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May 2024 Edition

2024 Post Synod Edition

From the Desk of ARCHBISHOP MAURICE

2024 Blessings I live by

1- Hold a brief Mass and Holy Communion ever day.

2-Memorize a Scripture once a week, ie, The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want

3- Read the Bible daily for at least 15 minutes

4- Let all that I do be done in Love I Corinthians 16-14

5- Help someone less fortunate than me.

6- Continue to love myself even if I fail one of the above

Leviticus 19:17-18,
Mark 12:31

In even numbered years our synods and gatherings are generally at the Arch Diocese level. We will be posting the dates for the various events as they are scheduled.



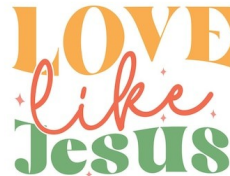
Holy Spirit of Hope serves as the COCC Cathedral of the West .
When in town please visit us at:
7728 Alameda Ave El Paso, Texas 79915

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Please include your email address in the request.

Arch Bishop's Corner

ARCHBISHOP MAURICE MCCORMICK is a founding member of the Independent Old Catholic Movement in America and the Charismatic Old Catholic Church.

ArchBishop Maurice is Pastor of Agape of Jesus Catholic Church and Chancellor of Seminaries for the COCC.



Archbishop Dr. Maurice McCormick, Ed.D, LPCC, LMHC

We can find inspiration everywhere. Make sure you're looking!

Jesus wants you to love Him.
We read in scriptures that Jesus loves us.
But Jesus want us to love him too.
In John 21:15 Jesus ask Peter 3 times, do you love me?
He wants you to tell Him you love him.

In your daily prayers tell Jesus you love him.
Through out the day, say, Jesus I love you.

When you play Rod Stewart's song,
"Have I told you lately that I love You?"

It can be a love song to Jesus.

"Have I told you there is no one else above You?"
"There a love, that's Di-vine
and it's yours and it mine"

"Have I told you lately that I love you?
You ease my troubles that what you do".

I love you Jesus.

✚ ✚ *Maurice*



ANGELS

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Archbishop Dr. Maurice McCormick, Ed.D., LPCC, LMHC



Angels are ministering spirits sent to serve the Heirs of Salvation.

Just as an Angel was involved in Christ's resurrection, so will Angels help us in death.



Only one thin veil separates our natural world from the spiritual world. That thin veil we call death. However, CHRIST both vanquished death and overcame the dark threats of the evil fallen angels (the devil/demons). So now God surrounds death with the assurance of Angelic help to bring pulsing life out of the darkness of that experience for believers.

When God had a message to deliver to a human on earth, He would entrust that message to one of His Angelic messengers.

There is a great deal of scriptural evidence for Angels serving and protecting God's people in general.

Andy Paris, my Bible Teacher at Louisville Bible College, said we do not have one Guardian Angel, but MANY Guardian Angels.

WE DO NOT HAVE ONE GUARDIAN ANGLE, BUT MANY GUARDIAN ANGLES

How many times have we been strangely and unaccountably preserved by Angels? I can recall many times in my (+Maurice's) life.

His Angels are around Us, and God's care for us never ceases.

An old Gospel song says:
When done with toils and cares of this life
when ended the turmoil, the sins and strife
The Angels will carry me over the tide

And ever with Jesus, my soul shall abide.





+ *Bishop Gabriel Obiano COCC Province of Africa*

Bishop Gabriel Okechukwu Chinedu Obiano aka O.O.C. He hails from Umueze He is a prolific song writer and author. Bishop Gabriel is happily married and blessed with two lovely children. The COCC is blessed to have him serving as her first Provincial Bishop of Africa.

HAVING SERVED 7 YEARS AS A MISSIONARY PASTOR IN THE PENTECOSTAL CHURCH, IT PLEASED THE LORD TO DIRECT HIS SERVANT BACK TO THE CATHOLIC CHURCH



Bishop Gabriel Okechukwu Chinedu Obiano was born on October 6th, 1992 to Architecture James and Mrs. Rose Obiano. He hails from Umueze Anam, in Anambra West LGA of Nigeria.

He began his education at Sacred Heart Nursery and Primary School, Enugu in 1995, and ended up at Verod International Primary School around 2001/2002. In 2005 he proceeded to the College of the Immaculate Conception (CIC), Enugu for his Secondary Education.

In 2013, he proceeded to Federal Polytechnic Oko, Anambra State to study Estate Management. His quest to serve God became burning in the heart. He later enrolled in a Theological Institute in Enugu known as Vital Life Bible Training Institute where he earned a National Diploma in Christian Ministry.

He has served as a missionary pastor and was involved in Church planting in Enugu State, Kogi State, Port Harcourt City, and Lagos State (all in Nigeria). He also enrolled in Global Maritime Academy to foster his secular pursuit—where he studied Maritime Transportation and Business Studies.

In 2016, he lectured at Word of Life Bible Institute and later pioneered Rhema Word Bible Institute in Enugu State. During his missionary work in Port Harcourt City in 2018, Bishop Gabriel also devoted his time working for Mbarie Services as Health Safety Environment Personnel. The same year, he was enrolled in the University of the People for his Bachelor of Science in Business Administration which was later earned with flying colors.

