

Go Make Disciples

Archbishop Coakley elected president of USCCB



Archbishop Paul Coakley

By John Helsley
The Sooner Catholic

Archbishop Paul Coakley emerged from a list of 10 candidates in a vote Nov. 11 to be named president of the United State Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Archbishop Coakley, who has served as archbishop of Oklahoma

City since 2010, was elected on the third ballot during the second day of the USCCB Fall Plenary Assembly in Baltimore. He will step into the role immediately.

"I'm humbled by the trust which my brother bishops have placed in me by choosing me to serve as president of our episcopal conference," Archbishop Coakley said. "When I became a bishop, I chose as my episcopal motto, 'Duc in

altum,' or 'Put Out into the Deep.' "Once again, the Lord is inviting me to put out into deep waters in calling me to accept this service and burden of leadership today. I accept it in faith and with great hope."

The 10 candidates on the ballot were selected by the bishops. The

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Archbishop Coakley celebrated a Mass of Christian Burial for homeless people on All Souls' Day. Photo Chris Porter/Sooner Catholic.

'I believe everyone deserves a final resting place'

Sister BJ's commitment to the homeless carries on

By Sally Linhart
The Sooner Catholic

The procession toward the mausoleum at Resurrection Memorial Cemetery stood fitting for All Souls Day.

All souls.

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Christ to others: 20 candidates ordained as permanent deacons



Twenty men were ordained to the permanent diaconate by Archbishop Coakley on Nov. 7 at the Bl. Stanley Rother Shrine in Oklahoma City. Photo Chris Porter/Sooner Catholic.

By Eliana Tedrow
The Sooner Catholic

On Nov. 7, 20 men of God were ordained as permanent deacons within the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. The ordination Mass was celebrated at the Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine and marked the culmination of a rigorous five-year formation journey.

Deacon Norm Mejstrik, director of the permanent diaconate for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City, noted this year's deacon formation class's rapid progress since beginning their formation more than four years ago. He said the candidate couples possess a deep spirituality that was strengthened

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Put Out Into the Deep

Luke 5:4

Make a pilgrimage during this Jubilee Year

In October, I had the joy of leading our Catholic Foundation of Oklahoma pilgrimage to France and accompanying our 22 pilgrims. Pilgrimages are the occasion for a renewal of faith and a strengthening of hope. Hope is very much at the heart of this Jubilee year with it's theme "Pilgrims of Hope."

God's providence is so evident in the ups and downs of travel, in the unexpected graces awaiting us in the sacred sites we visit and our companions on the journey. This trip was no different.

We were blessed to walk in the footsteps of several great French saints – Saint Catherine Labouré, Saint Louise de Marillac, Saint Vincent de Paul and Saint Martin of Tours and others. The architecture was breathtaking at the many cathedrals and shrines where we were privileged to pray and celebrate Mass. Yet just as moving as these holy places were the conversations with fellow pilgrims over shared meals that nourished both body and soul.

One of the highlights, of course, was visiting Lisieux and praying before the relics of the great Saint Thérèse and her parents, Saints Louis and Zélie Martin. Her basilica, built in the Neo-Byzantine style, is massive and radiant, with 18 side altars donated by nations from around the world. It is the second-most visited pilgrimage site in France, after Lourdes.

Standing there, I was reminded of Thérèse's core message, that God can accomplish great things through even the smallest acts of love. In life, she desired to be a missionary, but she spent her days hidden in a Carmelite monastery. Now, her "Little Way" has touched the world. She reminds us that humility, trust in God and great love expressed in small acts are all that are required to become a saint.

Our pilgrimage began, fittingly, at Montmartre, where the Basilica of the Sacred Heart stands watch over Paris. It struck me that Saint Thérèse's own famous pilgrimage to Rome began in that same place. There, our group gathered in prayer and consecrated ourselves to the Sacred Heart before setting out on our journey, as she once did.

As our travels continued, we found ourselves in Normandy. In Bayeux, we celebrated Mass at the ancient cathedral before visiting Omaha Beach and the American Cemetery overlooking the sea. This day was particularly moving for me since my father was a GI who served in France during the Second World War. Standing among the thousands of white crosses was a deeply prayerful moment – a reminder of sacrifice, courage and the cost of freedom.

It was humbling to see how faith endures even in places marked by such sorrow and heroism. That day taught us that pilgrimage also means remembrance, carrying the stories of others close to our hearts as we walk in faith.

From there, we journeyed westward to Mont-Saint-Michel, the breathtaking island abbey that rises out of the tides like a vision of heaven touching earth. For more than a thousand years, pilgrims have climbed its winding steps in prayer. We celebrated Mass in the beautiful parish church within its ancient walls. Walking its ramparts and gazing out at the sea below, I was reminded that our lives, too, are like the tides, rising and falling under the guidance of God's provi-

dence, always returning to him.

Our final days brought us to Solesmes, the Benedictine abbey renowned for its Gregorian chant. There, prayer and beauty are inseparable – every note, every silence an offering of praise. Listening to the monks chanting the ancient psalms, time itself seemed to pause. It was a glimpse of the heavenly liturgy, the worship that never ends.

I had been privileged to spend some time there as a much younger man, and returning reminded me how powerfully God has been at work in my life from then to now. The steady rhythm of the liturgy, day after day and year after year, has sustained me in my own ministry and taught me that fidelity is often where grace is most profoundly found.

Reflecting on all we had seen, from the quiet convent of Lisieux to the windswept shores of Normandy, from the mystical towers of Mont-Saint-Michel to the solemn chant of Solesmes, and many other sacred sites I realized that pilgrimage is not about distance but about depth. It draws us deeper into God's love and teaches us to recognize his presence everywhere: in joy and fatigue, in laughter and prayer, in grandeur and simplicity alike.

Saint Thérèse herself understood this truth. Reflecting on her pilgrimage to Rome, she wrote:

"I was full of poetic thoughts at the sight of these wonders which I was looking at for the first and last time. But not of regrets; my heart was set on wonders greater than these. I had seen earth's beauties; now I had no eyes but for the beauties of heaven." (Story of a Soul, ch. XXII)

Looking upon the great basilica in honor of this "little saint," I was reminded again of her message: God can do great things even through the littlest of acts done with love. Humility and trust in him are the heart of holiness.

Pilgrimage, when done well, delights in the beauties of this world. But even more, it awakens in us a longing for the world to come. Each step, each prayer and each shared meal is part of a greater journey, leading us ever closer to the One who is both our destination and our companion along the way.

I would recommend undertaking a pilgrimage to all the faithful. You don't need to travel all the way to France to encounter the Lord. We have wonderful places of grace even here in our own archdiocese, including the Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine, that can awaken the soul to God's presence. We also have the National Shrine of the Infant of Prague in Prague and the diocesan shrine of Our Lady of Fatima in Bison.

Even an impromptu visit to your own parish church reflects this important truth: this life is a journey meant to lead us to God.

I encourage all to make a pilgrimage to one of these or any other pilgrim destination during this Holy Year dedicated to Hope. As Saint Thérèse reminds us, this world is merely our ship, and Heaven is our home.



Archbishop Paul S. Coakley

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By Sooner Catholic Staff

Additional coverage of Church and archdiocesan news and events, only on [sooneratholic.org](#).

✓ **To send photos**, event information or story ideas, e-mail communications@archokc.org.

✓ **May the rights**, language, land and traditions of Indigenous people be respected. We pray to the Lord. Lord, hear our prayer.

✓ **The Archdiocese** of Oklahoma City Catholic in Recovery meetings are 7 p.m. Tuesdays in the Meerschaert House, second floor, at St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, 1901 N.W. 18 St. in Oklahoma City. The meetings are for individuals and families seeking recovery from a variety of addictions, compulsions and unhealthy attachments. For more information, visit catholicinrecovery.com or contact Kendra M. at (405) 709-2895; kmann@archokc.org.



@archokc



Archdiocese of Oklahoma City

Arquidiócesis de Oklahoma City

Lord,
we thank you
for the goodness of
our people and for the
spirit of justice that fills
this nation.
We thank you for the
beauty and fullness of
the land and the
challenge of the cities.
We thank you for our
work and our rest,
for one another, and for
our homes.
We thank you, Lord:
accept our thanksgiving
on this day.
We pray and give thanks
through Jesus Christ
our Lord.
Amen

Statement from Archbishop Paul S. Coakley on the granting of clemency to Tremane Wood



The Cathedral Choir performed during the Chrism Mass on April 15 at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Oklahoma City. Photo Chris Porter/Sooner Catholic.

Music carries meaning in the celebration of the Mass

By Olivia Dailey
The Sooner Catholic

The Catholic Mass intentionally engages all five senses. People see beautiful art, taste the Eucharist, feel rosary beads, smell incense and, of course, hear the music.

Catholicism and music cannot be untangled. While music holds significance in nearly all religions, Catholicism employs it with remarkable precision and has influenced the development of Western music as people know it today.

The Catholic Church's art patronage led to some of the most famous works of art, and not just visual art. Monks and nuns were given the freedom of time and space to create music that people sing to this day. As an example, the "Do-Re-Mi" song originated from an eighth-century hymn written by a Benedictine monk.

