

The Basilica of Saint Mary of the Assumption

PARISH OFFICE: 506 Fourth Street, Marietta OH 45750 PHONE: 740-373-3643
WEBSITE: www.stmarysmarietta.org www.facebook.com/stmarysmarietta EMAIL: info@stmarysmarietta.org



June 4, 2023
The Most Holy Trinity

SUNDAY MASSES - Saturday 5:30 PM; Sunday 8:00 AM, 10:00 AM, 12:00 PM

CONFESSIONS - Saturday 3:30-5:00 PM (or anytime by appointment)

BAPTISMS - Contact Parish Office

WEDDINGS - Contact Parish Office *six months* in advance

Rector - Rev. Msgr. John Michael Campbell (fatherjmike@gmail.com)

Parochial Vicar - Rev. Edward Maxfield Jr. (emaxfield@diosteub.org)

Permanent Deacon - Rev. Mr. Lee Weisend

Music Director - Mr. John Ontko (740) 350-4224 (ontkotb@suddenlink.net)

St. Mary School - 320 Marion St. (740)-374-8181 (www.stmaryscatholic.org)

School Principal - Elizabeth Tokodi (elizabethtokodi@stmaryscatholic.org)

K of C Grand Knight - Mr. Pete Saliba (304) 494-6170

Parish Council President - Luke Strahler - (614) 309-8876

CWC President - Jenn Tinkler

Hibernians - Mr. William Rathbone (740) 374-5492

Prayer Line - & Eucharistic Adoration, Mrs. Shelly Medley (740) 525-6360

Health Ministry - Mrs. Janet Jaeger (740) 374-6768

Daily Bread Kitchen - Mrs. Carol Henshaw (740) 885-1181

St. Vincent De Paul - Help Line (740) 376-1334

Welcoming Committee - Jim Naylor (740) 350-5510

Divine Mercy Gift Shop - Barb Ritchie (740) 538-4733

MASSES FOR THE WEEK

Sat	5:30 PM - Harry Way
Sun	8:00 AM - John Schoeppner, 7 th Anniversary
	10:00 AM - Dave & Cathy Rauch, Wedding Anniversary
	12:00 PM - People of the Parish
Mon	7:45 AM - David Erb
	12:05 PM Robert & Lucy Long
Tue	7:45 AM - Liv/Dec/Aniano DeJosef Family
	12:05 PM - Nate Heiss
Wed	7:45 AM - Special Intention/Stapleton Family
	12:05 PM - Tarcella & George Hendershot
Thu	7:45 AM - Carol Ruth Mahoney Sarver
	12:05 PM - Tim Strahler
Fri	7:45 AM - Brenda DeGori
	12:05 PM - Terry Arnold
Sat	9:00 AM - Robert Heiss
	5:30 PM - Norma Jean Adams
Sun	8:00 AM - Dec'd Members of the Maffei Family
	10:00 AM - Mark Bradley
	12:00 PM - People of the Parish

***Come, Holy Spirit, fill the hearts of your faithful and
kindle in them the fire of your love.***

READINGS FOR NEXT SUNDAY.

Dt 8:2-3, 14b-16a; 1 Cor 10:16-17; Jn 6:51-58.

REST IN PEACE:

Brenda DeGori passed away May 27th. We offer our sincere condolences her husband Dom and Family. May Brenda. now enjoy eternal peace and happiness in heaven, her eternal home.

DONUT SUNDAY

Today is Donut Sunday. Please join us in the Social Hall after the 8:00 AM or 10:00 AM Mass to enjoy fellowship and donuts/coffee. Everyone is welcome, hope to see you there.

CALL TO CONVENTION:

All Women of the Diocese are cordially invited to the 78th Anniversary Catholic Woman's Club Convention. It is scheduled for Wednesday June 7, 2023, at Holy Family Church, 2608 Alexander Avenue, Steubenville, OH. convention is "Wherever You Go, I Will Follow." For more information, please contact our CWC President, Jen Tinkler.

VISITORS WELCOME! We welcome any visitors who are joining us for Mass this weekend. We hope your stay in Marietta is enjoyable. Any new parishioners at the Basilica are asked to please register with the parish office.

