

THE WESTERN  
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2023-2024 Impact Report Issue  
*A diocesan year in review*



**Time**



**Talent**



**Treasure**

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# WHY THIS ISSUE IS DIFFERENT



Holy Name of Jesus  
School in Henderson  
celebrates Mass for  
Catholic Schools Week  
on Jan. 30, 2023.

RILEY GREIF | WKC

BY ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD, EDITOR

When this June issue of The Western Kentucky Catholic arrived in your mailbox, you may have been surprised. Doesn't the WKC usually take a printing break in the months of June and July?

This is not an ordinary issue, however. This special issue focuses on the Diocese of Owensboro's past year-in-review, highlighting our many joys of serving the people of western Kentucky.

The diocese, through the efforts of the Office of Communications, Chancellor's Office, and Office of Stewardship and Development, has produced an impact report for years, in a variety of iterations. Some years, it has been designed as a glossy magazine. Other years, it has been printed within the pages of a normally-scheduled issue of the WKC, squeezed in between regular news content.

But this year, we felt that these reports – these stories – needed their own space. We decided to print this in newsprint, as a special issue of The Western Kentucky Catholic.

I encourage you to read through this issue and get to know the staff of the McRaith Catholic Center. In these pages, you will learn why each of us has chosen to serve the Catholic Church in our respective ministries.

If you enjoy this special issue, please reach out via [wkc.editor@pastoral.org](mailto:wkc.editor@pastoral.org) and let us know. To quote founding editor and my predecessor, Mel Howard, who, when meeting people and being told, "You're The Western Kentucky Catholic!" always responded with, "Yes, but we all are."

*Elizabeth Wong Barnstead is the editor of The Western Kentucky Catholic and coordinator of diocesan publications for the Diocese of Owensboro.*

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KENTUCKY  Catholic

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*Front page photos by Elizabeth Wong  
Barnstead and Riley Greif, Office of  
Communications*

## A Word From Bishop Medley: Rising to the call

My Dear People of God,

There's a cliché in church leadership that if you have seen one diocese... then you have seen one diocese! That's because they are all a unique collection of priorities and people.

This impact report issue of The Western Kentucky Catholic is a myriad of numbers and offices that represent how the Diocese of Owensboro chooses to serve. It is a unique blend of resources, services and ministry designed to support the Catholic faith here in the Church of western Kentucky.

Every single office and position provide different skill sets that impact our parish and school communities. It is my hope and prayer that the community appreciates how hard we work to serve in the many ways we are called to minister to our people, and that we rise to the call we have been given.

Are the rules that govern applied fairly? Do the ministries and retreats inspire? Do our schools and youth ministers act as strong systems of support for the family's primary educators – parents? Are we

reaching out to the marginalized and welcoming the new cultures of people that Jesus is entrusting to our care? Are we teaching generosity, strengthening marriages, and providing opportunities for faith formation? Am I doing all I can to shepherd each one of these efforts, and the other efforts taking place throughout the diocese?

This publication attempts to provide some accountability, but numbers, articles and photos cannot ever tell the entire story. Much of our work reflects what we're being asked to do by various constituencies throughout the diocese, and what the generosity of the people allows us to do.

Please browse through these reports to read about how we serve and invest in the future of our Catholic Church.

May God bless you always!



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



RILEY GREIF | WKC

Diocesan staff participate in Eucharistic Adoration during an August 2, 2023 staff retreat at Saint Meinrad.

## A message from the Office of Stewardship and Development

Dear Friends,

As the director of Stewardship and Development in our Diocese of Owensboro, the most rewarding part of my work has been working with parish leadership throughout the diocese. For 34 years, I have had the privilege of serving as a director in parish ministry and development; each moment has been a blessing. Now, as my journey takes me to parishes throughout western Kentucky, I have been blessed by the parish leadership I get to work with.

I've had the privilege of assisting numerous parishes in enhancing their Sunday offerings through a tailored Increased Offertory Program that we developed, resulting in an

impressive three-year average exceeding \$2 million that benefits parishes directly. If your parish and its leadership are interested in exploring this opportunity further, I invite you to join me at a workshop I'll be conducting. "Stewardship: Increased Offertory" will take place at The Bruce Convention Center in Hopkinsville on August 24. You can register at [owensborodiocese.org/pml-conference/](https://owensborodiocese.org/pml-conference/). I look forward to sharing insights and strategies to help your parish offertory thrive. If you are not able to join me at the conference and your parish would like me to come and talk to you, please call or email me.

My journey this year has taken me into homes to meet with people one-on-one to learn more about

*Continues on page 4*

Stewardship continued from page 3

their communities and faith journey. I am looking forward to meeting as many of you who would enjoy sitting down sharing your stories with me, hearing about your Catholic heritage, and who inspired your Catholic faith and service. I am eager to hear your stories of childhood memories growing up Catholic or what led you to the Church as an adult.

The services and ministries of the diocese touch thousands of lives: from our youth, to marriages, to our death. All of these journeys were enhanced because of your generosity, which was made possible by your gift from the Disciples Response Fund. Serving from Leitchfield to Fulton, and everywhere in between, the diocese tries to reach out and serve parishes who request our services. I am truly honored and humbled to have the opportunity to walk on this this journey with you, and I look forward to more visits this year.

Our services are free to your parish. Please reach out to me to learn how I can help you. Thank you for your dedication to our Catholic faith and for the love you continually pour into your parish and our diocese. Together, let us rejoice in the Good News of Jesus Christ and the abundant blessings He bestows upon us each day.


With heartfelt blessings,


Valeria Vessels  
 Director, Office of Stewardship and Development  
 valeria.vessels@pastoral.org  
 (270) 852-8348


# Our Diocese at a glance


Below statistics reflect the 2023 calendar year





78  
 Parishes 


72  
 Diocesan priests 


6  
 Religious priests serving our diocese 

109  
 Sisters 

43  
 Permanent deacons 

3  
 Seminarians 

8  
 FOCUS missionaries 

1400 +  
 Lay ministers 

654  
 Infant baptisms 


**51,000**  
 Catholic Population

822  
 First Communions 

705  
 Confirmations 

212  
 Marriages 

466  
 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



## Finance: Numbers tell our diocese's story

BY TOM LILLY, CHANCELLOR

Every family's checkbook tells a story. The same is true for how the Diocese of Owensboro distributes the money entrusted to its care. It takes roughly \$8 million a year to operate the McRaith Catholic Center. About \$2.8 million comes from parish assessments, while investments and contributions generate \$3.7 million. Grants, and other forms of income provide the balance.

For seven straight years, the diocese has not had an increase in assessment to the parishes, due to improved market returns and a large uptick in parish collections and contributions.

About 39% of the revenue generated is spent on diocesan salaries, including payroll taxes and benefits. Some of the revenue goes out to beneficiaries of special collections, and other distributions include program service expenses, liturgies, professional fees, insurance, grants, and direct aid.

In a year where the diocese does experience a surplus (as it did with exceptional investment returns this past fiscal year), it provides the means for capital improvements on the McRaith Catholic Center building, as well as the two Newman Centers, and adds additional loan revenue for parish projects.

Some 23 offices provide a level of administrative or ministry support to the 78 parishes, 17 schools and various shelters in our care. The diocese is a resource in the area of finance, human resources, benefits, parish ministries, the marriage tribunal, archives, communications, faith formation, retreats and providing a safe environment for the vulnerable. There are also efforts that support vocations, seminarians, advanced education and sabbaticals for priests, and Catholic schools. ■

*Tom Lilly is the chancellor for the Diocese of Owensboro.*

## Disciples Response Fund: *The power of stewardship*

BY VALERIA VESSELS, OFFICE OF STEWARDSHIP AND DEVELOPMENT



*Making disciples better stewards*

Many of us are familiar with language about making disciples, and how important that journey is for our parishes in the Diocese of Owensboro. Stewardship is a disciple's response, so in other words, once you become a disciple – a follower of Christ – then your example shows others how to become good stewards of everything that God has blessed in their care. And that doesn't just mean money.

*Continues on page 6*

Your generosity provides us with opportunities to be a witness for Christ and carry out His mission. During the DRF period of October 2022 to September 2023, your gifts changed thousands of lives.

**Disciples Response Fund**

 **\$579,525 Raised**

 **3,213 Donors**



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!

**St Benedict's \$275,789**

**Mandeville Jamacia \$60,821**

**Retired Religious \$29,064**

**\$41,097 Catholic Relief Services and Rice Bowl**

**\$46,291 Brescia** | **\$29,675 Seminarian Fund**

 **Catholic Campaign for Human Development \$19,260**

 **\$12,944 Home Missions**

**Disciples Response Fund continued from page 5***Prayer*

In our Church, prayer is an important aspect of the meaning of stewardship. It represents our deep spiritual connection and responsibility to God. Stewardship through prayer means dedicating time to seek guidance, intercede for others, and express gratitude for the blessings bestowed upon us. Through prayer, we acknowledge our dependence on God and commit ourselves to his will, aligning our actions with his purpose.

