



— ARCHDIOCESE OF CINCINNATI —
**CATHOLIC SOCIAL
ACTION OFFICE**



LOVE IN ACTION

A Principle of Beacons of Light

DECEMBER 2024 NEWSLETTER

Celebrating God's Love

Greetings from the Social Action Office. We hope all is well and you're having a wonderful Advent journey.

([Click here](#) to read the Catholic Telegraph's Advent reflections.)

It has been a long and - at times - arduous year, and we now come to a time of anticipation, both for the known (Christ is coming) and the unknown (God only knows what the new year will bring). Please take the time you need to both prepare your heart for Jesus' miraculous birth and to rejuvenate yourself for the coming of 2025.

There is much to celebrate: it's a year of Eucharistic mission, it's a Jubilee year (calling us to be 'Pilgrims of Hope'), and there will undoubtedly be

many opportunities to share God's grace and mercy and stand with solidarity and compassion.

Additionally, we will have many challenges to face in the coming year. Based on the rhetoric we've heard, we will need to lean especially into supporting our immigrant and refugee sisters and brothers and caring for God's creation. We promise to keep everyone updated with our efforts to work for justice in these areas (and others), and we ask that you please stay in contact with us to share about your work.

Today we celebrate the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, commemorating the appearance of Mary to a simple Mexican man, Juan Diego, almost 500 years ago. She appeared to him in his cultural dress and spoke to him in his native language, showing him - and all of us! - that God comes to us no matter where we are in the way that we need to hear God. She is the patron saint of the Americas, and we honor her today. Check out this [great video](#) from the National Eucharistic Congress on Our Lady of Guadalupe. She calls all of us to "unite your will to that of my Son."

We ask God to give us the strength and resolve to engage in the work of peace, justice, and solidarity.

Thanks to all who joined us for the events around "What We Have Seen and Heard" and Fr. Clarence Rivers. Both the symposium and mass were wonderful.

Thanks also to all who visited our Fair Trade Sale. There was an amazing turnout - one of the largest ever! - and we look forward to an even bigger crowd next year.

And finally, thanks to all who donated to the **Catholic Campaign for Human Development** (CCHD). Your generosity is appreciated. (If you haven't had a chance to donate, don't worry - you still can. [Click here](#) to make your secure online donation.

We humbly ask that you continue to pray for us. 2025 will be an exciting and challenging year, and your prayers - and engagement! - will make our success possible. God help us!

If there's anything that we can do to support the work happening in your community, please let us know. We're trying to be more present to families of parishes, especially during the Beacons of Light process, and we'd love to (re)connect with you and work to build up God's kingdom of peace, justice, and kinship in your corner of the kingdom.

We will continue to send out Regional Updates with time-sensitive reminders and Action Alerts encouraging everyone to bring their voice and power to bear on important issues.

We wish you a wonderful Advent and a joyful Christmas, and - as always - we look forward to seeing you soon as we continue to stand up for justice, solidarity, and equity.

Peace and all good,
Tammie, Sr. Christine, Jill, Glen, & Andrew



In this issue...

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Meet Tom Hollywood.

He has a GLOBAL story to tell.

During the first week of February 2025, the Catholic Social Action Office of the Archdiocese of Cincinnati will host Tom Hollywood, *Partner and Campaign Engagement Advisor for Catholic Relief Services (CRS)*. It is most appropriate that Tom will share his vast experiences in improving the human condition during a visit that coincides with the **50th anniversary of CRS Rice Bowl**.

For the past twenty-five years, Tom tackled challenging emergencies and entrenched global problems that the poor encounter in Latin America and Africa. In 2007, he joined Catholic Relief Services (CRS). As a fellow, he worked in Venezuela, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia, and Ethiopia.