PARISH OFFICES are open from 1:00 PM until 4:00 PM on Mondays and from 9:00 AM until 4:00 PM Tuesday through Friday, with a lunch break from Noon until 1:00 PM each day.

MEETINGS AND EVENTS

MON	6:15 PM	-	Our Lady of Perpetual Help
WED	8:20 AM	-	7:00 PM – Eucharistic Adoration in the Chapel of the English Martyrs.
FRI	8:20 AM	-	7:00 PM – Eucharistic Adoration in the Chapel of the English Martyrs.

The Lord Will Never Be Outdone In Generosity!

Total collection last weekend: \$ 13,175.75

Amount needed each weekend for
our Basilica budget: \$14,225.00

God bless those who support our Basilica Parish!

SECOND COLLECTION

The first weekend of each month there is a collection for the maintenance of our Basilica. This collection will be taken up at all Masses this weekend, June 3rd and 4th. Envelopes were provided with your packet.

ONLINE GIVING

Online giving is available at the Basilica. For more information, please visit this website:
<http://www.stmarysmarietta.org> and go to the left side of the web page. Click on the GIVE ONLINE button to see more information or to sign up.

BASILICA FOUNDATION:

A fund has been established by the Marietta Community Foundation for the maintenance and repairs of our Basilica. This fund is separate from the monthly maintenance collection.

ALTAR FLOWERS

This weekend, the roses and flowers for the altar are in Honor of Geraldine Pouzide's 90th Birthday. If you would like to request flowers for a particular weekend, in memory or in honor of someone, please call the parish office to reserve the date. You should call the florist of your choice to arrange for delivery.

DIVINE MERCY GIFT SHOP

Looking for a special gift? Divine Mercy Gift Shop may have that perfect gift for you. Stop by and check out the new line of items after Mass today.

SAINT MARY SCHOOL NEWS

St. Mary Catholic School summer office hours are in effect. The school office is open on Wednesday's from 10:00 AM - 2:00 PM. The office will be closed the week of the 4th of July.

St. Mary Catholic School has the following job postings for the 2023-2024 school year.

- **Tag teacher** (part time)
- **Technology teacher** (part time)
- **PreK teacher** (full time, we will be having 2 PreK classes in the Fall)
- **Middle School Social Studies teacher** (part time)
- **Director of Religious Education** working within the school and the Basilica)

All job postings/descriptions are on the school website at stmarys.k12.oh.us

The Irish Booster Scholarship application for two St. Mary Catholic School alumni is open for submission. The scholarship application can be found on the school website home page at stmarys.k12.oh.us

Due to unforeseen circumstances, Vacation Bible School previously scheduled July 10-14 is postponed until July 2024.

Have a great summer!

FATHER'S DAY FISH FRY

K of C Council 4671 is sponsoring a Fish Fry on Father's Day, June 18th, from 12:00 PM until 3:00 PM. Cost is \$15.00 each. STAG – Open to gentlemen of the public and K of C members! All you can eat fish-fries-coleslaw and drinks. There will be a 50/50 and tool raffle at the door! Questions? Call Scott Wells at 740-516-3279.

SCHEDULING MEETINGS AND EVENTS

Please check with the parish office before scheduling a meeting in the Basilica Social Hall, Conference Room or using the Basilica Kitchen. If you cancel & reschedule make sure the date and time are available.

WEeping WILLOW CHURCH SOFTBALL LEAGUE

The Basilica will once again be fielding a team in the competitive division of the Weeping Willow Softball League. The team, which is co-sponsored by the Basilica and the Knights of Columbus Council #478 of Marietta, is the five-time defending league champion.

Any parishioner (age 16 and older) interested in playing should contact Jim Humphrey at 740-629-4867 (cell) or via E-mail at super7@suddenlink.net.

League play is tentatively scheduled to begin on Monday, June 5th.

MARY'S HOUSE- GOLF OUTING

Mary's House Golf Outing is Saturday, June 24 at Lakeside Golf Course in Beverly, Ohio. Cost is \$70.00 per person. Cost includes 18 holes of golf, cart, mulligan, food, and drink. Hole sponsor is available for \$100.00. Call Jordan Welch to sign up your team and hole sponsor, 740-538-9901.