*Service*

Service embodies another piece of stewardship

in our Church. It signifies the selfless act of giving one's time, talents, and resources to serve both our faith community and the wider world. Our commitment to service as stewards is a reflection of Christ's teachings of love and compassion. By actively engaging in acts of service, we demonstrate our dedication to nurturing our faith and making a positive impact on the lives of others, embodying the principles of stewardship in action.

*Generosity*

Generosity is also a fundamental part of stewardship in our Church, symbolizing our

willingness to share the blessings we've received. It encompasses not only financial giving but also a spirit of openheartedness and abundance. As stewards, we generously contribute to support our Church's mission, aid those in need, and advance God's work on earth. Generosity is a powerful expression of faith. ■

To learn how to support the Disciples Response Fund, visit [owensborodiocese.org/give-disciples-response-fund](https://owensborodiocese.org/give-disciples-response-fund).

## Sophia Awards: Celebrating faithful stewards

BY RACHEL HALL, WKC

Bernadette Mullen and her husband, Norm Wheeler, are cherished members of Sacred Heart Parish in Russellville, Kentucky. Though Bernadette doubted her qualifications for the Sophia Awards, a fellow parishioner was persistent in wanting to nominate her. Last year, their dedication was finally recognized. Together the couple organize the Mass music; Norm is on the financial council, and Bernadette is active on the parish council. Their pastor, Fr. Ken Mikulcik, praised them, "Both go the extra mile in everything."

Upon retiring from Western Kentucky University in 2015, Bernadette wondered how she would spend her time. She soon found herself busy with grandchildren and church activities. The couple took part in an Acts 2:42 group. Bernadette happily joked, "We took turns bringing the food, and gave breaking bread a new meaning." They are hosting the second series of the Acts 2:42 small groups this fall.

Bernadette is also involved in planning part of

the National Eucharistic Revival Pilgrimage, which will be stopping at Sacred Heart in Russellville. She has memorized every part of the perpetual pilgrims' journey through our diocese and had been looking into the pilgrims themselves too: "These young adults' credentials are awesome." She wanted to familiarize herself with the parishes future guests, showcasing her natural hospitality.



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC  
Recipients are recognized during the Sept. 10, 2023 Sophia Awards Mass at St. Stephen Cathedral.



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC  
The recipients and Bishop Medley are seen after the Sept. 10, 2023 Sophia Awards Mass at the cathedral.

**Continues on page 7**

**Sophia Award continued from page 6**

In receiving the Sophia Awards, Bernadette said it, “was overwhelming in a good way.” She appreciated coming to the award ceremony Mass held at St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro and was grateful to reconnect with old friends from Stanley, where she grew up.

The Sophia Awards have been given out of the diocese’s stewardship office for almost 30 years. It honors those heartfelt stewards in our parishes, who have exemplified the values of stewardship by generously giving their time, talent, and treasure.

Please join us at this year’s Sophia Awards, taking place on August 11 at 2 p.m. at St. Stephen Cathedral. May we all be inspired to faithfully serve God and our community. ■

## Communications: Sharing the Good News



COURTESY OF DANNY MAY  
Bishop William F. Medley blesses the communications studio on April 19, 2023. The majority of videos produced by the Office of Communications are created in this space.

BY COMMUNICATIONS OFFICE STAFF

The Office of Communications in the Diocese of Owensboro exists to serve.

Our tasks are varied, and no day is like another. Our ministry includes informing the faithful of the diocese about recent and upcoming events, sharing stories of what is happening among the people of the diocese and the broader Church, assisting parishes and organizations in promoting event/programs, assisting parishes and other organizations in best practices of communication, and creating visual content for our social media outlets like

Facebook and Instagram.

We produce faith-filled video content through our in-house studio, which was completed and blessed by Bishop Medley in April 2023.

Other responsibilities include communicating public messages from the Office of the Bishop; highlighting the Catholic schools of the diocese; photographing and covering major liturgical events within the diocese; and maintaining our multiple diocesan websites, which include OwensboroDiocese.org, WesternKyCatholic.com, OwensboroVocations.com, and CleanHeartInitiative.org, a website spearheaded by the Office of Marriage and Family Life addressing the issue of pornography within the context of the Catholic faith.

Each month, apart from a summertime printing break, we produce The Western Kentucky Catholic newspaper, a 32-page publication filled with stories, photos, regular columns, and submitted articles from around our diocese. The newspaper prints a section in Spanish and publishes content in Spanish online, continuing a practice begun many years ago.

If you’d like to connect with the communications office and learn how we can help you, email [communications@pastoral.org](mailto:communications@pastoral.org). ■

*The staff of the Office of Communications are Rachel Hall, director; Riley Greif, digital media specialist; and Elizabeth Wong Barnstead, editor of The Western Kentucky Catholic.*

**Social**

Facebook Followers- 6,000  
Instagram Followers – 2,100  
YouTube Subscribers – 188  
Videos - 194  
Vimeo Subscribers - 63



**Website**

4 Websites Hosted  
Diocesan Website- 6,300 users  
with 297,000 views in the last year

**Western Kentucky Catholic**



since 1985  
Mailed to 22,000 households  
20,000 online users

# Catholic Schools: Faith, service, and excellence

BY DAVID KESSLER, CATHOLIC SCHOOLS OFFICE

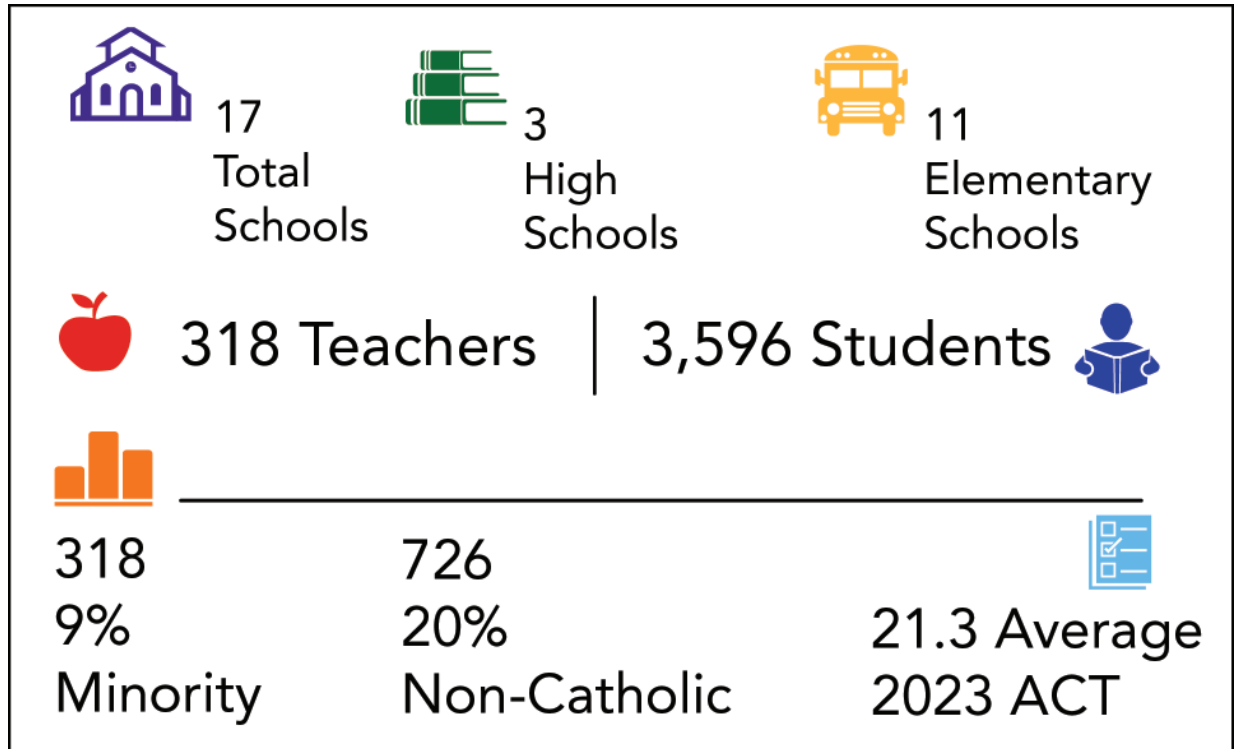
Through our Catholic schools in the Diocese of Owensboro, we are striving to inspire students to live lives of faith, service, and excellence. Through our mission, we are continually looking to create communities of learners who are committed to discovering and sharing the Gospel message. Our students will be leaders who bring Christ's love and compassion to the world around them. We encourage and promote all students and faculty to make a positive impact on their families, communities, and the world. Through the daily formation of the faith in our school buildings, we feel that these goals can and will be accomplished.

