



ARCHDIOCESE  
OF ST. LOUIS

**CELEBRATION  
PLAYBOOK**

# Introduction to the Bicentennial Celebration Playbook

In 2026, the Archdiocese of St. Louis will joyfully commemorate the **200th anniversary of its founding as a diocese in 1826**. This once-in-a-generation Jubilee is an invitation for every parish community to enter more deeply into the mystery of God's enduring presence among us and to celebrate the vibrant, living history of Catholic faith in our region.

The Jubilee theme:

*Rejoicing in God's Radiant Light.  
A Legacy of Faith. A Future of Hope.*

The Jubilee theme reflects our deep gratitude for the past and our bold trust in what lies ahead. As we honor two centuries of our Catholic faith, the Bicentennial Jubilee calls us to shine brightly in the present and carry that light forward for generations to come.

*"God is light, and in him there is no darkness at all....But if we walk in the light as he is in the light, then we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of his Son Jesus cleanses us from all sin."*

1 John 1:5,7



This **Celebration Playbook** is designed to help parishes and ministries bring the Jubilee theme to life in ways that best fit their own community. The ideas offered here are simply starting points, feel free to use them as written, adapt them, or create entirely new expressions of joy and hope that reflect your local heritage and pastoral needs.

These ideas are tools for discernment, not directives, meant to spark creativity and support you as you invite the faithful into the Bicentennial Jubilee honoring your unique Catholic heritage and contribute to the spirit of unity and mission that defines this historic moment.



Rooted in the lives of our **three patron saints**, the Jubilee year is guided by their spiritual legacy:

- **St. Louis, King of France**, patron of our archdiocese, models faithful leadership, charity, and justice in public life.
- **St. Rose Philippine Duchesne**, pioneer missionary, embodies perseverance, contemplative prayer, and a love for education and the marginalized.
- **St. Vincent de Paul**, whose charism inspires countless acts of mercy and systemic care for the poor, reminds us of the Church's mission to serve Christ in the most vulnerable.



Your story is part of something greater. As we enter this Bicentennial Jubilee, we honor the generations who built the foundation of faith in our region and invite every parish and ministry to help carry Christ's light into the future. Together, we continue the living story of the Church in the Archdiocese of St. Louis—200 years strong and still shining.

We invite you to **prayerfully consider how your events, programs, and gatherings in 2026 might reflect this Jubilee spirit of celebration and renewal.** Whether your community is large or small, urban or rural, long-established or newly formed, you have a vital part to play in this archdiocesan celebration.

May this Jubilee be a time of joy, renewal, and shared purpose as we give thanks for 200 years of faith, inspired by our saints, and illuminated by God's radiant light that continues to shine through His Church in every generation.

As you celebrate, whether at parish events, school activities, or in your family, we'd love to see and share those moments!

Remember to tag your photos and stories with **#ArchSTL200** so together we can showcase the light of our Catholic faith across the Archdiocese.



## Bicentennial Jubilee Plenary Indulgence

### A Pastoral Opportunity for Renewal, Encounter, and Grace

In honor of the 200th Anniversary, the Holy See, through the Apostolic Penitentiary, graciously granted a **plenary indulgence**, under the usual conditions, to the truly penitent and devout faithful through July 26, 2026.

This indulgence, requested by Archbishop Mitchell T. Rozanski and approved by Pope Leo XIV, is a beautiful expression of God's mercy, inviting the faithful to a deeper conversion and renewed holiness.

Pilgrims may receive this grace by visiting any of the sacred sites designated throughout the archdiocese.

All Saints Parish

Basilica of St. Louis, King of France

Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis

Most Holy Trinity Church (St. Josephine Bakhita Parish)

Shrine of St. Rose Philippine Duchesne

St. Alphonsus Parish (Millwood)

St. Cecilia Parish

St. Charles Borromeo Parish

St. Francis Borgia Parish

St. Ferdinand Parish and the Old St. Ferdinand Shrine

St. Joachim Parish (Old Mines)

Chapel of St. Vincent de Paul (Cardinal Rigali Center)

St. Vincent de Paul Parish (Perryville)

Ste. Genevieve Parish (Ste. Genevieve)



## Embark on a Journey of Faith

A pilgrimage during the Jubilee Year offers a meaningful way for individuals and communities to step away from routine, rediscover our Catholic heritage, and encounter Christ anew. Walking together in prayer allows the faithful to reflect on the legacy of faith handed down through generations and to move forward renewed in mission and hope.