ST. JOHN'S GOLF OUTING

St. John Golf Outing is scheduled for Saturday, June 3, at Lakeside Golf Course in Beverly. Four Man Scramble - \$65/person, \$260, team. 18 holes with cart, dinner and raffle.

Contact Kristin Pottmeyer, 304-989-0792 to register your team, or to sponsor a hole. Please come out and support St. John's Athletic Program.

2023 DIOCESAN/PARISH SHARE CAMPAIGN

This year our parish goal is \$115,639.21. This is an increase of \$4,381.21 over last year. So far, the Diocese has received \$80,336.00 from our parish. This means that our parish has only met 69% of our goal.

Thanks once again to those who participated in this year's DPSC. If you've not yet turned in your pledge, please do so. You can place your pledge in the collection basket, or you can mail it directly to the diocese using the pre-addressed DPSC envelope. Additional pledge cards are available at the parish office. You can also contribute to the campaign on line at www.Give.Diosteub.org.

Our parish has always met and surpassed our goal. Please help us to do so again this year.

BASILICA BOOK CLUB NEWS

Living Joy: Thanks to a donation, the book "Living Joy" by Chris Stefanic is available for check out in our parish library. Due to the content that asks for reflection, the book will be discussed at the June meeting of the Basilica Book Club.

Remember: ALL are welcome, bring a friend. Snacks and drinks are provided. If you are not able to read the book, a summary is presented, and you can participate at whatever level is comfortable for you. Any questions, information or if you want to be added to the Basilica Book Club email list: contact Debbie Lazorik, lazorikd@marietta.edu or 740-434-3769.

PILGRIMAGE TO ITALY

Join Father Tom Nelson on a Pilgrimage to Italy, January 1-12, 2024. Stops include Assisi, Norcia, Cascia, Loreto, Lenciano, San Giovanni Rotondo, Monte San Angelo, Montecassino, and Rome. The discount price of \$4,989.00 per person is enjoyed by those paying with Cash or Check (based on a minimum of 30 participants with double occupancy). For full itinerary visit: <https://catholicfaithjourneys.com/>. For more information contact Maggie McDaniel: email: maggie@catholicfaithjourneys.com or phone: (419)290-8782.



THE FEAST OF THE HOLY TRINITY

June 4, 2023

Jesus said to Nicodemus: "God loved the world this way. He gave the world His only Son so that those who trust Him may not die but would live forever. For God did not send his Son into the world so the Son could judge it. No, God sent him to save the world! God does not judge the person who trusts in his Son. But whoever does not trust in the name of God's only Son has already been judged."

We can find these famous lines in John 3, where John set God's messenger (Jesus) against a teacher of the Law (Nicodemus). In John's mind, Jesus spoke for the Christian audience the evangelist addressed. Nicodemus represented opposing Jewish communities lead by Pharisees. By the time John's gospel first appeared in a complete form (100-115 A.D.), Christians not only professed a new Messiah; they proclaimed a new spirituality. God created a new, spiritual relationship with all people. And this new relationship bypassed the Jewish Law.

Jesus told Nicodemus about salvation. Salvation meant spiritual rebirth which God's Spirit initiated. And only God's messenger, his Son, brought the message. Everyone could see God's salvation when the Son was lifted up (i.e., Jesus died on the cross. But this required faith.

Faith saw that God treated his people with love. This was the basis for salvation. But love required sacrifice (otherwise, we could not call it love). So, God showed his love by giving the world his Son. Those who trusted the sacrificed Son would possess eternal life.

John's gospel painted the universal gift of salvation, in spite of the fact that most people would reject the message, and those who preached it. Indeed, John's community lived a sheltered existence, in fear of Roman authorities and Jewish competitors. The spirit of isolation tempted the community. The gospel itself described the faith and the lifestyle of the Christian in terms of good and bad, light and dark, "us vs. them." The community could easily fall into the notion that they enjoyed God's favor; everyone else lost out.

God's love inspired hope, opened vistas to new possibilities for those who lived in the "world." God meant his love for all. He invited all to a love relationship. So, his Son came not to condemn but to save.