Tom's position focuses on connecting individuals, parishes, high schools, and universities to CRS. Using his field-based experiences, Tom invites the US Catholic community to learn more about CRS and global realities while presenting opportunities for impactful actions that alleviate poverty. Tom's visit will include visits to numerous high schools and parishes around the Archdiocese. His visit will be tailored to his audience and highlight the accomplishments of CRS and, specifically, CRS Rice Bowl.

There is still a chance to hear Tom. If your parish group is interested in a presentation or where one might be available to attend, please contact Jill Foster jfoster@catholicaoc.org.

CRS Rice Bowl is the Lenten program of Catholic Relief Services, the official relief and development agency of the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops.

Rooted in the history of the Eucharistic Congress, CRS Rice Bowl invites Catholics and faith communities in the United States to encounter God and our global family throughout Lent by practicing the pillars of prayer, fasting and almsgiving. Lenten alms donated through CRS Rice Bowl support the work of CRS in more than 120 different countries each year. Twenty-five percent of donations to CRS Rice Bowl stay in the local diocese, supporting hunger and poverty alleviation efforts. Since its inception in 1975, CRS Rice Bowl has raised more than \$350 million.

<https://www.crsricebowl.org/about>



Remembering Sr. Dorothy Stang, other Eco-Martyrs, and lost species

February 11
7:00 pm - 8:15 pm
[online](#)

The Laudato Si' Circle of the Family of the Most Holy Eucharist parishes invites you to an event dedicated to reflecting on the incredible life of Sister Dorothy Stang, SNDdeN.

We will explore her legacy through a PowerPoint presentation and two short videos and review other Eco-Martyrs and lost species featured in the Season of Creation 2024 Catholic liturgy guide. We will begin and end our remembrance with prayer.

REGISTER: email Monica Kleimeyer at laudatosicircle@gmail.com or text 513-520-0125.
Deadline to register: Monday, February 10, 2025 at 5 p.m.

Those registered will receive the Dorothy Stang Novena nine days before the meeting. Join us as we honor her life and continue the call to care for creation.

[Back to Calendar](#)

Remembering Sr. Dorothy Stang, other Eco-Martyrs and lost species. | February 11, 2025 |
20th Anniversary

Social Media post:

You are invited to join the Family of the Most Holy Eucharist's Laudato Si' Circle for this zoom meeting.

[#dorothystang](#) [#NotreDamedeNamur](#) [#martyrs](#) [#sddenohio](#)



Stories from the Heart: *Voices of Refugees and Immigrants*



Catholic Charities of Southwestern Ohio has started the Voices Project to tell the stories of refugees and immigrants who have settled in our community. Here are a few examples of what participants have said after meeting our new neighbors and listening to their actual stories:

- “I was riveted to every word. He opened my eyes to the humanity of refugees and immigrants.”
- “Very touching, so informative.”
- “Healing for the storyteller; understanding and connection for the listener. He was so captivating.”
- “A personal experience makes the story much more impactful. His story was so personal, not abstract information. It was a privilege to be here to hear it.”

If you want to get beyond the media spin and shrill politics, this interactive presentation is for you and your congregation or organization. If you want to really understand the ordeal refugees and immigrants go through and appreciate the character of the people who are coming to us, scheduling this 90-minute experience will be life-changing and inspirational for participants. To learn more or schedule a meeting, please contact Paul Bergman at paulbergman@live.com.

