



Sam and Jessica Mauck with their children (bottom left to right): George, Bernadette and Rosemary (top left to right): Gabriel and Augustine.

A conversation with Sam Mauck, Director of Evangelization and Faith Formation

BY BETH SIMKANIN

SAM MAUCK HAS BEEN ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN EVANGELIZATION EFFORTS IN THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF MEMPHIS FOR ALMOST 15 YEARS. PREVIOUSLY, HE SERVED IN YOUTH, CAMPUS AND YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY AND NOW IS DIRECTOR OF ONE OF THE BUSIEST OFFICES IN THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF MEMPHIS - THE OFFICE OF EVANGELIZATION AND FAITH FORMATION.

This area is dedicated to supporting pastors, clergy, parish leaders, couples and families by providing formation, programs and direction and guidance to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others in West Tennessee. The office covers a wide range of evangelization and formation efforts, from sacramental and catechetical formation and pastoral care to ministries involving youth, college students, young adults and the imprisoned.

Faith West Tennessee sat down with Sam to discuss how his office is working with various groups to assist in evangelization and formation efforts and some new initiatives that are

on the horizon with the implantation of the Diocesan Strategic Plan.

Faith WTN: *What are some ways your office assists in evangelization efforts throughout the Diocese?*

Sam: Evangelization is the act of sharing the Good News with others. In Evangelization, we introduce people to the Risen Christ. The people who work in our offices are first and foremost disciples of Jesus who seek daily to know and grow in intimacy with the One Whom we are sharing.

Out of that relationship, we are building relationships with clergy and lay leaders in our parishes to give them the tools and support they need to grow in their own relationship with Christ. We want to share Christ with others and encourage them to do the same.

It's not a one-size-fits-all approach. We have a vast diocese, so it's our responsibility to go out into the parishes and find out their needs, meet them where they are and discuss how to assist them in their mission.

We also demonstrate the goodness of the Lord by providing disciples ways to practice the spiritual and corporal works of mercy, whether that is training others how to best meet the needs of our sick and dying parishioners, comforting those who struggle

with addiction, visiting the imprisoned or comforting the grieving. For instance, recently we updated our After Hours Emergency Response Team (AHERT) line for native Spanish speakers, so Catholics who speak Spanish can receive the sacrament of Anointing of the Sick in their own language.

Faith WTN: *What are some positive results have you seen in youth ministry, campus ministry and young adult ministry over the past year? How are these areas growing and what are some ways you are reaching youth and young adults?*

Sam: Recently, our youth ministry has seen a resurgence of participation in our Diocesan retreats for middle school students (Voyage), freshman/sophomores (Quest) and juniors/seniors (SEARCH). We've also developed a very strong Discipleship Camp for youth to dive deeper in their relationship with Christ, learn to share His love and empower them to be leaders in their youth groups and schools.

In campus ministry, we've seen record participation in our Fellowship of Catholic University Students (FOCUS) Bible Studies at the University of Memphis over the last three years. We've also seen an uptick in the number of college students getting involved in our college ministries at the University of Memphis (U of M), University of Tennessee at Martin (UTM) and Rhodes College.

Our ministry at UTM, Skyhawk Catholic, recently purchased and updated a new Newman Center next door to St. Jude Catholic Church in Martin. Involvement at Rhodes College has continued to increase, including at Mass, in the years since we returned after the COVID pandemic. We see more and more young people seeking to become Catholic every year.

Young adult ministry has never been so active. Every month, our young adults have the opportunity to learn about the faith at Theology on Tap, which is a program designed to help young adult Catholics explore their faith in a relaxed environment.

We have disciple formation for both men and women, too. Several parishes have formed new young adult formation groups. We have been organizing domestic mission trips and weekend get-aways. Our yearly young adult retreats continue to grow, and we are currently in the process of planning a mission trip to Ireland with the Franciscan Friars of the Renewal.

Faith WTN: *How has the marriage preparation program been redesigned and why is marriage preparation so important for couples in their faith journey together?*

Sam: Marriage preparation has been a strong focus in our office. During the COVID pandemic, we responded to Pope Francis' call to revisit our marriage preparation efforts and took an intentional look at the offerings in our Diocese, and those around the country, and determined we needed a fresh take. We knew that we wanted to develop a parish-based program that our office could support.

We believe this will enable more flexibility for engaged couples, bring them in closer relationship to their local parish and, more broadly, form others in the Sacrament. The content covers many of the same content areas that our previous programs did, but they have been rewritten so that the theological truth of a "one-flesh" relationship is woven throughout.

Theology of marriage is a fundamental message in each of the talks and activities throughout the marriage prep workshop. Our marriage prep program reflects a stronger emphasis in understanding the sacramental graces of marriage and the beautiful union that happens when men and women truly embrace their gifts.

This revamped program has been well-received by over 100 couples. Currently, the Diocese hosts two marriage prep workshops every six months. We are in the process of hosting training for parish leaders, so they can minister to engaged couples at the parish level.

Faith WTN: *How does the Diocesan Strategic Plan affect the Office of Evangelization and Faith Formation and its collaboration efforts with parishes in the Diocese?*

Sam: The Strategic Plan's vision to live a Christ-centered life of fellowship building up the Kingdom of God reflects the expressed need from the people of West Tennessee. We are excited to form new programs for families, especially parents, to this end.

