



# The Cincture

and

## SENIOR PRIEST CONNECTION

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### FROM THE VICAR FOR CLERGY



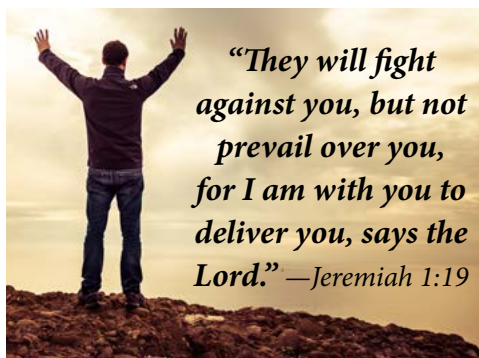
Fr. Nathan Reesman

Dear Friends: Praised be Jesus Christ! After a Cincture article or two from me with theological reflections on the identity of the minister, below please find in this issue some practical updates and news from the Office of the Vicar for Clergy.

#### Assignments and Parish Planning

My “thanks” to everyone who completed the electronic version of the personnel survey this year so that our office can begin to build the next listing of needed appointments for the coming placement cycle. We are still digesting all of the responses, including the requests to stay beyond the end of a term, as well as requests to retire and requests to transfer. We also included this year in our personnel survey the parish directors for a more comprehensive picture of our pastoral map across the archdiocese. All of the information we have received is very helpful.

With increasing frequency, you will be hearing the message that the years-long routine of making assignments that involved on an annual basis X number of open slots and X number of priests (or directors) moving/available, resulting in an annual reshuffling of the deck, is over for the foreseeable future. At present we have approximately 70 more parishes than we have pastors, without taking into



*“They will fight against you, but not prevail over you, for I am with you to deliver you, says the Lord.” —Jeremiah 1:19*

account an array of complicating circumstances that widen that gap more realistically to about 90 more parishes than we have pastors to assign. This also does not take into

account the batch of directors and priests who are already eligible to retire and generously choose not to.

What this means, among other things, is that our annual placement process now coincides with a year-round planning process that attempts to both recommend assignments to the archbishop and also to

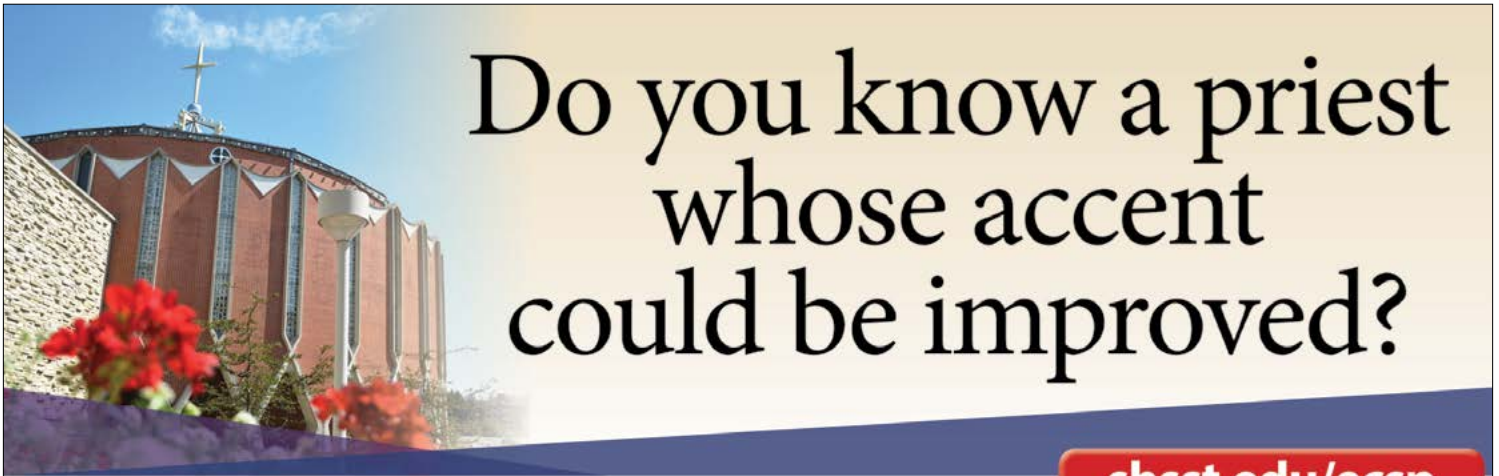
► Continued from Page 1.

consolidate administrative structures simultaneously. Before we can even post a new assignment, we are often having to create a new assignment out of several existing structures. We seek input from the area pastors and leaders as much as possible as we engage in this work, and we rely on the good will and understanding of everyone involved as we present a new model.

