

WITH HUMBLE SPIRIT

JULY 2025

CALENDAR NOTES

JUL 3

St. Thomas the Apostle

- The GLORIA is said.

JUL 14

Kateri Tekakwitha

- **Memorial:** This is a memorial in the United States of America and should be observed.
- The complete Mass formulary can be found on the USCCB website [here](#).

JUL 22

Saint Mary Magdalene

- **FEAST:** This day was elevated to the liturgical rank of Feast in 2016. The GLORIA is said.
- A proper preface was composed and may be found [here](#).

JUL 25

St. James the Apostle

- The GLORIA is said.

JUL 28

Optional Memorial of Blessed Stanley Rother

- The Collect and other texts for the Optional Memorial of Blessed Stanley Rother may be found [here](#).
- Note: Archbishop is not giving permission to celebrate the optional memorial on the nearest Sunday.

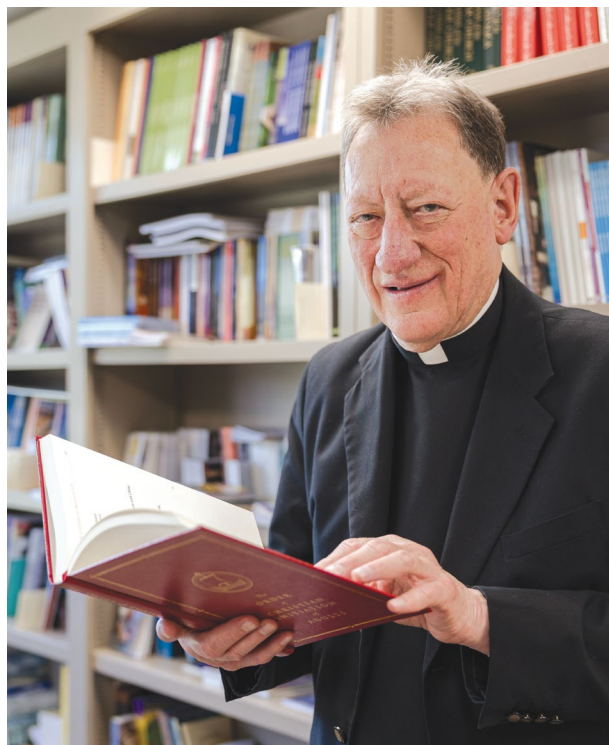
JUL 29

Saints Martha, Mary, and Lazarus

- For more information including Mass formulary, the USCCB provides resources [here](#).

IN THANKSGIVING

FR. STEPHEN BIRD RETIRING AFTER 46 YEARS OF FAITHFUL SERVICE



In another life, Father Stephen Bird might have been a Broadway director, utilizing a keen eye for great artistic endeavors and a skill for guiding elaborate productions. And he does carry a passion for the arts, particularly the stage.

The Good Lord, however, had a different plan for Father Bird's talents – beyond the priesthood – one that led to a 46-year term leading the Secretariat of Divine Worship, even before the office officially existed. The curtain closes on this extended run July 1 when Father Bird retires from the post, leaving decades of behind-the-scenes orchestration of the liturgy and music and more that has marked the many significant events of the archdiocese.

"Father Bird's service as director of the Secretariat of Divine Worship for all of these years has been exemplary," Archbishop Paul Coakley said. "He has an amazing care for the important details that are so important in the sacred liturgy."

Father Bird remains pastor of Epiphany of the Lord Catholic Church in Oklahoma City, as he retires only from a secondary role that leaned into his strengths, which then-Archbishop Charles Salatka recognized in the late '70s before he handpicked Father Bird for a new position in 1979.

The job has developed and grown at times through the years, and many have aided Father Bird along the way, yet he has served



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FR. JONAH BECKHAM
AND
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as the point man for providing the details for ordinations of priests and deacons, for priest funerals, for the installation of three archbishops. And he's coordinated major events, like the annual Chrism Mass, the beatification of Blessed Stanley Rother, the Jubilee Year Celebration in 2000 and the 100th anniversary of the Diocese of Oklahoma in 2005 – both held at the Myriad/Cox Convention Center – and the dedication of the Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine, among others.