Consider organizing a **Bicentennial Jubilee Pilgrimage** for parish groups, school classes, youth ministries, or families. To receive the plenary indulgence, pilgrims may visit one of the designated sacred sites across the archdiocese.

When planning a pilgrimage for the plenary indulgence, please coordinate with the host site to ensure pilgrims have access to the church, prayer resources, and opportunities to fulfill the conditions.

The following pages highlight several additional pilgrimage destinations for consideration, each offering a distinctive window into the history, faith, and missionary spirit that gave rise to our local Church.



**Examples of pilgrimage destinations include the following, each offering a distinctive window into the history, faith, and missionary spirit of the Church in our region:**

**Basilica of Saint Louis, King of France (Old Cathedral) – St. Louis**

The first Catholic Church west of the Mississippi River and the only property in St. Louis City that has never changed hands—it has always belonged to the Catholic Church. The adjacent museum was completely renovated in 2024. It showcases artifacts, documents, and stories tracing its roots back to 1764. Discover its role in the historical developments of the Church throughout our broad region.

[Old Cathedral & Museum](#)

**Cathedral Basilica of St. Louis (New Cathedral) – St. Louis**

In 1908, the cornerstone was set in this one-of-a-kind work of art. The magnificent superstructure was completed in 1914 and consecrated in 1926. The museum and tours offer a guided overview and a glimpse at the history of the breathtaking church, its community, and events that led to its completion.

<https://cathedralstl.org/>

**Old St. Ferdinand Shrine – Florissant**

Established in 1821, this site was home to Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne, who served among Native American communities and lived a life of prayerful missionary witness. The shrine honors her legacy and offers a peaceful setting for pilgrimage and prayer. <https://www.oldstferdinandshrine.org/>

**St. Charles Borromeo Parish – St. Charles**

Founded in 1791, this is the first regularly established parish between the Mississippi and Missouri Rivers. The current church, dedicated in 1916 after three previous structures, stands as a testament to over two-hundred years of faith. Nearby find a re-created [log cabin church](#) that honors the frontier beginnings of Catholic life in the region. <https://borromeoparish.com/About/Tour-of-the-Church>

**St. Mary's of the Barrens & National Shrine of Our Lady of the Miraculous Medal – Perryville**

Bishop DuBourg established the first Catholic seminary in American territory west of the Mississippi River in 1818. The Vincentians built the theological seminary and college with construction supervised by Father Joseph Rosati. Today find peace and hope on a prayerful journey on the Rosary Walk.

<https://amm.org/visit-us/rosary-walk/>



### **Shrine of Saint Joseph - *St. Louis***

Founded by the Jesuits, the church had its beginning in 1843. The Shrine is one of the few churches in the Midwest to be the site of a Vatican-authenticated miracle (attributed to Saint Peter Claver). Pray before the magnificent Main Altar known as The Altar of Answered Prayers for the intercession of Saint Joseph during a cholera epidemic. <https://www.shrineofstjoseph.org/>

For those unable to make a physical journey to the Shrine of St. Joseph, the spiritual fruits of this pilgrimage can still embrace them through a virtual tour. Walk through the images of the many historic features that have inspired generations of faithful. <https://www.shrineofstjoseph.org/virtual-tour.html>

### **Shrine of Saint Philippine Duchesne – *St. Charles***

Walking where Saint Rose Philippine Duchesne lived and prayed offers a powerful opportunity to encounter her legacy of faith, perseverance, and service to the poor and marginalized.