None of this is simple, and I pray for everyone's patience and understanding as we navigate our new realities of parish structures. More updates to follow as time passes.

**Fr. Reesman Additional Studies**

I also ask for everyone's patience as I make my way further into my cycle of studies for a license in Canon Law. There are currently three of us priests engaged in the misnamed "summer studies" program of the School of Canon Law through Catholic University of America. The program requires attending classes in Washington, D.C., every June and July for four summers, and it also requires online classes the rest of the academic year for four years. If you have found me harder to reach or schedule meetings with since this past May, this is the reason. Please know of my sincere desire to respond to your needs more quickly than I often do. Know also of my daily prayers for all of you, and of my profound gratitude for all of the work that is done by you for the Lord and for his Church.



# Do you know a priest whose accent could be improved?

[shsst.edu/ecsp](https://shsst.edu/ecsp)

Sacred Heart Seminary and School of Theology has an **online accent modification** program to help priests share the Gospel clearly.

- **Spring Session begins** the week of Jan. 29, 2024
- **Summer Session begins** the week of May 13, 2024

**APPLY NOW!** EMAIL: [ecsp@shsst.edu](mailto:ecsp@shsst.edu) | VISIT: [shsst.edu/ecsp](https://shsst.edu/ecsp)

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FROM THE DIRECTOR OF DIACONATE FORMATION

## THE SYNODAL WAY OF A FORMATION & FAMILY COMMITTEE



Deacon Dale Nees

*“A family life perspective is rooted in the challenge of St. John Paul II as stated in **Familiaris Consortio**: ‘No plan for organized pastoral work, at any level, must ever fail to take into consideration the pastoral care of the family.’ Refocusing*

*one’s thinking from an individual-centered approach to a family-centered approach represents an important component in organizing diaconal formation, ministry, and life.”<sup>1</sup> (No. 144)*

It has almost been a year since the kickoff of our Formation & Family Committee. We have met four times to date, and the fruit of the members’ participation and discernment has already enriched Diaconate Formation in an impactful way. The diversity of their practical skills and experience, as envisioned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, will continue to influence the future relevancy of how we address the needs of those in formation — not only the men but their wives, if married, and families as well. This committee focuses on the reality that: “Individuals do not enter into formation alone. Those who participate in diaconal formation, married or unmarried, come with their families.”<sup>2</sup> (No. 146)

Our first two meetings focused on two primary items, getting grounded as a committee that understands the scope of the work and providing feedback on whether the new curriculum was designed in such a manner that the capacity was there for the family perspective to grow and thrive. To that end, in the two subsequent meetings we discussed the feedback we have heard through listening and surveying, particularly our wives, and how this may help us with cultivating their experience of formation, family life and ministry. Also, it became evident that we needed to expand our focus and attention beyond initial formation, as aspirants,

candidates, wives and families. We needed to include what the five years following ordination might look like for them knowing that: “Each participant must explore ways to keep his family life as a priority in the face of the growing demands of formation and ministry, which include issues of age, faith, health, economics, employment, and relationships.”<sup>3</sup> (No. 147)

After almost a year my feeling is that this renewed standing committee is an authentic expression and response of our commitment as formators to synodality where it pertains to diaconal formation. It has allowed us to move closer to the lives of our whole formational

community and be more relational. The activities of the Formation & Family Committee, for me, fall into alignment with the definition of the synodal way offered in the Synthesis Report from the XVI

Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops (4-29 Oct. 2023), which says: “The synodal path is, in fact, implementing what the Council taught about the Church as Mystery and People of God, called to holiness. It values the contribution all the baptized make, according to their respective vocations, in helping us to understand better and practice the Gospel ... it constitutes a true act of further reception of the Council, prolonging its inspiration and reinvigorating its prophetic force for today’s world.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Deacon Dale Nees**

<sup>1</sup>United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, National Directory for the Formation, Ministry, and Life of Permanent Deacons in the United States of America: Second Edition (Washington, DC: USCCB), 79.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid, 81.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid, 81.