The Roman Missal provides the music instructions for the Mass, and in it lays out Gregorian chant as the primary music of the Catholic Church. The pipe organ is the primary instrument of the Catholic Church. So each liturgy should involve either that music and that instrument, or music and instruments that were inspired by Gregorian chant or the organ.

"What we often call 'Gregorian' chant was one of many chant traditions, and it formed the backbone of Catholic musical life for more than a millennium," said Paul Feller-Simmons, Ph.D., assistant professor of music (musicolo-

gy) at the University of Oklahoma.

"Chant structured the daily rhythm of devotion, with monks and nuns sometimes singing six or seven hours a day. Early notation, musical education, and even later polyphonic styles all grew out of these chant practices, which remained alive long after the medieval period."

Liturgical music is music specifically written for either Mass or for the Liturgy of the Hours, like Vespers. Just like how the readings, or lectionaries, follow a prescribed order, so that all the Catholic churches in the world universally offer the same readings each day, the music performed during Mass is also predetermined, but not only that, the content of the music, the words sung, align with the message of the day's readings.

This is apparent when it comes to big solemnities, such as Christmas, where people expect to hear traditional Christmas carols like "Silent Night," but in fact, every Sunday of the year is its own feast with music written specifically for that day.

On the continuum of music in the Church, Nolan Patrick Reilly, director of music and organist at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, said, "We are a Church that believes that the Communion of Saints is present at every Mass. We draw deeply from our ancestral history, and it's important that we continue to incorporate the music our ancestors wrote. It gives me chills to realize that some of our chants have been sung for more than 800

years. Christians around the world – saints and sinners alike – have sung the very same words to the very same melodies in the very same parts of the Mass. Imagine that for a moment: your favorite saint likely raised their voice during Mass to sing some of the very same things you and I sing today."

Earlier this year, a popular video of Pope Leo XIV chanting the "Regina Coeli" inspired the Pontifical Institute for Sacred Music to launch a video series, Sing with the Pope. These short, instructional videos detail the theory and technique around certain phrases, teaching anyone how to sing simple Gregorian chants during Mass.

Music is a powerful way to not just deliver a message but to really drive it home.

A song stays in someone's mind more than a lecture. That is why people sing the alphabet, to learn it. Singing not only supports the scripture during the Mass but is also explicitly mentioned in scripture. One of the oldest parts of the Bible is a hymn sung in Exodus, where the Israelites thank God for their arrival and safety. Singing is mentioned several times in the Book of Psalms, like in 98:5: "Sing praises to the Lord with the lyre, with the lyre and the sound of melody!" Saint Augustine is attributed to the well-known quote, "to sing is to pray twice."

During Mass, a song is a prayer.
Olivia Dailey is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.

Archbishop Coakley's Calendar

The following events are part of Archbishop Coakley's official calendar.

- Nov. 23** – Native American Mass, 3 p.m., Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine
- Nov. 25** – Mass, 11:30 a.m., Saint Francis de Sales Chapel, Catholic Pastoral Center
- Nov. 26** – Mass, 11:30 a.m., Saint Francis de Sales Chapel, Catholic Pastoral Center
- Dec. 1-6** – Delegation to Guatemala
- Dec. 7** – Advent Lessons and Carols, 6 p.m., The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, OKC



**Most Reverend
Paul S. Coakley**

Archbishop of Oklahoma City
Publisher

John Helsley
Editor

Dana Attocknie
Managing Editor

Volume 47, Number 22

Sooner Catholic Newspaper
7501 Northwest Expressway
Oklahoma City, OK 73132
(405) 721-1810

E-mail: communications@
archokc.org

Mailing Address:
P.O. Box 32180
Oklahoma City, OK 73123

Visit us online at
sooneratholic.org

Visit the archdiocesan website
at archokc.org

The Sooner Catholic
(USPS 066-910) is published
biweekly except for once in
January and July by the
Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

The newspaper is not responsible
for unsolicited material.
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Subscription rate: \$35 per year
for all who are not members of the
Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.
Periodical postage paid at
Oklahoma City, OK 73125.

POSTMASTER: Send address
changes to the Sooner Catholic,
P.O. Box 32180, Oklahoma City,
OK 73123.



*The Sooner Catholic
is supported through the
Annual Catholic Appeal and Sooner
Catholic Communications Appeal.*

Dcn. DeForest Warren Hearn, Jr.

Deacon DeForest Warren “DW” Hearn, Jr. died on Oct. 31, 2025. He was born in Brownsville, Texas on Aug. 13, 1945, to DeForest Hearn and Marguerite Muller Hearn. He was the eldest of six children. The family moved to Midwest City in 1952, where his father started a machine shop business.

A good student, DW showed an early aptitude for math and went on to study mechanical engineering at the University of Oklahoma. He was active in the Engineer’s Club and was selected for membership in the honorary Loyal Knights of Old Trusty.

While at OU, he met Paula Smith at a Catholic student dance. They fell in love, and after graduation, married in 1967 and moved to Chicago. Just a few months later DW was drafted into the Army and stationed at Aberdeen Proving Ground, Maryland, where he joined a team of scientists and engineers who conducted research and performed Honor Guard duties. In 1970, DW and Paula returned to Oklahoma City where they welcomed baby Brian. DW, with his father, founded Hearn Rail Drill Company.

In 1973, sister Kara was born, and soon after the family joined The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help where they worship to this day. While working full time, DW completed an MBA at OU and received his Professional Engineer Registration. He was active in the National Management Association and the Society of Manufacturing Engineers where he served both as chairman. His engineering career also took him to CMI Corporation and to Little Giant Pump Company, where he became director of engineering.

In 2000, a carefully planned dream was realized when DW and Paula both quit their jobs and began a three-year adventure in

Europe. From their Italian base, they visited 26 different countries on three continents, recording their experiences in journals and film. Back in Oklahoma in 2004, they continued to travel the world, volunteered at Sr. BJ’s Pantry, and returned to their beloved ballroom dancing.

In 2009, Monsignor Ed Weisenburger encouraged DW to apply for the archdiocese’s diaconate program. He was ordained a deacon in October 2013 and served at the cathedral until 2025. During that time, he pursued his studies at Newman University and received a Bachelor of Arts degree in 2016.

Deacon DW was devoted to daily Mass and adoration and participated for years in a Bible study group. He started a weekly virtual prayer group at the cathedral, visited homebound people, performed baptisms and burials and was a volunteer chaplain at Integris Health Baptist Medical Center.

Deacon DW was pre-deceased by his parents and sisters Anita Ulicky and Carol Worley. He is survived by Paula, his wife of 58 years, son Brian (Sarah), daughter Kara (Bill Miller), and by grandsons Walter and Sullivan. He is also survived by sisters Eileen Hearn and Barbara Burkhard (Alan), brother Deacon Randy Hearn (Lynda), sister-in law Lorie Cotter, brother-in law Gary Worley and many beloved nieces and nephews.

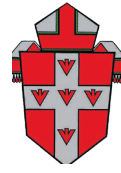
An evening prayer service was held Nov. 7 at Smith & Kernke, 23rd Street Chapel. The Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Nov. 8 at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help in Oklahoma City.

Memorials in his name may be made to Sister BJ’s Pantry.



Dcn. DeForest Warren Hearn, Jr.

OFFICIAL CLERGY ASSIGNMENTS



Archdiocese of Oklahoma City

Effective Date: Nov. 11



Administrator

Rev. Deva Undralla

St. Ann Church, Elgin
Mother of Sorrows Church, Apache
Our Lady of Perpetual Help Church, Sterling

Effective Date: Nov. 6



Hospital Chaplain

Rev. Antony Kuriakose

Holy Family Church (assigned by St. Thomas Syro-Malabar Diocese of Chicago)
SSM Health St. Anthony Hospital
Mercy Hospital



Dcn. Bart Brashears

partnership that shaped every part of his life.

Through the 80s and 90s Bart and Connie raised their family in Weatherford while Bart worked for Purina Mills as an agricultural specialist. They were active parishioners at Saint Eugene Catholic Church. Bart organized pancake breakfasts, taught middle school Sunday school, helped with Saint Vincent de Paul and served as lector and communion minister.

Bart served on parish council and was instrumental in the building of the education wing. He also made his Cursillo 34 years ago and helped start the Cursillo community in Weatherford. He enjoyed serving on many Cursillo retreat teams.

In 1999 Bart and Connie moved to Blackwell where Bart worked in the banking industry for 15 years. In 2002, Bart was ordained a permanent deacon for the Archdiocese

of Oklahoma City. Bart served parishes in Blackwell, Tonkawa and Stillwater, visiting the sick, counseling families through hardship, and assisting priests at Mass.

He spent more than 20 years ministering to countless parishioners through baptisms, marriages, burials and sponsoring many on their path to joining the Catholic Church. Bart also served on the board of Birthright of Stillwater, a pro-life organization. His ministry reflected his deep compassion and strong faith.

When Bart and Connie returned to Stillwater in 2015, they built

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CCHD annual collection to aid families in poverty

The annual Catholic Campaign for Human Development (CCHD), the domestic anti-poverty program of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, will once again support initiatives that empower families and communities to break the cycle of poverty across the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.

