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Uganda Martyrs Parish Celebrates 100 Years

OKMULGEE — A joyful crowd of more than 200 worshippers filled the historic [Uganda Martyrs Catholic Church](#) on Pentecost Sunday to celebrate the parish's 100th anniversary.

Bishop David Konderla celebrated Mass with concelebrants Fr. Ken Harder, church pastor, and visiting priests Fr. Khiet Nguyen, Fr. Josh Litwack, and Fr. Steven Ditzel. Deacon of the Mass was Dcn. Brad Moen. Honored guests included Sister Lucia Carl, SSF, of New Orleans.



In his homily, Bishop Konderla spoke of the inevitability of time, contemplating future events, and the role of the Holy Spirit in guiding believers towards spiritual fulfillment and eternal life.

Following Mass, the faithful gathered in the Parish Hall for a meal and fellowship.



Photos by Chris Rush

Storm Damages McAlester Parish

MCALESTER — Severe storms packing straight-line winds and a possible tornado blew through southeastern Oklahoma early Saturday morning and did damage at St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church.

Bishop David Konderla personally visited the church property on Saturday following the storm and provided several pictures and recorded the damage:

“Scattered damage throughout the church roof, part of the gymnasium roof is in the driveway, leaving a big hole in the gymnasium room,” said Bishop Konderla's notes. “Part of a stone wall knocked over, a couple of air conditioners shoved over, rain gutters and roof shingles missing from the office, etc. Lots of buildings in the downtown area with damage.”

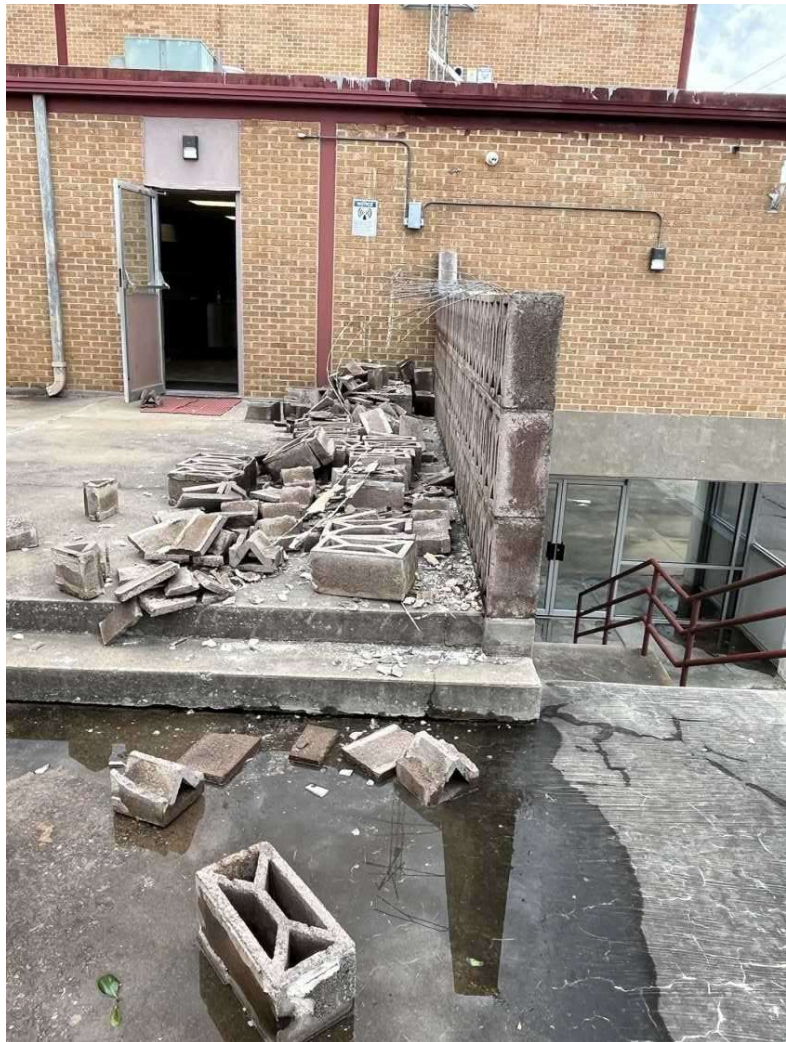
According to reports from the [McAlester News-Capital](#), the most severe storm damage hit the north side of town, as well as Old Town McAlester and the downtown district. “Crews are out throughout the city moving debris and assessing damage,” the newspaper reported on Saturday.