“I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me.” – Matthew 25:35

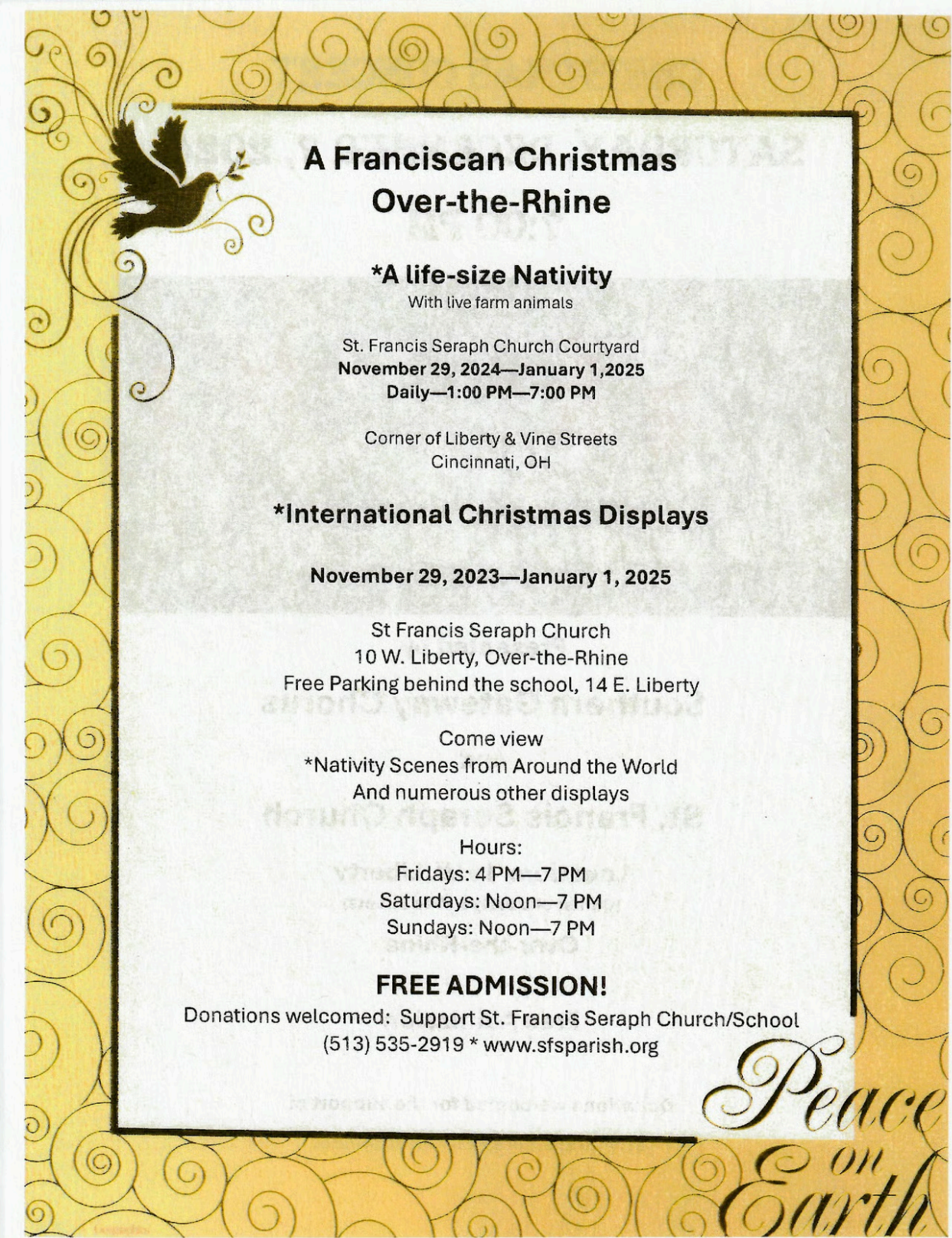


A Vision for Love in Action:

Becoming Communities of Salt & Light

Is your family of parishes ready to take your visioning for Love in Action to the next level? The Department of Life, Dignity, & Charity is offering a 3-part series **Love in Action** opportunity to help your parish family Love in Action team understand why this vision is important, how this vision has developed in the history of the Church, what are the larger and small local organizations with which your parish can cooperate, and how to build on what you already have going on in your parishes (along with your resources of time, talent, and treasure) to create a growing vision of Love in Action in your parish family. This series is only offered on the deanery level so we invite you to ask your pastor if he is interested in bringing this series to your deanery and how he might work with the other pastors and families in his deanery to bring it to fruition. If you would like more information about the series, please contact Mary Anne Bressler at mbressler@ccswoh.org.