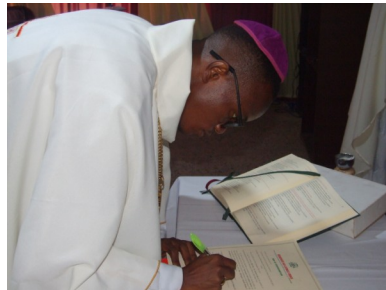
In 2018, Bishop Gabriel won his first writing award in a drug abuse story quest titled “The Monster Hit Story Quest.” In 2022, he also won the International Editor’s Choice Award at Stary PTE LTD, Singapore. He has also authored many books and his latest book is titled “THE DAY.”

Having served 7 years as a missionary pastor in the Pentecostal church, it pleased the LORD to direct His servant back to the Catholic Church to be trained as a priest for the greater work He has for His servant, Bishop Gabriel.

Bishop Gabriel Obiano



Bishop Gabriel followed the leading of the Holy Spirit. After his formation in the Sacred Heart Theological Seminary in Nasarawa State, he was raised to the order of the Diaconate in 2021 under the Old Catholic Apostolic Church-Nigeria by Rt. Rev. Dr. Peter Ulofu. He served as the assistant women's chaplain and later in 2022; he was ordained a Catholic Priest by Most Rev. Dr. Jean Ndjewel to serve under the Roman Catholic Church of England and Wales-Nigeria Province. Bishop Gabriel served as the Bishop's secretary to the then Bishop of Lagos and as the Vocation Director of the Lagos Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church of England and Wales-Nigeria Province under the ecclesiastical authority of His Grace, Most Rev. Dr. John Ajibola Adeyemo.



Bishop Gabriel is happily married and blessed with two lovely children. After he moved down to Enugu, he also worked as a classroom teacher and was later made the Vice Principal of Ideal Child Foundation School, Enugu. He has three gospel songs titled: 'Holy are You Lord,' 'Getting High,' and 'King of kings.'

Today, it has pleased God to raise Bishop Gabriel Okechukwu C. Obiano to the episcopate to serve the highest order in the Catholic Church under the Charismatic Old Catholic Church.

Bishop Gabriel (AKA) O.O.C as fondly called by friends and classmates is a gentle, approachable, humble, and pragmatic leader. The Charismatic Old Catholic Church is blessed to have him pioneer the Africa Province and to serve as her first Bishop of Africa.



A Hospital Not a Courtroom by Fr. Tim Schoonard



Fr. Tim Schoonard, MTh, is a prolific author, artisan, and military veteran who for 30 years ministered to the Roman Church in his liturgical art apostolate. Today, with his wife Dcn. Karla, he serves across the northeastern U.S. as a healing minister and exorcist.

**A HOSPITAL
NOT A
COURTROOM**



As the title denotes, as a church, we are a hospital, purposed to heal the “sick” as our Lord stated in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Obviously, the healthy do not need a doctor. The same applies to sin. The church is a place for sinners, not saints. Jesus did not dispatch us to take His gospel to the whole world as Judges, but Evangelists. That of course doesn’t remove from us, as ministers of the Gospel, of our responsibility to express Christian love without sacrificing Christian truth. If we did that, we would neither be serving Christ or the souls He sends us to.

This was the underlying theme echoed throughout our Synod in Kentucky this year. And many pertinent questions were discussed there in that stead, as well as asking ourselves, “How do we respond as a church” in that way to others we minister to? How will the COCC, an ancient church, expressed in a new way, relate to other Catholic churches, while meeting the needs of those God sends us to in today’s world? How do we meet people where they are, and how will we best lift them up from where they are? What is the COCC’s response to the many moral questions relative to the lives of twenty-first century souls who cross our paths, to lead them to Christ, get them living in Christ, and walking with Christ?

Many were questions that were deemed too difficult to answer for our COCC in such a short space of time, so more study is ongoing to collect and review the information needed for the House of Bishops to make those decisions for our Charismatic Old Catholic Church, as we mission to bring souls back into the fold of our Good Shepherd.

—continued—

Fr. Tim Schoonard



This wonderful Synod wasn't just about important questions of faith, but a beautiful opportunity to build community amongst our clergy. I for one left with a true sense of "church family" as well as making many new friends that I had opportunity to meet face-to-face. Having worked in ministry in many ways for thirty-five years before this, I can honestly say that this Synod, in its "complex simplicity", was one of the best church related experiences of my life (even with my coerced karaoke debut), and I look forward to the next one, as well as the small group meetings that will take place in many ways until then.

I was happy to know when I returned home, that I am not the only COCC priest in Michigan now with the Ordination of Father John Santeramo, who with his wife Kathy, only live two hours from Karla and me. We are all hopeful for what the Lord may lead us collaboratively to do in the many days ahead. One of the challenges of our church being stretched far and wide in the US, not to mention our international church family that keeps growing, is networking together, or staying in communication as well as prayer and mutual support. So many good things are happening. I am certain this question will be one that is also looked at closely in the near future.



This article is short, but says the good things I wanted to say, and to let all who minister with Karla and I in this growing, fresh, and important Charismatic Old Catholic Church, that you are in our prayers daily. All Glory to Jesus Christ! Amen.