Each year, the national and local CCHD offices provide grants to organizations and parishes working to address the root causes of poverty through programs that uphold the dignity of every person and foster community transformation rooted in faith.

This year, two Oklahoma-based initiatives received grants from the national CCHD office:

- RestoreOKC was awarded funding to expand its Restore OKC Youth Internship Program, an innovative initiative providing young people with leadership development, faith formation, and practical job skills while serving their community.
- Fertile Ground received a national CCHD grant to support its Potting Soil Project, which promotes sustainability and faith-based community development through environmental stewardship.

The Archdiocese of Oklahoma City also distributed local CCHD grants to parishes and

community partners serving families in need across central and western Oklahoma. This year’s recipients include:

- Saint Patrick Catholic Church – grant to support new signage and summer retreats for Vagabond Missions, an outreach organization sharing the Gospel with young people by raising up and sending out missionary disciples.
- Archdiocese of Oklahoma City – grant to support youth participation in the Steubenville Youth Conference.
- Rose State College – support for community service and student engagement initiatives.
- First Presbyterian Church – grant to improve the Community Garden Project.
- Saint Matthew Catholic Church – funding for a three-door commercial freezer to enhance its parish food ministry.
- Saint Francis Xavier Catholic Church – support for the parish’s Biblical School adult faith formation program.
- Saint Patrick Catholic Church – additional grant to support the Catholic Homeschool Co-Ed program.
- Christ the King Catholic Church – funding for the Saint Martin Mabel Bassett Prison Ministry, serving incarcerated women through faith and fellowship.



Chris Engel (left) and Cici Pham, CCHD summer intern, presented a check to Debbie MacDonald of RestoreOKC. *Photo provided.*

- OKC Women’s Sanctuary Development Center – grant for new shelving to expand its resource and outreach center.

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their dream home and opened Hidden Meadows Bed and Breakfast on the Kastl family farm. Bart loved welcoming visitors with a quick wit, a great story, and freshly “squeezed” orange juice. His humor was gentle, and his joy in storytelling made him unforgettable.

Deacon Bart is survived by Connie, his wife of 50 years; his daughter Angela Studnek and her husband Jon and their daughters Abby, Emma, and Julia; his son Very Reverend Christopher Brashears, the Pastor of Saint Benedict Catholic Church in Shawnee; his daughter Amanda Jones and her husband Kyle and their children Annamarie, Christopher and Sarah; and his brothers Kendall and wife Paula Brashears and Michael and wife Gwen Brashears and nine nieces and nephews. Bart was proud beyond words of his family. His eyes always lit up when he spoke of his grandchildren.

He will be remembered for his steadfast faith, kindness and humor, and for his gift for making everyone feel known and valued. His family takes comfort in knowing that his story continues in all the lives he touched and all the hearts he warmed.

The wake service was held on Nov. 18 at Saint Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Stillwater. A Mass of Christian Burial was celebrated on Nov. 19 also at Saint Francis.

The family would like to express appreciation to the friends and family who have visited Bart in the last few months. In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation in honor of Deacon Bart Brashears to the Serra Club in support of Catholic Vocations at serraokc.org or dioceseoftulsa.org/serra-club-of-tulsa.



St. Teresa continues All Saints Day tradition



What began in 2011 as a small alternative to a Halloween celebration for catechists, Doug and Heather Nation have grown into a tradition at Saint Teresa of Avila Catholic Church in Harrah.

On Oct. 26, parishioners at Saint Teresa enjoyed the annual All Saints Day party. Originally hosted in the hallway of the education building, the event grew moving to the gym and now fills the entire Family Center.

There were games, ice cream, a costume party and parish organizations offered a “treat or toy” table, offering simple toys, games and candy.

The Nations, who have served as catechists together for 14 years across various elementary grades, continue to lead the event, which has become an event children and families look forward to each year. *Photos provided.*



Día de Muertos celebration Morelia, Michoacán, Mexico. *Photos Branden Seid.*

An encounter with Día de Muertos: faith and remembrance among marigolds and monarchs

By Branden Seid
The Sooner Catholic



Branden Seid

The idea sounded good to make a trip to Mexico to attend Día de Muertos – the Day of the Dead – a celebration rooted not in fear of death, but in the faith that love transcends it. And it was, although not without some twists and turns.

First came a long day of travel, nerve-racking enough to make me question the trip entirely. Arriving in Morelia, Michoacán, Mexico, I suddenly felt the weight of being in a foreign country where I couldn't speak the language. Moving through security checkpoints, immigration and customs I had no idea what waited for me on the other side.

After a full bag search and clearing customs, I stepped out to find that my transportation was nowhere in sight. For the first time in a long while, fear began to set in. It was the kind of fear that strips away confidence, reminding you how fragile you are when surrounded by voices you can't understand.

Finally, I asked a police officer

for help. He spoke little English, but understood when I showed him the picture of the company I was looking for. Eventually, I was on my way, ultimately arriving at my resort feeling exhausted, disoriented and grateful. The only thing I felt was relief.

That night, colleagues persuaded me to go to dinner in Morelia's city center. It was Halloween, and the streets were shoulder-to-shoulder with children in costumes, musicians, families celebrating and vendors filling the air with the smell of fresh cooked tamales, quesadillas and tacos.

We visited the cathedral, where Masses were celebrated nearly every hour on Sundays. The crowd was astonishing, the energy electric, and yet beneath the surface I could feel something deeper: the anticipation of Día de Muertos. It had been a long travel day, but it was the beginning of something that would change how I see death, grief and remembrance forever.

On Saturday we gathered for lunch and calavera face paintings before setting out for what was called The Night of the Souls. On the way, our bus wound through small towns where daily life seemed frozen in time.

As we approached Tzintzuntzan and stepped out of the bus we

stepped directly into the heart of the celebration. We had arrived at a large open area outside of the city's main drive where families were blessing floral arches. While walking through the courtyard we witnessed many Comparsas – costumed singers, musicians and dancers – who were headed in the direction of the cemetery. Once we had arrived through massive crowds of people celebrating and dancing and taking in all the sights and sounds, we finally arrived at the entrance of Panteon de Tzintzuntzan (Cemetery of Tzintzuntzan).

It was the beginning of what we had been anticipating: Noche de Muertos.

No photograph could capture the sights in those cemeteries. The air was thick with incense, smoke and the fragrance of thousands of marigolds and candles. Every grave was a masterpiece — some simple, some ornate, but each glowing with hundreds of candles flickering in the night.

Bands played in the distance and within the cemetery, fireworks exploded overhead all in remembrance of the souls that were believed to return that sacred night. At one graveside, musicians danced, played music and handed out beers as we went by — not in irreverence, but in celebration.

It was joy intertwined with grief, laughter threaded through tears. This was a fusion of Aztec ancestry and Catholic faith — a theology lived, not preached.

Here, death was not denied or hidden away. It was embraced, sanctified and transformed. The faithful were not mourning as those without hope. They were proclaiming, in candlelight and song, that love never dies.

As we traveled back to the lake-side resort we paused for dinner and drinks before moving on to the next few cemeteries. The next cemeteries were on islands in Lake Patzcuaro. We traveled by boat from island to island in a country where OSHA did not exist. There were no handrails on the docks leading to the boats, no emergency lights, and definitely not enough life jackets on board for the occupied amount. Yet there was no fear in their eyes. Only pride, reverence and the rhythm of faith.

On the island of Yunuen, the cemetery was small, maybe an acre or two, yet filled with people. When we arrived, a band was playing. Moments later, the music stopped as the priest began Mass beneath the open sky. The families prayed, children played and

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candles burned on every side.

The next stop: Pacanda Island. We climbed steep paths in the darkness, hearing only the distant bells and the hum of the boat below. At the top, the night opened into a field alive with celebration: dancing, singing, praying — all at once. We passed by little shacks, houses and sleeping areas with dogs barking at every passing. Bells rang, rosaries murmured, guitars strummed. It was as if heaven and earth had agreed, for one night, to meet in the middle.

Then we reached the final cemetery, Panteon Pacanda — the most peaceful of all. The glow from thousands of candles illuminated the marigolds like a living fire. Vendors sold bread, candles, flowers, cerveza and candy, but no one was there for profit. No marketing campaign, no sponsorship, no fanfare. Just love, simple, poor, sincere love. I realized then that remembrance doesn't require wealth. It requires heart. These families, many with almost nothing, give everything to honor those they love. They teach us what it means to remember not as an event, but as a vocation.

The next morning, we learned that some communities, like Patzcuaro, attract tourists and outside funding from the state tourist board which makes their altars larger and their streets more crowded. The islands we visited on the other hand receive no such attention. Their devotion is private, family-built and deeply spiritual. They do it not for show, not for commerce, but because it is who they are.

Our guide explained that for the Purépecha people, the lake itself is sacred, a portal between the worlds where their loved one's travel through to visit and have those family reunions. The marigold arches symbolize the gateways between heaven, earth and the



underworld. Monarch butterflies, arriving each year around the same time, are believed to be returning souls; a family reunion written in wings and wind.