While God began the initiative when He sent His Son, the Son remained the active player. He did not condemn but became the instrument that brought people back to God. As Jesus did, so must the community do. They must act in a way that does not condemn outsiders, but invites them in. The (person) trusting in HIM is not judged. But the (person) not trusting has already been judged, because he has not trusted in the name of only-begotten SON of God.

Those who did not build their spiritual life on trust of the Son pretended to be self-reliant. Ultimately, they were self-centered. Christ entered the world and called followers to Himself. But those who opposed Christ and Christians (i.e., the Pharisees) plotted against them in secret. Jesus Suffered rejection, gossip, and back-room subversion from the Jewish leaders. Many in John's audience would suffer the same fate.

Catechism Theme: The Father revealed by the Son (CCC 238-242)

Many religions call God "Father," as He who created and sustains all things. Christianity's unique claim to the title lies in the relationship between God and Jesus of Nazareth. As John's gospel stated, the Father sent his Son into the world. That is, God commissioned Jesus to reveal the true nature of the Father. In doing so, Jesus revealed himself as the Father's only true Son, or as John's gospel stated, God's only begotten Son. This relationship transcends time into the eternal.

At the Council of Nicaea (325), the Church defined the relationship between the Father and the Son as "consubstantial." That is, the Father and the Son share the same divine nature. Eventually, the Church extended the definition to include the Spirit. Hence, the belief in the Trinity was codified.

As John's community found, many people put a trust relationship at arm's length. Even today, talk of trust based upon love seems too naive, too idealistic. The real world, as common wisdom implies, rewards the devious, those who build their lives on money and power. Those who point to a greater goal find themselves punished by the world.

Christians base their faith not so much on the facts, but in a trust relationship with Jesus of Nazareth. Trust of a person, not knowledge of the facts or obedience demanded by duty, defines the Christian life. In John's gospel, Jesus revealed trust as the key to eternal life..

Special Events & Scheduled Pilgrimages at the Basilica:

June - 19, - 4:00 pm. Priest Jubilee Mass – St.Clairsville
Sept. - 24 - 9:30 am. Confirmation – Saint Henry Church
Oct. - 1, - 10:00 am. Respect Life Mass - Bishop
Oct. - 27, - 8:45 am. Diocesan Teacher in Service Day
Oct. - 29, - 12:00 pm. Women Religious celebration
Dec. - 12, - 11:00 am. Our Lady of Guadalupe Celebration



Perpetual Help Devotions This Monday

Perpetual Help Devotions will resume this evening at 6:15 pm. Parishioners are encouraged to participate in this devotion celebrated every Monday evening in our Basilica. We ask Our Lady to guide and protect our Basilica, all visitors, and each one of us.

Adoration of Jesus in the Most Blessed Sacrament

Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament will take place in our Basilica's Chapel of the English Martyrs. this week on Wednesday and Friday from 8:15 am. until 7:00 pm. Jesus remains in the Blessed Sacrament to refresh and love us.

Diocesan Catholic Woman's Convention

The 78th Anniversary DCCW Convention will take place on June 7, 2023 at Holy Family Church in Steubenville. The theme of the convention is "Wherever You Go, I Will Follow." All women of the Diocese are invited to the convention. There will be a Basket Raffle for the benefit of our seminarians.

Deceased priests of the Diocese of Steubenville



On Tuesday, we remember the 2nd anniversary of the death of Fr. Robert Kawa. We thank God for Fr. Bob Kawa who served the Church well.

MEETINGS, EVENTS, AND MASSES FOR THE WEEK:

Monday, June 5,

7:45 am. - Mass
12:05 am. - Mass
6:15 pm. - Perpetual Help devotions

Tuesday, June 6,

7:45 am. - Mass
12:05 pm. - Mass

Wednesday, June 7,

7:45 am. - Mass
8:20 am. - Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
12:05 pm. - Mass
7:00 pm. - Reposition of the Blessed Sacrament

Thursday, June 8,

7:45 am. - Mass,
12:05 pm. - Mass
1:00 pm. - Basilica tour

Friday, June 9,

7:45 am. - Mass
8:20 am. - Adoration of the Blessed Sacrament
12:05 pm. - Mass
7:00 pm. - Reposition of the Blessed Sacrament