A two-story building that formerly housed the local Catholic Charities office had its entire front wall blown out. The McAlester CCEOK office had recently moved to a new location earlier this year.

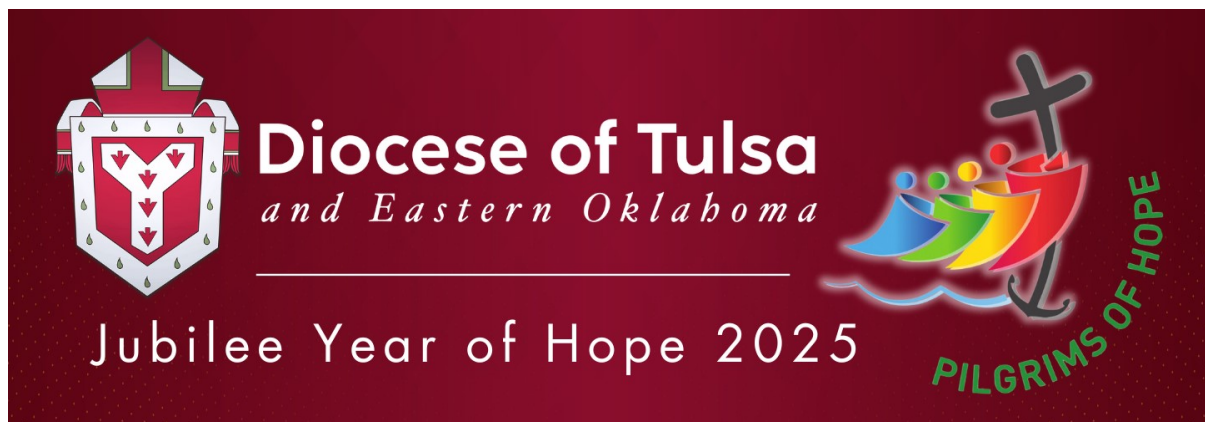
The same storm also blew down trees and knocked out power at St. Joseph Catholic Church in nearby Krebs. A parishioner posted several [photos online](#) of severe tree damage at the church property

The powerful thunderstorm roared through the area around 6 a.m. Saturday and knocked out power in several communities, including Wilburton. Bishop Konderla urged the faithful to “please continue to pray for all who are affected by the storm.”

Residents with damage to their property should report it at [damage.ok.gov](#). To receive assistance from Catholic Charities of Eastern Oklahoma, call the Disaster Line at (918) 935-2650 or fill out [this online form](#).



Photos by Bishop David Konderla



June Jubilee Mass Draws Pilgrims to Cathedral

BY JEAN YAEGER

TULSA — The [2025 Jubilee Year of Hope](#) pilgrimage on Saturday brought a crowd to Holy Family Cathedral to pray for those called to Holy Orders and religious life.

The pews — filled almost to capacity — included sisters, seminarians and families from across the Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma. A group clad in green t-shirts, representing Sacred Heart Church in Sapulpa, prayed a pilgrim's prayer on the front steps.

Fr. Brian O'Brien, rector of the cathedral, spoke in his homily about building a culture of vocations to the priesthood and consecrated life. Future priests and sisters need our prayers and prompting in their discernment, he pointed out.

Father O'Brien shared the example of his mother's friend at their church in Houston, who used to tell the teenage Brian that he should think about becoming a priest. Additional encouragement came from his parents, grandparents, teachers and college roommates.

"When was the last time you walked up to a young man or a young woman in your parish or your household and said, 'I think you'd be a really good priest. I think you should think about religious life. I think you'd be a wonderful religious sister,'" Father O'Brien asked.

Emphasizing the theme of the jubilee year, Father O'Brien described the difference between wishful thinking and the theological virtue of hope. Don't just wish for an increase in vocations but practice the supernatural hope that God in his goodness can bring a renewal in clergy and the Church.

The petitions included prayers for Pope Leo XIV and Bishop David Konderla, for priests and deacons and their families, and for the souls of deceased ordained and religious community members.

After Mass, visitors toured the cathedral's architecture, stained-glass windows and relics. Speaking outside, Sister Marie Therese Long, OSB said she liked the message about creating a culture of vocations. "The invitation to think about the religious life is certainly a sign of hope," she said.