Later that afternoon, back in Morelia, the tone shifted a bit. As we traveled through Morelia Square near the cathedral to visit the numerous ofrendas and tapetes, there was a calm protest going on. We asked the guide what it was about and he said, "Oh maybe something about the laborers demanding fair treatment and justice." Our guide brushed it off as if it happened all the time.

We continued the tour and after it completed, we went to the market. As I made my way back toward the cathedral after the market with some colleagues, we noticed smoke and a lot of noise in between the cathedral and the state government

buildings. The protest had turned violent as protestors broke into the Palacio de Gobierno de Michoacán (the Government Palace of Michoacán).

As crowds ran towards us, they were holding shirts over their mouths and wiping their eyes. I was just across the street, caught suddenly in the cloud of gas. My throat burned, my eyes stung, and my heart raced. Through the chaos I found my colleagues and we ran to the restaurant that we had planned on having supper. They shut the doors behind us, sealing out the sting of gas. Inside, strangers comforted one another, eyes red, voices hoarse, we waited.

The protests had erupted in grief and anger after the assassination of Uruapan's mayor the night before, killed by the cartels as he attended Día de Muertos event with his

family. Within 30 minutes, the city exhaled. The restaurant reopened its windows as if nothing had happened. The people of Morelia had returned to what they know best — endurance. Life went on.

That night, as we shared dinner, I thought about how these same people who celebrate their dead with such beauty also live with constant fear, of corruption, of violence, of systems that fail them. And yet, in that fear, they remain faithful. They choose beauty anyway. They choose remembrance anyway. They choose to love anyway.

As I flew home, I kept thinking of those cemeteries. The glow of candles across the lake. The smell of incense. The marigolds bright as the evening sun. The Night of the Souls had shown me that faith and poverty are not opposites. In Michoacán, they coexist in a sacred harmony.

For those of us who serve the Church through Catholic cemeteries, this is the essence of our ministry. We are not merely stewards of land; we are caretakers of memory, midwives of hope.

The families of Michoacán, living with so little, reminded me that the greatest act of mercy is not in marble or bronze, but in presence — in the simple act of showing up at the grave, again and again, with faith that love endures beyond death.

The people of Michoacan taught me something no conference session or policy manual could: that holiness often begins where the world sees little worth and takes root in places it deems insignificant.

I also prayed that our cemeteries, too, might be places where fear gives way to faith, where remembrance burns bright, and where, like those families in Michoacán, we never forget that the soul is never truly gone.





Archbishop Coakley celebrated a Mass of Christian Burial for homeless people on All Souls' Day, Nov. 2, in the Our Lady of Sorrows Chapel at Resurrection Memorial Cemetery in Oklahoma City. Sr. Barbara Joseph Foley, of Sr. BJ's Pantry, organized the first Mass for homeless friends in 2022. *Photos Chris Porter/Sooner Catholic.*



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On Nov. 2, All Souls Day, the unclaimed remains of 45 departed souls were solemnly carried to their final resting place. Archbishop Coakley led the procession, which included knights and dames of The Order of Malta.

The remains of each, whose names were written on the urns, were prayed over as the urn was carried to the crypt at the mausoleum, to be finally interred.

Sister Barbara Joseph Foley, C.S.T., who started the annual tradition of honoring those unclaimed three years ago, said "I wanted it to be personal and prayerful."

A day to honor the deceased, All Souls Day is a time to recognize and pray for all who have died. At Resurrection Cemetery, that extends to those unclaimed, with a Mass of Remembrance, celebrated by Archbishop Coakley in the Our Lady of Sorrows Chapel, preceding interment.

"We are like brothers and sisters," Sister BJ said. "This cause is close to their heart, too, so they are part of it."

This special Mass for the homeless was first held in 2022 after Sister BJ learned of the shocking number of remains that go unclaimed.

"In my heart, I felt called as a work of mercy to bury all these people and make sure they have a final resting place," said Sister BJ. "It was so beautiful that I decided I wanted to do it every year."

A long-time advocate for the homeless, Sister BJ opened Sister BJ's pantry at NW 4 and Clasen nearly 20 years ago. Through donations made to the pantry, she was able to purchase a crypt, and the unclaimed remains of 90 men and women were interred the first year the Mass was held.



"For me, this is an extension of the Corporal Work of Mercy of burying the dead," Sister BJ said. "I believe everyone deserves a final resting place."

The crypt, which can hold the remains of 300 people, is expected to be full by next year.

Through donations raised by Nolan Reilly, director of music and organist at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, a second crypt was purchased, allowing for the interment of an additional 300 unclaimed remains.

Sister BJ called her mission to provide the deceased with the dignity of proper interment "a beautiful way to honor homeless people – people who have names."

Jason Zimdars, regional hospitaller for the Order of Malta, described the event as a way to provide Corporal and Spiritual Works of Mercy, "by burying and praying for the dead."

"This is one of the highlights of each year for our members," he said of the order, "and it's impossible to not be moved emotionally by the experience."

Sally Linhart is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.

Elected USCCB president, Coakley talks immigration, Vigano criticism, lifting up saints

By Michael R. Heinlein
OSV News

BALTIMORE – Archbishop Coakley was elected as the next president of the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, succeeding Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio of the U.S. Archdiocese for the Military Services, who served in that office since 2022.

Archbishop Coakley sat down with OSV News to discuss his new leadership role in the conference. The interview has been edited for length and clarity.

OSV News: What do you hope to bring to your exercise of the office of president in the next three years?

Archbishop Coakley: I would like to demon-

strate that we as bishops of the United States are far more unified pastorally, fraternally than is often portrayed in a lot of the media and a lot of people's imaginations. The narrative is out there that the American bishops are divided, we're polarized, and that's not been my experience. I think there's a lot more mutual understanding and support for one another and genuine friendship among us. So I would like to be able to show that over the course of the presidency that I'm embarking upon – that we are a wonderful fraternal body and united in this common mission as successors of the apostles in the United States.

OSV News: The issue of immigration is one of the political issues that most would agree is dividing Catholics at this moment. What do you think could be the most effective in helping the faithful build a truly Catholic perspective on this issue?

Archbishop Coakley: One thing that comes to mind is to help our people see this not as a political right or left, red or blue issue, (but as) a concern that we share as members of the Body of Christ, as Christians, as members of the baptized – certainly, as bishops and priests. We have concern for our brothers and sisters, for their well-being, that their human dignity be respected and protected and promoted. But we also have a concern for our nation – that everybody deserves to live in security and peace. And so we have a responsibility as a nation to protect our own borders and promote access to this nation in a legal fashion. Reform of our immigration policies would be so beneficial for everybody in this nation.

OSV News: Archbishop (James F.) Checchio said yesterday in his presentation to the bishops on the conference budget, "Times have changed, but our physical structure has not. And the way we do business largely remains the same." Drawing from your experience of leadership so far in this conference, what would you say might need to change about the way the conference does business?

Archbishop Coakley: Well, we certainly need to be good stewards of our assets and resources. I'm not sure if Archbishop Checchio was referring to the physical USCCB headquarters. If so, I would tend to agree. We have a beautiful

facility, a beautiful building, but it's being underutilized right now. We'd like to find a good, practical and economically feasible way of being good stewards of that resource.

OSV News: No question, it's an exciting time in the church right now in the United States, with the election of the first U.S.-born pope. How do you hope to best be of service to him as president of the U.S. bishops' conference?

Archbishop Coakley: I really look forward to meeting Pope Leo – as a bishop, as a fellow American, as a Catholic. I would like to be able to have a line of communication with him, an opportunity to help share our perspectives, that is on behalf of the bishops, on how things are here in the United States. I don't know where his information sources might be, I'm sure they're trustworthy and good, but I want him to understand our United States Catholic lived reality, and particularly our love and support for him and for his predecessors. I think that American Catholics have been historically very supportive of Rome and the papacy, not just financially but spiritually. There's a great love for the pope among our American Catholics, and I want him to experience that from us.

OSV News: The church in the U.S. is experiencing growth, in many areas including your own. But there is also what appears to be a general overarching decline of our institutional footprint across the country, with closures and mergers of parishes, schools and other facilities. How would you encourage Catholics observing this decline to keep the faith?

Archbishop Coakley: Our institutions obviously are very important, but the church is more than its institutions. So my encouragement for Catholics is to remain rooted in Jesus Christ, to become disciples, to live that discipleship in terms of mission. And I think that's how the church will be revitalized, as we have a renewed encounter with the person of Jesus Christ and under the power of his Spirit, to serve him in our parishes, in our schools, communities, our homes and families, particularly among our lay Catholics, to be the light, to be the leaven that we're called to be. And to the extent that we do

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incumbent president and vice president, Archbishop Timothy Broglio and Archbishop William Lori, are stepping down as their three-year terms expire.

After two rounds of voting, the third vote was cast with only Coakley and Bishop Daniel E. Flores of the Diocese of Brownsville (Texas) remaining, Coakley winning 128-109. Flores was elected vice president in a subsequent vote of the remaining nine candidates.

Archbishop Coakley, a bishop since 2004 having previously served in the Diocese of Salina, has been serving in the role of USCCB secretary but will surrender that position as president.