As a school community of faith, we have seen our schools make major strides this past academic year in:

- Creating a culture of faith
- Fostering a spirit of service
- Cultivating excellence in education
- Developing leadership
- Building a strong and supportive community
- Promoting equity
- Emphasizing the importance of lifelong learning

We are so proud of all our school communities and their commitment to Catholic education! ■

*David Kessler is the superintendent for the Catholic schools in the Diocese of Owensboro.*




ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC  
A teacher instructs a student at John Paul II School in Morganfield on Jan. 30, 2023.



COURTESY OF ST. ROMUALD SCHOOL  
Students are seen celebrating the 100th day of school during Catholic Schools Week 2024.




Schools continued from page 8




**In Summer 2023**  
The Diocese Catholic Food Service

**46 Summer feeding sites**  
**16,532 breakfast**  
**21,413 lunches**  
**5,227 suppers**



These meals were served across western KY in multiple counties where we have schools operating under the National School Lunch and Summer Feeding programs.

To find a site near you this summer follow QR code




RILEY GREIF | WKC  
Assisted by student and altar server Miles Edge, Bishop William F. Medley installs seminarian Conrad Jaconette (center) in the Ministry of Acolyte during a school Mass at Owensboro Catholic High School on March 1, 2023.



RACHEL HALL | WKC  
A student places a crown of flowers on the statue of Our Lady during the May 4, 2023 school Mass for Owensboro Catholic K-3 Campus at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Owensboro.



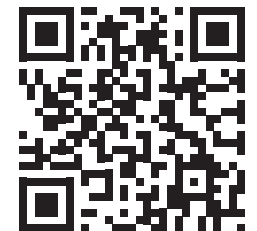
RILEY GREIF | WKC  
A Holy Name student crowns a statue of Mary in 2023.



COURTESY OF ANNA MCDANIEL  
The seniors of Trinity High School in Whitesville participate in a senior honoring Mass at St. William Parish, Knottsville, in January 2024..



In fall 2023, with guidance from the Catholic Schools Office, the diocese's Office of Communications recorded and created a series of videos to highlight the diocese's 17 Catholic schools, which spanned from Paducah to Grayson County. Each video included a message from the school's principal, talking about why they love serving their school, and why families should consider Catholic education for their children. The 16 videos debuted during Catholic Schools Week 2024 and the week after.



## Tribunal: Hope and healing

BY LOUANNE SEIBERT, TRIBUNAL

The Diocese of Owensboro Tribunal offers hope and healing by pastorally assisting in examining the sacramental validity of previous marriages. The staff consists of five full-time and four part-time ministers.

Serving as the Judicial Vicar since 2017, Very Rev. Patrick Cooney, OSB, JCL, judges marriage cases and addresses other canonical issues assigned to him by the Bishop.

Louanne Seibert serves as the Director of the Tribunal and Formal Case Instructor. Serving for over twenty-four years, she oversees the day-to-day function of the Tribunal and instructs marriage cases in the formal process.

Appointed in 2020, Emily Danchisin-Johnson,

JCL, serves as a Judge in formal marriage cases. She also assists with other canonical projects.

Patti Bartley was appointed as an Ecclesiastical Notary and Documentary Case Instructor in 2020. Patti instructs all marriage cases in the documentary processes and offers administrative assistance.

Joining the Tribunal staff in 2022, Debbie Grinnell-Perez serves as an Ecclesiastical Notary, providing administrative assistance as well as greeting visitors and callers.

Rev. Will Thompson, JCL, serves as the Defender of the Bond for the Tribunal in marriage cases, a part-time position he has held since 2019. Fr. Will also serves the Diocese as the Promoter of Justice.

Also serving the Tribunal for many years as



RILEY GREIF | WKC

Tribunal staff are seen outside the McRai Catholic Center in Owensboro on May 8, 2024.

Judges are Rev. Michael Clark, JCL, Very Rev. Patrick Reynolds, JCL, and Rev. John Vaughan, JCD. ■

For information on how to initiate a marriage case, contact your pastor or the Tribunal directly at (270) 683-1545.

## Evangelization: A central task for growing our faith



COURTESY OF ACTS 2:42

A parish group that studied with Acts 2:42 this past year.

BY DR. JEFF ANDRINI, OFFICE OF  
EVANGELIZATION AND DISCIPLESHIP

The Office of Evangelization and Discipleship is focused on equipping adults to live and share our Catholic faith. In conjunction with the Eucharistic Revival Committee, Bishop Medley and I developed our Acts 2:42 Small Groups. With 65 parish coordinators, 185 host team leaders and over 2,000 participants, this effort is producing abundant fruit.

As the 2020 Directory for Catechesis states, “The Christian Community is the primary agent of catechesis” (para. 218). The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops wrote a document called “Our Hearts are Burning within Us” in 1999 and made two important statements. One, “Adult faith formation... must be the central task in [this] catechetical enterprise” (para. 5). Two, small groups

are “powerful vehicles for adult faith formation, providing opportunities for learning, prayer, mutual support, and the shared experience of Christian living and service to Church and society” (para. 106).

Through programs like Renew, Arise, Cursillo small groups, and more, we have learned the value of gathering adults to grow and share our Catholic faith and to build meaningful friendships, support one another and vulnerably share life’s burdens. God is doing great things in our Acts 2:42 Small Groups. Consider joining a group this fall! ■

Dr. Jeff Andrini is the director of the Office of Evangelization and Discipleship for the Diocese of Owensboro.

# Vocations: Sharing our vocation stories and helping discernment

BY FR. DANIEL DILLARD, OFFICE OF VOCATIONS

Over the course of the past few years there has been a concerted effort in the Office of Vocations to inspire our pastors to be the first promoters of vocations in their parishes. We have had both a presbyteral day and a convocation on the topic of vocations.

At the presbyteral day, the priests were given resources to help them have conversations with people who are discerning in their parishes. At the convocation, Bishop J. Mark Spalding of the Diocese of Nashville, as our special guest speaker, encouraged the priests to develop a culture of vocations in their parishes. One concrete step that was suggested was for every priest to tell their vocation story in their parishes at least once a year.

This past 2023-2024 year, our vocations office has taken five men on “come-and-see” trips to the seminary. These trips provide opportunities for prayer, socialization, visiting classes, and meeting seminarians so that they can get a feel of seminary life and aid in their discernment. Two men have participated in a come-and-see trip to Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis, Ind., and three have participated in a similar trip to Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology in St. Meinrad, Ind.

Please continue to pray for vocations in our diocese, and for all those discerning. ■

*Fr. Daniel Dillard is the director of vocations for the Diocese of Owensboro.*



COURTESY OF FR. COREY D. BRUNS

Fr. Uwem Enoh participates in the Diocese of Owensboro's Presbyteral Convocation, held at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, from Jan. 15-18, 2024.



COURTESY OF FR. COREY D. BRUNS

Bishop William F. Medley gives a homily at the Diocese of Owensboro's Presbyteral Convocation, held at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, from Jan. 15-18, 2024.



COURTESY OF FR. COREY D. BRUNS

Priests attend the Diocese of Owensboro's Presbyteral Convocation, held at Saint Meinrad Seminary and School of Theology, from Jan. 15-18, 2024.

# ‘Christ-bearers’

BY WKC STAFF

On May 20, 2023, the Diocese of Owensboro celebrated the ordinations of two new priests: Fr. Chris Kight and Fr. Christopher Grief.

“This is a great day in the history of our Church,” said Bishop William F. Medley as he addressed the people who filled St. Thomas More Parish in Paducah to its capacity.

Both men had grown up in Paducah – Fr. Grief a son of St. John the Evangelist Parish, and Fr. Kight a son of St. Thomas More Parish – and so Bishop Medley had felt it fitting to hold their ordinations where their vocations began many years ago. Typically, priestly ordinations are held at St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro.

Since both new priests were named Christopher, Bishop Medley said in his homily that St. Christopher was a devout and pious man “who longed to serve others.”

According to the legend of St. Christopher, the saint was known for his incredible strength and one day carried a small child across the river. As he walked through the water, the child became heavier with each step, until Christopher could barely carry him.

It was then that the boy revealed he was the Christ Child, who carried the weight of the world on his shoulders.

“The very name Christopher means Christ-bearer,” said Bishop Medley, adding that the term is also where the Church gets the title of “Theotokos” for the Blessed Mother – the original Christ-bearer.

The diocese will celebrate its next ordination in January 2025, as seminarian Conrad Jaconette is ordained to the transitional diaconate. ■



RILEY GREIF | WKC

Newly-ordained Fr. Christopher Grief (left) and Fr. Chris Kight (right) prepare to distribute Holy Communion at their May 20, 2023 Mass of Ordination.



RILEY GREIF | WKC

The two elect lie prostrate as all sing the Litany of the Saints shortly before Bishop William F. Medley ordains them to the priesthood on May 20, 2023.

## *Faith Formation: Encouraging catechetical leader formation*

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

The Office of Faith Formation plays a pivotal role in nurturing and empowering catechists, the torchbearers of parish religious education. Through its various formation efforts, it has impacted both the spiritual growth of catechetical leaders and the vibrancy of Catholic communities.