A Franciscan Christmas Over-the-Rhine

***A life-size Nativity**

With live farm animals

St. Francis Seraph Church Courtyard
November 29, 2024—January 1, 2025
Daily—1:00 PM—7:00 PM

Corner of Liberty & Vine Streets
Cincinnati, OH

***International Christmas Displays**

November 29, 2023—January 1, 2025

St Francis Seraph Church
10 W. Liberty, Over-the-Rhine
Free Parking behind the school, 14 E. Liberty

Come view

*Nativity Scenes from Around the World
And numerous other displays

Hours:

Fridays: 4 PM—7 PM

Saturdays: Noon—7 PM

Sundays: Noon—7 PM

FREE ADMISSION!

Donations welcomed: Support St. Francis Seraph Church/School
(513) 535-2919 * www.sfsparish.org

*Peace
on
Earth*

A Franciscan Christmas hosted in historic OTR Church

A nearly two-decade tradition continues this Christmas, connecting generations to the birth of Jesus. Cincinnati's iconic St. Francis Seraph church at the corner Liberty & Vine in Over-The-Rhine hosts "A Franciscan Christmas" beginning Friday, November 29, 2024; the annual displays run throughout the holiday season. It is free of charge & open to the public. and runs through New Year's Day.

"It is a great tradition especially for the children of the neighborhood since many of them

have never seen live farm animals,” said Brother Tim Sucher, pastoral associate, who began collecting nativity scenes with his brother as a boy. He heads up the effort.

Live animals, from The Good Green Earth Farm in Clermont County, live in the urban church’s courtyard each winter. Additionally, the International Christmas displays, including 100 creche scenes from around the world, are visible on weekends inside the church. A dozen countries are represented in these unique, global manger scenes.

A Tradition Both New & Old

Some have brought their children here years ago to see the Nativity scenes, and now they are starting to bring their grandchildren. The Nativity scenes are about peace, reflection, and prayer. St. Francis of Assisi first re-created the Christmas creche of Bethlehem over eight centuries ago. “A mother told me that she brings her children to see the nativity displays first before going to do their Christmas shopping. She wants them to know the true meaning of Christmas,” Brother Tim added. The free parking definitely helps make it easy! Visitors are permitted to park behind St. Francis Seraph School at 14 East Liberty during the displays, also free of charge.

Christmas Concert December 7th

A free-will Christmas Concert will be performed on Saturday, December 7th when the Southern Gateway Barbershop Chorus performs their Christmas Concert in the church at 7pm under the direction of Jeff Legters, a lifetime barbershopper. Southern Gateway Chorus is a not-for-profit organization of male acapella harmony singers dedicated to enriching lives in the Greater Cincinnati community. Admission to the performance is free of charge.

More Information on A Franciscan Christmas

You can see the life-size, outdoor Nativity Scene with live animals, daily from 1pm – 7pm beginning the day after Thanksgiving. The international Christmas displays are open Fridays 4pm – 7pm and Saturday & Sundays 12pm-7pm. Leave the rush of advent and Christmas behind and enjoy the beauty of St. Francis Seraph Church this holiday season. A free-will offering is welcomed for the support of the Church and the School.

About St. Francis Seraph Church

Saint Francis Seraph Church has been in the heart of Over-the-Rhine since 1859, located at 10 West Liberty Street, directly at the corners of Liberty & Vine streets. There is plenty of free parking in the school parking lot at 14 East Liberty. The church and courtyard are accessible to visitors with mobility needs from Liberty Street gate, immediately adjacent to the front of church.

There are spaces for disabled persons to park on street parking, right in front of the church.



Advocacy Opportunities

The Catholic Conference of Ohio shared updates on several pieces of legislation being considered in Columbus. Please consider reaching out to your elected officials and letting them know your support or opposition to these bills.