Blessings ,

Tim 



Campus Ministry of the Charismatic Old Catholic Church in Nigeria

by Bishop Gabriel Obiano



Bishop Gabriel Okechukwu Chinedu Obiano aka O.O.C. He hails from Umueze He is a prolific song writer and author. Bishop Gabriel is happily married and blessed with two lovely children. The COCC is blessed to have him serving as her first Provincial Bishop of Africa.

The Charismatic Old Catholic Church in Nigeria



has established various arms of ministry to cater to the spiritual needs of its members and the larger community. One of these arms is the campus ministry, which focuses on reaching out to young people and helping them discover and fulfill their destinies.

In Nigeria, there is a popular phrase that goes, "Catch them young." This phrase is often used positively in the context of evangelism, highlighting the critical role that young people play in advancing the kingdom of God.

When young people are reached with the message of Christ early in life, they become powerful agents of change and transformation in their communities. The Charismatic Old Catholic Church in Nigeria recognizes the importance of engaging young people in its ministry, and the campus ministry is one way that it seeks to do so.

One of the recurring themes in the campus ministry is "Destiny Hunt," a monthly seminar program that focuses on various topics related to the lives of young people.

Some of the topics covered include:

1. The way to destiny
2. Teens' relationships with their parents and teachers
3. The lies that teens tell themselves
4. Failure isn't my final destination.

By addressing these issues, the campus ministry hopes to equip young people with the tools they need to navigate the challenges of life and fulfill their God-given destinies.

The Charismatic Old Catholic Church in Nigeria believes that investing in the spiritual development of young people is a crucial part of its mission to impact the world for Christ.

Agape,

+Gabriel

WHEN YOUNG PEOPLE ARE REACHED WITH THE MESSAGE OF CHRIST EARLY IN LIFE, THEY BECOME POWERFUL AGENTS OF CHANGE AND TRANSFORMATION IN THEIR COMMUNITIES.

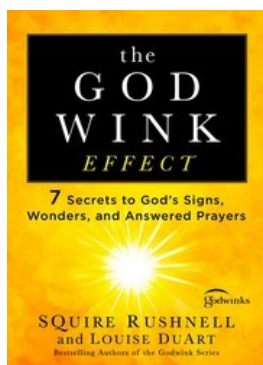
The Difficult Path *Fr. Hal West* +++

Monsignor Harold (Hal) Ellis West, O.S.S.T., O.S.L., S.T.A., S.T.B., S.T.M., M.Div.

Fr. Hal is a Priest, Chancellor and Vicar General for the State of Florida of the Archdiocese of the Southeastern States and Missionary Dependencies. Order of the Most Holy Mary Theotokos in the Evangelical Orthodox Catholic Church in America and Shofar contributor.



I BELIEVE IT IS SAFE TO SAY THAT HUMANS TEND TO TAKE THE PATH OF LEAST RESISTANCE



Are You a “Godwink”?

Fr. Hal West

There is the story of a time when the rains began to fall upon a community near a large river. The rain went on unceasingly for days. It was soon obvious that a major flood was inevitable. The local police fanned out across the city knocking on doors and telling folks to prepare to evacuate. At one house, a police officer spoke to the resident and asked if he would need any assistance is getting out of there before the flood came. The gentleman thanked the officer but told him, “Young man, I will stay right here. God will take care of me.”

A few days later, the streets began to fill with water making it impossible for automobiles to get through. The fire department sent their trucks out to cruise the streets and check for anyone who might be stuck in their homes. Well they came across the home of that same gentleman and the water was up over the axles of the car in the driveway. A fireman waded through the water up to the door and spoke to the homeowner. The firefighter invited the man to come out to the truck and they would drive him to safety outside of the flood zone. “No thanks.” the man replied. “God will take care of me!”

A couple of days later, the water was now up and over the first floor of most buildings and homes. Rescue boats fanned out to rescue anyone who still might be in the flood area. Well, sure enough, a boat came upon our friend watching the water rise from his second floor window. The boat was maneuvered up to the window and the

rescuers told our friend to get in. “No thank you. God will take care of me!” The boat moved away leaving the man behind.

The very next day, a military helicopter flying over the area saw the man sitting on the roof of his house as the raging flood waters swirled around the very edge of the roof. The helicopter hovered over the scene and lowered a harness to the man and yelled at him to put it on and they would pull him up to the safety of the chopper. The man waved them off. “God will take care of me!”

The next thing our friend knew, he was inside Heaven's gates and standing before God. “God, I don't understand. All my life I have been a devout Christian. I have always trusted in you completely I am grateful to be here with you but, I am a young man and I prayed and prayed for days as the floods came and as my home was slowly consumed by the rising waters. I asked you to save me but, here I am. I just don't get it!” God said, “I sent you a policeman, a fireman, a rescue boat, and a helicopter. What else did you expect me to do?”

The “Godwinks” series of books by Squire Rushnell is based on the premise that many coincidences that we see regularly occurring in our lives actually are not. Rushnell describes them as signposts that can help guide us by greatly improving our lives. These signposts are actually “Godwinks” or little messages or acknowledgements from God that we often dismiss. The books present stories of “Godwinks” recognized and acted upon by people receiving them result in successes, deeper faith experiences or, even miracles.