<sup>4</sup>XVI Ordinary General Assembly of the Synod of Bishops: First Session (4-29 October 2023) Synthesis Report; A Synodal Church in Mission, Introduction.



FROM THE MANAGER OF PRIEST PLACEMENT

## ADVENT



Brenda Cline

It is no longer a surprise to us when retailers begin selling Christmas candy and decorations well before Halloween, but I have been very surprised the last couple of years to see the advent of so many

Advent calendars in stores! Most even use the name “Advent,” although a few resort to “holiday countdown calendar.” Recent ads from Aldi seem to have the largest variety of Advent calendars ... from beer, wine and cheese editions to hot sauce, hard cider, sparkling water, coffee, children’s toys, pet toys, and yes, even traditional chocolate. (Which one will you choose?) These are fun, but I like our Church Advent calendar the best — the one where an opportune saint accompanies us each day, where the scripture readings prepare us daily for the coming of our Savior and where the candles on our Advent wreath glow brighter each week as we prepare to welcome the Light of the World.

The Priest Placement Office and Board have been busy preparing as well: reviewing the personnel survey results

to determine the first open listing (to be published early in 2024); meeting with the Office of Missionary Planning and Leadership to discuss opportunities for planning and placement to work together in our diocese; and meeting our nine (9!) transitional deacons at the seminary, as they make their final preparations toward priestly ordination, and their first parish assignments.

We also just celebrated the 32nd annual Vatican II Awards at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist. There were 14 recipients across 12 categories, representing every corner of our archdiocese. Thank you for your nominations and support of this incredible local tradition. This event was truly a recognition of our local Church and the men and women who tirelessly serve our mission: To proclaim Christ and Make Disciples through the Sacramental Life of the Church!

Please know of my prayers and support as you enter this busy but beautiful season of the year. May it be a time of homecoming and renewal for you and your parish communities.

## TO AUTUMN

*Season of mists and mellow fruitfulness,  
Close bosom-friend of the maturing sun;  
Conspiring with him how to load and bless  
With fruit the vines that round the thatch-eves run;  
To bend with apples the moss'd cottage-trees,  
And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;  
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells  
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more,  
And still more, later flowers for the bees,  
Until they think warm days will never cease,  
For summer has o'er-brimm'd their clammy cells ...*

**John Keats**



From left to right: Frs. Michael Courchaine, Tom Eichenberger and Tony Zimmer enjoyed some time together as they toured the Pabst Mansion Oct. 10, 2023. As the event progressed, some other priests who were in attendance actually enjoyed a Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer!

## TO ALL PRIESTS FROM THE VICAR FOR SENIOR PRIESTS



Fr. James Lobacz

*I write this to all of you ACTIVE PRIESTS because I want you to know about the life our senior priests are living. With rare exception I find our senior priests to be active, creative, grateful and prayerful, living life with generous priestly hearts.*

According to the World Health Organization, elderly people throughout the world share five common issues.

1. Physical and mental health complications due to various chronic diseases, such as dementias, heart disease, diabetes, arthritis and cancer.
2. Financial challenges due to limited income and difficulty accessing necessary benefits.
3. Social isolation and loneliness due to not adapting to technology or the social norms of a different world.
4. Physical injury due to falls, accidents or abuse.
5. Ageism and discrimination due to negative stereotypes and attitudes toward older people.

In my experience as the Vicar for Senior Priests of the past decade or so, I see that all of the issues ring true for the priests under my care. Lengthy treatments for cancer, arrested mobility because of arthritis, diminishment of memory interrupt or end the health once enjoyed.

I have assisted some senior priests as they navigate their way into Social Security benefits, cultivated a better understanding of health insurance, dental insurance, vision insurance and hearing aid benefits. I have helped some priests reorganize their finances, arranged for family members to take over day-to-day financial matters and encouraged priests to work out a complete burial plan.

I am always disappointed when I hear that a senior priest “doesn’t go on his computer anymore.” Our recently deceased brother priest, Fr. Ed Eschweiler, was keeping up email correspondence, playing games and accessing news on his computer to nearly the day he died at 100 years of age. I caution elderly priests about getting new telephones. If they can’t adapt to the options on the new phone, they just stop calling others and only speak on it when someone calls them.