In 2025, an exciting and powerful bill will be introduced in the Ohio General Assembly. This legislation - if passed - will protect life at all stages: abolish the death penalty, affirm the prohibition against state money being used for physician-assisted suicide, and strengthen laws banning state funding for abortion. There will be a state-wide effort to move this legislation forward, and we hope you will work diligently with us on this effort. Look for more information in the coming months.

CCO Opposes HB 451 on Remittance Transfer Fee

The Catholic Conference of Ohio opposed [House Bill 451](#) in the House Ways and Means Committee. HB 451 would levy a remittance transfer fee on money transmissions to a person outside the United States. Within the testimony, CCO notes that “HB 451 puts onerous restrictions on legal residents of Ohio and threatens their support of loved ones stuck in cycles of poverty and violence. ...these small remittances of \$200 to \$300 are the difference between survival and starvation.” Ohio residents should not need to pay an additional fee for fulfilling a Christian obligation to provide charitable resources to people in other countries. [Click here to view the full testimony >](#)

HB 7, the Strong Foundations Act, Passes the House

[House Bill 7](#), the Strong Foundations Act (*sponsored by State Representatives Andrea White (R-Kettering) and Latyna Humphrey (D-Columbus)*), a CCO-supported bill, passed the Ohio House of Representatives and will now go to the Ohio Senate. HB 7 supports Ohio mothers and babies in their first one thousand days to address maternal and infant mortality and to improve health, developmental, and learning outcomes

SB 198 Passes the Senate

CCO supported [Senate Bill 198](#) (*sponsored by Senators George Lang (R-West Chester) and Nathan Manning (R-North Ridgeville)*), which provides inmates with state identification cards and documentation upon their release relating to work experience, education, and trade skills passed out of the Small Business and Economic Opportunity Senate Committee. It will now move to the Ohio House.

End the Death Penalty in Ohio

The time is NOW to change state law.

Make your voice heard and urge your state legislators to support [Senate Bill 101](#) and [House Bill 259](#) to abolish the death penalty in Ohio. We cannot solve violence with more violence or obtain justice via the state of Ohio directly and intentionally killing a defenseless human life.

[Action Alert for Senate Bill 101](#)

[Action Alert for House Bill 259](#)

Help Communities Affected by Climate Change

Urge Congress to support the Green Climate Fund and Development Assistance.

[Urge Congress](#) to address the impact of climate change by providing robust funding for poverty-reducing international assistance programs in the fiscal year 2024 budget, especially for the Green Climate Fund and Development Assistance.

Help the Hungry

Urge lawmakers to protect SNAP in the Farm Bill.

[Urge Congress](#) to protect families. This version of the bill would undermine a recent change to the Thrifty Food Plan, a USDA-developed estimate of how much it actually costs to feed a family on a budget. It's projected this policy would cut future SNAP benefits for all recipients, totaling roughly \$30 billion dollars over ten years.

Urge the Senate to Strengthen the Child Tax Credit

Every year, the Child Tax Credit (CTC) lifts millions of American families out of poverty and helps them live according to their dignity and with greater economic security. While the USCCB has long supported the CTC, the current credit must be improved because it excludes many of the poorest children. [Add your voice here.](#)

Stand in Solidarity with our Afghan Neighbors

Tens of thousands of Afghan nationals have now been resettled in communities across the United States, many of whom served alongside U.S. servicemembers. They are in need of a legal pathway to real and lasting safety. [Add your voice here.](#)

Urge Congress to Safeguard Children in Need and Ensure Communities Have Access to Religious Workers

The bill would relieve the backlog currently confronting special immigrant juveniles by exempting them from the annual caps for the employment-based, fourth preference (EB-4) visa. This would ensure that abused, neglected, or abandoned youth who are deemed eligible for relief by state courts no longer need to compete with adults relying on the same category of visas. It would also increase the availability of EB-4 visas for religious workers who serve communities across the nation. [Add your voice here.](#)