Saturday, June 10,

9:00 am. - Mass
11:00 am. - Baptism
3:30 pm. - Confessions
5:30 pm. - Mass

Sunday, June 11,

8:00 am. - Mass
9:30 am. - Mass (St. Henry)
10:00 am. - Mass
12:00 pm. - Mass

THE FEAST OF THE HOLY TRINITY

Today's celebration of the Holy Trinity was approved by Pope John XXII in 1334. The scriptural readings give us a glimpse of the nature of God in relation to humanity. The trinitarian doctrine developed first from theological reflection on how God is revealed to us.



"A society without mothers would be a dehumanized society, for mothers are always, even in the worst moments, witnesses of tenderness, dedication and moral strength... Dearest mothers, thank you, thank you for what you are in your family and for what you give to the Church and the world."

—Pope Francis



THE BASILICA OF SAINT MARY

4TH STREET • MARIETTA OH 45750 • 740-373-3643



June 4, 2023

Dear Parishioners,

Today as we celebrate the Feast of the Holy Trinity - the Feast of the Mystery of God - the foundation of our Faith, we are drawn again to the Cross. What we know about the Trinity comes from Jesus Who came to this world to share God's life with us. Jesus proved that He was God by performing many miracles: He cured the sick, He gave sight to the blind, He cast out devils, He brought three people back to life. He proved that He was God by going to the Cross and returned to life after his terrible death on that Cross.

After His Resurrection, when the Apostles were afraid and lonely, Jesus promised that He and the Father would not leave the Catholic Church which He established, alone and abandoned. He and the Father would send the Holy Spirit to be with the Apostles and with Church until the end of time.

Trinity Sunday is the celebration of God, our Father, who walks with us. It is the celebration of God reaching out to us in His love – showing us that He is not a cold, lonely God – He is our Father, our Creator, our Sustainer and source of life.

The Trinity is the celebration of God revealing Himself as Savior in the person of Jesus Christ who took on flesh to be “Emmanuel”, and suffered death on the cross to bring us back into a relationship with our Father.

The Trinity is the celebration of the Holy Spirit who breathes God's life into each one of us, and to all of creation. When we are inspired, it is the Holy Spirit. When we are strengthened in our Faith, it is the Holy Spirit.

On the day of our baptism, water was poured on our head in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and we began to live a new life in union with the Blessed Trinity. The Trinity accompanies us in our journey of life.

The icon of the Holy Trinity depicts the three Persons sitting at a table. There is a fourth place at that table, and that place is for us. We are drawn into the mystical presence of the Trinity through the Eucharist.

On this Feast of the Holy Trinity, know that this Mystery tells us that God loves us; that we are not alone; and that God is the answer to the mystery of life and suffering and death. May God father, Son and Spirit fill us with life and hope.

Sincerely in Christ,

Rev. Msgr. John M. Campbell

LITURGICAL FEASTS THIS WEEK:

Monday, June 5, Saint Boniface (Bishop & Martyr)

Boniface founded the abbey of Fulda. He was bishop of Mainz. He was martyred with 30 companions in 754 at Dokkum in Frisia. He is known as the "Apostle of Germany."

Tuesday, June 6, Saint Norbert (Bishop)

Norbert founded the Premonstratensians or "Norbertines" (O. Praem), today numbering 1,175 members. He was the archbishop of Magdeburg. He was a strong supporter of Church reform and evangelization. He was a strong supporter of the Holy Eucharist.

Friday, June 9, Saint Ephrem, (Deacon & Doctor of the Church)

Ephrem was a Syrian theologian and poet who authored biblical commentaries, homilies, and many hymns used today in the Syriac liturgy. He is known as the "Harp of the Spirit", and Peter was an exorcist. Under the order of Diocletian, they were both beheaded in the year 303.

Alleged Marian apparitions the subject of new observatory

An institution has been formed in Rome to study alleged Marian apparitions and other supernatural phenomena in the Catholic Church.

The International Observatory on Marian Apparitions and Mystical Phenomenon was established in April and is part of the Pontifical International Marian Academy.