We have about 120 elderly priests. Around 100 of them live privately in a condominium, an apartment or free-standing individual home. This is the group that concerns me the most. A fall or accident could go undetected for some time. I encourage our senior priests who live privately and are 80 years of age or older to make use of an emergency notification system. Not many do. I encourage them to get a “phone buddy” who will be in touch with them everyday through a brief phone call. Not many do.

While ageism impacts all the elderly all around the world, I believe that our senior priests can sometimes become invisible. Once a priest is no longer able to do sacramental helpout, once he has “nothing to do,” he drops out of sight. Another recently deceased brother, Fr. John Yockey, once told me, “As a senior priest I get up every morning, I write a list of the things I need to do that day, I set the list down on the end table, and then I sit in my favorite chair and pray and nap all day. I don’t do anything on the list!”

I write this to all of you ACTIVE PRIESTS because I want you to know about the life our senior priests are living. With rare exception I find our senior priests to be active, creative, grateful and prayerful, living life with generous priestly hearts. Pick up the phone and call a senior priest you know. It just might make your day!



### PAPAL TWITTER FEED

“War is the great enemy of the universal dialogue that we need”  
- Pope Francis, October 19, 2023

### MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

November 2022 - October 2023

- Rev. Robert X. Stiefvater
- Rev. Jerome V. Repenshek
- Rev. Howard J. Johnson
- Rev. Michael J. Hammer
- Rev. Edward F. Sippel

## A THANKSGIVING PRAYER FOR GIFTS PAST AND PRESENT

Lord God, we gather around this table to humbly thank you for all that you have given us this past year — not just what is on this table, but who is sitting around this table. Thank you for life and laughter, for health and happiness, for relationships and memories. Thank you, too, for the lessons learned and the tears we've cried



because of your ability to grow us through them. Thank you for your comfort and your presence, in light of

good days and bad. Thank you for what we have now, for what we had yesterday, and for what you will continue to give tomorrow. Let us never take that for granted, but to always be grateful for every good and perfect gift that comes from you. May we have hearts full of thanksgiving not only today but every day of our lives. We

pray these things in the name of Jesus Christ, your Son, Amen. *Cindy McMenamin*

# SAVE THE DATE

**Wednesday, March 20,  
2024**



*Pray, Reconcile & Rejoice*  
**12 HOURS of**  
*Reconciliation*

**As you plan to participate in  
*Pray, Reconcile, Rejoice:***

***12 Hours of Reconciliation***

**please keep in mind the following:**

- Clear Your and the Parish Calendar
- Do Not Schedule Any Meetings
- Do Not Schedule Any Funerals

Help is needed all over the Archdiocese. If you are willing and able to drive to a different deanery, please do so.

This is not the occasion for school, Christian Formation or Youth Ministry Confessions; this is also not a time for Communal Penance services.

In order to make this Sacramental Event a great success, all priests are needed to assist.

***Registration will begin in early January 2024***

## MARK

*A winged lion, swift,  
immediate*

*Mark is the gospel of  
the sudden shift*

*From first to last,  
from grand to  
intimate,*

*From strength to weakness, and from  
debt to gift,*

*From a wide deserts haunted  
emptiness*

*To a close city's fervid atmosphere,  
From a voice crying in the wilderness*

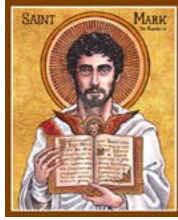
*To angels in an empty sepulcher.  
And Christ makes the most sudden  
shift of all;*

*From swift action as a strong  
Messiah*

*Casting the very demons back to hell  
To slow pain, and death as a pariah.*

*We see our Saviour's life and death  
unmade*

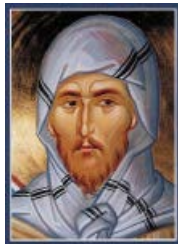
*And flee his tomb dumbfounded and  
afraid.*



## PRAYER OF ST. EPHREM

*O Lord and Master  
of my life, spare  
me from the spirit  
of apathy and  
meddling, of idle  
chatter and love  
of power. Instead,*

*grant to me, your servant, the spirit  
of integrity and humility, of patience  
and love. Yes, O Lord and God,  
grant me the grace to be aware of  
my sins and not to judge others, for  
you are blessed, now and ever and  
forever. Amen.*



## FALL DEHON LECTURE

The superior general of the Priests of the Sacred Heart, Fr. Carlos Luis Suárez Codorni, SCJ, remarked, "THIS IS A SPECIAL HOUSE," at the October 4th Dehon Lecture. The topic of his talk was "Moved by the Word." He discussed how, in addition to the words found in the Bible, the wisdom and theology shared with him in the words that come from other people's lived experiences had also moved him.