From the Respect Life Office

Bob Wurzelbacher, Director of Respect Life Ministries

Miracle Mikey

Daniel Shachle, a devoted father from Connecticut, experienced a profound transformation in his life when his wife, Michelle, became pregnant with their 13th child. The child was diagnosed in-utero with a severe case of fetal hydrops, a life-threatening condition involving an abnormal buildup of fluids in the tissue around the lungs, heart or abdomen. The doctor told the couple that the baby had a zero percent chance of survival, and advised them to abort. They not only refused the abortion option, but Daniel also refused to give up hope. They had already been preparing for a trip to the Marian shrine in Fatima, Portugal, awarded to Daniel for his work as an insurance agent for the Knights of Columbus. The Schachles started praying for a miracle, seeking the intercession of Blessed Michael McGivney, the founder of the Knights of Columbus.

Blessed Michael McGivney, a parish priest in the late 19th century, dedicated his life to serving others, particularly widows and orphans. He founded the Knights of Columbus in 1882 to provide financial security for Catholic families and works of charity for the less fortunate. His legacy of compassion and service has inspired countless individuals, and the Shachle family found solace in his example during their darkest hours.

After Daniel and Michelle returned from Fatima, Michelle had a follow-up ultrasound, and the fetal hydrops was completely gone. The doctors were astonished at what looked like the ultrasound of a completely different baby. In honor of Michael McGivney, the Schachles named their baby Michael, and he became known as "Miracle Mikey". Because of Daniel's connections to the Knights of Columbus, this miraculous

healing eventually caught the attention of the Vatican, leading to an investigation into the case.

In 2020, the Vatican recognized Mikey's healing as a miracle attributed to the intercession of Blessed Michael McGivney, paving the way for McGivney's beatification. This momentous occasion not only celebrated McGivney's life and contributions, but also highlighted the power of faith and community in times of crisis. The Schachle family's journey stands as a testament to hope, love, and the enduring impact of a father's prayer, forever linking their story to the legacy of Blessed Michael McGivney and the Knights of Columbus.

There is so much more to this story. I invite you to check out my full interview with Daniel Schachle on my **[Being Pro Life podcast](#)**. You can listen to the podcast on your favorite audio player on your phone, go directly **[to this link](#)**, or watch the **[video version here](#)**. May his story inspire you to also never give up hope, and trust in the Lord in all things.



From the Office for Persons with Disabilities

Lisa Averion, Associate Director of Office for Persons with Disabilities

Solidifying Our Deaf Community

On Saturday, November 23rd, the Deaf community in the Archdiocese of Cincinnati came together for a joyous and meaningful Christmas get-together at St. Rita's School for the Deaf. This event, the first of its kind in many years, was a significant celebration that brought the Deaf community together to reconnect, share their faith, and strengthen the bonds within their community.

The choice of St. Rita's School as the venue was particularly meaningful, as it is one of the best Catholic Deaf schools in the country that has produced a significant number of alumni from the state of Ohio and beyond. The event allowed the participants to return to their 'alma mater' and reconnect with the place that played a crucial role in their early formation and development.

The program was filled with a variety of engaging activities, including social time for the attendees to catch up with one another, a delicious and nourishing lunch, informative documentaries on the rich history of St. Rita's School, exciting raffle draws, the sacrament of reconciliation, and a joyful and uplifting Holy Mass. Despite the short notice before the gathering, the turnout was impressive, showcasing the strong desire of the Deaf community to come together and celebrate their shared identity, faith, and heritage.

At the end of the event, the Chaplain for the Deaf ministry, Fr. Charles Onumaegbu, addressed the participants and emphasized the importance of fostering unity, understanding, and active participation within the Deaf community. He encouraged the

attendees to reach out to other Deaf individuals within the Archdiocese and continue to build this vibrant and thriving community, which aims to deepen the Deaf community's connection to the Church and her ministries.



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