[Holy Family Cathedral](#) is the sixth of 12 sites in the Jubilee of Hope pilgrimage taking place throughout this year in eastern Oklahoma. At [St. Anne Catholic Church of Broken Arrow](#) on July 5, the theme will be prayers for the poor, marginalized and neglected.



Photos by Daniel McCay

Bishop Konderla, Five Visiting Bishops, Consecrate New Shrine at St. Thomas More

TULSA — On May 21, [St. Thomas More Parish](#) held a special Mass for the consecration of its chapel and the Shrine of the Virgin of San Juan de Lagos by Bishop David Konderla, five visiting bishops from Mexico and El Salvador, and several priests of the diocese.

Father Jose Maria Briones, pastor of the church, described it as “a momentous and historic occasion for our parish community.”

“In this jubilee year of hope, I pray that this shrine will serve as a beacon of hope for all of us, allowing



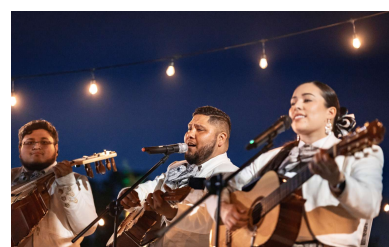
us to embrace this significant event with hearts full of gratitude.” —Fr. Jose Maria Briones

The new Diocesan Shrine is located within the newly renovated sanctuary and will house an identical image of the one located at the Cathedral in San Juan de los Jalisco, Mexico. The Diocesan Shrine will be able to receive official pilgrims year-round and pilgrims who wish to fulfill mandates and promises in this sacred place. The shrine has been registered and authorized by the Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma on behalf of Bishop Konderla. The faithful will may place their requests, mandates and promises in the local shrine without having to travel to Jalisco, Mexico.

“Catholics and faithful devotees of the Virgin of St. John will now have a safe place where they can pilgrimage to deposit their petitions from within the entire Diocese of Tulsa and adjoining dioceses and can pilgrimage from anywhere in the United States of America in search of some blessing,” according to information posted on the parish social media. “Although it is a Diocesan Shrine, it is known that there are pilgrims who come from other states near Oklahoma and Tulsa, in search of a miracle and intercession of the Holy Mother of God, the Virgin Mary of St. John of the Lakes.”

Following Mass, Fr. Briones hosted dinner with Bishop Konderla, the visiting bishops, the many concelebrating priests from around the diocese, as well as the whole community of faithful devotees who attended the historic event.

Visiting bishops who participated in the Mass of the Diocesan Shrine of the Virgin of San Juan de Lagos included: Bishop Jose Leopoldo González - Diocese of San Juan de los, Jal. Mexico; Bishop Elias Samuel Bolaños - Diocese of Zacatecoluca, El Salvador; Bishop Gonzalo Alonso Calzada - Diocese of Tehuacan, Puebla, Mexico; Bishop Gerardo de Jesús Rojas - Diocese of Tabasco, Mexico; and Bishop Miguel Angel Espinoza - Diocese of La Paz, BC, Mexico.





Photos by Valentin Danescu

Seminarians Get Sweet Kickball Revenge

TULSA — The 2nd Annual Kickin' for Christ kickball game between priests of the diocese and seminarians drew a crowd of approximately 500 to the [Church of Saint Mary, Tulsa](#). The match was described as a “nail-biter” according to EOC photographer Daniel McCay, but the seminarians got their sweet revenge by claiming victory after last year's loss.

The all-time record now stands at 1-1. Organizers eagerly anticipate next year's match at [Bishop Kelley High School](#) and expressed heartfelt gratitude to the Church of St. Mary for hosting the event the past two years, and the Knights of Columbus for the great food.





Photos by Daniel McCay

Tulsans Gather for Oklahoma March for Life Rally Saturday

TULSA — Participants from various ecumenical backgrounds gathered just before noon Saturday at the Chapman Centennial Green in downtown Tulsa to support life and advocate for the rights of the unborn.

The satellite event was held simultaneously with the [Oklahoma March for Life](#) in Oklahoma City, which culminated at the Oklahoma Capitol.