By providing formation opportunities, resources, and ongoing support, the Office of Faith Formation equips catechetical leaders with the knowledge, skills, and spiritual depth needed to effectively transmit the richness of the Catholic faith and to form disciples of the Kingdom. These leaders, in turn, become catalysts for transformation within the programs they lead within their parishes and beyond.

Moreover, the Office of Faith Formation's

formation initiatives foster a deeper understanding of Catholic teachings, cultivates a personal relationship with God, and nurtures a spirit of service and evangelization. As catechetical leaders grow in their faith and competence, they inspire others to do the same, creating a ripple effect of spiritual renewal and community engagement.

Finally, the Office of Faith Formation's emphasis on ongoing formation ensures that catechetical leaders remain dynamic and responsive to the evolving needs of the faithful in their care. This commitment to excellence in catechetical leadership not only strengthens the Church's educational mission but also enriches the lives of countless individuals who seek truth, meaning, and connection in their journey of faith. ■

*Dcn. Jay W. VanHoosier is the director of the Office of Faith Formation in the Diocese of Owensboro.*



COURTESY OF DCN. JAY W. VANHOOSIER  
Dcn. Jay W. VanHoosier, director of the Diocese of Owensboro's Office of Faith Formation, speaks at the April 2023 catechist retreat held at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center in Bowling Green.



COURTESY OF DCN. JAY W. VANHOOSIER  
Sr. Cheryl Clemons, OSU, addresses catechists during the April 2023 catechist retreat held at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center in Bowling Green.



COURTESY OF DCN. JAY W. VANHOOSIER  
Joe Bland leads a presentation during the April 2023 catechist retreat held at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center in Bowling Green.



COURTESY OF DCN. JAY W. VANHOOSIER  
Eucharistic Adoration is held during the April 2023 catechist retreat, which was held at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center.

# Gasper River: Biggest summer ever

BY BEN WARRELL, GASPER RIVER  
CATHOLIC YOUTH CAMP AND RETREAT  
CENTER

It was another amazing year for Gasper River. We worked to expand and chip seal the entrance road into camp, and it is now an amazingly smooth two-lane road. We also had to build a new camp director's residence, as the current house had no foundation and was rotting from the bottom up. The new house will be completed in May 2024 and is beautiful. We also built a new canteen and remodeled the male staff house.

For the near future, we are planning on adding two new elements to our teams' course, adding a new giant slip-and-slide activity, and creating a new maintenance area complete with a barn with a workshop and plenty of storage. We are also looking at options for bridges/walkways across the river to the new Tower #68, which was named in honor of our former camper, Logan Davis, who died in 2020.

This past year, we hosted 86 retreat groups (44 different organizations). Of the 86 groups, 62 were Catholic groups and 24 non-Catholic groups. Forty-two groups were overnight retreats and 44 were day retreats. Of the 86 retreat groups, 46 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 4,200 meals during our retreat season. Retreat season includes our Christmas/New Year's Camp - which had 32 high schoolers ending 2023 and beginning 2024 here at camp.

The 2023 summer camp program was record-breaking. We served well over 500 campers (our biggest summer ever), had 17 summer staff working summer camp, with 36 volunteers and 7 SIT (Staff in Training). During summer camp, we served over 15,000 meals and led ropes course and river activities daily. In addition, Tower #68 had its first summer of use. The campers loved the two climbing sides, and the Leap of Faith activity challenged young people out of their comfort zones and into growth!

We visited many parishes and schools in and outside of our diocese, and all three of our diocese's Catholic campus ministries this past year, as we led retreats and game nights and recruited campers and summer staffers.

It was another great year for growth, outreach, and evangelization. The future is exciting and bright for the ministry here at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center! ■

*Ben Warrell is the director of Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center.*



RILEY GREIF | WKC

A camper rock climbs up Tower #68 during Camp Life at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center on July 11, 2023.



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC

Campers wait their turn to jump off Tower #68 during Camp Life at Gasper River on July 11, 2023.

*Continues on page 15*

## SPECIAL EDITION

*Gasper continued from page 14*



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC  
Calvin Padgett reads the Prayers of the Faithful at daily Mass during Camp Life on July 11, 2023.



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC  
Camp counselor Karina Romero checks a camper's helmet before she jumps off Tower 68 on July 11, 2023.



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC  
Campers tend a fire they built for the Survival Track at Camp Life in July 2023.



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC  
Campers and staff members hang out before lunch.



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC  
Tower #68 sign is seen at Gasper River Youth Camp.



RILEY GREIF | WKC  
Fr. Jason McLure speaks to campers on July 11.

500 campers

86 retreat groups

36 volunteers | 17 summer staff

**Tower #68**  
had first summer of use.



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC  
Campers play 9 Square in the Air on the sports track during Camp Life at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center on July 11, 2023.

# Marriage and Family Life: Investing in strong marriages

BY DANNY MAY, OFFICE OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY LIFE

The biggest accomplishment for the Office of Marriage and Family Life during the 2023/2024 year was fully funding the \$50,000 match from the Catholic Marriage Initiative (CMI), which took a little time, a lot of hard work, and many generous donors.

With our full match, added to the CMI \$50,000 match, that's a grand total of \$100,000 that is being invested in building stronger marriages in western Kentucky over a three-year initiative from Jan 1, 2022-Dec 31, 2024.

The \$50,000 raised by the Diocese of Owensboro was a collaboration of community partners including the Michael Horn Family Foundation, 14 local Knights of Columbus councils, the Catholic Foundation of Western Kentucky, an Owensboro

Health community health mini-grant, and 14 private donors.

One of the major focuses of the grant included expanding Grace Marriage to over 200 couples in 14 locations across the diocese. Other grant projects include launching Red Bird Ministries, a ministry for child loss; launching Life-Giving Wounds, a ministry for adult children of divorce and separation; and expanding marriage retreats in Spanish and English.

This past October, we also hosted the first diocesan Safe Haven Sunday addressing the issue of pornography. Two other goals we completed in the past year were updating resources for couples in crisis and successfully hosting two Engaged Encounter marriage preparation retreats at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center. ■

*Danny May is the director of the Office of Marriage and Family Life for the Diocese of Owensboro.*



RACHEL HALL | WKC

A couple holds hands during the Sept. 24, 2023 Marriage Anniversary Mass at St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro, sponsored by the Office of Marriage and Family Life.



RACHEL HALL | WKC

A couple holds hands during the Sept. 24, 2023 Marriage Anniversary Mass at St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro, sponsored by the Office of Marriage and Family Life.



RILEY GREIF | WKC

A young engaged couple smiles at each other during the Jan. 13, 2024 PreCana Retreat, held at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center in Bowling Green.



RILEY GREIF | WKC

A young engaged couple bows their heads in prayer during the Jan. 13, 2024 PreCana Retreat, held at Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center in Bowling Green.



## Archives: Why history matters

BY EDWARD WILSON, ARCHIVES

When speaking to the importance of history in the modern world, countless appeals can be made to the fact that history fills a deep yearning in the human spirit, or that it helps fulfill our natural desire for stability, place, and purpose. It does all these things and more.

The archives does this in very practical ways. We fulfill countless requests for photographs of nuns and priests that played a life changing role in a parishioner's or student's life. We have compiled a short history of a historic African American Catholic school in one of our small towns for a resident who wanted to know more about her unique experience and history as an African American in rural Kentucky.

We work closely with every part of our diocese. We provide blueprints for priests looking to make additions to churches. We assist researchers writing histories of their parishes as well as academic level publications. We provide deeds and wills to the diocesan finance department, photographs and information to the communications department, and help parishioners track down elusive sacramental information.

None of these commitments even speak to the broad dissemination of our history by the archives such as our monthly article in *The Western Kentucky Catholic*, or our monthly videos for the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph. Saint Meinrad will also be sending seminarians to our archives as they develop a deeper understanding of the significant role culture and history play in

spiritually serving a diocese.

Perhaps just as important as the utilization of our history is the protection of these physical documents. The world is entering a dangerous period when digitized information can be flawlessly altered or falsified through artificial intelligence. Currently, our only protection is our physical documents. This is a conversation that is not being had and a danger that is, sadly, going unnoticed. Few, if any, have ever endeavored to alter history with good intentions. The archives has been safeguarding this physical information even before others realize the threat. ■

*Edward Wilson is the archivist for the Diocese of Owensboro and the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph.*



COURTESY OF ARCHIVES  
Sr. Emma Cecilia, OSU, the previous archivist for the Ursuline Sisters of Mount Saint Joseph and founding archivist for the Diocese of Owensboro, is seen in the diocesan archives in 2008.

## Safe Environment; Keeping our communities safe

BY JANICE HENDRICKS, OFFICE OF SAFE ENVIRONMENT

Following the protocols set forth by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops plays a huge role in keeping our children safe within our schools and parishes. Volunteers, priests, parish and catechetical leaders, teachers, and other leaders being willing to come on board and complete training and background checks, and to follow the Safe Environment polices set forth, plays an important part in making this happen.

