



Southern Vicariate of the
ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS



2025 FRUITS OF THE HARVEST



Rooted in Christ, we plant and nourish

the Seeds of Faith in Word and Deed.



Southern Vicariate of the
ARCHDIOCESE OF ST. LOUIS

Episcopal Vicar

Very Reverend Michael J. Lydon

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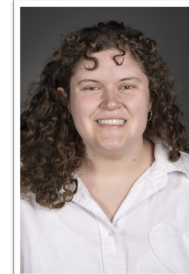


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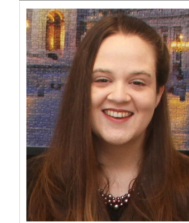
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THE VICAR'S VIEW

In a 2023 study, Catholic Charities identified homelessness, poverty/basic needs and mental health as the three top social needs of our Southern Vicariate, with two of our counties – Washington and St. Francois – being in the “distressed” category. Food insecurity and elder care/support were also named to round out the top five social concerns.

In the last two years, we presented workshops on the issues of mental health and suicide. We helped the Washington County partnership expand their capacity to offer shelter to the unhoused. We stabilized Caring Hearts, a pregnancy resource center in Potosi. We financially supported and came to know the staff of Shared Blessings, a housing unit for qualified residents in St. Francois County. We partnered with the James II Project to help feed our unhoused and impoverished neighbors in Arnold and in Festus.

This year, we are making a major push to address the need for transitional housing for those seeking to stabilize their lives. Caritas House-Festus, would house up to 20 residents annually as they move to more permanent situations. The Archdiocesan Affordable Housing Fund donated \$585,000 to establish this building in Crystal City at the site of the former Catholic school of Sacred Heart parish. We need to raise just over \$800,000 more to bring this project to life. We are seeking support from foundations, corporations and individuals for this project. Bridge of Hope-Lincoln County and Assisi House are the models for our efforts.

This fall, we are offering two Saturday morning programs on Catholic Social Teaching (CST) – one in Deanery 3 and one in Deanery 4. These Mornings of Prayer include learning and discernment regarding how we as Catholics can help one another to better live out the Church’s social teaching – especially in the arena of homelessness, poverty, and mental health. Both “arms” of CST – direct works of charity and advocacy for biblical justice – will be presented with some practical suggestions as well. Our core staff – Joyce Mard – Director of Operations, Jennifer Meehan – Director of Pastoral Ministry, George Herrera – Director of Social Outreach and Jennifer Lutker – Catholic Charities Navigator - will collaborate in creating and implementing this CST workshop. These two workshops offer a blend of evangelization, advocacy for the poor and vulnerable, and service to those in need. I hope you can attend one of them.

Our work is not done. This report describes some of the first fruits of our harvest. I look forward to strengthening our partnerships as, together, we plant and nourish the seeds of faith in this field of the Vineyard in the Archdiocese of St. Louis.

In Christ,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "FR Mike Lydon". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Fr. Mike Lydon, Episcopal Vicar

BUILDING



- Fr. Mike Lydon is celebrating Mass on Mondays at 12pm at Mercy Jefferson hospital. This Mass is open to the public and is offered via the internal PA system to those in the hospital should they wish to watch.

- St. Francis of Assisi partnered with the Southern Vicariate to provide Christmas meals to the people in Washington County through the ministry at St. Stephen's in Richwoods.



- Continuing our partnership with the Salvation Army and the James II Project, we assisted in the expansion of the James II lunches to include Thursdays in Arnold and Mondays in Festus.
- James II Volunteers come from Sacred Heart - Crystal City, Our Lady, Good Shepherd, Queen of All Saints, Assumption, Holy Family, St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, St. Joseph-Imperial, and Mary, Mother of the Church.



- We assisted the grade schools at St. Agnes (Bloomsdale), St. Francis of Assisi, St. Rose of Lima and St. Joachim (Old Mines) in creating feasibility plans for the 2025-26 school year.



RELATIONSHIPS

- “Curia Connections” continues to provide opportunities for networking, information sharing, prayer, and fellowship. These quarterly meetings ensure all parishes receive current and accurate information directly from the Curia offices.



- Father Lydon and Debbie Koeller met with the Director of Shared Blessings, Transitional Housing program in Bonne Terre, MO to learn about services and see how we can support their work.



- Debbie Koeller made introductions to Alexis Mehringer, Family Empowerment Coach with Catholic Charities of St. Louis - United For Families Program in May 2025 - now accepting referrals for families with school age children in the home.

- For the second year, we offered a Day of Reflection for women throughout the Southern Vicariate. Nearly 100 “Marthas” attended our retreat day, hosted by Good Shepherd Parish in Hillsboro.

We spent the day with the Three Marys - Mary of Nazareth, Mary of Magdala, and Mary of Bethany, learning from them ways to walk closer to Christ.