<https://rscj.org/shrine/home/>

For those unable to make a physical journey to the Shrine of Saint Philippine Duchesne, the grace of this pilgrimage can still reach them. <https://rscj.org/shrine/virtualtour/>

### **Catholic Cemeteries**

As faithful Catholics, we are encouraged to visit cemeteries, especially to pray for the deceased. Visiting these grounds during the Bicentennial reminds us that our faith spans generations that we are part of a Church not bound by time, but rooted in hope beyond death. As we pray among the faithful departed, we honor their witness and renew our trust in the promise of eternal life.

In a special way, let us remember the pioneers of our Catholic faith—early missionaries, bishops, clergy, religious, and lay faithful—whose sacrifices and witness helped plant and grow the Church in this region. As we walk among the resting places of those who came before us, may we give thanks for the foundations they laid and be inspired to carry their legacy of faith into the future.

<http://www.awaittheblessedhope.org/>

*Inquire of the former generations, pay attention to the experience of their ancestors -  
As we are but of yesterday and have no knowledge, because our days on earth are but a shadow -  
Will they not teach you and tell you and utter their words of understanding?*

Job 8:8-10



## “Telling Your Parish Story”

**Every parish has a story, a sacred thread woven through decades of faith, community, and mission. As we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, your parish is invited to rediscover and share its own chapter in our legacy.**

**Begin at the beginning.** When was your parish founded? What historical moment was it responding to? Who were its founders and earliest families? What inspired its name? Gather the key moments that shaped your parish over the years. Parish bulletins, sacramental records, and historical photos can help bring this journey to life. Highlight your parish *Stewardship Stories*, who (individuals or groups) made generous contributions for the stained glass windows, statues, or specific building projects?

**Lift up the voices of your community.** Interview longtime parishioners who carry treasured memories. Invite former priests and deacons to contribute reflections or photos. Invite young people to participate reflecting what the parish has meant in their lives. Consider visual opportunities with images and art. These stories illuminate the faith lived out in ordinary and extraordinary ways.

**Choose a way to share.** Organize an Archive Committee to collect photos and publications. Digitize the content to create a bulletin series, a video montage, or a display wall in the church vestibule. Host a history night with parish storytellers.

For historical records or support, contact the Office of Archives and Records at [archives@archstl.org](mailto:archives@archstl.org).

**Your parish story is part of the greater story of the Church in the Archdiocese of St. Louis. By telling it, you honor those who built the foundation and inspire the next generation to carry the light forward.**



## “Light for Our Neighbors” Service Day

### Theme Inspiration:

**Matthew 5:16, "let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father"**

**Matthew 25:40, "whatever you did for one of the least of these... you did for me"**

To celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, parishes and ministries are invited to consider hosting a “Light for Our Neighbors” Service Day, a one-day outreach effort to meet visible, practical needs in the community.

This is a day that should not go unnoticed. When the Church steps out in Christ’s name, communities and neighborhoods feel the impact.

Organize sign-ups for parishioners, ministry groups, and families to serve in teams for a few hours. Projects might include yard work or porch visits for elderly neighbors, simple home repairs, assembling prayer kits or care bags, creating and sharing arts and crafts that reflect Christ’s light and love, or visiting nursing homes. Groups might also write cards to the homebound, organize a phone outreach team, clean up public areas, support local Catholic cemeteries with groundskeeping and prayer, or partner with city and county leaders to meet specific community needs.

Begin the day with prayer and sending service rooted in Scripture, and close with fellowship to share experiences and stories of grace.

### Invitation Content

Let your light shine! In celebration of the 200th anniversary of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, our parish is organizing a one-day **“Light for Our Neighbors” Service Day**, a bold outreach effort to meet practical needs and bring the light of Christ to others in our community.

When the Church steps out in Christ’s name, neighborhoods feel the difference. Join ministry groups, families, and fellow parishioners for a few hours of meaningful service [insert the options for service projects].

We’ll begin with prayer and end with stories and fellowship.  
This is more than a service project—it’s a visible sign of the Gospel at work.



