

Sent:

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Subject:

Around the Diocese: April 28, 2025



Clear Creek Abbey Celebrates 25th Anniversary

HULBERT — An educational journey to Europe by several University of Kansas students in 1976 inspired many of them to more fully embrace their Catholic faith and a few even entered monastic life, which eventually led to the founding of a monastery here in eastern Oklahoma in collaboration with French monks.

Officially founded in February of 2000, the monastery of [Our Lady of Clear Creek Abbey](#) near Hulbert, celebrated its Silver Jubilee (25 years) with Mass, a reception, and historical talks on Saturday, April 26. The event, attended by approximately 300 people, had long been planned and came on the same day as the funeral for Pope Francis earlier in the morning. The Holy Sacrifice of the Mass was celebrated by His Excellency, James Conley, Bishop of Lincoln, Neb., who was one of those KU students inspired to investigate religious life.

“The first time hearing the chant, it was like we had stepped into another world,” said Bishop Conley of his initial visit to [Our Lady of Fontgombault Abbey](#) in France. “A world

where all the senses were engaged along with mind and heart. And everything and everyone was directed to the praise, glory, and admiration of Almighty God.”

Three of his classmates eventually entered the monastery in France, and in 2000, were among the 13 founding monks of Clear Creek Abbey in rural eastern Oklahoma.

“We give thanks to God and our Lady for what has been accomplished here in the hills of eastern Oklahoma and what will be even more soon in God’s land,” said Bishop Conley. “We thank many friends and benefactors who are part of this marvelous story. It is a wonderful story indeed, and it's a blessing to have so many friends who are part of this story and who have come today to be with us, many of whom have traveled great distances to be here.”

For more about Clear Creek Abbey’s history, see the website [here](#). Also, look for more photos from Saturday's event on the diocesan social media platforms. The June issue of *Eastern Oklahoma Catholic* magazine will feature historic photos and a timeline of the Abbey’s history.





EOC Photos by Daniel McCay

Diocese Launches Effort to Assess Needs of Growing Hispanic Community

TULSA — The Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma plans to assess the needs of the Hispanic community through listening sessions and surveys and aims to engage both practicing and non-practicing members to enhance diocesan support.

“We know that the Hispanic community in general is growing a lot. It is already quite large in our diocese,” Cristina Contreras, Coordinator of the Hispanic Apostolate, told those gathered at a kick-off event at Holy Family Cathedral Thursday evening. “Bishop Konderla wants to know what those needs are to better form all those who live in the peripheries.”

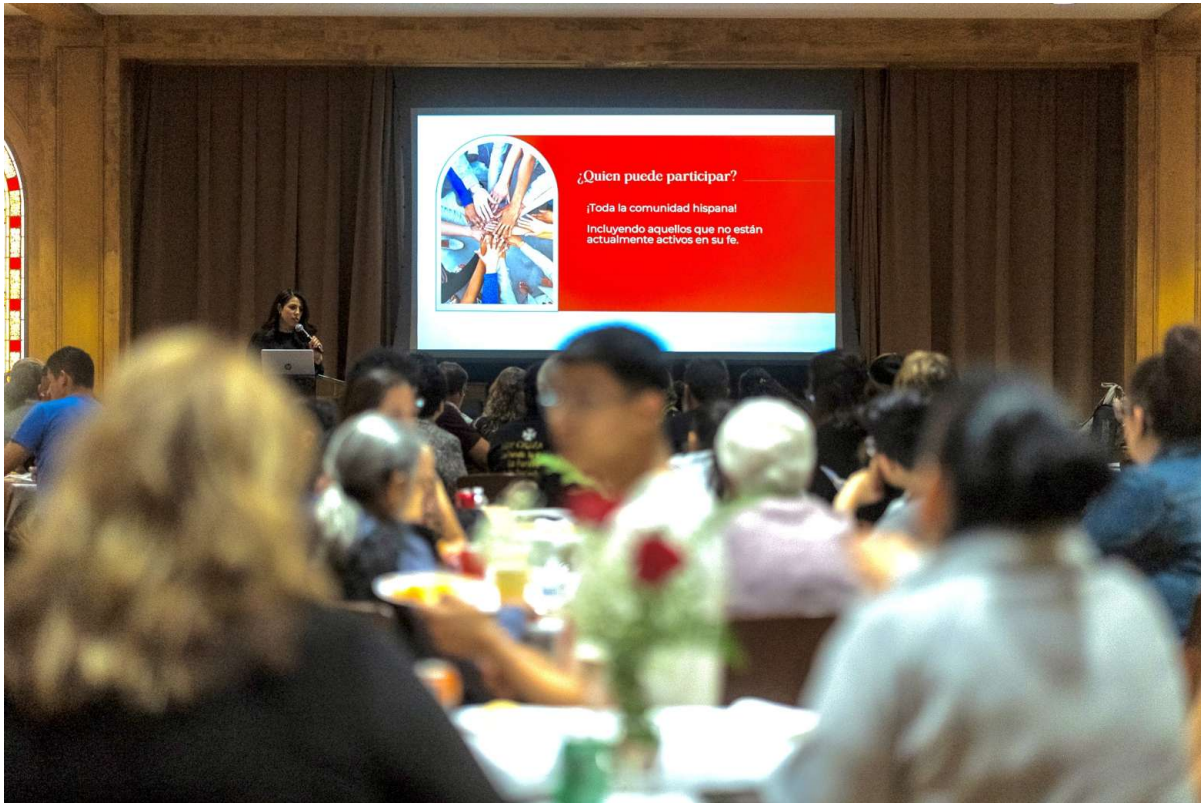
The initial event drew approximately 200 faithful representing Hispanic Catholics from around the diocese, even as far away as Idabel. Following an evening Mass in Spanish, attendees assembled in HFC's Heiring Auditorium to hear a presentation by Contreras representing the committee tasked with the fact-finding project. That was followed by an extensive Q&A period.