"I ask for the prayers of all of

the clergy, religious women and men and the faithful of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City," Archbishop Coakley said. "I have great confidence in the staff of both the USCCB and our own archdiocese. They will help me shoulder these responsibilities."

"Please pray that I may be a faithful steward and a wise servant of unity and communion with our Holy Father, Pope Leo, and with my brother bishops and priests."

To be elected, the bishop must receive a simple majority of the voting bishops. After the president is selected from the 10-person slate, a vote is then taken among the remaining nine candidates for vice president.

The list of candidates:
■ Bishop Robert E. Barron, Dio-

cese of Winona-Rochester
■ Archbishop Paul S. Coakley, Archdiocese of Oklahoma City
■ Bishop Daniel E. Flores, Diocese of Brownsville
■ Archbishop Richard G. Henning, Archdiocese of Boston
■ Bishop David J. Malloy, Diocese of Rockford
■ Archbishop Nelson J. Pérez, Archdiocese of Philadelphia
■ Bishop Kevin C. Rhoades, Diocese of Fort Wayne-South Bend
■ Archbishop Alexander K. Sample, Archdiocese of Portland in Oregon
■ Archbishop Charles C. Thompson, Archdiocese of Indianapolis
■ Archbishop Edward J. Weisenburger, Archdiocese of Detroit

Weisenburger is a former priest and vicar general in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City.
The only previous USCCB president with Oklahoma ties was Archbishop John R. Quinn, who served as archbishop of Oklahoma City from 1971 to 77, before being appointed Archbishop of San Francisco, where he was when elected.
Archbishop Coakley's record as a bishop is noted for his staunch defense for a culture of life, standing strong against both abortion and the death penalty. This year, he has criticized President Donald Trump's mass deportation efforts, while also maintaining that countries have a right to protect their borders.
John Helsley is editor of the Sooner Catholic.

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during their time together as a cohort.

"The men developed excellent preaching skills based on their theological studies and appeal to the Holy Spirit," he said.

Deacon Mejstrik emphasizes the heart of the permanent diaconate and its role in the Church today is to be "Christ to others," especially to those on the margins and the most in need.

"The word 'deacon' means 'servant,'" said Deacon Mejstrik. "Deacons are ministers of liturgy, word and charity. Of those three, charity should be the main focus of the servant."

"My prayer is that the new deacons and their wives will be strong models of discipleship in their parishes and communities, and through their example and work, lead many people to God," he says.

Deacon Jose Martinez and his wife, Maria, were among those who recently answered their call into the diaconate.

"I first sensed God's calling to the diaconate, was when I lived a Cursillo retreat in 2016, I

had this burning love to serve God. The call unfolded overtime when I kept hearing

God's voice saying don't give up, and things started to go as God planned," said Deacon Martinez.

Deacon Martinez said he plans to leave it in God's hands to guide him where he is needed most, but said he looks forward to ministering to matrimonies.

"In today's world, couples need lots of help, especially young couples, to help keep Jesus Christ at the center of their marriage. Because it's a three-person relationship: husband, Jesus and wife."

Alongside many of the newly ordained deacons were their wives, whose role is one of companionship and support.

Maria Martinez said their discernment began in a deep encounter with Christ through a retreat from the Cursillo movement, where they found a very important element in their lives: forgiveness. Martinez said knowing that Christ forgives us and offers a new life in him

was where their desire to serve him was born.

"We will participate as a family in everything that we can. I will keep him in my prayers that he may be an instrument in the hands of God and always seek to give his best in service."

Five years ago, Deacon Tom March walked into their home and told his wife, Ferrella, his spiritual director wanted him to begin discerning a call to the diaconate. Although hesitant at first, his wife urged him to immediately begin praying together.

"The time required for formation and the changes in our lives affected not only us but also our ability to be completely available to our adult children. As formation unfolded, we gained clarity about what it meant to be a deacon couple and what it was that God was calling us to," said March.

Deacon March hopes he can share Christ's love and be of service to the community.

"I believe that is best accomplished by serving my priest and conforming to his vision for our parish," said Deacon March.

Ferrella March said formation has been a period of trials and blessings, noting at the onset of their formation process, their daughter lost her husband one year after their marriage and six months after the birth of their son. This tragedy was marked by numerous struggles along the way, but said they were able to form a reciprocal relationship of love and support with the other couple and formation team.

"One moment that sticks with me is during our last retreat when walking over to the cemetery to pray a rosary. Along the way, we sang 'Somos los Peregrinos.' It was explained to me that we are pilgrims on a journey along-side with each other," she said.

March stressed that "along-side" is key to this journey with her husband.

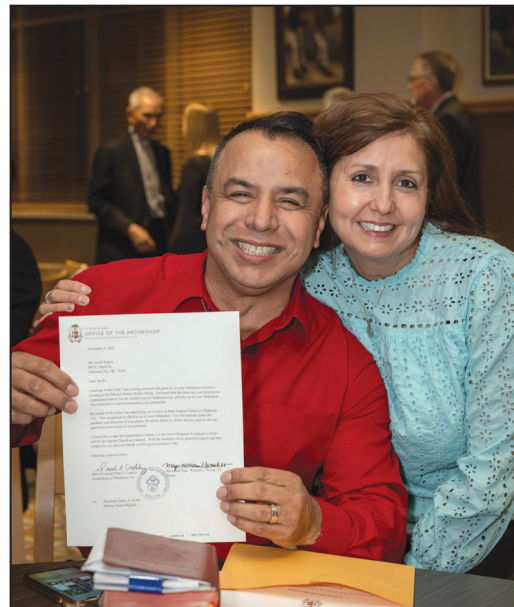
"I am not sure what the future holds or what it will look like. I know that God will guide us. Tom and I are on a journey sharing our faith along the way," she said.

For more information on the permanent diaconate program visit archokc.org/permanent-diaconate.

Eliana Tedrow is a freelance writer for the Sooner Catholic.



Twenty men were ordained to the permanent diaconate by Archbishop Coakley on Nov. 7 at the Bl. Stanley Rother Shrine in Oklahoma City. The evening before, Archbishop Coakley presided over a Holy Hour with the deacon candidates in the St. Francis de Sales Chapel at the Catholic Pastoral Center. *Photos Chris Porter/Sooner Catholic.*



- | | |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ■ Deacon Venancio Aragonz | ■ Deacon Thomas Paul March, Jr. |
| ■ Deacon Artemio Lara Avila | ■ Deacon Jose Angel Martinez |
| ■ Deacon Timothy Earl Burns | ■ Deacon Robert Kevin Newby |
| ■ Deacon Eric James Conrady | ■ Deacon Peter Hoa Nguyen |
| ■ Deacon Truong Thanh Dao | ■ Deacon Shawn Earl Payne |
| ■ Deacon Tony Dwayne Darnell | ■ Deacon James David Robb |
| ■ Deacon Kirk Alan Estes | ■ Deacon Ernesto Contreras Rosas |
| ■ Deacon Bradley Kent Forshee | ■ Deacon Jose De Jesus Serrano |
| ■ Deacon Jan Mahlon Latta | ■ Deacon Jacob Suarez |
| ■ Deacon Justin Lawrence Linck | ■ Deacon Kevin Wayne Winter |

Moments at the Mount

At The Mount, a holiday to anticipate and a retreat to remember

As the calendar pushes toward Thanksgiving, we thought it might be a good time to ask a simple question: **what are you thankful for this Thanksgiving?**



Annabelle Snyder

Annabelle Snyder, a senior, said she's thankful for her parents because they've taught her everything she knows. Snyder is a part of the Rocket cheer team who advanced to state Nov. 14-15. She added that her family provides for her and are supportive in everything that she does.



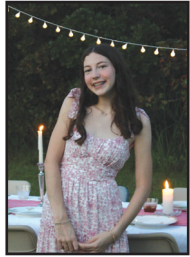
Luke Ranck

Junior Luke Ranck said he's thankful for the opportunity to travel to Europe with his family. Ranck is involved in Rocket baseball and robotics. "I'm very thankful because I've traveled out of the country before,"

Ranck said, "but going to Europe is a once in a lifetime opportunity. Not a lot of people, especially young people, get to experience that."

For Lilly Page, a sophomore, her family stands above all.

"Even when I can't talk to my friends about things, my family is always there for me."



Lilly Page

Page added that she feels very connected to her family, saying she is constantly with them and everyone is very supportive. "I never feel judged by them," she said. Coco Vaughn, is also thankful for her family. Vaughn is a part of the Rocket drama department. She competed with the cast of Mockingbird and was named to the All-State cast.



Coco Vaughn

"My family has always been there for me and has always supported me," Vaughn said. "They have always supported me in my different interests and hobbies. Really, I'm thankful for how they have pushed me to be my best self."

Kathryn Pickens, a math teacher and graduate from the class of 2007, said she is thankful for the sacraments.

"The sacraments are reliable and grace-filled," said Pickens, who has been a teacher at The Mount for

12 years. "No matter the day, there is Mass available to me."

She also appreciates that confession is an ever-present way to reconnect with the Lord.



Kathryn Pickens

A Senior Retreat to Remember

On Nov. 12, the senior class went to the Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Camp to spend the day together. The day consisted of listening to talks from different teachers, including Mark Woodward, math teacher, and Francois Boda, French teacher, as well as engaging in group activities.