	<b>“Gifts of Gratitude” Parish Appreciation Project</b>			
	<p>Another consideration, invite parishioners to identify people whose quiet service reflects Christ’s light such as priests, deacons, volunteers, staff, teachers, aides, musicians, ministers, first responders, health care workers, etc.</p> <p><b>Possible Features:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Set a parish goal of writing 200 thank-you notes or prayer intentions.</li><li>• Create a display wall (“Gratitude Glows Here”) where parishioners can anonymously post notes.</li><li>• Invite youth groups or school classes to design artwork or bookmarks of appreciation.</li><li>• Bless all honorees at a Sunday Mass or parish event.</li></ul> <p><b>Sample Prompts:</b> “Where have you seen Christ’s light in someone at our parish?” and “Whose service has made a difference in your life?”</p>			
	<p>Invitation Content: As part of the Archdiocese’s 200th anniversary celebration, help us honor those who reflect Christ’s light through quiet service: teachers, clergy, ministers, staff, first responders, and more. Add a thank-you note or prayer to our “Gratitude Glows Here” wall as we aim for 200 expressions of appreciation. Youth and school groups will also contribute creative tokens of thanks.</p>			
			ArchSTL200.org	



## “Come and See” Open Church Door Day

### **Theme Inspiration: “Let in the Light” A Jubilee Invitation to Neighbors**

As a Jubilee idea, your parish might consider hosting a “Come and See” Open Church Door Day, a gentle, hospitable moment when your church doors are open to neighbors seeking peace, beauty, or stillness.

This is not a formal event or a structured program. Rather, it is a simple act of welcome, an invitation for anyone, whether practicing Catholics, lapsed parishioners, or spiritual seekers to step inside and experience the radiant light of Christ in sacred space.

In a time when many carry quiet burdens, this day offers a quiet gift: “You are welcome here.”

“In a noisy world, we offer a quiet welcome. On [date], our church doors will be open to anyone seeking a moment of stillness, beauty, or prayer. Whether you come to sit in silence, admire the windows, or light a candle, know that this space is here for you.”

Consider providing simple self-guided tour or reflection sheets reminding visitors that long before most people could read, churches were built to *show* the faith through stained glass, statues, icons, and architecture. Details were designed to teach the truths of Scripture, inspire prayer, and lead hearts to our Father in Heaven.

Encourage your community to reflect what this space is trying to teach us. Invite them to pray with their eyes, discover the sacred meaning behind familiar elements, and see their church not just as a “place to go to church.”



**“Come and See”**  
**Possible areas to**  
**highlight:**

**Stained Glass Windows** - Who or what is depicted? What message does this image convey about God's light or love?

**Statues, Mosaics, Paintings, or Stations of the Cross** - Who are the figures portrayed? What do their gestures, postures, or surroundings symbolize? How do they invite prayer or reflection?

**Liturgical Furnishings** - What does the baptismal font say about our entrance into the faith? Where is the tabernacle?

**The Origins of the Building** - When was it built? What historical moment was it responding to? Who designed it? What materials were used, and why? Was it built by immigrant communities or local craftspeople?

**A Look Closer** - What stories does the building tell? What is inscribed on the cornerstone, and why? Whose faith in relics rests in the altar?



## **“Come and See” Suggested Features**

- Open the church for set hours with warm, approachable greeters at the door.
- Provide quiet background recorded or live music.
- Offer guided or self-guided tours.
- Invite parishioners to share brief stories or details.
- Offer coffee and cookies in a side room or narthex for informal conversation.
- Have printed cards available with Mass times, prayer opportunities, and parish contact information.
- Offer a take-home coloring page and invite the children to bring it back the following weekend to be displayed.



# Candlelight Prayer Service

## Theme Inspiration:

**“Christ, Be Our Light”**

**“In His Light, There is Hope”**

A reflective evening prayer service where participants gather by candlelight to recall the light of Christ passed down through 200 years of Catholic witness in the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

## Suggested Features:

- Begin outdoors or in the vestibule with the lighting of individual candles.
- Invite participants to light a candle in memory of a loved one, in prayer for peace, or for a personal intention.
- Process into the darkened church singing, “Christ, Be Our Light” or “The Light of Christ.”
- Include Scripture readings (John 1:1–9, Matthew 5:14–16), quiet reflection music, and brief witness stories from parishioners.
- Allow silent time for personal prayer.
- Conclude with a communal intercession.

