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Sophia



The recipients of the 2019 Sophia Awards pose for a group photo at St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro.

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS FILE PHOTO

A Time to Celebrate Wisdom

On September 10 at 2 p.m. at St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro, parishioners with many years of service to the Church will be celebrated in the annual Sophia Awards Mass. Sophia – the Greek word for "wisdom" – packs our cathedral with honorees and families who have faithfully served parishes throughout the Diocese of Owensboro.

About 50 people are honored each year at the Mass celebrated by Bishop William F. Medley, and a reception follows.

The Sophia Awards Mass has been a staple on the diocesan calendar for nearly 30 years, and some 1,500 families have won the award for their acts of generosity to the Church. Please join us this September to honor these recipients!

Tom Lilly

Chancellor and Chief Administrative Officer of the Diocese of Owensboro

The Eucharist: Christ Made Present to a Hurting World

Over the course of history, the Church has withstood plagues, scandals, division, and persecution. Throughout these moments the Eucharist served as a sacrament of hope, love, charity and as a unifying force. But perhaps most important, the Eucharist made Christ present to a hurting world.

In our age we too experience disease, scandal, division, and even persecution – yet in some ways our challenge is greater than those who came before us. By and large, our ancestors had a robust belief in the Real Presence of Christ in the Eucharist, a belief that helped them overcome the forementioned obstacles. Not so with our generation, which has been struggling to accept the Real Presence.

The U.S. bishops decided to address this crisis through a National Eucharistic Revival – meant to remind us of Christ's true presence in the Eucharist. Also, to remind us of the transforming power of the Eucharist in our lives and in the world.

Our Revival began last year on the Solemnity of Corpus Christi with a procession through tornado-ravaged Mayfield, Ky. We continued in December with a Eucharistic event in Owensboro along with continued planning for future events.

The second year of our Revival kicked off with a Corpus Christi procession in Owensboro and other locations throughout the diocese, and will continue throughout our 78 parishes.

The third Revival year will begin with the completion of a Eucharistic pilgrimage across the country, followed by a National Eucharistic Congress in Indianapolis. The current route for the national pilgrimage will pass through our diocese.

Deacon Ken Bennett

Co-coordinator of the Office of Worship

The National Eucharistic Congress will take place July 17th-21st, 2024 at Lucas Oil Stadium in Indianapolis. Learn more about the National event and ways you can participate locally on our website: owensborodiocese.org/eucharistic-revival/

Campers sit in Adoration during the Lazarus Retreat, held at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center, in February 2023.

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"The Eucharist is the presence of Jesus, it is deeply transforming."

"In the Eucharist, it is Christ who offers Himself, who gives himself for us. He invites us, so that our lives may be nourished by Him and may nourish the lives of our brothers and sisters. Each time we participate in the Eucharist, Jesus comes and Jesus gives us the strength to love like He loved, because it gives us the courage to encounter others, to go out of ourselves, and to open ourselves to others with love."

An excerpt from Pope Francis' July 2023 prayer intention

This Impact Report highlights just a few of the offices and ministries in the Diocese of Owensboro. However, there are many others available to assist parishes and parishioners. For a complete list of those at the McRaith Catholic Center ready to serve you, please visit owensborodiocese.org/category/directory. You are also welcome to call 270-683-1545.

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