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United in Faith

INSIDE

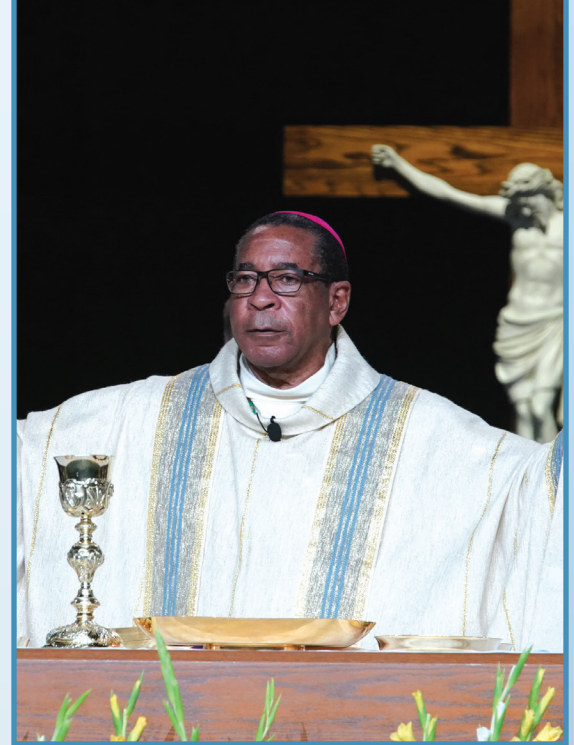
United in Faith
Strengthening the
Catholic Church in
West Tennessee for
the Next 50 Years

And for a moment,
all were indeed
as one

*Catholic Diocese of Memphis
celebrates 50th anniversary
with Eucharistic Congress*



WHEN GOD CALLED, HE LISTENED *and* FOLLOWED



BY ROBERT ALAN GLOVER

MEMPHIS, TENN. – As all of West Tennessee now knows, our first-ever, Diocesan Eucharistic Congress was a great success.

On Oct. 8 and 9, many faithful Catholics – some of whom traveled great distances – attended this event, which was held at the Renasant Convention Center in downtown.

In doing so, they all reunited with a dear friend: Most Reverend J. Terry Steib, S.V.D., Bishop Emeritus.

Bishop Emeritus Steib served as our fourth Bishop of Memphis for 23 years, from his installation on May 5, 1993, until his resignation on August 23, 2016.

This FAITH/West Tennessee Catholic writer talked to Bishop Steib several days after the Congress ended. My impression was of having met someone who is the essence of a man at peace with God and himself.

FAITH/WTC: We are now two weeks out from the end of our first Eucharistic Congress; looking back, how would ‘rate’ it?

Bishop Emeritus Steib: I thought that for a first-time-ever undertaking, it was very good, especially with the quality of our speakers, the number of people who attended, and especially those individuals whom I had not seen in years – people whose faith in the church is still very much alive.

People came from far away – something that made me feel good – driving two to three hours, from locations like Jackson and Paris, Tennessee.

I particularly liked Reverend Dennis Robinson’s address, and felt that Scott Hahn was also very

dynamic when speaking on the importance of the Eucharist to us.

However, I also feel that Archbishop Emeritus J. Peter Sartain’s presentation was just as important, and well-received, because – as a native of the diocese – he was speaking directly to the people of Memphis, said Bishop Emeritus Steib.

Bishop Robert Marshall’s presentation was also very well received. He too is a native son. And the final Benediction bestowed on all of us after the whole Congress closed was a wonderful, spirit-filled moment.

Another ‘plus’ was just being able to roam around, and be with people; walking from the convention center to Saint Peter’s Church on Saturday evening during the closing procession was very moving.

FAITH/WTC: What role did you play in the Congress?

Bishop Emeritus Steib: My participation in the Congress was to be the principal celebrant at the opening Mass of the Congress on Friday night, and to preside at the morning prayer on Saturday. Both were deeply spiritual moments. I was pleased with the attendance for the opening mass and equally pleased with the attendance for the morning prayers.

FAITH/WTC: For this reporter’s benefit – and the faithful who do not know you – please give us some background on your journey with Jesus Christ.