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The Difficult Path *Fr. Hal West +++*



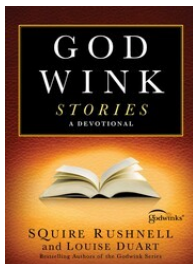
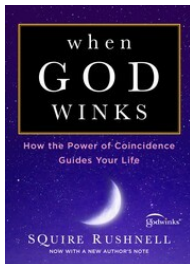
Many of us (myself included) fail to recognize not just Godwinks but, sometimes God give us nudges, shoves, and shouts to get our attention. As I wrote my book “Beautiful Life – Beautiful Death” {Lynne's story) about my late wife's final year on this earth, I became fully aware that the experience of facing death at a young age from a brain tumor with renewed faith and grace was the result of a series of events that occurred long before. And that, when you look at the big picture, were not chance meetings or mere coincidences. People came in and out of her life at key moments. Long before she was diagnosed with a cancer that would take her life. Only in retrospect can you see that each one gave her some little nudge that pushed her a little closer to God.

After her diagnoses. We saw the fruits of the “nudges” and realized that many of those folks had no idea the impact of their appearance in her life at that particular time and place. Most, were no more conscious of nudging her than we were. Although we never got the miracle healing we prayed for, I believe that the miracles big and small in that short time between diagnoses and death we saw jolted many people into a reality that sent them racing to draw closer to God. Her death would be as she wanted. She lived for having a house full of friends, laughing, playing board games, and eating chips and salsa. She left this world with 14 friends piled into our living room around her hospital bed. Almost all of them had been there all night. At about 5:30 a.m., she drew her final breath. People were singing hymns, praying, hugging and, as she slipped away, one of her best friends was leaning over her, wiping her face and saying quietly, “Go to Jesus, Go to Jesus.” A beautiful life ending in a beautiful death. I am convinced that no coincidence could have led to that point.

I agree with Rushnell that we need to be conscious of the “Godwinks” that God sends our way and be ready to respond to them. I also believe sincerely that is equally important that we become aware of moments when God is calling upon us to be the Godwink that others need.

Many years ago when I was still young and dumb (I'm no longer young) I spent 6 years or so as a professional wrestler. I had a partner that I trained with and traveled with from show to show. We became close friends. He was like a brother to me. Between a series of injuries and low pay that was common in that pre WWE era, I had to quit and work a normal job. Bobby and I kept in touch for a time but eventually, life happened and we lost contact. He moved and I did not know where he had gone. He had also changed phone numbers and no one from those days that we knew had any idea where he had gone.

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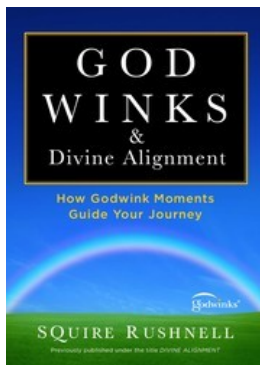


The Difficult Path *Fr. Hal West + + +*



Several years later, Bobby came to mind. I remembered some of our adventures in and out of the ring and it brought a smile to my face. I had this crazy thought that I should again try to find Bobby and see what he thought of us putting together one more show for charity. For several weeks that thought kept crossing my mind “one more show”. One night, out of the blue, I got a call from a woman who identified her self as Bobby's fiancée. She said Bobby asked her to go through his old address books and see if she could find my number and give me a call.

Then she told me he was in the hospital about an hour from my house and he was dying from cancer. She said I should come as soon as I could because the doctors told her it would not be much longer. I rushed to the hospital the next day. I sat by his bedside and grabbed his hand. The big burly man I once knew was now skin and bones. It was obvious he has been suffering for some time. Bobby gave me that big grin and suddenly he said, “Hey West. What do you think? Are we good for one more show?” His once booming laugh that followed a quip like that or some joke he pulled on me was gone but he got out one last chuckle as I was trying not to cry in front of everyone. That would not be very becoming of a wrestler turned cop, A few days later I got the call that he was gone.



Then, at the funeral I learned from his pastor that Bobby had given his life to the Lord and was active in the church until he became ill to continue. Did I get a Godwink? Was his quip repeating my thoughts about one more show his acknowledgement of that?

Since then there have been times when people have come into my mind that I have not spoken to in a while. I make note that I need to check on them. Too many times, life happens and I don't follow through. Sometimes I find out they had been going through a bad time and I may have been able to help them. Sometimes, I get the dreaded call. I won't get to talk to them again in this life.

Father God, help us to hear you in the Godwinks you send our way. Forgive us for the times you ask us to deliver a Godwink to one of your children and we don't listen or we fail to act.

AMEN



Navigating the Spiritual Seas of Ethiopia: Br Zerai Hagos



Br Zerai Hagos

**DMin Student
Agape Seminary,
Louisville, Kentucky
An Applicant to COCC
Mission: Start St.
Paul Old Catholic
Charismatic Seminary
and reach young, vi-
brant Christians with
sound practical theo-
logy and Christian
counseling, as well as
start satellite counsel-
ing centers in Ha-
wassa and beyond.**

**ETHIOPIA,
WHERE
TRADITION AND
SPIRITUALITY
INTERTWINE**

In the heart of Ethiopia, where tradition and spirituality intertwine, a profound quest for holistic guidance emerges. As an Ethiopian burdened with the responsibility of providing pastoral counseling to my fellow brothers and sisters, I embarked on a journey fraught with challenges. The dichotomy between tradition-entrenched, non-spirit-led Oriental Church practices and the allure of higher, yet often counterfeited, Pentecostalism left me grappling for a theological niche that could reconcile these divergent paths.