The objective of the observatory is to research alleged Marian apparitions and other phenomena, such as the apparent crying or bleeding of Marian statues and images, whose authenticity have not yet been declared by the competent authority.

The director of the observatory said that the task of the observatory is not "to judge or intervene in alleged apparitions or phenomena, but to study how these events take place and to give information and support to the bishops of the various dioceses who need to conduct investigations in this field."

Marian apparitions do not introduce new revelation; they bring "a spiritually fruitful actualization of the Gospel in human history." The new observatory will take a multi-disciplinary approach to the study of Marian apparitions with scholars from the areas of sociology, culture, psychology, medicine, and theology.

The head of the academy, Father Stefano Cecchin, OFM, told the Vatican newspaper L'Osservatore Romano that "it is important to provide clarity, because often the alleged messages [from alleged Marian apparitions] generate confusion, spread anxious apocalyptic scenarios or even accusations against the pope and the Church."

The observatory also has plans to provide training to media and to dioceses on how to handle alleged apparitions or other phenomena.

Iraqi Christians Struggle to Survive and Thrive 20 Years After 'Operation Iraqi Freedom'



Twenty years after the military invasion of Iraq, the country's Christians continue to suffer from the fallout of the conflict and face persecution, marginalization and displacement while governments and the world's media largely ignore their situation. But precisely how did the Iraq War impact Christians, and what lessons can be learned from

strategic errors that made the suffering and persecution worse for the ancient community whose presence dates back to the first century, but which has now been forced to the brink of extinction?

On March 20, 2003, a U.S.-led coalition invaded Iraq with the aim of overthrowing President Saddam Hussein and his government, to prevent him from obtaining weapons of mass destruction which threatened to destabilize the entire oil-rich region. The George W. Bush administration expected a swift military campaign, followed by the installation of a democratically elected government that would bring peace and stability to the country. But the operation became a protracted conflict that cost more than 200,000 civilian and military lives, 2 trillion US dollars, and displaced 9.2 million Iraqis.

Christians and other minorities became targets of Islamist groups, such as al-Qaida, that rapidly gained a foothold in the country. Their many attacks targeted Christians, such as five churches bombed in Baghdad and Mosul in 2004, as well as the murder of clergy including Chaldean Archbishop Paulos Faraj Rahho of Mosul in 2008 — the most senior Chaldean Catholic to be killed in the Iraq War — and Father Ragheed Ganni in 2007.

After the departure of U.S. forces in 2011, an even more barbaric terrorist group, Islamic State (ISIS), emerged as a regional power. Having already brutally attacked Iraqi Christians in 2010, in 2014 it invaded the ancient, predominantly Christian-populated areas of Northern Iraq. At its peak, ISIS managed to capture 40% of the country, most notably Mosul, home to 24,000 Christians in 2003 but now to only 350.

President Obama, who oversaw the withdrawal of US troops in 2011, ordered the forces back into Iraq in 2014 in a bid to restore security. But ISIS was not defeated completely until 2018, by which time many Iraqi Christians and other minorities had been violently killed or tortured, and many more had been dispossessed and displaced, or had fled the country altogether to seek refuge in the West. The overall consequences of the 2003 invasion "brought death to many and has nearly destroyed Iraq, saw the emergence of ISIS, and set wars off in the Middle East that continue today," said Archbishop Bashar Warda of Erbil in northern Iraq. "It also destroyed many lives, livelihoods and forced people off to the diaspora."

In 2003, a total of 1.3 million Christians lived in Iraq and enjoyed protection and near-equal rights with Iraq's Muslim majority under Saddam. Now that number has dwindled to fewer than 250,000. "I have not met one person both locally and internationally who has said the 2003 military invasion was a good decision," Archbishop Warda told the Register. "No one, except corruption, has benefited from the invasion."



ETERNAL LIFE

In the Gospel today, Jesus was speaking with Nicodemus about the journey into eternal life. Jesus assured him and us that believing in God's Son brings eternal life now. We have already arrived! Eternal life is not something that begins when the line of the heart monitor in the intensive care unit registers flat, and when our breathing stops. Eternal life begins when water is poured on our heads, and the words of a priest or deacon are pronounced: "I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit."