Bishop Emeritus Steib: I did my high school

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His coverage of our Eucharistic Congress appeared on many Catholic new websites and in print editions nationwide through the Catholic News Service. A graduate of the University of Dayton with a bachelor's degree in social work, Robert also minored in theology.

studies at St. Augustine Seminary in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi from 1953 to 1957, and I was in the Divine Word Novitiate in Conesus, New York from 1957 to 1959.

It was there that I professed my first vows as a member of Divine Word Missionaries, and then from 1959 to 1961, I also did my junior college work in Conesus. I completed my college studies in philosophy at the Divine Word Seminary in Techny, Illinois, studying there from 1961 to 1963. (see full bio below)

FAITH/WTC: As personal as this question is, can you explain to our readers how it feels to actually know that God is calling you - the spiritual significance of such a moment?

Bishop Emeritus Steib: It was an awesome moment when I felt that God was calling me to serve (Him), but the question I was always asking myself was, 'am' or 'if' I was worthy, because, when I look back, I never got to do what I wanted to do - which was to be a missionary - but instead listened to what God wanted me to do.

I went from teaching in our Catholic schools - teaching 5th grade to 8th grade, then high school, later switching from education and formation to administration. This move involved becoming Provincial Superior, of the Divine Word Missionaries, Southern Province, for two and a half terms, from 1976 to 1983.

I learned to bloom where I was planted - in my first assignment - helped by the evaluations of others and one example of this growth is when I received a call from Archbishop John L. May in 1984.

He told me that the Holy Father had me in mind for the position of Auxiliary Bishop in the Archdiocese, and he wanted to know what did I think about it.

My answer was, "Archbishop, I don't know what this means, but, if this is the will of God, I will accept it."

Our Bishop Emeritus J. Terry Steib did his theological studies from 1963 to 1967 at Divine Word Seminary in Bay St. Louis, Mississippi.

He was ordained to the priesthood on January 6, 1967, at Divine Word Seminary in Bay St. Louis by Archbishop Philip M. Hannan. This was followed - after many other assignments - by his Episcopal ordination as Auxiliary Bishop to the Archdiocese of St. Louis on February 10, 1984. Archbishop John L. May was the presiding prelate.

Bishop Steib remained in the Archdiocese of St. Louis until 1993. On May 5, 1993, God's humble servant was installed as our Bishop of Memphis by Archbishop Thomas C. Kelly, O.P.

Bishop Steib's past positions are both varied and numerous. They include serving as Assistant Dean of Students at Divine Word Seminary in Bay St. Louis while teaching at the Catholic high school of Saint Stanislaus College in Bay St. Louis. He also served two and a half terms as the provincial superior of the Society of the Divine Word's Southern Province from 1976 to 1983.

FAITH/WTC: We listed the various positions you have held earlier in our talk. As the first African-American Bishop to head the Diocese of Memphis, what are some of the accomplishments that you are most proud of?

Bishop Emeritus Steib: I am proud of how we promoted the spirituality of our people across the diocese, the men's and women's series of spirituality enhancements, and the growth of our parishes which has allowed our people to grow and become stronger Catholics, and the growth of the diversity of cultures throughout the diocese.

I am especially pleased with how Our Queen of Peace Retreat Center in Dancyville, Tenn., has grown over the last 16 years, and how the retirement home (Villa Vianney) built for our aging and retired priests is being used.

FAITH/WTC: How do you feel with the performance of our Jubilee Schools as charter schools? The schools, which were created in 1999 - and closed in 2019 - successfully educated some 1700 plus African-American students, many from impoverished backgrounds, during their existence. You currently serve as a member of the Compass Community School Board and the St. Paul Catholic School Advisory Board.

Bishop Emeritus Steib: They are going great - really well- especially in terms of the service they are giving to inner-city students, and in following educational guidelines.

FAITH/WTC: Pope Francis accepted your resignation in 2016 - how have things been since you stepped down as our Bishop, and where do you see yourself going?

Bishop Emeritus Steib: I am retired now, and doing things that I always wanted to do but never could, such as giving retreats, and being involved in spiritual direction to priests, the religious, and laity on a one-on-one basis. †