- In June, The Roundtable was launched to provide an opportunity for pastors and parish staff to connect in a virtual session with Curia resources to discuss solutions for running a vibrant parish.



PROVIDING



- Fr. Lydon installed two new pastors at parishes in the Southern Vicariate: Fr. Yates at St. Joseph and at St. John in Imperial; Fr. Blessing at Holy Family in Arnold.
- Kathy Smith, our Finance Liaison, works with parishes to establish uniform reporting metrics and best practices for accounting. She attends Finance Council Meetings with pastors and meets with Parish Business Managers.
- The Respect Life Apostolate led informational sessions on Amendment 3 at SV parishes as well as Pro-Life Apologetics Workshops. For more information, or to bring one of those workshops to your parish, contact Mary Varni.



- In March and April, Jennifer Meehan and Fr. Lydon led a program to help parents and grandparents discuss faith with family members who've stepped away. **"Meet Them at the Well"** was presented at Holy Family in Arnold and at the Bloomsdale K of C hall.

The program also won a state-wide award from the Missouri Knights of Columbus.

SUPPORT



- The Respect Life Apostolate supports pregnancy centers and pro-life social service agencies in the SV via the Walking with Moms St. Louis network and Archdiocesan Deacon Diaper Drive as well as LifeLine Coalition grants.

- Fr. Lydon is providing support for and working closely with Holy Family parish in Arnold as they begin the process of building a new church.
- Our Catholic Charities Navigator continued to serve households in SV with housing-related direct aid assistance thru **Helping Hands** funding. From April 2024 to April 2025, **over \$79,309** was paid towards 56 total grants in total- 24 families received grants in the Southern Vicariate to help stabilize their housing.



- Vicariate Director Joyce Mard sends out a monthly “Flocknotes” to all parish staffs as a means of communication between Curia, Vicariate office and parishes. She encourages parishes to share events through this communication.
- The Respect Life Apostolate continues to grow its parish representative program throughout the Southern Vicariate.



ADDRESSING



- Marie Kenyon and Dave Baranowski presented a program at Sacred Heart (Valley Park) and at St. Margaret Mary Alacoque, sharing the stories of the parishes in the Deanery 4 region.



Following these sessions, several dozen people from Deanery 3 parishes completed a day-long “immersion trip” to several Deanery 4 parishes and agencies, developing relationships across the vicariate.



- In our ongoing efforts to address the mental health issues facing many in the Southern Vicariate, we held two Suicide Prevention workshops in the fall of 2024 - one at Sacred Heart, Ozora, and the other at St. Paul, Fenton.

- In November, we held a “Morning of Hope and Healing” for those affected by suicide. After a Mass of Remembrance, people had the chance to speak with a counselor, pray with a Jonah Prayer Team, and attend a grief meditation. Fr. Lydon was available to celebrate the Sacrament of Reconciliation while Our Lady parish provided refreshments.



We will offer a similar Mass and program again this year, beginning with 9am Mass on November 8, 2025 at Our Lady Catholic Church in Festus.

NEEDS

- Catholic Charities staff was present throughout the SV in the spring of 2025 following the spring tornadoes. They conducted Disaster Assessments and offered resources for long term recovery services.



- We supported the work of Caring Hearts Family Resource Center (Potosi) by attending the annual fundraiser, conducting two pastoral visits, and connecting CH with the national Biking for Babies ministry for additional funding/visibility. Mary Varni also shared about their mission during her St. Francis of Assisi's Advent by Candlelight presentation; nearly \$800 raised at that event was donated to Caring Hearts.



- Good Shepherd Children & Family Services opened an office in Hillsboro in December 2024 to serve an additional 60 children in Foster Care in Jefferson County, along with offering their other services from this site as well.
 - Deacon John Wolffer greets and talks with those who attend James II lunches on Tuesdays and Thursdays in Arnold, helping them with their spiritual needs. He also directs them to the people who are able to assist them with the services and resources they need.
- We provided parishes and the faithful with Amendment 3 prayer and educational resources to combat the statewide abortion ballot initiative including clergy preaching talking points, signs, prayer cards, bulletin inserts, website, and prayer campaigns.

FORMING



- Jennifer Meehan offered custom staff retreats for several parishes in the Southern Vicariate, including St. Joseph-Imperial, Our Lady-Good Shepherd-Sacred Heart, Holy Family, and Our Lady Queen of Peace. Each retreat day is designed to meet the specific needs of the parish staffs.