Eternal life is not some distant event that causes us to ask: "When will I arrive?" It is present now if we are in union with God through sanctifying grace.

Morticians mystified by Sister Wilhelmina's body: -



'Something special going on there'

Expert morticians are scratching their heads at the recently exhumed body of Sister Wilhelmina Lancaster, a Benedictine nun who died in 2019 and now appears to be in an unexpected state of preservation.

The reactions come a week after the abbess and sisters of the community that she founded, the Benedictine Sisters of Mary, Queen of the Apostles, unearthed the 95-year-old African American religious sister's simple wooden coffin on May 18 from the cemetery on the monastery grounds in rural Gower, Missouri, to relocate her remains to a final resting place inside their chapel.

Jack Klein, owner of Hixson-Klein Funeral Home in Gower, Missouri, said he was present at Sister Wilhelmina's burial and issued her death certificate, confirming that the religious sister's body was not embalmed and that the wood coffin was not placed into any outer burial container. He said he "can't understand" how Sister Wilhelmina's un-embalmed body is in the state it's currently in, four years after her burial.

Sister Wilhelmina's body, which has been on display in the open air for pilgrims to visit, is reported to have no foul odor in recent days, as would be the case, morticians say, with a body that has undergone decomposition for four years. One pilgrim, Peggy Tynan of Denver, said that while praying over Sister Wilhelmina's body on May 24, she smelt a "sweet and flowery aroma," which was so powerful she could taste it.

Her fellow sisters plan to hold a procession on Monday on the monastery grounds and then place Sister Wilhelmina's body under a glass case to accommodate the many pilgrims coming to the property. As many as 1,000 pilgrims reportedly visited the monastery on Wednesday. The diocese has been advising the sisters about how best to handle the influx of visitors, she said.

Columbus to close 15 churches; bishop calls for stronger Catholic engagement

Ohio's Catholic Diocese of Columbus will close 15 churches as part of a parish reorganization and merger plan, but Bishop Earl K. Fernandes emphasized new possibilities for growth, especially if lay Catholics take on more responsibility for the Church's future.

"When I arrived, I said I'm not interested in presiding over 25 years of decline in the diocese," the bishop said. "I want to grow the church, not for my glory, but for God's glory," he said. Fernandes said the reorganization plan was an effort to "try to come up with the best possible solution for the whole Diocese of Columbus." He stressed the need for "an engaged lay faithful" who take shared responsibility for the Church's mission of evangelization and for the future of their parishes in "authentic collaboration" with clergy. The diocese serves more than 278,000 Catholics at 108 churches in 23 counties of central Ohio.

The changes are needed due to declining church attendance and fewer young priests, as well as population decline in rural areas and population shifts in the Columbus area. Two Catholic schools will also close.

At the same time, there are signs of growth in the diocese. The bishop noted a "huge number" of Spanish-speaking people, compared with 10 years ago, as well as an influx of Africans, some of whom speak French. The diocese has 15 new prospective seminarians this year, but those who continue to ordination will still take years of study and preparation.

"Columbus is unique in that it's growing in the Midwest as a city with lots of jobs coming here," Fernandes said. "But also Columbus, like many other dioceses, has an aging clergy, so something needed to be done, not just for the retraction of the diocese, but for the mission of evangelization." The bishop said the population influx could even mean the construction of new Catholic schools in parts of the diocese. He said he hoped the planned changes are the foundation for a better future for the diocese. He said he envisions, in 10 or 15 years, parishes that are not simply maintaining what they have but are "actually evangelizing" and "making new disciples." Parishes should have a "culture of vocations" and "beautiful churches and liturgy."

The diocese's reorganization process, titled "Real Presence, Real Future," began in 2019 under Fernandes' predecessor, Bishop Robert Brennan. The first draft of the reorganization model was released in fall 2021 and final recommendations were presented to the bishop in fall 2022. Final recommendations to Fernandes slated 19 churches for closure, but the bishop said he made adjustments based on input from parishioners and priests.

The Columbus Diocese borders the Diocese of Steubenville. A proposal to merge the two dioceses is in process.