Every year, theology teacher Brian Boeckman takes the senior class out to the campsite so the students can grow in their faith with God and in their relationships with each other.

"I think this senior retreat really brought our class together in a way none of us were expecting," senior Kozette Nguyen said.

"We all got to see a new side of our classmates that we might not have noticed over the past three



Lucy Rosenhamer

Mount Saint Mary Catholic High School

years, bringing out a rare kind of vulnerability and solidarity. It was a wonderful opportunity to be reminded to take the time to not only be thankful for the time we had together but also for the time we have left."

"At the end of the day," said Harrison Durbin, "you could see everyone coming together and helping each other out. Having the time to talk to everyone and be vulnerable had put us all in a good mood."

"It made us closer to each other." The day following the retreat, the seniors received an e-mail from Boeckman, reading:

"Our Senior Retreat was the best I can remember and my heart is filled with joy on how blessed I am to experience this wonderful senior class."

Said Durbin, "After it was all said and done, I was just thinking about how good of a day it was. I'm kind of sad we won't be able to do anything like that again. At the end of the day it was kind of bittersweet, but mostly sweet."

Irish Insights

Counting blessings and a state title at BMCHS

With Thanksgiving approaching, we found it a good time to check in with students and staff and ask the question: "What are you most grateful for this year?"

The Irish are grateful for ...



Reagan Fulfer

Reagan Fulfer

Senior Regan Fuller said she's most thankful for the support of her family. While in her second year of debate, Fulfer's freshman self could not imagine what she has accomplished so far.

"They let me read over my cases and give them a bunch of speeches even though they don't want to hear them,"

Fulfer said

She credits her family for the courage it took to pursue debate and other challenges she might face.

"They encouraged me to apply to schools I was afraid to and to pursue debate and I ended up really liking debate," Fulfer said.



Susan Smith

Susan Smith

Personal Finance Teacher Susan Smith said she is also most grateful for her family and how her faith contributes to it. In particular, Smith is grateful for the opportunity to share her faith with her daughter both help you grow as a person a mom and a wife

"I am able to share my faith with my daughter and help instill that in her as she grows and it helps us create family traditions and family values," Smith said.

Smith said her daughter has helped to enjoy the little things.

"Having younger kids, you hit pause on always being in a rush to stop and teach new things or laugh at the little things that maybe you miss out on," Smith said.



Sarai Cerano

Sarai Cerano

Junior Counselor Sarai Cerano said she's most grateful for her faith. Cerano, a Rosary Catholic School and Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School graduate, first experienced the importance of faith through her education. For her, her faith is a constant support.

"I feel like I'm really thankful for my faith because in times where I don't know what to say God is always there," Cerano said.



Laney Maguire

Laney Maguire

Sophomore History teacher Laney Maguire said she's grateful for her friends and students because her family lives far away and her students make life interesting.

"My family is very spread out and so my friends are like my family," Maguire said. "I spend all my important moments with them."



Matt Housh

Matt Housh

Staff member Matt Housh said he is grateful for his job at McGuinness because it combines two of his favorite things: being in the kitchen and being a part of each student's day. House added that his job seems familiar because his mother was a youth minister at the archdiocese growing up.

Gardner reflects on volleyball championship

Sometimes, revenge is doubly sweet. After losing to Mount Saint Mary Catholic High School earlier in October, and seeing the Rockets win the state title a year ago, the No. 1-ranked Irish beat their rival when it mattered

most, taking a 3-2 win in the Class 5A state final.

"I feel like we played as one team, and our team chemistry was really good, especially since it was The Mount we lost to earlier in the season," said senior Emma Gardner, who scored the deciding point with a spike kill. "We wanted to do a rematch."



Katherine Menz

Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School



Senior Emma Gardner made the winning hit against The Mount in the 5A State Tournament. Photo Ella Herrin.

For Gardner, the match was particularly important because the team was victorious after only four sets.

"We thought it was gonna be five sets, so we came ready for five sets," said Gardner who will be graduating early with plans to play for Long Beach State University in California.



Sr. Carolyn Stoutz, R.S.M. retired from Mercy Hospital in Ardmore after 25 years of service. A retirement reception was held on Oct. 28 at the hospital. Fr. Kevin Ratterman and Dcn. Juan Jimenez from St. Mary Catholic Church in Ardmore attended the event. Photos provided.



Fr. Phil Seeton blessed pets on Oct. 5 at Holy Family Catholic Church in Lawton. Photos Jolene Schonchin/Sooner Catholic.



During parents weekend at the University of Oklahoma, Saint Thomas More Catholic Church hosted its first-ever Crimson Gala on Oct. 3 in support of Campus Ministry at OU. More than 250 attended the gala, enjoying a night of faith, fellowship and crimson and cream spirit. Thanks to the incredible generosity of attendees, the Crimson Gala raised \$60,000 for campus ministry at OU. Photos Chris Porter.



"Make Straight the Way"

hosted by Dcn. Larry Sousa

Dec. 2 and 3: In Memorial of the recent passing of Louis Wise, member, St. Joseph Catholic Church, Norman. **Dec. 9 and 10:** Ferrella March, licensed professional counselor, member St. Joseph Catholic Church, Norman.

Dec. 16 and 17: James Coleman, Center for Employment Opportunities and Ambassadors in Chains, member, St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, Edmond (part one). **Dec. 23 and 24:** James Coleman, Center for Employment Opportunities and Ambassadors in Chains, member, St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, Edmond (part two).

Dec. 30 and 31: Fr. Joseph Arledge, pastor, St. Patrick Catholic Church, Oklahoma City, How his faith led him to the priesthood.

"Make Straight the Way" broadcasts on Oklahoma Catholic Radio Tuesdays at 3:30 p.m. and 7:30 p.m. and Wednesdays at 3:30 p.m. Listen online at okcr.org.

Lánzate a lo más Profundo

Luke 5:4

Realicen una peregrinación durante este año jubilar

En octubre de este año tuve el gusto de encabezar la peregrinación de nuestra Fundación Católica de Oklahoma a Francia y acompañar a nuestros veintidós peregrinos. Una peregrinación es una oportunidad para renovar la fe y fortalecer la esperanza.

Esta esperanza es el centro de este año jubilar, cuyo lema es “Peregrinos de la Esperanza”. La Providencia de Dios es tan evidente en los altibajos del viaje, en las gracias inesperadas que nos aguardan en los lugares sagrados que visitamos y en nuestros propios compañeros de travesía.

Y este viaje no fue la excepción.

Tuvimos la dicha de seguir los pasos de varios de los grandes santos franceses – santa Catalina Labouré, san Luis de Marillac, san Vicente de Paúl y san Martin de Tours, entre otros.

La arquitectura era impresionante en las diferentes catedrales y santuarios donde tuvimos el privilegio de rezar y celebrar la Misa. Estos lugares sagrados fueron tan conmovedores al igual que las conversaciones con otros peregrinos durante las comidas compartidas, que alimentaron tanto el cuerpo como el alma.

Uno de los momentos más destacados, por supuesto, fue visitar Lisieux y rezar ante las reliquias de la gran santa Teresita y sus padres, los santos Luis y Celia Martin. Su basílica, construida al estilo neobizantino, es enorme y radiante, con dieciocho altares laterales donados por naciones de todo el mundo. Es el segundo lugar de peregrinación más visitado en Francia, después de Lourdes.

Al estar allí, recordé el mensaje central de santa Teresita: que Dios puede lograr grandes cosas incluso a través de los actos de amor más pequeños. En vida, anhelaba ser misionera, pero pasó sus días recluida en un monasterio carmelita. Ahora, su “caminito espiritua” ha conmovido al mundo. Ella nos recuerda que la humildad, la confianza en Dios y el gran amor expresado en pequeños actos son todo lo que se necesita para convertirse en santo.

Nuestra peregrinación comenzó, apropiadamente, en Montmartre, donde se erige la Basílica del Sagrado Corazón, desde donde se divisa todo París. Me llamó la atención que la famosa peregrinación de santa Teresita a Roma comenzara en ese mismo lugar. Allí, nuestro grupo se reunió en oración y nos consagramos al Sagrado Corazón antes de emprender nuestro viaje, tal como ella lo

hizo en su momento.

A medida que continuaba nuestro viaje, llegamos a Normandía. En Bayeux, celebramos una Misa en la antigua catedral antes de visitar la playa de Omaha y el cementerio americano con vista al mar. Este día fue especialmente emotivo para mí, ya que mi padre fue un soldado estadounidense que sirvió en Francia durante la Segunda Guerra Mundial. Estar de pie entre miles de cruces blancas fue un momento de profunda reflexión, un recordatorio del sacrificio, la valentía y el precio de la libertad.

Fue una muestra de humildad ver cómo la fe perdura incluso en lugares marcados por tanto dolor y heroísmo. Ese día nos enseñó que el peregrinar también significa recordar, llevar las historias de los demás junto a nuestro corazón mientras caminamos en la fe.