To watch the Dehon Lecture, click [here](#).

## DINNER AND CONCELEBRATED MASS OF THE LORD'S SUPPER ON MARCH 28, 2024

You will receive a letter inviting you to participate in a reception and dinner prior to the Mass of the Lord's Supper at the Cathedral of St. John the Evangelist. For now, mark your calendars for Holy Thursday, March 28, with a reception at 5:30 p.m., dinner at 6 p.m. and Mass at 7 p.m. If you are concerned about steps, please know there is a way to get into the Cathedral Rectory using an elevator. If you need a ride or would like to offer a ride, please let Nancy know when you register. To register, please contact Nancy Kerns at 414-769-3594 or [kernsn@archmil.org](mailto:kernsn@archmil.org).

## 2023 HEALTH WEBINARS

If you were unable to log in to the Nov. 16 Clergy Wellness webinar, all presentations can be viewed by visiting the Wellness Council page of the archdiocesan website or by clicking [here](#).

Topics for future presentations are listed, and links will be made available closer to the presentation date.

## ONLINE 2023 ANNUAL CONTINUING FORMATION OF CLERGY ASSESSMENT

*(Formerly the Annual Vicar for Clergy Assessment)*

The assessment will be available online by the **end of November**. Please watch your e-mail for details.

## HOLY DAY/HOLIDAY OBSERVANCES

Please be aware that the Mary Mother of the Church Pastoral Center will be closed on the following days:

- **Thursday, Nov. 23 and Friday, Nov. 24** (Thanksgiving)
- **Friday, Dec. 8** (Immaculate Conception)
- **Monday, Dec. 25 and Tuesday, Dec. 26** (Christmas)
- **Friday, Dec. 29, 2023, and Monday, Jan. 1, 2024** (New Year's Day)

## WEBSITE FOR THE IRS STANDARD MILEAGE RATES

<https://www.irs.gov/tax-professionals/standard-mileage-rates>

*Please be aware the IRS maximum rate may change mid-year.*

## UPDATES FROM THE OFFICE OF COMMUNITY RELATIONS





## OUR FOURTH ARCHBISHOP

### MOST REVEREND SEBASTIAN GEBHARD MESSMER, D.D., D.C.L. 1903 - 1930

Sebastian Gebhard Messmer was born on August 29, 1847, in Goldach, Switzerland and was the last European-born Archbishop of Milwaukee. Messmer studied at the University of Innsbruck, Austria, and was ordained a priest on July 23, 1871, in Innsbruck. He came to the United States to serve on the faculty of Seton Hall College in South Orange, New Jersey in the Newark diocese.

Messmer obtained a doctorate in Canon Law in Rome before his nomination in 1891 to succeed Bishop Katzer as the Bishop of Green Bay. He served there for nearly 13 years until he was appointed to succeed Katzer again, this time as archbishop of Milwaukee on November 28, 1903.

Once again the question of Catholic ethnicity in Milwaukee arose, however Messmer softened his former devotion to ethnicity and instead became a proponent of smoothing over ethnic differences with his centralizing policies. He became associated with the American Federation of Catholic Societies, a group seeking to present American society with a united front on Catholic issues.

In order to centralize authority in the Church, he wrote the first Handbook for Catholic Parishioners in 1907 to establish guidelines for diverse ethnic groups in the diocese. As the Polish community in the diocese swelled and insisted on maintaining its distinctive Church life, Messmer became involved in a heated debate with Fr. Wenceslaus Kruszka, a Polish priest, which nearly created a serious schism in the Milwaukee Church.

Under Messmer, Milwaukee received its first two auxiliary bishops. Bishop Joseph Koudelka came to Milwaukee in 1911 and served until he was transferred to Superior, Wisconsin, in 1913. Bishop Edward Kozlowski was consecrated auxiliary bishop in 1914, and died suddenly only having served a year. During Messmer's time, 29 more orders of religious men and women were also



established in the archdiocese.

Known as the “archbishop of Christian charity,” Messmer personally contributed a sizable amount of the funds for a charitable bureau that he created in 1916. The bureau drew the various child protective organizations in the diocese under a central administration. Charitable institutions for the sick, orphaned, poor and aged more than doubled during Messmer’s administration.