We have completed over 6,000 background checks since beginning the CMG Connect program, and over 9,300 training programs have been completed.

We currently have 5,888 volunteers, employees, priests, deacons, sisters and others active in the Diocese of Owensboro.

This past year, we trained over 5,000 children across the diocese using the Circle of Grace program in our school and parish religious education programs.

We are currently able to train in English and Spanish, and now, due to our thriving population of Burmese faithful, have begun working on training programs with translators in the dialects of Myanmar as well.

Ensuring that the people from outside our diocese who interact with those within our care are following the same types of protocols we are, keeps

*Continues on page 18*

*Safe Environment continued from page 17*



our parishes and schools safe.

Well over 100 priests, religious sisters, and lay speakers have visited our diocese, sending in the required Letters of

Testimonial prior to their visits to help celebrate Masses, weddings, funerals, hear confessions, cover our priests when on vacations, and help with our youth events and various retreats and weekends. Those testimonials sent to Bishop Medley and tracked through the Safe Environment office assure us that these folks are Safe Environment-compliant.

This affirms that we are all following the protocols set forth to keep our schools and parishes safe. ■

*Janice Hendricks is the coordinator of the Office of Safe Environment in the Diocese of Owensboro.*

## Black Catholic Ministry: Heritage of faith

BY F. VERONICA WILHITE, OFFICE OF BLACK CATHOLIC MINISTRY

The Office of Black Catholic Ministry in the Diocese of Owensboro is dedicated to serving the needs of Black Catholics throughout western Kentucky. This includes information on opportunities to participate in national, regional, and local Black Catholic events and training.

The office maintains a mailing list of current and former Black Catholics in the diocese, as well as anyone who express an interest in Black Catholic activities. We request updates annually from parishes, and each December the Josephite African American History Heritage Calendar is mailed out.

Our affiliates are the National Black Catholic Congress (NBCC); the National African American Catholic Youth & Young Adult Ministry Network (NAACYMN); the Tennessee, Indiana, Kentucky and Ohio (TIKO) regional conference; and the National Association of Black Catholic Administrators (NABCA) for which I served as Secretary last term. Locally, we host a diocesan day of reflection with Bishop Medley.

On Nov. 4, 2023, more than 100 people from Bowling Green, Mayfield, Owensboro, Paducah, and Berea, as well as the Ursuline Sisters, School Sisters of Notre Dame and Sisters of the Lamb of God attended



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC

The gifts are carried up at the offertory during the Nov. 4, 2023 Black Catholic History Month Mass at St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro.

the first celebration of Black Catholic History Month in our diocese at St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro.

The pastors of Blessed Sacrament Chapel (Owensboro) and Rosary Chapel (Paducah) concelebrated Mass with Bishop Medley. Music selections from “The Sound of My People” Mass by Roger Holland, the classic hymn “God is Love” by Fr. Clarence Rivers, and a welcome song by the Congolese choir from Holy Spirit Parish (Bowling Green) made this especially festive. A history of Black Catholics was handed out to participants, and portraits of the six Black Americans on the road to sainthood were displayed before the altar (let us continue to pray for



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC

Women sing during the Nov. 4, 2023 Black Catholic History Month Mass at St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro.

their canonization causes). Hopefully, this will be an annual celebration.

This past year, six delegates from our diocese representing Blessed Mother (Owensboro), Blessed Sacrament, Immaculate (Owensboro), and St. Charles (Bardwell) parishes attended the 13th National Black Catholic Congress, which convenes every five years.

For those interested in prayer resources, Black Madonna rosaries and prayer cards are available. Further education resources and opportunities will be on the diocesan website and/or shared in the WKC.

*F. Veronica Wilhite is the director of the Office of Black Catholic Ministry for the Diocese of Owensboro.*

**Continues on page 19**

Black Catholics continued from page 18



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC  
A woman proclaims the first reading during the Nov. 4, 2023 Black Catholic History Month Mass at St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro.



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC  
People attend the Nov. 4, 2023 Black Catholic History Month Mass at St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro.



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC  
A woman sings along to the closing hymn during the Nov. 4, 2023 Black Catholic History Month Mass at St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro.

## Source & Summit: A journey of Eucharistic reflections

BY ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD, THE  
WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

Over this past year, *WesternKyCatholic.com* – the online home of *The Western Kentucky Catholic* – published a weekly series of reflections about the National Eucharistic Revival’s Year of Parish Revival.

The series, called *Source & Summit*, took inspiration from “*Lumen gentium*,” a dogmatic constitution released by the Second Vatican Council fathers: “(The faithful) taking part in the Eucharistic sacrifice, which is the source and summit of the whole Christian life, offer the Divine Victim to God, and themselves along with it.” (LG #11)

Intended to help local Catholics probe the riches of

the Church’s liturgical year and celebrate the liturgy well, the columns always began with the scripture readings for the Mass of the Day to help readers reflect on, and to “unpack” and expand their experiences at liturgy into the domestic church (the home) and the workplace.

Spearheaded by diocesan Eucharistic Revival committee chair, Mike Bogdan, the reflections were written by a variety of writers who discussed the Lord’s Day, the liturgy, the Eucharist, as well as community.

The final installment of the series was released on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ (Corpus Christi), and written by Susana Solorza, the coordinator of pastoral juvenil with the diocese’s Hispanic/Latino ministry office. It is reprinted below.

What a time to celebrate Corpus Christi, during this year of the Eucharistic Revival!

I wanted to bring to your attention a beautiful way in which this feast is celebrated and I wanted to do that by introducing you to my father, Bayardo Solorza. Bayardo is the truly wonderful combination of scientist and artist, and his Catholic faith is beau-

tifully intertwined within these two embodiments of himself. He uses his talents in both areas to further his faith, the faith of his family and his community.

During this year’s feast of Corpus Christi, where we take time to celebrate and honor how Jesus is truly present in His Body and Blood in the Eucharist, my dad will continue the tradition of sand, sawdust, or flower carpets. The carpets are made of different organic materials and can be seen throughout the Americas and Europe. They are seen during Holy Week, Corpus Christi, and All Souls Day. These carpets can be created on sidewalks or streets and can go on for miles. The artist draws from Eucharistic symbols and bright colors to decorate the carpet and can include sayings such as “¡Viva Cristo Rey!” “Long Live Christ the King!”

My dad is focusing this year’s carpet on those Eucharistic symbols – a chalice, a host, grapes, and wheat, that are cross-cultural. He is modeling it after the stained glass windows and old pews of Holy Name of Jesus Parish in Henderson. In the carpet

*Continues on page 20*

Source & Summit continued from page 19



RILEY GREIF | WKC

Fr. Corey D. Bruns, parochial vicar at St. Joseph Parish in Bowling Green, processes with the Blessed Sacrament during the parish's June 18, 2023 Corpus Christi procession.

of sand that my dad designs and – with the help of family and community members – creates at the entrance to our parish, you will see our love for the Eucharist reflected in the dedication to the creation of this beautiful piece of art.

During this Solemnity of Corpus Christi, I challenge you and your family to take some time to create a carpet at home, a stained glass window, or a simple drawing honoring the Eucharist. You can use cross-cultural symbols of the Eucharist, cultural symbols, messages from scripture and the saints about the Eucharist, and symbols and sayings from your

own family.

By putting our faith into art, we can see the beauty of the love of Christ becoming Body and Blood for love of us: what a thing to celebrate! ■

Read the entire Source & Summit series by scanning this QR



## Hispanic/Latino Ministry: 'Going Forth with Joy'



COURTESY OF STS. JOSEPH AND PAUL PARISH

The parish community and Bishop William F. Medley celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe at Sts. Joseph and Paul in December 2023.

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

“Missionary Disciples Going Forth with Joy” is the title for the new and recently-enacted National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic/Latino Ministry. It has been a process of many years of working through

looking back at our common historical context as Hispanic/Latino Catholics in the U.S., of joys and sorrows, discernment, challenges, hopes and celebration.

This National Plan started years ago, first with grassroots consultation in shared parishes across our country, leading to a national level of conclusions, and finally, with our Catholic bishops unanimously approving our path forward.

Now, as we embark on the stage of implementation, on May 9, 2024, our Diocese of Owensboro had the privilege of hosting a provincial gathering of diocesan directors from various offices from the seven dioceses of Kentucky and Tennessee. This turned out to be a beautiful opportunity for these directors of different diocesan offices to share their impressions of the plan from their perspective. One important aspect of this day was heeding the call to become a more synodal Church as we listened to one another in small groups. As we strive towards better inclusion



COURTESY OF DEACON CHRIS GUTIÉRREZ

(Left to right) Sr. Ofelia Quiroz, Sr. Angelica Lopez, Bishop William F. Medley and Sr. Leopoldina Romano Carmona, Superior General of the Misioneras del Sagrado Corazon de Jesus ad Gentes, who are based in Mexico. Sr. Leopoldina visited Bishop Medley on May 1, 2024, during a trip to the Diocese of Owensboro.

and ecclesial integration, we ask God to help us to work together to better serve the Church in all its diversity. ■

*Dcn. Chris Gutiérrez is the director of Hispanic/Latino Ministry for the Diocese of Owensboro.*



RILEY GREIF | WKC

(Left photo) The traditional carpets are seen outside St. Joseph Parish on Corpus Christi, June 18, 2023. (Right photo) First Communicants are seen at Corpus Christi 2023.