“Come gather in quiet reflection for a beautiful evening of candlelit prayer inspired by our Bicentennial.”

“Together, we will recall God’s Radiant Light passed down through 200 years of Catholic witness in the Archdiocese of St. Louis.”

“All are welcome to step into the stillness, carry the light of Christ, and reflect on the hope He brings to our lives and our Church.”



# Candlelight Procession

## Theme Inspiration: “Walk in the Light”

### An Evening Marian Procession

As a Jubilee idea, your parish or ministry might consider hosting a “Walk in the Light,” an evening Marian procession, walking through the parish grounds or neighborhoods with candlelight, prayer, and song.

Mary’s journey was always one of light because she carried the Light of the World within her. From her visit to Elizabeth in loving service, to her quiet intercession at Cana, to her prayerful presence in the upper room at Pentecost, Mary walked in faith, bringing Christ to others.

“Come and take a prayerful step with Mary toward deeper discipleship and together, let us walk in the light of Christ.”

### Suggested Features:

- Begin with a brief reflection on Mary as the first disciple, followed by a blessing of candles.
- Distribute intention cards that can be placed in a basket near an image of Mary.
- Invite participants to light a candle for a specific intention.
- Include stops at key “stations” for Scripture, reflection and/or intercession.
- Conclude with a decade of the Rosary or *Litany of Loreto*.
- Offer a blessing for all disciples to “walk in the light of Christ.”



## Candlelight Praise & Worship

### Theme Inspiration: “Radiant Light: An Evening of Praise”

Consider hosting a powerful evening of candlelit adoration, music, and testimony in your parish church or chapel. This simple yet moving event offers the faithful a chance to encounter Christ through beauty, witness, and silence.

To deepen the experience, consider incorporating a brief reflection on the history or significance of your church or chapel connecting this moment of praise with the faith of those who came before us.

Invitation Content:

***“Come and Witness, the Radiant Light.”***

Join us for a powerful evening of candlelit praise and worship in [Church/Chapel Name], a sacred space that has stood as a beacon of faith in our community for generations. Through Eucharistic Adoration, personal witness from young voices, and uplifting music from [fill in details], we will lift our hearts in gratitude for 200 years of Catholic witness in the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

As part of the evening, we’ll take a moment to reflect on the history of this holy place and the generations of faithful who have prayed, served, and worshiped here before us.

### Suggested Features:

- Create a candlelit space
- Include 2-3 short witness talks and include young people
- Offer time for fellowship and light refreshments afterward



## “Stories that Shine”

**Theme Inspiration:** *“I am the light of the world. Whoever follows me will not walk in darkness, but will have the light of life.” John 8:12*

To celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, parish communities are invited to consider gathering short testimonies of lived Catholic faith to highlight the diverse, inspiring ways Christ’s light shines among us.

This idea “Stories that Shine” encourages local communities to celebrate everyday holiness, share stories that evangelize through personal witness, and strengthen intergenerational connection and parish identity.

### **Suggested Features:**

- Invite parishioners to reflect on a spiritual prompt such as:

*“Where have you seen Christ’s light in your life?”*

*“How are you sharing the light of Christ with loved ones and strangers?”*

*“How has Christ helped you move from darkness to light?”*

- Gather 5, 10, 20, or even 200 stories - whatever fits the size and capacity of your community.
- Consider spotlighting voices across generations.
- Share stories in your bulletin, on parish social media, or as part of a Jubilee-themed event.
- Encourage visual or creative submissions (photos, art, video clips) if your community is open to a multimedia approach.



## “Stories that Shine” + Parish Dinner

**Consider combining “Stories That Shine” with a parish dinner or potluck** to create a meaningful evening of testimony and togetherness. Sharing stories over a shared meal offers a powerful way to foster intergenerational connection, strengthen parish identity, and highlight the everyday holiness present in your pews.