"Father Bird's commitment to excellence sometimes disappears into the background because it has been practiced for so long," said Father Don Wolf, rector of the Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine. "We get used to it and imagine every celebration and every liturgical moment is well-planned, quietly executed and easily performed, since they all are. But we forget it is not so.

"Father Bird has always been successful working with all those involved in the celebrations of the archdiocese, both clergy and lay. He has never faltered in his insistence on excellence and preparation."

So, what does a director of divine worship do? It's not just in the details; it is the details.

Fans of Broadway easily relate to the stars and offer standing ovations to cheer their performances. Dame Judi Dench. Julie Andrews. Idina Menzel. James Earl Jones. Sir Ian McKellen. Jonathan Groff. Masters of the craft through the ages.

Yet it's the director's unseen guidance and handling of the details that makes a performance truly rise.

So it is with an ordination or a special celebration or in accommodating a crowd of more than 20,000 as well as bishops from across the U.S. and beyond for the beatification of the first American-born martyr.

For important events and Masses in the archdiocese, large and small, the director plays the lead role in the effective planning, coordinating and execution of all aspects of liturgical celebrations. Working in coordination with the archbishop, they ensure that worship services are meaningful, engaging and in accordance with Catholic tradition. That includes overseeing music, vestments, the liturgical environment and the training of liturgical ministers, as well as written worship materials like programs.

Father Bird likens it to the performer spinning plates atop a pole, like the guy in the old variety shows, hustling from pole to pole, making sure no plates fall.

"That's kind of the way I describe my life," he said, "trying to keep it all straight in my head. But I've enjoyed it. I like details."

And he's a master of the details.

"Father Bird has a great love for the Church and its

liturgy," said Michael Scott, an administrative assistant who works closely with Father Bird in the Secretariat for Divine Worship. "His commitment runs deep. He creates meaningful worship experiences, especially the times that the whole archdiocese comes together."

Said Father Zak Boazman, who will be stepping into Father Bird's seat as director: "Over the past four years, I have witnessed Father Bird's unwavering commitment and dedication to his role, as he has consistently taken every decision with the utmost seriousness, as if it were his first day. His meticulous attention to detail and his ability to recognize and compliment people when needed have been truly inspiring."

Father Bird's inspiration began at an early age in Lake Charles, Louisiana, where he jumped into the elementary school chorus. And his love for song and performance only grew, even as his family moved to Oklahoma and he attended Bishop McGuinness Catholic High School, and on to seminary and into his priesthood, where Archbishop Salatka eventually recognized Father Bird's talents and plugged him into a director role that took the place of a commission.

Now he's providing the inspiration, through careful planning and music and atmosphere and liturgy.

"Two celebrations are uppermost in my mind," said Archbishop Coakley, "since my arrival in the archdiocese 14 years ago: the Beatification of Blessed Stanley Rother and the dedication of the Blessed Stanley Rother Shrine.

"I participate in liturgies around the country and I would say that ours are equal to any. I credit Father Bird with establishing a culture within our archdiocese in which reverent, beautiful and prayerful liturgies are not the exception, but the norm."

The director's touch.

"It's something I love, I still love," Father Bird said. "But I also know it's time to let somebody else take it on."

So what's next?

There will be time for Father Bird's other passion, attending plays locally and in New York City when time allows. And he may yet have a production or two still to pull off, beginning with a capital campaign at Epiphany – his other full-time job.

The parish turns 50 next summer, cause for celebration. And planning. And directing.

"You know, our tentative project title is 50/50, celebrating the past 50 and empowering the church for the next 50, preparing it for the next generation of people," said Father Bird, who will coincidentally be celebrating his 50th anniversary in the priesthood. "So that in itself can be a big thing to do, something challenging."

John Helsley, editor of the Sooner Catholic



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