## Pregnancy home surpasses \$20,000 goal at spring fundraiser

BY ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD, THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

On April 27, an inaugural fundraising event was held to support St. Gianna Crisis Pregnancy Home, which is scheduled to open this summer in Bowling Green. The sold-out event, with the theme of “An Evening in Italy,” saw about 275 guests, including several local Catholic priests. The event raised nearly \$35,000, surpassing its goal of raising \$20,000.

“We were blown away at the response to our first annual Evening in Italy gala,” said Lisa Carter, director of development for St. Gianna’s. “Thank you to everyone that supported us with donations, ticket purchases, and prayers.”

St. Gianna Crisis Pregnancy Home, operating under the umbrella of Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Owensboro, will be located on the campus of Holy Spirit Parish in Bowling Green. The home will be rooted in Catholic tradition, offer transitional housing exclusively for women experiencing a pregnancy with no means of support, and be inclusive and welcoming regardless of women’s religious beliefs, socio-economic status, ethnicity, familial status, or geographical location. The home will also offer after-birth care, including the option for postpartum moms to stay at St. Gianna’s with their baby for up to eight months after delivery. ■

Next year’s *Evening in Italy* fundraiser is scheduled for May 25, 2025. Learn more about the home at <https://www.stgiannacph.org/>.



RILEY GREIF | WKC

Fr. Corey D. Bruns leads the opening prayer at the April 27, 2024 Evening in Italy gala.



RILEY GREIF | WKC

Fr. Randy Howard participates in an activity at the gala.

## Youth Ministry: Renewed efforts, reasons for hope



RILEY GREIF | WKC

Youth in Lucas Oil at the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis on Nov. 20, 2023.

BY CHARLIE HARDESTY, OFFICE OF YOUTH  
& YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

I am going to be honest, I was pretty concerned about the state of youth ministry in our diocese coming out of the pandemic. At the time, there was no way of knowing how trends might shift and if we would be able to regain any momentum in our work with young people. Upon reflection, I find a great deal of reasons for hope.



RILEY GREIF | WKC

Youth speak to Bishop Medley in the Thematic Park at the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis Nov. 17.



RILEY GREIF | WKC

Youth from St. Thomas More Parish wear traded hats during the National Catholic Youth Conference on Nov. 17, 2023.

A significant turning point came in April 2023 when our office was given the opportunity to provide updated youth ministry formation for our diocesan priests at their spring presbyteral day. We enlisted the help of ProjectYM to provide information on this current generation of youth, their needs, and strategies for youth ministry. As a result, several parishes renewed their efforts and energy in youth ministry.

Throughout the year, the attendance at youth events began to steadily grow and bounce back more closely to

how things felt pre-pandemic. The exclamation point for us came in November when we attended a sold-out National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis with a delegation of 215 from our diocese. It was truly a Holy Spirit driven celebration.

Numbers never tell the whole story, but I am deeply encouraged by the sheer amount of parishes and new youth leaders who have reengaged in youth ministry. ■

*Charlie Hardesty is the director of the Office of Youth and Young Adult Ministry in the Diocese of Owensboro.*



RILEY GREIF | WKC

Youth from St. Stephen Cathedral pose with Bishop Medley at the National Catholic Youth Conference Nov. 17.



RILEY GREIF | WKC

Youth in Lucas Oil at the National Catholic Youth Conference in Indianapolis on Nov. 20, 2023.



RILEY GREIF | WKC

Bishop Medley speaks with Charlie Hardesty at NCYC.



RILEY GREIF | WKC

A young person takes a photo with Bishop Medley during National Catholic Youth Conference in downtown Indianapolis, which was held in November 2023. A delegation of 215 youth and chaperones from the Diocese of Owensboro attended the event, which takes place every other year.

## Youth in 2023

33 youth and adults participated in the fifth Lazarus Retreat



400 youth and adults participated in the 26th annual YOUTH 2000 retreat

6 youth ministry leaders attended ProjectYM's Thriveanooga formation

215 youth and adults attended the National Catholic Youth Conference



## Campus and Young Adults in 2023

85 + students from Western Kentucky University, Murray State University, and Brescia University attended the SEEK Conference

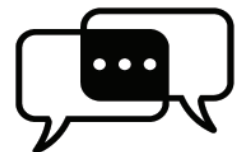


23 young adults participated in the spring or fall Journey Hike Retreat

24 young adults participated in the retreat day at the Passionist Monastery

**BG Catholic, OBKY Catholic, and Paducah-Lakes Area Catholic Young Adults**

have regular events in their local communities



# The work isn't over, but Catholic Charities presses on to serve communities impacted by tornado



COURTESY OF STACEY MENSER  
Katina Hayden, welcomes client Evelyn Duke to her new home.

BY STACEY MENSER, CATHOLIC CHARITIES

It was a Friday night, two weeks before Christmas, when the quad-state tornado ripped through western Kentucky. It hit Fulton first at 9:01 p.m. and began a path of destruction that would stretch across 16 western Kentucky counties. The Dec. 10, 2021, tornado stayed on the ground for more than 200 miles, causing new destruction every 15 minutes in the next small community along its path.

In just a few hours, thousands of homes and businesses were destroyed, and 77 people in Kentucky lost their lives as a result of the tornado that night.

There were communities like Princeton – population 6,200 – where the tornado destroyed 200 homes in seven minutes. And then there were communities like Dawson Springs – population 2,400 – where 750 structures were impacted. The tornado's path through Dawson Springs went through an area with a high density of Section 8 housing. It wiped out full city blocks of homes and decimated a 50-unit housing authority complex. An estimated 60 percent of housing was destroyed in that small community, and 19 people lost their lives in that small community.

Within weeks of the tornado, Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Owensboro went to the 16 western Kentucky counties impacted and offered to help. What Catholic Charities was bringing to the table was case management to identify the needs of survivors and donor dollars to help rebuild the lives of people who didn't have another safety net for recovery.

In Dawson Springs, Catholic Charities case managers immediately recognized the greatest need was for housing and new home construction. So



COURTESY OF STACEY MENSER  
Josh Hipp hands over the keys to the Ladd family, who were clients of Catholic Charities.

Catholic Charities called in Josh Hipp. When Hipp came to the Diocese of Owensboro, he had 12 years' experience in disaster recovery construction. He started in Joplin, Missouri, and made his way down to Florida where he coordinated rebuilds and repairs as a Catholic Charities contractor. In overseeing projects, Hipp often partnered with other disaster relief organizations like Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS), which provides skilled volunteer labor for recovery projects.

When Hipp was called to western Kentucky, the first call he made was to MDS to recruit skilled volunteers to set up camp in Dawson Springs.

Catholic Charities pledged to build 15 homes in the community, and case managers sought out clients who could use a hand-up in the rebuilding process.

Clients selected for new home builds included a family with a 24-year-old special needs daughter, another family with an adult special needs son; a

*Continues on page 25*



**Tornado continued from page 24**

family of five with three school-aged children; a family of seven with five school-aged children; a single father with a 6-year-old and an 8-year-old; another single father who is a Marine Corps veteran; an 86-year-old woman who lost her home of 60+ years, and a widower who lost his wife to Covid the year before the tornado.

By partnering with MDS for volunteer labor and reaching out to multiple funding partners, Catholic Charities was able to build 17 houses in 17 months – 16 new homes in Dawson Springs, and one in Princeton all completed by April 2024.

Catholic Charities' work is not over. Construction of two more houses is scheduled this summer, and case managers still work daily to meet the needs of people across western Kentucky recovering from the quad state tornado. ■

*Stacey Menser is a case manager for Catholic Charities of the Diocese of Owensboro.*



COURTESY OF JASON JONES

The downtown square in Dawson Springs, Ky., a week after the Dec. 10, 2021 tornado impacted the region.

565  50% children  
2023 opened cases

65 cases for survivors of domestic violence and crime

200 asylum and humanitarian cases

230 cases for unaccompanied children

currently

1,300 cases open for immigration relief

2251 people helped  
 Disaster Relief

Tornadoes/ straight-lined winds, floods

## Catholic Charities: The veil of accompaniment

BY SUSAN MONTALVO-GESSER, CATHOLIC CHARITIES

In our faith tradition there is a saint, Veronica, whom we hear about when we pray the sixth Station of the Cross. As the story goes, Veronica was so overcome by the sight of Jesus carrying his cross, covered in sweat, blood, and pain on the road to be crucified, that she used her veil to wipe the blood from his face. Jesus left his holy face as a perfect image on her veil. Many people likely watched Jesus carry his cross, and were likely frozen by the trauma they were witnessing... afraid to come forward to do anything, the situation feeling too big and people were powerless. After all, the crucifixion was inevitable. But Veronica let her love and empathy overwhelm the trauma and did something no one else would. She loved Jesus in the best way she could at that moment. She had to know that even after she wiped his face, the blood and sweat would return. Her effort could be seen as fruitless, but God recognized it as incredible – deserving of a miracle.