The Strategic Pastoral Plan gives us focused priorities, which I believe will make our office and parishes more effective at our mission of sharing the Gospel. We will be rolling out support materials and workshops for parishes very soon.

In addition, we are building workshops for parish leaders and staff on best practices for evangelization. We formed a partnership three years ago with the Catechetical Institute at Franciscan University of Steubenville, to provide every parish leader solid formation. We are still rolling this out in our parishes, but it holds tremendous promise.

Faith WTN: *What resources do you provide Catholic parents in assisting them in their child's faith formation?*

Sam: There are family workshops available for parishes from the Catechetical Institute on the ministry of true family. *Formed*, a Catholic streaming resource that offers Catholic content, is a great resource for parents, and we can help parents figure out how to use that effectively.

We've reached out to Catholic HOM (Household on Ministries) and other apostolates to bring both formation and accompaniment to parents. But the big things we're working on are a new retreat we launched in November for new and expecting parents on how to build a Domestic Church and live the Liturgical Life. We are also exploring ways we can start a summer camp experience for families. As I mentioned earlier, our *To Be in One Flesh* marriage prep content is also being developed into a marriage enrichment program for parishes.

Faith WTN: *What are some additional things you would like the faithful to know about the Office of Evangelization and Faith Formation?*

Sam: Our Lady Queen of Peace Retreat Center is a gift for our Diocese to encounter the Lord. We are excited for the new and exciting ways it meets the spiritual needs of our parishioners.

We truly have missionary hearts and our priority is to serve pastors, clergy, and parents in any way we can. We want to meet with leaders at every parish to help identify needs and collaborate on efforts to make every parish thrive.

In the past people went to the Diocese for programs and policy clarification to meet their needs. We want to turn things around and have the Diocese come to them.

If you are a pastor who needs more resources or a parish leader who needs direction, please reach out to us. Even our Catholic

schools are a wonderful opportunity for our office to assist in the formation of teachers and also parents and families. It is my dream that our offices are always empty because we are out in the parishes helping them to flourish and thrive. †

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OFFICE OF EVANGELIZATION AND FAITH FORMATION

The Office of Evangelization and Faith Formation oversees a large portion of ministries which directly impact parishes and families and support pastors, clergy, parish leaders, couples, parents and children within the Catholic Diocese of Memphis. The department's goal is to guide these groups in proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ to others in West Tennessee.

PARISH RENEWAL

Sam Mauck, Director of Evangelization and Faith Formation

This department provides leadership training, discipleship initiatives, enrichment programs and is a liaison to evangelization apostolates within the Diocese and across the U.S. Parish Renewal also plans and implements special initiatives from Rome and the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, such as the National Eucharistic Revival and, most recently, the Jubilee Year celebration.

SACRAMENTAL AND CATECHETICAL FORMATION

Deacon Jeff Drzycimski, Associate Director

This department enacts and supports K-12 Catechesis, marriage preparation, Natural Family Planning, Order of Christian Initiation of Adults (OCIA) and catechist formation.

PASTORAL CARE

Deacon Rick Martin, Associate Director

This area covers minister training for the Ministry of the Sick and the After Hours Emergency Response Team (AHERT), which gets families in touch with a priest immediately for a loved one who needs Anointing of the Sick. Additionally, the department supports the Sanctity of Life Steering Committee, same-sex attraction ministry, addiction ministry, bereavement ministry, divorce ministry, miscarriage or infant loss ministry and mental health ministry.

YOUTH MINISTRY

Rebecca Talarico, Associate Director

This department provides leadership training to parish leaders and students in addition to planning and implementing youth retreats for children in grades 7-12. It also plans Diocesan youth events and attends international events such as World Youth Day and National Catholic Youth Conference.

CAMPUS MINISTRY

Rebekah Zachary, Associate Director, Campus Ministry (University of Memphis) and Young Adult Ministry

Corey Kieffer, Associate Director, Campus Ministry (Rhodes College) and Young Adult Ministry

Deacon Rodney Freed and Stacy Freed, Campus Ministers, University of Tennessee at Martin

This area covers Catholic campus ministry at three universities within the Diocese – Rhodes College, University of Tennessee at Martin and University of Memphis.

YOUNG ADULT MINISTRY

Rebekah Zachary, Associate Director, Campus Ministry and Young Adult Ministry

Corey Kieffer, Associate Director, Campus Ministry and Young Adult Ministry

This department offers training and support for young adult groups at parishes and plans and implements young adult Diocesan events like Theology on Tap, retreats, formation nights, social outings and kickball.

MULTICULTURAL MINISTRY

Open Position

This area addresses the needs of various cultural and ethnic Catholic ministries at different parishes throughout the Diocese.

PRISON MINISTRY

Open Position

Prison Ministry visits the imprisoned and assists in implementing Kairos retreats inside prisons located in the Diocese.

OUR LADY QUEEN OF PEACE RETREAT CENTER

Steve Fracchia, Director

The 140-acre retreat center and retreat house, located in Stanton, offers a variety of day and overnight faith-based retreats for various groups and ministries throughout the year. For more information on retreat availability, please go to olqpretreats.com.

For questions on any of these departments and ministries, please go to cdom.org or contact:

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