Amidst this spiritual landscape, I observed a pressing need for psychosocial counseling, a need unmet by both traditional institutions and modern charismatic movements. It is in this crucible of cultural and spiritual tension that the Charismatic Old Catholic Church (COCC) emerges as a beacon of hope for me—a vessel capable of navigating the turbulent waters of Ethiopian spirituality with grace and authenticity.

Drawing inspiration from Ethiopian-themed literature, we find echoes of our collective longing for spiritual fulfillment and guidance. In works such as "*Fikir Eske Meqabir*" by Haddis Alemayehu, we witness the struggles of individuals seeking solace and redemption amidst the complexities of life. Similarly, in the poetry of Tsegaye Gabre-Medhin, we find expressions of the human spirit yearning for transcendence and communion with the divine.

The COCC, with its unique blend of pure biblical tradition and Spirit-led evangelical practices, offers a compelling solution to the spiritual hunger that pervades Ethiopian society. Rooted in the rich heritage of the Old Catholic Church and invigorated by the charismatic movement, COCC embraces the transformative power of the Holy Spirit while honoring the sacred traditions that have sustained Christianity for centuries.

In the bustling city of Hawassa, nestled within a nation steeped in religious fervor, the COCC will stand as a beacon of light, offering sanctuary to those in search of spiritual guidance and healing. By providing psychosocial counseling grounded in biblical truth and infused with the power of the Holy Spirit, COCC will address the holistic needs of individuals and communities, fostering spiritual growth, emotional resilience, and communal unity.

Navigating the Spiritual Seas of Ethiopia: Br Zerai Hagos



As I reflect on my role within this dynamic landscape, I am reminded of the words of Ethiopian philosopher Zera Yacob: "Let us seek the truth; let us endure the suffering along the way." In embracing the mission of COCC, I am committed to walking alongside my Ethiopian brothers and sisters, offering them a path to truth, healing, and spiritual wholeness.

In conclusion, the journey of providing pastoral counseling in Ethiopia is a profound and multifaceted endeavor marked by the intersection of tradition, spirituality, and cultural identity. By embracing the Charismatic Old Catholic Church as a vehicle for holistic healing and spiritual transformation, we honor the rich Ethiopian heritage while charting a course toward a brighter future filled with hope, faith, and love through evangelicalism, charismatic and yet sticking to early church practices, and the sacraments.

Many Blessings



ETHIOPIA

Planting the Light of Christ: Our Journey of Faith in a Small Kentucky Town

Fr. Steven McBride



Fr Stephen McBride, DMin is an ordained priest in the Charismatic Old Catholic Church and a PRN Chaplain.

Stephen and his wife are currently planting a church, the Light of Christ Community Church in Bedford KY.

**THIS DIRECTIVE
CHALLENGED MY
INNATE DESIRE
FOR METICULOUS
PLANNING AND
PUSHED ME FAR
OUT OF MY
COMFORT ZONE**

For many years, I was deeply involved in ministry, culminating in my ordination as a Deacon and subsequently as a Priest in the Charismatic Old Catholic Church. During my time here, I've had the honor of serving alongside Archbishop McCormick and Bishop Gentry, helping to pastor Agape of Jesus Catholic Church in Louisville.

My wife Amy and I felt a calling to embrace rural life, leading us to purchase an 18-acre multi-generational farm outside the city. This transition meant becoming quick learners in the nuances of farming and adjusting to the inconveniences of rural living—where the conveniences of large chain stores and restaurants aren't just around the corner. Online shopping has become our go to.

For several months, I commuted to the city every Sunday, either delivering the homily or performing Mass. As I settled into our new home and met new people, I began to understand the local struggles and felt a strong calling to plant a church in my community. I prayed for guidance and for the people around me.

During this period, the Holy Spirit was pouring out at Asbury University and we sensed a similar movement stirring in our own town. It was my wife Amy who first noticed the cries for revival on our local Trimble County Facebook Page. She showed me and encouraged me to explore what was occurring.

Initially, I was skeptical, attributing the fervor to social media buzz about Asbury the Phenomenon. However, my continued prayers led to a profound personal revelation. God's message was clear: "I don't want you to put together a plan; you don't need to be prepared. Just follow the Spirit's lead and trust in Me." Thoughts of father Abraham echoed in my mind when God instructed him to "go," or when Jesus asked the disciples to drop their nets and "follow Him." Now, I'm not comparing my direction from the Holy Spirit with Abraham or the Disciples' calling by any means, but this directive challenged my innate desire for meticulous planning and pushed me far out of my comfort zone, as it probably did for Abraham or the Disciples in their time.