*Continues on page 26*

## Catholic Charities continued from page 25

the end of the road. Through our CAP (Counseling Assistance Program), where those suffering from mental illness and trauma receive accompaniment from a qualified therapist, we do not see the results or even know names, but we know we are often helping people through some of their most trying times. In our housing services, we also get to shelter people and return them to dignity.

But in our immigration services department, often there is no light at the end of the tunnel. We work in broken systems, in a broken society with problems we do not have the power to solve. How do

we keep from falling into despair, or being frozen, or cynically working where we cannot do a lot to change the “big picture?”

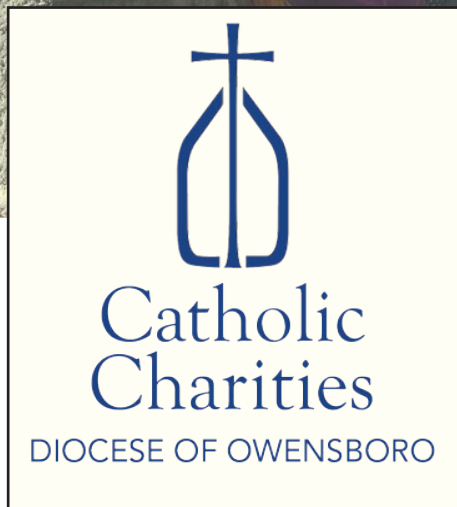
The answer lies in Veronica. We wipe their faces.

At Catholic Charities, we currently have 1,300 cases open for immigration relief including 200 asylum and humanitarian cases, 230 cases for unaccompanied children, 65 cases for survivors of domestic violence and crime, and hundreds of family reunification cases. Last year, we opened cases for 565 souls – and a little over 50% of those persons were children. About 43% of those assisted last year were Hispanic, 27% were Asian, 28% were

white, and 2% were African. One hundred percent represented Jesus to us and we tried to be Veronica to them.

We hope that through the good stewardship of the gifts we are given, that we can continue to serve in this way, no matter how broken our world is, to accompany those whom the world has broken – with our love, skill, and veil of accompaniment. ■

*Susan Montalvo-Gesser is the director of Catholic Charities for the Diocese of Owensboro.*



GREATER OWENSBORO CHAMBER OF COMMERCE  
**2023 Non-Profit of the Year**  
**HUMAN SERVICES**

## Worship: Celebrating together, united in one faith

BY DCN. KEN BENNETT, OFFICE OF  
WORSHIP

The Office of Worship plays a crucial role in numerous diocesan liturgical celebrations, including the annual Marriage Anniversary, Sophia Awards, and Respect Life Masses. It also actively participates in other significant liturgical events at the parish level, such as the installation of a pastor or the dedication of an altar. These are just a glimpse of the many retreats and celebrations in the church's life where the Office of Worship's involvement is pivotal.

Each liturgical celebration is special in its own way but those that bring people into the Church and those that confer ordination are particularly joyful.

In the past year, two men were ordained to the priesthood and now actively serve in our diocese. Nine men were accepted to candidacy for Holy Orders. One of these men will be ordained a

transitional deacon in the coming months and a priest next year. The remaining eight men will be ordained permanent deacons within the next few years.

The Office of Worship is also involved in the RCIA process and conducted a workshop with RCIA coordinators last year, where each coordinator was provided with the RCIA Ritual Book in English or Spanish, and an opportunity to network.

Our office coordinated three separate Rite of Election celebrations, one in Paducah and two in Owensboro. Each catechumen (unbaptized) and candidate (those already baptized) received a personal invitation from Bishop Medley to attend and participate in the Chrism Mass.

The Easter Vigil is the liturgical celebration where those who have gone through the RCIA process enter the Church. At this year's Easter Vigil from around the diocese, there were 96 catechumens who



ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD | WKC  
Bishop William F. Medley confirms a man during the 2023  
Easter Vigil at St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro.

were baptized, and 161 candidates who came into full communion with the Church.

In total, there were 257 people who entered the Church through the RCIA process, which represents a 23.8% increase from the year before.

The Lord has blessed our Church in many ways but especially with ordinations, those to be ordained, and those entering the Church. ■

*Dcn. Ken Bennett is the Co-Coordinator for the Office of Worship in the Diocese of Owensboro.*

## Eucharistic Congress attendee looks forward to the experience

BY ELIZABETH WONG BARNSTEAD, THE WESTERN KENTUCKY CATHOLIC

Jackson Purcell, a teacher in Bowling Green who attends St. Joseph Parish, is one of more than 240 people from the Diocese of Owensboro who will attend the National Eucharistic Congress this July, thanks to free tickets made available by the diocese.

"I'm grateful for the diocese handing out those tickets," said Purcell, who grew up at St. Jerome Parish in Fancy Farm. He said he hasn't had an opportunity to attend a large Catholic gathering like this since college, and looks forward to going for the first time "as an adult."

"I'm looking forward to the talks from the different figures in the Catholic Church," he said.

He said he isn't going with any planned expectations, and instead, "I'm just going to experience it." ■



## Un Mensaje del Obispo Medley: Aceptar el llamado



FOTO POR CORTESÍA RILEY GREIF  
Personal de la Diócesis de Owensboro en adoración.

Mi estimado pueblo de Dios,

Hay un cliché en el liderazgo de la Iglesia que dice que si has visto una diócesis... ¡entonces has visto sólo una diócesis! Esto se debe a que todas las diócesis son un conjunto único de prioridades y personas.

Esta edición del informe de impacto de *El Católico de Kentucky Occidental* es una gran cantidad de números y oficinas que representan cómo la Diócesis de Owensboro elige servir. Es una combinación única de recursos, servicios y ministerios diseñados para apoyar la fe católica aquí en la Iglesia de Kentucky Occidental.

Cada cargo y puesto proporciona diferentes conjuntos de habilidades que impactan nuestras comunidades parroquiales y escolares. Es mi esperanza y

mi oración que la comunidad aprecie lo duro que trabajamos para servir en las muchas maneras en que somos llamados a atender a nuestra gente, y que aceptemos el llamado que se nos ha dado.

¿Se aplican de manera justa las normas que nos rigen? ¿Inspiran los ministerios y retiros? ¿Nuestras escuelas y ministros juveniles actúan como fuertes sistemas de apoyo para los principales educadores de la familia: los padres? ¿Estamos extendiendo la mano a los marginados y dando la bienvenida a las personas de nuevas culturas que Jesús está confiando a nuestro cuidado? ¿Estamos enseñando generosidad, fortaleciendo los matrimonios y brindando oportunidades para la formación en la fe? ¿Estoy haciendo todo lo que puedo para guiar cada uno de estos esfuerzos y los demás esfuerzos que se llevan a cabo en toda la diócesis?

Esta publicación intenta rendir cuentas de alguna manera, pero los números, los artículos y las fotos nunca pueden contar la historia completa. Gran parte de nuestro trabajo refleja lo que nos piden que hagamos varios grupos de la diócesis y lo que la generosidad de la gente nos permite hacer.

Explore estos informes para leer sobre cómo servimos e invertimos en el futuro de nuestra Iglesia católica.

¡Que Dios los bendiga siempre!

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

## Evangelización y Discipulado: Una tarea central para hacer crecer nuestra fe



FOTO POR LA OFICINA DE EVANGELIZACIÓN Y DISCIPULADO  
Los fieles se reúnen en la casa de un feligrés para la reunión de una pequeña comunidad de Hechos 2:42.

POR EL DR. JEFF ANDRINI, OFICINA DE EVANGELIZACIÓN Y DISCIPULADO

La Oficina de Evangelización y Discipulado se centra en equipar a los adultos para vivir y compartir nuestra fe católica. En conjunto con el Comité del Avivamiento Eucarístico, el Obispo Medley y yo desarrollamos nuestras Pequeñas Comunidades de Hechos 2,42. Con 65 coordinadores parroquiales, 185 anfitriones y más de 2,000 participantes, este esfuerzo está produciendo abundantes frutos.

Como dice el Directorio para la Catequesis de 2020, “La comunidad cristiana es el sujeto principal de la catequesis” (n. 218). La Conferencia de Obispos Católicos de Estados Unidos redactó un documento titulado “Sentíamos arder nuestro corazón” en 1999 e hizo dos declaraciones importantes. Primeramente, “La formación en la fe del adulto... debe ser ‘la opción

central de la catequesis de adultos” (n. 5). Segundo, las pequeñas comunidades son “vehículos poderosos para la catequesis de adultos, ya que proporcionan oportunidades para aprender, rezar, dar apoyo mutuo y compartir experiencia de la vida y el servicio cristiano a la Iglesia y a la sociedad” (n. 106).