He also played a significant role in education,

as Messmer High School was built and 40 more schools were added to the Catholic school system. He also appointed Fr. Joseph Barbian as the first superintendent of schools and reinvigorated the school board. During his time, Messmer saw the establishment of Mount Mary College and Marquette College’s change in status to Marquette University.

Messmer approved the first ministry to African-Americans when a Catholic couple, Lincoln C. and Julia Valle, organized St. Benedict the Moor church and school in 1909. He also supported the establishment of Our Lady of Guadalupe Mission for Mexican Catholics, which was founded on December 12, 1929. Though he opposed women’s suffrage, he favored the formation of Catholic women’s organizations, such as the Marquette Women’s League and the Milwaukee Archdiocesan Council of Catholic Women. He also started and encouraged many lay organizations, including the Archdiocesan Union of the Holy Name Society, the Federation of American Catholic Societies, the Western Catholic Summer School, the Knights of Columbus and a revived St. Vincent De Paul Society.

Archbishop Messmer also founded the Catholic Herald in 1922, the official Catholic, non-partisan, English-language paper of the Archdiocese of Milwaukee. He died on August 4, 1930, while visiting his beloved native Switzerland and was buried there in Goldach.

Motto: *In Ubertate Terrae.* "In the Richness of the Earth"

## CONSTRUCTION AND DEDICATION OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES PREPARATORY SEMINARY – 1963

*Photos courtesy of Archdiocese of Milwaukee Archives*



*High School dormitory, looking south.*



*Junior college wing and infirmary, locker room and junior college recreation areas, looking north.*



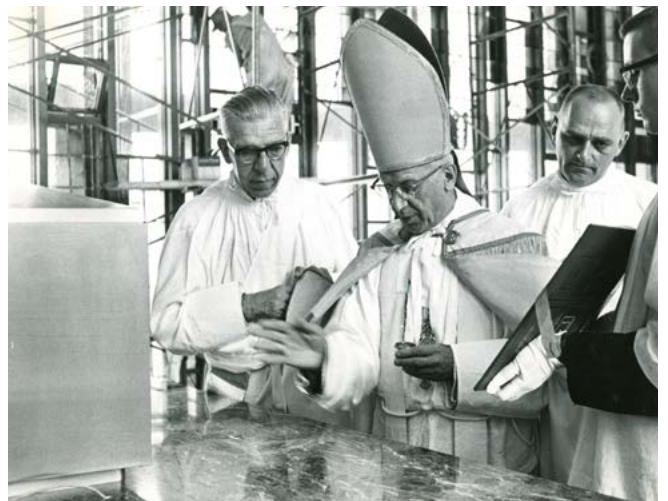
*The seminary under construction, with the dome of Henni Hall in the distance.*



*Installation of the Seminary Bells, September 1963.*



*Consecration of the bells.*



*Bishop Roman Atkielski blessing the altar of Mater Christi Chapel*

CONSTRUCTION AND DEDICATION OF ST. FRANCIS DE SALES PREPARATORY SEMINARY – 1963 - CONTINUED



*Bishop Roman Atkielski blessing the choir loft and organ in Mater Christi Chapel.*



*Bishop Roman Atkielski blessing the St. Francis de Sales Chapel.*



*Albert Cardinal Meyer blesses the halls during the dedication ceremony.*



*Albert Cardinal Meyer, Archbishop William Cousins, Priests and Monsignors process into the dedication ceremony.*



*Dedication Mass in Mater Christi Chapel.*



*People look around Mater Christi Chapel during the dedication ceremony.*

# SAVE *the* DATE



## 2024 Spring Assembly of Priests

May 6 - 8, 2024

Osthoff, Elkhart Lake

Presenter: Bishop Robert Barron



## 2024 Active & Senior Priest Retreat

October 7 - 10, 2024

Redemptorist Retreat Center, Oconomowoc.

# PRIEST Wellness Day

Tuesday, October 22, 2024

Ascension / SE Wisconsin at Mayfair Road  
(201 N Mayfair Road, 5th Floor  
Conference Center, Wauwatosa).  
Stay healthy and happy.

## OFFICES FOR CLERGY AND LAY ECCLESIAL MINISTRY

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## INTERACTIVE PRIEST DIRECTORY



[www.archmil.org/  
Priest-directory.htm](http://www.archmil.org/Priest-directory.htm)