-continued --

Planting the Light of Christ: Our Journey of Faith in a Small Kentucky Town



As I continued to familiarize myself with our community and its surrounding areas, it became quite apparent that it lacked a catholic presence, a fact highlighted during an encounter with the new Bishop of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Louisville at a local Home Depot. Sporting my Trinity High School shirt—an all-boy Roman Catholic institution—my alma mater, he struck up a conversation. During the conversation, he asked where I lived, and I told him about our recent move to Trimble County. He noted, somewhat amused, that it was one of the few counties in the State of Kentucky without a catholic church. Of course, he was referring to a Roman Catholic church, but it so happens that there are no types of catholic community in the area.

IT BECAME QUITE APPARENT THAT OUR COMMUNITY LACKED A CATHOLIC PRESENCE,

This interaction lingered in my mind about the challenges I might face in the community, with the likelihood of generational teachings and misunderstandings about the faith, given the predominance of Pentecostal, Baptist, and Evangelical Churches.

Nevertheless, motivated by a sense of mission, we started a prayer group at the local community center, inviting everyone, specifically clergy and congregations from the surrounding churches, regardless of denomination. Some declined respectfully, and others remained quiet and never responded to our invitation.

We eventually established a solid core group of regular attendees. We would eventually settle on a name for our prayer group, The Countryside Christian

Initiative. This group has done its best to stay independent of respective churches, to remain open to all Christian brothers and sisters.

While out and about in the community doing ministry work, such as serving out the local nursing home or other community events. I noticed that simply wearing clergy clothing has been a trigger point for some. The collar automatically generates questions because of its association with Roman Catholicism. I find this somewhat humorous because the white collar finds its roots in Protestantism, which is the majority of the churches out here. I often refocus critical questions back to what we have in common: Jesus and The Gospel. It has been my mission to break the mindset of negativity toward our other brothers and sisters in Christ, to not muddy the waters with theological differences. I remind myself, Jesus doesn't have a denomination; He has only one, holy, catholic, and apostolic Church, as stated in the Nicene Creed.

Attendance to the Countryside Christian Initiative (CCI) prayer group had continued to vary, but our persistence was steadfast, trusting in God's plan. The great news is that our prayers were answered when a prominent local, Christian landowner, approached me through one of the attendees of the CCI prayer group about an old historical church in town that had just become available for leasing.

— continued —



Planting the Light of Christ: Our Journey of Faith in a Small Kentucky Town



With the lease not being renewed, because the prior occupants, the Freemasons, had purchased a church down the road, he offered us the opportunity to establish a congregation in the historic building, he wanted it to be used again as a House of God, which I gratefully accepted. To this day, I refuse to call this luck; this was all God’s doing. He works everything out for His good purpose.

The church, a quaint structure from the 1830s located at the end of Church Street in Bedford, Kentucky, still boasts its original stained-glass windows. I have recently crossed paths with the great-great granddaughters of one of the original founders of the old Methodist church. She explained that each stained glass was dedicated by the original founding families, and that each glass design meant something specific and special to the families and their walk with God.

I don’t believe in coincidences, I feel that I was meant to meet this lady, that God wanted me to know this, it was a very touching conversation. The church itself needed tender love and care, along with the residences that live around it, which we have eagerly provided. Plans for restoration of the old church building included new doors, fresh exterior paint, landscaping, and eventually a new steeple. To increase visibility, we illuminated the church with purple lights during Lent, earning it the nickname "The Purple Church" by the community—a moniker that sparked local curiosity and conversation on social media and amongst other churches in the area. When I first heard of this, I found it amusing, I in fact chuckled at the thought of it. The reason for the laughter is that the color purple points back to Christ and His Royalty as The King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. To say the least, I’m ok with the nickname, better yet, I feel honored with it.



**TO INCREASE
VISIBILITY, WE
ILLUMINATED THE
CHURCH WITH PURPLE
LIGHTS DURING LENT**

What started as a distant echo of revival has become a focal point for those in Bedford seeking a genuine encounter with God. Our consistent prayers and welcoming stance towards the entire Christian community here have fostered a spirit of love, slowly establishing Light of Christ Community Church "The Purple Church" as a beacon of hope and renewal. As we continue to pray and refurbish Gods cherished church building, we trust that this is just the beginning of a greater awakening in our community, reflecting the brilliant Light of Christ.

On a personal note...Amy and I recently have welcomed 5 foster children into our home. It has been an adjustment to say the least, once a quiet house, has now become a house full children’s laughter and at times a bit chaotic, but are truly blessed by God having them in our lives, for however long that may be.

In Christ,
Rev. Fr. Stephen A. McBride
Pastor, Light of Christ Community Church- Bedford, Kentucky



Bishop Ted Kerr



BP. Ted Kerr is the Founder/CEO of

Touchstone Capital, Inc. an Investment Advisory group with over \$150 million in assets under management. Ted is also the President of Touchstone Cares, a 501(c)3 organization, which has contributed hundreds of thousands of dollars to local, national, and international charities, including Transformando Vidas (Transforming Lives), a community project in Northeast Brazil.

OUR MISSION IS
SIMPLE
TRANSFORMING
LIVES TO
TRANSFORM THE
WORLD

Our School in Brazil Continues to Grow!

My wife, Patty, and I opened the Transforming Lives Education Center in February 2022 with students in levels preschool fifth grade. In February 2024, we opened for our third year and now have 28 staff and teachers and 155 students up to seventh grade!