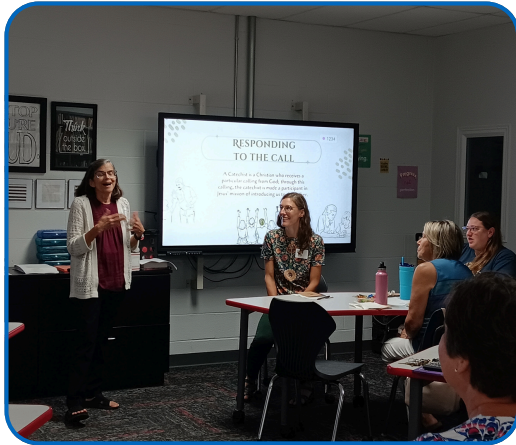
- Fr. Lydon and Jennifer Meehan led a Morning of Reflection on “The Jubilee Year of Hope” for 93 lay leaders in the Southern Vicariate in February.
- Respect Life Apostolate offered Archdiocesan Monthly Pro-Life Masses and Rosaries at SV locations: St. Francis of Assisi (Oakville), Immaculate Conception (Park Hills), and Queen of All Saints (Oakville) and hosted five meetings for each SV parish respect life coordinator to come together to pray, strategize, and learn and share best practices.



- In September 2024, E-Team Squared got its start in the Southern Vicariate. ET2 is a monthly gathering of staff and volunteers from around the SV who are active in evangelization and outreach efforts in their parishes. Each meeting includes prayer and formation, time for sharing ideas with one another, and a challenge to take back to our parishes.

- Our quarterly “Curia Connections” meetings include an extended period of prayer and formation for our parish staffs.

DISCIPLES



- Fr. Lydon celebrated the Sacrament of Confirmation with the 8th graders at: St. Margaret Mary Alacoque (Melville), St. Joseph (Farmington), St. Vincent de Paul (Perryville), Assumption (Mattese) and St. Joseph (Apple Creek). The gift of the Holy Spirit is essential for these 8th graders as they prepare to enter the bigger world of high school.

- The “Side-by-Side” parish-based Mentor Couple marriage preparation program was implemented in six SV parishes this year. In June, Jennifer Meehan held training for 8 additional Mentor Couples.
- St. Agnes (Bloomsdale) and St. Joseph (Zell) Evangelization Team completed their initial “A Reason for our Hope” training in Fall 2024. Jennifer Meehan continues to meet with the team regularly to check on their progress.



- St. Paul (Fenton) began “A Reason for our Hope” Evangelization training in April 2025. A group of 10 meet monthly to grow their skills and parish plan for evangelization.

LOOKING



- Beginning in June 2025, an additional \$20,000 will be available in Jefferson County thru the **Helping Hands Program** for those experiencing a housing crisis with new funding from the Jefferson Foundation.

- To address both the practical and the societal issues facing the SV region, we are offering two “Hope Into Action” mornings of reflection this fall. Please consider joining us on **September 6th** at **St. Joseph - Imperial** or **October 18th** in at **St. Joseph - Farmington**.



- In 2025–2026, the Office of Youth Ministry will build on the momentum of this past year with a renewed focus on meeting leaders where they are through- intentional assessment of needs, continued formation and accompaniment and new initiatives as the need arises.
- The Festus Housing Project “**Caritas House**”, spearheaded by Catholic Charities and funded in part by a grant from the Archdiocese Affordable Housing Program is moving forward. Caritas House will provide transitional housing for those who wish to gain permanent housing with support services offered on site. Additional funding is actively being pursued for this project which will be located at the former Sacred Heart School in Crystal City/Festus.



- With the addition of Kathleen Schoellhorn to our Pastoral Ministry staff, we will better be able to serve parishes in their staff development, evangelization training, and out reach needs.

AHEAD



- The Respect Life Apostolate is bringing the **Pro-Life Apologetics Workshop** to the SV (**Our Lady-Festus on Friday, September 19th at 6 pm**).

- Through our partnership with Catholic Charities, parishes, nonprofits, and individuals can apply for emergency assistance grants. Contact Jennifer Lutker for more information.
- We schedule “Staff Service Days” twice-annually to visit and provide supplies to food pantries throughout the Southern Vicariate.
- New Coordinator of Parish Outreach, Samantha Pleimann will enhance parish and vicariate support through direct consultation and collaborative efforts to strengthen youth ministry.



- Ongoing Formation through the Youth Ministry Office will include monthly gatherings rotating by vicariate, Advent and Lenten Days of Prayer, a retreat weekend for leaders, and an annual training day in collaboration with Life Teen.

- In our ongoing efforts to identify and address the specific needs within the Southern Vicariate, our new Director of Social Outreach, George Herrera, plans to explore continued collaborative solutions and sustainable partnerships between urban and rural Catholic communities by visiting and meeting with leaders in the community.





FINAL THOUGHTS OF GRATITUDE

Habemus Papam! We have a new Pope since May of 2025. The election of Pope Leo XIV has inspired our staff to create a Saturday workshop based on Pope Leo XIII's encyclical Rerum Novarum, Of the New Things (1891), and the succeeding encyclicals since then, including St. Pope John Paul II's Centesimus Annos (1991). Catholic Social Teaching (CST) has been called the "hidden gem" of the Catholic Church and we hope to uncover and polish this gem in our presentations to Deanery 3 and 4. We intend on making CST accessible, understandable and practicable to the parishioners who attend our Saturday workshops on Sept. 6 at St. Joseph in Imperial and October 18 at St. Joseph in Farmington.