Attendees received pamphlets entitled, “¡Tu Obispo quiere oír de ti!” (Your Bishop wants to hear from you!) It describes the mission, process, and introduces the local committee, which includes clergy and laypersons from multiple parishes.

Contreras said a series of listening sessions and surveys will be conducted in the coming weeks to understand the needs of the Hispanic community, including non-practicing members. These activities will be supported by a third-party organization to

ensure effective implementation. Information on sessions will be disseminated via Facebook, diocesan websites, and parish announcements for easy access.

Contreras emphasized that the entire Hispanic community is encouraged to participate, "including those who are not currently practicing their faith," said Contreras. "Because they also count. And maybe there is a reason why they are not currently practicing their faith. They also have the right to be heard."



EOC Photos by Daniel McCay

Church of St. Benedict Shows Outpouring of Support for Family of Beloved Deacon

BROKEN ARROW — Hundreds of parishioners, family members, friends, as well as numerous priests and deacons of the Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma, attended a Mass of Christian Burial for Deacon Danny Brennan at the Church of Saint Benedict on Tuesday, April 22.

Mourners celebrated the life of Dcn. Brennan with an outpouring of emotion for a man who had served his parish and the Church faithfully for many years. Fr. Bryan Brooks, pastor of St. Benedict, celebrated Mass with approximately 20 priests from around the diocese as concelebrants.

"Due to the illness of Bishop Konderla, I had the honor to be the main celebrant of the Funeral Mass for Deacon Danny Brennan," said Fr. Brooks. "To be invited into the sorrow of that moment, as well as the bonds of love and faith, was a humbling experience. It was also one of the most beautiful liturgies I have participated in. May it have been a time of consolation and comfort to the Brennan family, their friends, and fellow parishioners."

Dcn. Brennan's deacon formation classmates and deacons from around the diocese, numbering more than 40 in attendance, served in various capacities during the Mass. It is estimated that approximately 1000 were in attendance.

Graveside service followed at Calvary Cemetery in Tulsa.

Dcn. Brennan died in a tragic cycling accident on April 14, 2025, in Tulsa. For his full obituary, see [Fitzgerald Funeral Service](#).





EOC Photos by Daniel McCay

Commemorative Pope Francis Edition of EOC Magazine Now Available Exclusively [Online](#)

BROKEN ARROW — A special electronic or "e-edition" of *Eastern Oklahoma Catholic* magazine featuring the life and legacy of Pope Francis is now available for viewing on the Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma website [here](#).

The EOC's publishing partner, FAITH Catholic, produced the 27-page commemorative publication, *Pope Francis Special Edition*, with multiple stories about the pontiff who died on the morning of Easter Monday after battling a months-long illness and declining health.

Stories include a biography, recount his visit to the United States, tell of his concern for the poor and being a champion for peace and human dignity, profile his record as a determined reformer, and much more.

Pope Francis' coffin was closed and sealed in St. Peter's Basilica in a private ceremony on Friday evening, after more than 250,000 people paid their final respects to the late pope over three days of public visitation, according to [Catholic News Agency](#). A funeral Mass was held in St. Peter's Square at the Vatican Saturday morning.

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Eastern Oklahoma Catholic

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Pope Francis Special Edition

Memorial Mass for Pope Francis Held at HFC

TULSA — A quickly arranged Memorial Mass was held last Monday evening at Holy Family Cathedral to remember and pray for the repose of the soul of Pope Francis, who died that morning.

Standing in for Bishop David Konderla, who is recovering from illness, Father Elkin Gonzalez, pastor of Christ the King parish, was celebrant and homilist. He was joined by several concelebrant priests of the diocese.