Desde allí, viajamos hacia el oeste hasta el Monte Saint-Michel, la impactante abadía insular que se eleva sobre las mareas como una visión del cielo tocando la tierra. Durante más de mil años, los peregrinos han subido sus sinuosos escalones en oración. Celebramos la Misa en la hermosa iglesia parroquial, dentro de sus muros ancestrales. Al caminar por sus murallas y contemplar el mar que se extendía bajo mis pies, recordé que nuestras vidas también son como las mareas, que suben y bajan regidas por la Providencia de Dios, y siempre regresando a Él.

Nuestros últimos días nos condujeron a Solesmes, la abadía benedictina reconocida por su canto gregoriano. Allí, la oración y la belleza son inseparables: cada nota, cada silencio es una ofrenda de alabanza. Al escuchar a los monjes recitar los antiguos salmos, el tiempo parecía haberse detenido. Fue un vislumbre de la liturgia celestial, la alabanza que nunca termina.

Tuve el privilegio de pasar allí una temporada cuando era mucho más joven. Regresar me hizo recordar cuán poderosamente Dios ha estado obrando en mi vida desde entonces hasta ahora. El ritmo constante de la liturgia, día tras día y año tras año, me ha sostenido en mi propio ministerio y me ha enseñado que la gracia suele encontrarse más profundamente en la fidelidad.

Reflexionando sobre todo lo que vimos, desde el tranquilo convento de Lisieux hasta las costas azotadas por el viento de Normandía, desde las torres místicas del Monte Saint-Michel hasta el canto místico de Solesmes, y muchos otros

lugares sagrados, me di cuenta de que la peregrinación no se trata de la distancia, sino de la profundidad; la cual nos sumerge en lo más hondo del amor de Dios y nos enseña a reconocer su presencia en todas partes: en la alegría y el cansancio, en la risa y la oración, tanto en la grandeza como en la sencillez.

La misma santa Teresita comprendió esta verdad y al reflexionar sobre su peregrinaje a Roma, escribió:

“Me invadieron pensamientos poéticos al contemplar estas maravillas que veía por primera y última vez. Pero no de remordimientos; mi corazón estaba puesto en maravillas más grandes que estas. Había visto las bellezas de la tierra; ahora solo tenía ojos para las bellezas del Cielo”. (Historia de un alma, cap. XXII).

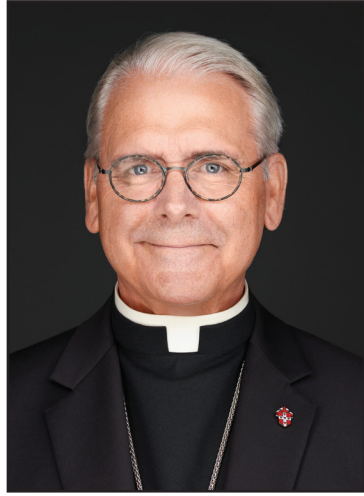
Contemplando la gran basílica en honor a esta “pequeña santa”, recordé de nuevo su mensaje: Dios puede hacer grandes cosas incluso a través de los actos más pequeños realizados con amor. La humildad y la confianza en Él son la clave de la santidad.

La peregrinación, cuando está bien hecha, nos permite deleitarnos con la belleza de este mundo. Pero además, despierta en nosotros un anhelo por el mundo venidero. Cada paso, cada oración y cada comida compartida forman parte de un viaje más grande, que nos acerca cada vez más a Aquel que es tanto nuestro destino como nuestro compañero en el camino.

Es por esto por lo que recomiendo a todos los fieles que realicen al menos una peregrinación. No necesitan viajar hasta Francia para encontrarse con el Señor. Tenemos lugares maravillosos de gracia aquí en nuestra propia diócesis, incluyendo el Santuario del beato Stanley Rother, que puede despertar el alma a la presencia de Dios.

Tenemos el santuario nacional del Niño Jesús de Praga en Praga y el santuario diocesano de Nuestra Señora de Fátima en Bison. Incluso una visita improvisada a tu propia parroquia refleja esta importante verdad: esta vida es un viaje destinado a llevarnos a Dios. Animo a todos a peregrinar a uno de estos lugares o a cualquier otro destino de peregrinación durante este Año Santo dedicado a la esperanza.

Como nos lo recuerda santa Teresita: Este mundo es sólo nuestro barco y el Cielo es nuestro hogar.



Arzobispo Pablo S. Coakley



El pasado septiembre 7, se reunieron los líderes del Movimiento Familiar Cristiano Católico (MFCC) para una formación con líderes de la Región. Siempre el propósito es fortalecer lazos de hermandad y de capacitarse mejor para el nuevo año de enseñanza con los matrimonios y las familias de la Arquidiócesis de Oklahoma City. *Fotos proporcionadas.*



Líderes del Movimiento de Talleres de Oración y Vida, (TOV) reunidos el día 4 de octubre, después de su Asamblea “Hogueras brillando en la noche de San Juan” Esto significa que cada tres años Talleres a nivel internacional examina en un ejercicio de autocrítica sobre el servicio brindado a las almas en todo el mundo y ese análisis se entrega a cada localidad. Dándoles a saber cómo se encuentran y hacia donde se dirigen en el servicio. Lo que hayan hecho y lo que falta por hacer. Siempre en un ambiente de oración y fraternidad. *Fotos proporcionadas.*



El movimiento de EMAUS de Oklahoma City, se reunió el sábado octubre 4 en el Centro Pastoral Católico, para preparar el retiro de mujeres del 2026. Les acompañó su asesor espiritual el Padre Boeckman y también apoyando con un tema de formación estuvieron presentes el Diácono Augusto Pellecchia y su esposa Alexandra Pellecchia, con un mensaje renovador para continuar anunciando la Buena Nueva de Jesús resucitado. Estén atentos para nueva información próximamente. *Fotos proporcionadas.*



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Briefs

Native American Mass

Join Archbishop Coakley as he celebrates a Native American Mass at 3 p.m. Nov. 23 at the Bl. Stanley Rother Shrine, 700 S.E. 89 St. in Oklahoma City. The Mass is sponsored by the American Indian Catholic Outreach office.

Advent retreat

St. Gregory's Abbey presents an Advent day retreat, "Our Lady of the Sign for Pilgrims and Hope" 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m. Dec. 6 at the Abbey, 1900 W. MacArthur St. in Shawnee. Abbot Lawrence Stasyszen, O.S.B. will be the presenter. Cost is \$30 prepaid or \$35 at the door. Lunch included. Pre-registration is required. Visit monksok.org.

St. Nick's Backyard Bazaar

The fifth annual St. Nick's Backyard Bazaar is 1-4 p.m. Dec. 6 at 613 E. Mansur Ave. in Guthrie. Join in for a day of shopping with local Catholic artists and vendors. Free pictures with St. Nicholas 3-4 p.m. For more information, e-mail rachelsandoval2020@gmail.com.

Advent Lessons and Carols

Everyone is cordially invited to Advent Lessons and Carols at 5 p.m. Dec. 7 at The Cathedral of Our Lady of Perpetual Help, 3214 N. Lake Ave. in Oklahoma City. A reception will follow. Childcare will be provided free of charge. RSVP at cathedralokc.org/carols. A live

broadcast will also be available on KUCCO Classical Radio.

Be not afraid

The middle school retreat "Be not afraid" with the Dominican Sisters of St. Cecilia is Dec. 12-14 at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Camp in Wellston. Early bird price \$100. After Nov. 20 \$125. Visit campguadalupe.org/be-not-afraid.

Casino night

The Knights of Columbus Council No. 6477 will host a New Year's Eve dinner and charity casino 6:30 – 12:30 p.m. Dec. 31 in the Great Hall at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, 9 and Boulevard in Edmond. Cost \$80 per person includes dinner, open bar, Blackjack, Texas Hold'em, door prizes and a champagne toast. Contact (405) 478-5200.

Retrouvaille

The next Retrouvaille weekend is Jan. 16-18. No marriage is beyond hope. Whether people are bored, angry, frustrated, not communicating well or in a state of hopelessness, Retrouvaille can help. Contact Troy and Lovette Rausch at TroyLovetteRausch@HelpOurMarriage.org, (405) 885-0667 or visit HelpOurMarriage.org.

The forge

The forge college retreat with the Servants of Christ Jesus is Feb. 27-March 1 at Our Lady of Gua-

dalupe Catholic Camp in Wellston. Early bird price \$60. After Feb. 7 \$100. Visit campguadalupe.org/forge.

Revival

Save the Date: Revival, a week-end retreat for mothers grieving from the loss of a child from pregnancy and infant loss, will be April 24-26, 2026, at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Camp, 890488 S. 3290 Rd. in Wellston.

Join the team

Applications are open for 2026 summer staff at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Camp in Wellston. Must be 16 years of age by June 1, 2026, to apply. Visit campguadalupe.org/summerteam.

Calling all Epiphany "Legacy Members"

As Epiphany of the Lord Catholic Church's 50th anniversary year approaches in 2026, the parish is looking for Epiphany "Legacy Members," any person who attended Epiphany when the church was located at the Catholic Pastoral Center. Those dates are June 17, 1976 until the first Mass in Bryce Hall on June 21, 1980. Anyone who was an adult, teenager or child that attended during that time can e-mail epiphany50@epiphanyokc.org.