The school is located in the small town of Lagoa De Pedras (English: rock pond) and serves a poor, rural farm community in Northeast Brazil. I have been involved with a project in Brazil since 2000, but opening and running our own school in 2022 was a big commitment of faith. God has proven his faithfulness on every step of the journey.

Our mission is simple: Transforming Lives to Transform the World.

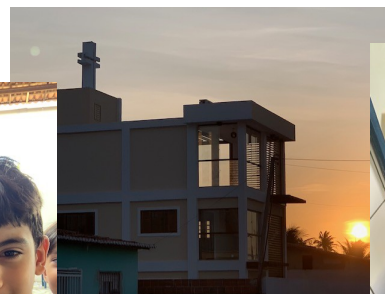
The school is supported through donations by my for-profit wealth management business, which has 250 clients in 23 states. Most donations come from a tithe of our business revenue, but we also have received regular and significant support from clients and friends.

Our vision for Transforming Lives is to grow to five elementary schools in the surrounding area that all roll up into one common middle and high school. Ultimately, we want to launch a missionary training center that will teach high school graduates how to go out into the world to share the gospel and to serve others through the love of Jesus Christ. Some will be called to the priesthood. I look forward to ordaining many Brazilians!

We have purchased the land for the second elementary school and plan on breaking ground on that building project in June when we visit Brazil. In 2025, we plan on beginning construction on the middle school on a separate property that we purchased previously.

Please pray for our project, for wisdom in the pursuit of our vision, and for our partners in Brazil who work tirelessly to serve those less fortunate.

 Ted



Bishop Ted Kerr



TEN YEARS AGO,
BISHOP
MAURICE
ORDAINED ME
AS A PRIEST.
THANK YOU FOR
BELIEVING IN
ME AND FOR
CONFIRMING
GOD'S CALLING
ON MY LIFE TO
SERVE PEOPLE.

+TED KERR
BISHOP OF
BRAZIL
AUXILIARY
BISHOP OF
EAST CENTRAL
DIOCESE



Dn. Karla Schoonard



Dcn. Karla Schoonard hails from Montana and began her walk with Christ there 48 years ago as a charismatic Protestant. Today she joins with her husband, Fr. Tim, in their healing and deliverance ministry, as well as writes for, and counsels abused women.

**IT COMES TO
KNOWING THAT
GOD DOES NOT
LIVE IN ANY
DENOMINATIONAL
BOX!**

I never would have thought that after walking with Christ for 49 years as a Spirit filled Protestant that I would find myself participating for 2 days in a Catholic Synod!

Honestly, I wasn't even sure how to properly pronounce the word up until recently! What an awesome experience though and an uplifting time for me. For those of you who didn't meet me in April, I come from a background of walking, praying, and celebrating the Spirit of God and living in the reality of the book of Acts in today's culture.

My belief system has always been that of liberality when it comes to knowing that God does not live in any box that my denomination would try and keep Him in. As if that were even possible!

My conviction of women in ministry, as well is full-fledged. If God needs a women to preach, anoint, heal, or hold an office, that is His choice not mine. He charged us to pray for laborers to go into the fields and declared that He needs more workers. (Matthew 9:37-38)

I believe so much in this that I sent my daughter through the Assembly of God Seminary for four years because she believed that she was called to be a Pastor and wanted to work in those fields that Jesus spoke about.

Looking at the context of Jesus' words in Matthew 9, we see that he was going throughout the cities and villages, teaching and healing. No doubt there were so many with so many needs. Scripture says that he had compassion for them when he saw the crowds. They were harassed and helpless, without a shepherd. His heart broke as he felt their pain. The urgency of the many, many, needs compelled him to charge his disciples with those words of verses 37 and 38

"The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few; pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest". The world IS the Lord's harvest! The sowing and reaping of the fields isn't to build numbers for our church pews, but the purpose of the harvest is to reach the lost, the hurting, the sick and oppressed, one by one.

Never think that the opportunities do not present themselves to you. Just take a moment to lift your head up and let your eyes see who is walking by you in the store, who is sitting three desks down from you at work, or who is sitting in the pew behind you on Sunday! People are in pain. They need God's touch. They need God's healing of their body and their hearts.

— continued —

Dn. Karla Schoonard



I don't think I've ever met anyone yet in life that hasn't had trauma impact them. These are the souls that we need to reach for Christ. Maybe they are already walking with Him, but everyone needs prayer of some kind. We as God's workers can offer that to them.

You may ask, what does this "rabbit trail" have to do with the Synod or women in ministry? It has everything to do with it. We as the COCC are establishing a Full Gospel representation to the world. We are reaching people and growing the ministries that God has placed in our care. We basically asked the question of "how do we do this for the Lord" at the Synod in April. This was discussed at length in different sessions.

I have confidence and faith in the Power of God's Spirit that as we look to His Word and listen for His voice that we will hear our challenge and charge before us. When we obey Him, we will accomplish His desire in reaching the lost with salvation and helping all those who are needing us to pray for them and teach them His truth! We have an amazing opportunity to be able to accomplish This by being a part of the COCC.

The many hours that we all spent together, breaking bread, discussing topics, witnessing ordinations and simply just worshipping together brought so much joy to my life. When we left the church building on Saturday afternoon to head back to Michigan, I looked at my husband Tim and said, "We have made friends!"