A large portrait of Pope Francis, draped in black, was prominently displayed. In his homily, Fr. Gonzalez recounted how he was in Rome at the time of the Conclave which selected Pope Francis nearly 12 years ago.

For more, go to the diocesan website [here](#) or the USCCB website [here](#).





EOC Photos by Daniel McCay



'Saint Katharine Drexel Route' Honors Namesake as Eucharistic Pilgrimage to Travel the Southwest

TULSA — As the three-year National Eucharistic Revival in the United States draws to a close on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Jesus Christ, the cross-country pilgrimage, named the St. Katharine Drexel Route from Indianapolis to Los Angeles, will pass through Tulsa May 30-31 with a local Procession, All-Night Adoration, and Mass. *(See the local schedule below.)*

The route's namesake, St. Katharine Drexel, came from a devout and wealthy family who used their material goods to serve those in need. After discerning a call to the religious life, she founded the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. This order was dedicated to serving the nation's Native American and African American populations.

By the time of her death in 1955, Mother Katharine had used the funds from her inheritance to build a vast network of missions and more than 60 schools, with 500 sisters teaching in them. Some of those schools were founded right here in eastern Oklahoma. She was canonized a saint in 2000 by Pope John Paul II.

To Mother Katharine Drexel, education was the key to opportunity. The bulk of the order's efforts went into developing a network of missions and schools throughout the South and West. These Catholic schools were staffed by laypersons, often attached to a local church or chapel, and offered religious instruction and vocational training. Unlike many religious mission schools, students did not have to be or become Catholic to enroll, and the schools expressly renounced assimilation as a goal.

In 1899, Mother Katherine Drexel provided funds to construct St. Theresa's Institute for Creek Indian Girls in Tulsa. She intended the school to benefit Indian and African American children of the Oklahoma and Indian Territories, but she allowed children of all races to enroll. The initial loan was repaid by 1902, and the school was renamed Holy Family School, adopting the same patrons as the church.

At the request of the Osage Nation, she also founded St. John's School for Osage Indian Boys in Blackburn (Osage County), which operated from 1888 to 1913.

The St. Katharine Drexel Adult Learning Center at Catholic Charities of Eastern Oklahoma is named in her honor.

FRIDAY, MAY 30:

11:30 a.m. Mass - Sacred Heart Catholic Church - Miami, OK

4 p.m. Tulsa Procession begins (gather at University of Tulsa starting at 3 p.m.)

8 p.m. Arrival at Holy Family Cathedral

8-10 p.m. Eucharistic Festival at Holy Family Cathedral

8 p.m. FRIDAY - 9 a.m. SATURDAY: All-night Adoration at Holy Family Cathedral

SATURDAY, MAY 31:

10 a.m. - Mass - Holy Family Cathedral

Then, caravan to St. Gregory's Abbey in Shawnee, OK

For more information about the 2025 Eucharistic Pilgrimage and to register for participation in local events, click [here](#).



At left, the young heiress Katharine Drexel at age 16. At right Mother Katharine is pictured in the habit of the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament, the religious order she founded.

From the Editor...

Followers of diocesan social media accounts may have noticed a new feature spring up last week, *The Rome Report with Deacon Robert Williams*. Our man in Rome has been reporting on the activities and mood in and around the "Eternal City" during the lead-up to Saturday's funeral of Pope Francis.

Deacon Williams and a few other Seminarians from the Pontifical North American College actively participated in the funeral proceedings, which drew millions of mourners to Rome, including dignitaries from around the globe. Check out his dispatches and photos on our Facebook, Instagram, and X accounts. In addition, Deacon Williams, who hails from St. Anne Parish in Broken Arrow and is to be ordained a Priest of the diocese later this June, was interviewed as part of a lengthy segment on CBS Sunday Morning. Catch that story [here](#).

New editions of The Rome Report will continue on social media during the upcoming Conclave culminating in the selection of a new Pope. If you missed them, you can catch up on Dcn. Williams' previous dispatches which are saved on our website [here](#).

Congratulations to Monte Cassino School, a private Pk-8 Catholic school here in Tulsa, which recently announced that its collaboration with Catholic Charities provided

nearly 27,000 diapers from this year's diaper drive, making it the best year since the initiative started in 2013. Since 2013, Monte Cassino has donated more than 302,000 diapers and more than 1500 baby wipe packages for the youngest of Tulsa's poor. Students sacrificed weeks of lunchtimes and recesses to assist Sister Julia Marie Roy pack and prepare the diapers for delivery and distribution to Catholic Charities.

And finally, Bishop David Konderla announced at noon on Friday the priest and deacon assignments for 2025. If you missed it on social media, you can find Bishop's memorandum and the complete listing posted on our website [here](#).

Until next week, thanks for reading!

Chris Rush
Chief Editor

"Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things" — Philippians 4:8

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