Guatemala Mission Trip

Join a mission trip to Guatemala Feb. 20-March 1. Adults 21 years

of age and older can embark on a journey of faith and service and enjoy a pilgrimage to the site of Bl. Stanley Rother's martyrdom and encounter the people he served. Price starts at \$2,200 per person. Package includes airfare, room/board, transportation and mission expenses. Apply at archokc.org/gua2026. Contact Kendra Mann at kmann@archokc.org.

Rome, Assisi pilgrimage

Join Fr. Kelly Edwards May 11-19 on a pilgrimage to Rome and Assisi. Some sights on this young adult and college adventure pilgrimage include major basilicas, the Roman Forum, colosseum and the Vatican Museum. There will be Daily Mass. Cost: \$3,750, includes room, airfare, travel to and from airport and some meals. Contact Fr. Kelly at kelly.edwards@archokc.org or on social media, fr.kelly.edwards (Instagram, Facebook, YouTube).

Eucharistic Adoration

Eucharistic Adoration will take place each Wednesday after the 11:30 a.m. Mass, from noon to 3:50 p.m. in the St. Francis de Sales Chapel at the Catholic Pastoral Center, 7501 Northwest Expressway. The period of adoration will conclude with benediction.

Calendar

This calendar only covers the two weeks between issue dates and may not reflect all of the calendar items. To see a full calendar, go to sooneratholic.org.

November	December
<p>23 Our Lord Jesus Christ, King of the Universe.</p> <p>23 Native American Mass, 3 p.m., Bl. Stanley Rother Shrine, 700 S.E. 89 St., Oklahoma City.</p> <p>24 Feast of St. Andrew Dung-Lac and Companions.</p> <p>25 Feast of St. Catherine of Alexandria.</p>	<p>25 Catholic in Recovery meeting, 7 p.m., St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, 1901 N.W. 18 St., Oklahoma City.</p> <p>27 Thanksgiving - CPC closed Nov. 27 and 28.</p> <p>29 Pray the Rosary for Life, 9:30 a.m., Our Lady of Lebanon Catholic Church, 500 Alameda St., Norman. Contact Connie Lang, (405) 249-1041, potato.lang@gmail.com.</p> <p>30 First Sunday of Advent.</p>
	<p>2 Catholic in Recovery meeting, 7 p.m., St. Francis of Assisi Catholic Church, 1901 N.W. 18 St., Oklahoma City.</p> <p>5 First Friday Sacred Heart Mass, 7 p.m., Catholic Pastoral Center. Exposition of the Blessed Sacrament 5:30 p.m.; reconciliation prior to Mass. Call (405) 721-8944, (405) 820-7255.</p> <p>6 The Lay Missionaries of Charity meeting. Contact Jonathan Tarman, (405) 278-8199, Toni Harrelson, (405) 341-2199.</p> <p>6 Pray the Rosary for Life, 9:30 a.m., Our Lady of Lebanon Catholic Church, 500 Alameda St., Norman. Contact Connie Lang, (405) 249-1041, potato.lang@gmail.com.</p> <p>6 Advent retreat, 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m., St. Gregory's Abbey, 1900 W. MacArthur St., Shawnee.</p>

RETRouvaille
A LIFELINE FOR MARRIED COUPLES
FOR A STRONGER MARRIAGE
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NO MARRIAGE IS BEYOND HOPE

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- are not communicating well;
- are bored, angry, or frustrated in your marriage;
- are in a state of hopelessness;
- are separated or divorced

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Weekend January 16 - 18



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ARCHDIOCESE OF OKLAHOMA CITY

November is
NATIVE AMERICAN
HERITAGE MONTH

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Guatemala

Embark on a journey of faith and service as well as a pilgrimage to the site of Blessed Stanley Rother's martyrdom and an encounter with the people he served!

PACKAGE INCLUDES:
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ROOM/BOARD
TRANSPORTATION
MISSION EXPENSES

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ADULTS 21+**

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*RATES MAY VARY

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kmann@archokc.org

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Young Adult & College Adventure Pilgrimage

8 days & 7 nights
May 11th-19th, 2026
Cost: \$3,750

Ground Cost: \$2660
Recommended Flight: \$1090
Total: \$3750

WALK ANCIENT STREETS, EXPLORE CHURCHES & CAFÉS, AND ALL MAJOR BASILICAS, THE ROMAN FORUM, COLOSSEUM & THE VATICAN MUSEUM.

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kelly.edwards@archokc.org
or on social media:
fr.kelly.edwards (insta/facebook/youtube)

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<p>Mike Maggio MDRT, SKC Court of the Table FICF, CLTC 405-697-8820 michael.maggio@kofc.org Councils: 949, 1038, 1053, 1903, 3336, 4026, 4042, 5266, 5396, 9583, 11135, 11237, 16214</p>	<p>Max Yardley MDRT FICF, FSCP, CLTC 405-570-2179 max.yardley@kofc.org Councils: 916, 1044, 1533, 4601, 6477, 9334, 13366</p>	<p>Edgar Garcia MDRT 405-815-7017 edgar.garcia@kofc.org Councils: 9668, 13828, 14220, 15834</p>	<p>Yo hablo español</p>	<p>Yo hablo español</p>	<p>This could be you! Career opportunities available Councils: 1018, 1302, 4598, 5160, 5354, 9333, 11734, 14106, 14248, 16048, 18010</p>

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continued from page 9

that, I think the institutional life will recover and will flourish.

We have many vibrant Catholic institutions still. The decline that you refer to is not universal. In many parts of the United States, it's still quite a vibrant institutional life in the United States. So I'd be careful about the narrative that we accept, that we need to be sure that it's an accurate and correct narrative. Many parts of the country, including in our own area in Oklahoma, we have vibrant strong parishes, vibrant Catholic schools, vibrant Catholic health care. So institutional life is not necessarily on the decline across the country. Populations, demographics have shifted, obviously, and we need to be prepared and able to follow that and build up the church where the Catholic population is currently, not where it was in the 19th or early 20th century because, obviously, there have been movements in that regard.

OSV News: Critics have tried to use against you a 2018 letter of support you sent the people of your archdiocese, in which you expressed support for fully investigating the scandal surrounding Theodore McCarrick and help bring "purification" to the church after revelations published by the former apostolic nuncio to the U.S., who then enjoyed a sterling reputation. How would you best

characterize your motivations for that letter?

Archbishop Coakley: The harm that was done through that scandal has been deep and mistrust that followed is real. My comments at that time – I don't remember, honestly, the contents of the statement – I didn't know Archbishop (Carlo Maria) Viganò other than what I knew of him from walking these halls here at bishops' meetings. He was always a gentleman, he was always supportive, he always showed an interest in how things are going in our dioceses. My comments when he was initially being criticized, and allegations being leveled against him, were meant to convey that that certainly has not been my experience of the man. And I just didn't want to jump to conclusions before all of the information was available.

So I think, in retrospect, I think a lot more about his views became apparent in subsequent months and years, which I could certainly not support or countenance. But I didn't have that information. I didn't know him in that way, what his views were, when I made those comments, which have been thrown back in my face numerous times subsequently and used against me. I was simply trying to protect the reputation of a man who I knew to be a churchman who had served the conference of Catholic bishops here in the United States admirably and faithfully.

I didn't know him in any other way.

OSV News: And had claims that were warranted?

Archbishop Coakley: Yeah.

OSV News: Finally, one of the most respected presidents of this conference, the late Cardinal Francis George, often remarked that one of the main tasks of a bishop is to look for the saints and to encourage them. So what are some of the ways you've found successful to identify them and encourage them?

Archbishop Coakley: Well, the first thing that comes to mind is our own work in the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City in promoting the cause of Blessed Stanley Rother, a diocesan priest of Oklahoma who volunteered to serve in our Oklahoma Catholic mission in Guatemala where he lived and worked from 1968 until his death in 1981. He was killed in his rectory after he had been urged to seek safety and security by returning to Oklahoma when his name appeared on a death list. He chose to remain, and he was murdered in his rectory.

His death was subsequently declared martyrdom by Pope Francis, and he was beatified in Oklahoma City in 2017. He became the first martyr from the United States to be officially recognized as such by the church and the first diocesan

priests from the United States to be beatified. So we have been promoting his cause and encouraging people to pray for his canonization by bringing to him their needs and asking his intercession seeking the miracle that will be necessary for him to be canonized one day, God-willing. So we're doing our part to promote the cause of Blessed Stanley and really lift him up as a model of holiness for seminarians because he struggled as a seminarian, as is widely known. But also for priests: parish priests, diocesan priests, missionary priests. He's a very approachable figure, and I think we need to make the saints approachable and lift up models of holiness that people can relate to. And I think Blessed Stanley Rother is that in spades.

It's been a great blessing for me. I saw it providentially in my appointment to the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. I didn't know anything about the archdiocese except that, that's where Father Rother was from and so I figured this was God's marching orders for me to promote this cause, which I have done joyfully and eagerly. And after his beatification, to prepare a suitable place for pilgrims to come and to learn about his life, we developed a beautiful pilgrim center and shrine where we continue to welcome thousands of people year after year.

Michael R. Heinlein is an OSV News correspondent and analyst.

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