Thank you to all of the Bishops and to Deacon Mark for respectfully listening to my thoughts and insights there as well. As the "new one", I wasn't sure what to expect but Bishop John assured me that I did not have to be intimidated at all. He was right!

What a joy to see Christians from all walks of life, Catholic, Protestant and everything in between, join together to be as bright of light to the world as we possibly can be.

May God continue to guide us in the COCC and may we forever have our eyes fixed on Him and look at those around us through the lens of God.

Blessings,

Deacon Karla Schoonard



The Fathers Simplicity of Spirit Accomplishes much in the Body of Christ: Dn Mark



DEACON MARK RUFFOLO
founding member of the COCC,
he sits on the Canon committee, is the Chaplain to the House of Bishops and production manager for the online COCC South American Sunday Church service with Bishop Fuentes. Professionally Mark is an audio engineer in Boca Raton FL where he also leads congregational worship in a RC Church



**SPECIAL THANKS TO
ALL THE ATTENDEES
WHO MADE THIS SUCH
A SUCCESSFUL EVENT**

Shalom everyone,

Coming off the Spring 2024 Synod, we have made some great accomplishments.

In my blog this edition, there is not going to be much of any discussion on technology.. Well... except that at the Spring 2024 Synod, we had very little technology. The Lord equipped us with nothing more than a TV (thank you Deacons Glen and Donna), a couple of Laptops, and some basic office supplies (including a stapler from Bishop Mike).

Come to think of it, it felt a little like five loaves and two fishing rods... Yet in spite of this apparent lack of resources, this may have been the most productive Synod to date!

Here is a simple, easy to follow synopsis of what you may have missed (or if you were there, experienced):

Synodal Summary

Presentations:

“Centering Prayer” by Richard Davis & Mother Sophia Ko-Davis

“The Body and Blood of Christ” by Father Joey Rogers (soon available on Video & a must-watch!)

“What is Old Catholicism? & Exploring Charismatic Worship” by Bishop Scott and Arch-Bishop Robert

“Keeping your Faith alive against all odds” by Father Tim Schoonard

Topics Addressed:

“Future Old Catholic Ordinations & Recognition of Validity of COCC Sacraments”

“Revisions and updates to the Canon, E-Sacraments,

Vote for ratification of Canons, & The Bonn Agreement”.

“Considering Fiducia Supplicans”

— continued —



Incardinations/Ordinations

Memar “Mimi” Geinzer: to Deacon
Sharon Hill: to Deacon
Mark Mareska: to Deacon
Glen Owen: to Deacon
Donna Owen: to Deacon

Jeff Blanken: to Priesthood- +Cruthis for CEEC
Doctor Brent Cook to Priest
Richard Davis: to Priest
Deacon John Santeramo: to Priest



Outcomes and Future Votes:

A Commission on the validity of E-Sacraments was formed. Led by Canon Dan Newby, it includes Bishop John Geinzer, Bishop Gerry Gammon, Father Brent Cook, Father Stephen McBride, Father Tim Schoonard, and Deacon Mark Ruffolo.

Consensus that all Baptised Christians may receive Holy Eucharist from any COCC Priest/Bishop.

The “5-Year Rule” for Bishops could be excepted at the discretion of the House of Bishop’s.

Global email or area on website for Synodal Resources.

Formalized resources for clergy being Ordained.

A Discussion amongst the House of Bishops on the method used in the Voting Process: This includes choosing between the Patriarchal method, the Democratic method, and the Consensual method. This is a big one!

Lastly, I do believe a modicum of gratitude is in order.

Thank you Arch-Bishop Maurice and Bishop Mike for hosting the Synod. Thank you Deacons Glen and Donna for all the love and support, especially with the Synodal Snacks.

Thank you to all the Presenters, the Workshops, the Talks, and Teachings. They were very edifying. Thank you to any of those with the Gift of Healing! Lots of healed tummies, backs , and clogged ears.

Thank you to the Spouses and Families at both the Synod and Ordinations, your support means everything to us Clergy!

And finally to our Ecumenical Brothers in the the Communion of Evangelical Episcopal Churches: Bishop Jarod, Father Jeff , and especially Father Dan Newby! Thank you for joining or supporting us at the Synod. Truly, together our Communions saw a communion of sorts as well as the building up of the Body of Christ!

That said, in our next Issue of Shofar, we will explore a more complex topic from the last Technology Column: AI. We will be going more in depth on topic.. The Pro’s and the Cons.

In Christ, Deacon Mark. Email- Catholicmrk@gmail.com Cell: 954-501-4899.





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CHURCH DIRECTORY**

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PLAN TO COME JOIN US!**

CATHOLIC

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CHURCH, Jeffersontown KY**

**HOLY SPIRIT OF HOPE
CHARISMATIC OLD CATHOLIC
CHURCH, El Paso TX**
(Ground and Zoom Services)

**ST MICHAEL'S INDEPENDENT OLD
CATHOLIC CHURCH, Loganville GA**

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CHURCH DIRECTORY**

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INDEPENDENT

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Warren OH**

ONLINE SEMINARY

AGAPE SEMINARY LOUISVILLE

**ST THOMAS OLD CATHOLIC
THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY**

**Contact editor to list your weekly celebration and to welcome our
brothers and sisters to join your local Worship!**

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