### Sample Format:

- **Welcome & Meal:** Begin with prayer and a simple shared meal. Consider inviting attendees to bring a dish from their culture or family tradition.
- **Witness Stories:** Invite 4–6 parishioners to share brief reflections (3–5 minutes) responding to: “*Where have you seen Christ’s light in your life?*”, “*How are you sharing the light of Christ with loved ones and strangers?*”, or “*How has Christ helped you move from darkness to light?*”
- **Multimedia or Bulletin Board Display:** Encourage attendees to view other collected stories, photos, or artwork from parishioners displayed around the space. Display “Telling Your Parish Story” exhibits. Distribute “Take-Home Story Cards” with Scripture and reflection questions to inspire dinner-table faith conversations.
- **Closing:** As the evening concludes, invite attendees to light a candle in prayerful gratitude for someone who has been a light in their life and/or as a personal commitment to share Christ’s light with others. This quiet moment of reflection offers a beautiful and symbolic way to close the evening.



## In the Light of the Lord: A Jubilee Concert

As one way to mark the 200th anniversary of the Archdiocese of St. Louis, parishes may choose to host a Jubilee concert celebrating the light of Christ expressed through sacred and cultural music. This local or regional concert can become a powerful opportunity for parishioners and neighbors alike to experience the joy of the Gospel through the beauty of music.

This event can also serve as an easy and natural moment for evangelization. Consider encouraging parishioners to bring family, friends, or neighbors and simply share the joy, beauty, and peace of your parish community.

To support this outreach, have printed song sheets or programs that include:

- Mass and confession times
- Upcoming prayer opportunities or parish events
- Parish contact information and website
- A simple welcome message and invitation to return

These small touches can help turn a single visit into a next step in someone's faith journey.

### **Possible Enhancements:**

- Collaborate regionally with neighboring parishes
- Multicultural choirs or ensembles
- Youth and high school choirs
- Instrumental or solo performances
- Narrated historical reflections between sets, connecting music to moments in the parish story
- Candlelit closing hymn or recessional
- Display “Telling Your Parish Story” exhibits



## “Meet Your Neighbor” Tailgate Fellowship

**Theme Inspiration:** To love our neighbor, we must first meet our neighbor.

This relaxed, outdoor social event invites parishioners to extend hospitality to their neighbors especially those not currently connected to the Church. It’s about building human connection in a joyful, approachable way and planting seeds of invitation that reflect the radiant light of Christ.

### Suggested Features:

- Open-Invite Tailgate BYOC (Chair & Cooler)
- Simple Food: grill, potluck, food trucks
- Welcome Table: Meet & Greet opportunity
- Kids Corner: Coloring table & jumbo games
- Prayer Moment: Short prayer of gratitude and hope

### Parishioner Challenge

Consider challenging parishioners to personally invite and also connect with at least ONE neighbor they do not yet know.

The **Parish Council**, as the pastoral leadership body of the parish, plays a vital role in encouraging and equipping others for this kind of outreach. Their support might include:

- **Model the Challenge:** Parish Council members each take the challenge and share brief testimonies of their experience afterward
- **Provide hospitality training:** Offering a short orientation on greeting newcomers with warmth and respect
- **Following up:** Consult for ways to welcome any new connections to future parish events



## Conclusion

**Your story is part of something greater.** By sharing it, you honor those who built the foundation of faith in our region and inspire others to carry Christ's light into the future. Together, we continue the living story of the Church in the Archdiocese of St. Louis—200 years strong, and still shining.

As you begin dreaming, planning, and discerning how your parish or ministry will celebrate the Bicentennial Jubilee, please remember that these ideas are simply starting points. You are welcome to use any one of them, combine several, or create entirely new expressions of joy and hope that reflect your community's story.

As additional resources and event ideas are developed by archdiocesan ministries, they will be shared to support your community's Jubilee celebrations. May this Bicentennial year be a time of gratitude, creativity, and renewed mission for all.

And as you celebrate, we warmly encourage you to share those moments. Tag your photos and stories with **#ArchSTL200** so together we can reflect the light of Christ and the beauty of our Catholic faith across the Archdiocese.

**May God's radiant light guide  
every step of your  
Bicentennial Jubilee journey.**