Photos by Daniel McCay

St. Michael Catholic Radio Launches in McAlester

MCALESTER — On June 1, after the celebration of Holy Mass, Ascension Sunday, [St. Michael Catholic Radio](#) officially turned on KMSJ 90.9 FM, the first-ever Catholic radio station in McAlester.

"St. Michael Catholic Radio is thrilled to announce a historic milestone for the Catholic community in McAlester, Oklahoma," the station said in a press release. "This long-awaited launch marks a transformative moment for the faithful in southeast

Oklahoma, bringing 24/7 Catholic programming to the region for the first time. The station will provide a consistent source of inspiration, catechesis, and evangelization to Catholics and all listeners in the area—including those incarcerated—offering the truth and beauty of the Catholic faith on the airwaves."

Bishop David Konderla of the Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma applauded the milestone.

"Two thousand years ago Jesus commanded his disciples to go into all the world and tell the good news," said Bishop Konderla. "We are so thankful to God that our new Catholic radio station will help us spread the gospel in the McAlester area. Look for the station and help us in this mission."

According to station leadership, the journey to bring Catholic radio to McAlester began nearly a decade ago.

"After years of prayer, planning, and perseverance, the dream finally became a reality. The St. Michael Catholic Radio team extends heartfelt thanks to the Catholic Foundation for Eastern Oklahoma (CFEO) and our generous private donors, whose support helped make this endeavor possible."

St. Michael Catholic Radio now operates four frequencies within the Diocese of Tulsa and Eastern Oklahoma including Tulsa at 94.9 FM, Bartlesville at 90.1 FM, Broken Arrow at 102.9 FM, and now McAlester at 90.9 FM. For more information about the station and its programming, click [here](#).





Photos courtesy St. Michael Catholic Radio

Father Jovita C. Okonkwo, pastor of St. John Parish in McAlester and Vicar Forane for the Southern Vicariate, sets the radio dial to 90.9 FM to hear the sound of KMSJ broadcast for the first time.

From the Editor...

In addition to Pentecost Sunday this was another extremely busy weekend around the Diocese which kicked off with the second annual "Kickin for Christ" kickball match between diocesan priests and seminarians. The weather held out for this year's fun, family-friendly event and drew a reported crowd of approximately 500 to the Church of Saint Mary in south Tulsa.

Organizers are already planning for an even bigger event next year at Bishop Kelley High School. It's a great opportunity for priests and seminarians to engage in friendly competition and fellowship, and for parishioners to see and interact with servants of the Church in a relaxed social atmosphere. For more photos, click [here](#).

Before Saturday's slate of events could take place, we learned that a powerful storm, possibly containing a tornado, did serious damage in parts of McAlester and Krebs. Bishop David Konderla personally inspected damage at the parish of St. John the Evangelist Catholic Church and filed a report complete with photos. I believe this is a

first for the *EOC extra* as Bishop Konderla gets photo credit in this issue. Turns out he is a pretty good on-the-spot reporter!

In addition to damage at the parish, the former Catholic Charities location in McAlester was partially destroyed as the aging building had its entire face torn off. Loyal *EOC extra* readers may recall that Catholic Charities moved its operations to a newly renovated space earlier this year. Please continue to keep the people of McAlester, Krebs, and other storm-impacted areas in your prayers as they recover.

Later that morning, the sixth monthly Jubilee Year of Hope Mass took place at Holy Family Cathedral with an impassioned homily by cathedral rector, Fr. Brian O'Brien. The theme for this month's pilgrimage Mass was Holy Orders and religious life and Fr. O'Brien shared his personal story of being encouraged to pursue the priesthood by an older parishioner. His homily, "Where do Vocations Come From?" can be viewed [here](#).

Following the Jubilee Mass at HFC, many faithful gathered just a few blocks away for the Oklahoma March for Life Rally, held in conjunction with the main event in OKC.

On Sunday, I personally had the privilege of attending the 100th anniversary celebration of the Uganda Martyrs Catholic Church in Okmulgee. The Mass was beautiful and the fellowship was sweet as many longtime parishioners greeted friends and family members who may have traveled great distances to attend. Although there is only space for a few photos to be published here, many more will be made available on our diocesan social media pages.

Next week, be looking for coverage of the enormous roof replacement project that begins today at Holy Family Cathedral. The multi-million dollar repair project is expected to take six months to complete. We'll have all the details next week. In the meantime, click [here](#) for more information.

Whew! I think that's it for now. 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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