A través de programas como RENEW, LEVÁNTATE, pequeños grupos de Cursillo y más, hemos aprendido el valor de reunir a adultos para crecer y compartir nuestra fe católica y construir amistades significativas, apoyarse unos a otros y compartir de manera vulnerable las cargas de la vida. Dios está haciendo grandes cosas en nuestras Pequeñas Comunidades de Hechos 2,42. ¡Considere unirse a un grupo este otoño! ■

*El Dr. Jeff Andrini es el director de la Oficina del Evangelización y Discipulado de la Diócesis de Owensboro.*

## Oficina de Formación en la Fe: Fomentar la formación de líderes catequéticos

POR EL DIÁCONO JAY W. VANHOOSIER,  
OFICINA DE FORMACIÓN EN LA FE

La Oficina de Formación en la Fe desempeña un papel fundamental en la formación y el empoderamiento de los catequistas, los portadores de la antorcha de la educación religiosa parroquial. A través de sus diversos esfuerzos de formación, ha impactado tanto el crecimiento espiritual de los líderes catequéticos como la vitalidad de las comunidades católicas.

Al brindar oportunidades de formación, recursos y apoyo continuo, la Oficina de Formación en la Fe equipa a los líderes catequéticos con el conocimiento, las habilidades y la profundidad espiritual necesarios para transmitir eficazmente la riqueza de la fe católica y formar discípulos del Reino de Dios. Estos líderes, a su vez, se convierten en catalizadores de la transformación dentro de los programas que dirigen dentro y fuera de sus parroquias.

Además, las iniciativas de formación de la Oficina de Formación en la Fe fomentan una comprensión más profunda de las enseñanzas católicas, cultivan una relación personal con Dios y alimentan un espíritu de servicio y evangelización. A medida que los líderes catequéticos crecen en su fe y competencia, inspiran a otros a hacer lo mismo, creando un efecto dominó de renovación espiritual

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FOTO POR EL DIÁCONO JAY W. VANHOOSIER  
El Diácono Jay W. VanHoosier de la Oficina de Formación en la Fe habla en abril de 2024 en el retiro de catequistas, Gasper River Catholic Youth Camp and Retreat Center en Bowling Green.

y participación comunitaria.

Finalmente, el énfasis de la Oficina de Formación en la Fe en la formación continua garantiza que los líderes catequéticos sigan siendo dinámicos y receptivos a las necesidades cambiantes de los fieles a su cargo. Este compromiso con la excelencia en el liderazgo catequético no sólo fortalece la misión educativa de la Iglesia, sino que también enriquece las vidas de innumerables personas que buscan la verdad, el significado y la conexión en su camino de fe. ■

*El Diácono Jay W. VanHoosier es el director de la Oficina de la Formación en la Fe de la Diócesis de Owensboro.*

## Esfuerzos renovados en el ministerio con adolescentes: Razones para la esperanza



FOTO POR CORTESÍA DEL DIÁCONO CRISTÓBAL GUTIÉRREZ  
Feligreses de la parroquia Santa María en Franklin asistir Conferencia Nacional de Jóvenes Católicos (NCYC) 2023: Plenamente viva en Indianápolis, este noviembre.

### POR CHARLIE HARDESTY, OFICINA DEL MINISTERIO CON ADOLESCENTES Y JÓVENES ADULTOS

Voy a ser honesto, estaba bastante preocupado por el estado del ministerio con adolescentes en nuestra diócesis después de la pandemia. En ese momento, no había manera de saber cómo podrían cambiar las tendencias y si seríamos capaces de recuperar algún impulso en nuestro trabajo con los adolescentes y jóvenes. Al reflexionar ahora, encuentro muchas razones para tener esperanza.

Un punto de inflexión significativo se produjo en abril de 2023, cuando nuestra oficina tuvo la oportunidad de brindar formación actualizada en el ministerio con adolescentes a nuestros sacerdotes diocesanos en su día presbiteral de primavera. Solicitamos la ayuda de ProjectYM para brindar información sobre esta generación actual de adolescentes, sus necesidades y estrategias para el ministerio con adolescentes. Como resultado, varias parroquias renovaron sus esfuerzos y energía en el ministerio con adolescentes.

A lo largo del año, la asistencia a eventos

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FOTO POR CORTESÍA RILEY GREIF

El Obispo William F. Medley posa con jóvenes católicos de nuestra diócesis para asistir a la Conferencia Nacional de Jóvenes Católicos (NCYC) 2023: Plenamente Vivos en Indianápolis, este noviembre. en inglés) 2023: Plenamente Vivos en Indianápolis, este noviembre.

juveniles comenzó a crecer de manera constante y a recuperarse más parecidamente a cómo se sentían las cosas antes de la pandemia. Algo muy bonito para nosotros fue que en noviembre de 2023 asistimos a la Conferencia Nacional Católica de Jóvenes Adolescentes (NCYC por sus siglas en inglés) en Indianápolis con entradas agotadas, con una delegación de 215 personas de nuestra diócesis. Fue verdaderamente una celebración impulsada por el Espíritu Santo.

Los números nunca cuentan la historia completa, pero me siento profundamente alentado por la gran cantidad de parroquias y nuevos líderes juveniles que se han vuelto a involucrar en el ministerio con adolescentes. ■

*Charlie Hardesty es el director de la Oficina del Ministerio con Adolescentes y Jóvenes Adultos en la Diócesis de Owensboro.*



FOTO POR CORTESÍA RILEY GREIF

Los feligreses de nuestra diócesis asisten a la Conferencia Nacional de Jóvenes Católicos (NCYC, por sus siglas en inglés) 2023: Plenamente Vivos en Indianápolis, este noviembre.

## Estadísticas juveniles para 2023

33 adolescentes y adultos participaron del quinto Retiro de Lázaro



400 adolescentes y adultos participaron en el 26° retiro anual YOUTH 2000

6 líderes del ministerio con adolescentes asistieron a la formación Threivanooga de ProjectYM

215 adolescentes y adultos asistieron a la Conferencia Nacional Católica de Jóvenes Adolescentes



## Estadísticas de pastoral universitaria y jóvenes adultos para 2023

85 + estudiantes de la Universidad Western Kentucky, la Universidad Estatal Murray y la Universidad Brescia asistieron a la Conferencia SEEK.



23 jóvenes adultos participaron en el retiro *Journey Hike* de primavera u otoño

24 jóvenes adultos participaron en el retiro de un día en el Monasterio Pasionista

BG Catholic, OBKY Catholic y los jóvenes adultos católicos del área de Paducah-Lakes han estado ofreciendo eventos regulares en sus comunidades locales.



# El Ministerio Hispano/ Latino 'En salida con alegría'

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

“Discípulos misioneros en salida con alegría” es el título del nuevo y recientemente promulgado Plan Pastoral Nacional para el Ministerio Hispano/Latino. Ha sido un proceso de muchos años de trabajo mirando hacia atrás a nuestro contexto histórico común como católicos hispanos/latinos en los Estados Unidos, de alegrías y tristezas, discernimiento, desafíos, esperanzas y celebración.

Este Plan Nacional comenzó hace años, primero con consultas de base en parroquias compartidas en todo nuestro país, lo que llevó a conclusiones a nivel nacional y, finalmente, con nuestros obispos católicos aprobando unánimemente nuestro camino a seguir.

Ahora, mientras nos embarcamos en la etapa de implementación, el 9 de mayo de 2024, nuestra Diócesis de Owensboro tuvo el privilegio de ser anfitriona para una reunión provincial de directores diocesanos de varias oficinas de las siete diócesis de Kentucky y Tennessee. Esta resultó ser una hermosa oportunidad para que estos directores de diferentes oficinas diocesanas compartieran sus impresiones sobre el plan desde sus perspectivas. Un aspecto importante de este día fue atender el llamado a convertirnos en una Iglesia más sinodal



FOTO POR CORTESÍA RILEY GREIF  
Los niños de la iglesia católica de San José en Bowling Green participan en la procesión, que tiene lugar en la fiesta del Corpus Christi, el 11 de junio de 2023.

al escucharnos unos a otros en pequeños grupos. Mientras nos esforzamos por lograr una mejor inclusión e integración eclesial, le pedimos a Dios que nos ayude a trabajar juntos para servir mejor a la Iglesia en toda su diversidad. ■

*El Diácono Cristóbal Gutiérrez es el director del Ministerio Hispano/Latino de la Diócesis de Owensboro.*



FOTO POR CORTESÍA DEL DIÁCONO CRISTÓBAL GUTIÉRREZ  
(De izquierda a derecha) Sor Ofelia Quiroz, Sor Angélica López, Mons. William F. Medley y Sor Leopoldina Romano Carmona, Superiora General de las Misioneras del Sagrado Corazón de Jesús ad Gentes, que se encuentran en México. La Hermana Leopoldina visitó al Obispo Medley el 1 de mayo de 2024, durante un viaje a la Diócesis de Owensboro.