I am very grateful to our dedicated staff of the Southern Vicariate. They are energetic, organized, and cooperative. (You can see their pictures and roles on the inside front cover). I am also very edified by the many volunteers and employees of various agencies, parishes, schools, and the Rigali Center who have collaborated with the Southern Vicariate.



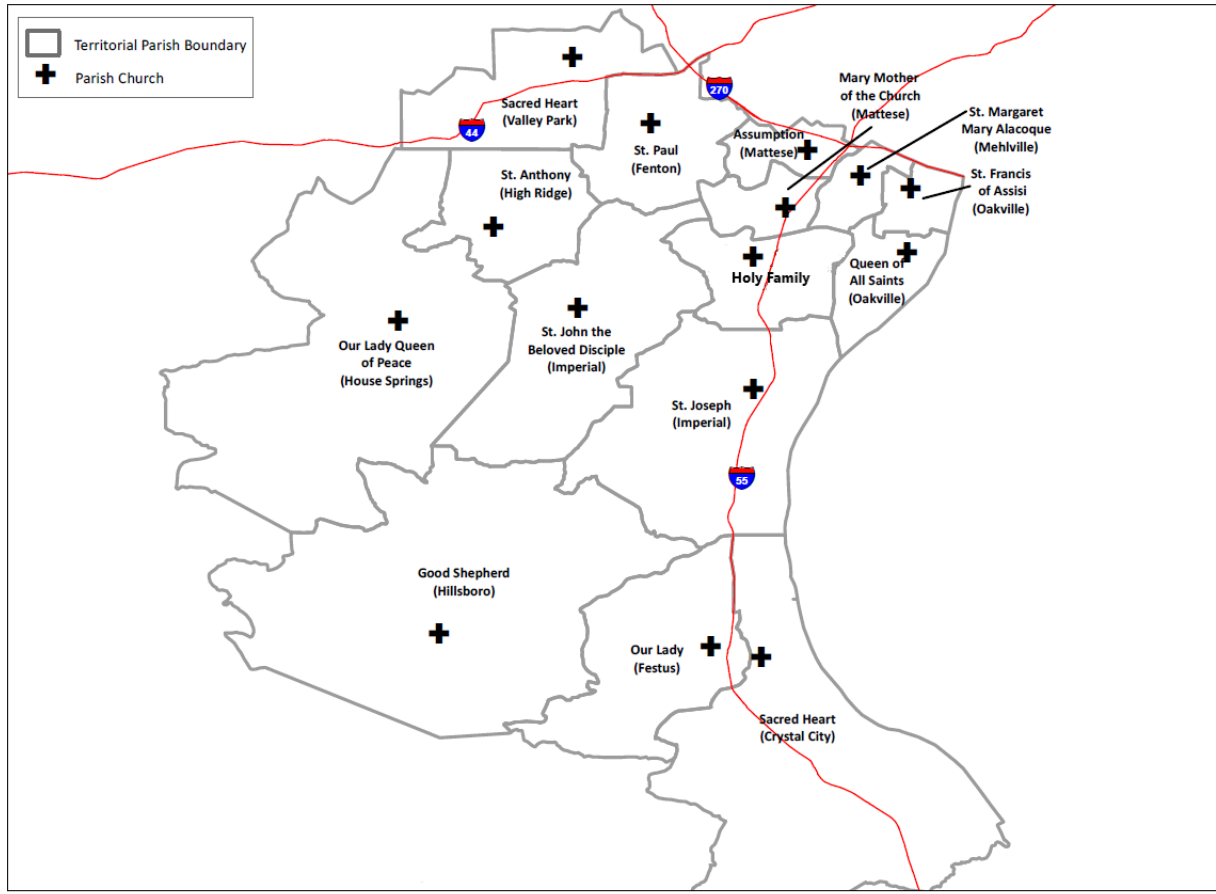
I am grateful to Archbishop Rozanski for the opportunity to serve as your Episcopal Vicar and for the Executive Administration in the Archdiocese, including my fellow Vicars. I give a special shout out to now Archbishop-Elect Mark Rivotuso whom I have known for over 40 years. His tireless ministry to the prisons, food pantries, and other areas of social need are well known. We will miss him much. Thank you, Bishop Rivotuso!

Nothing "fills my bucket" of faith, hope and love like bringing resources – human, in-kind, expertise and financial – to those without them. I believe my team shares the same mindset as we work to "plant and nourish the seeds of faith in word and in deed" throughout the Southern Vicariate.

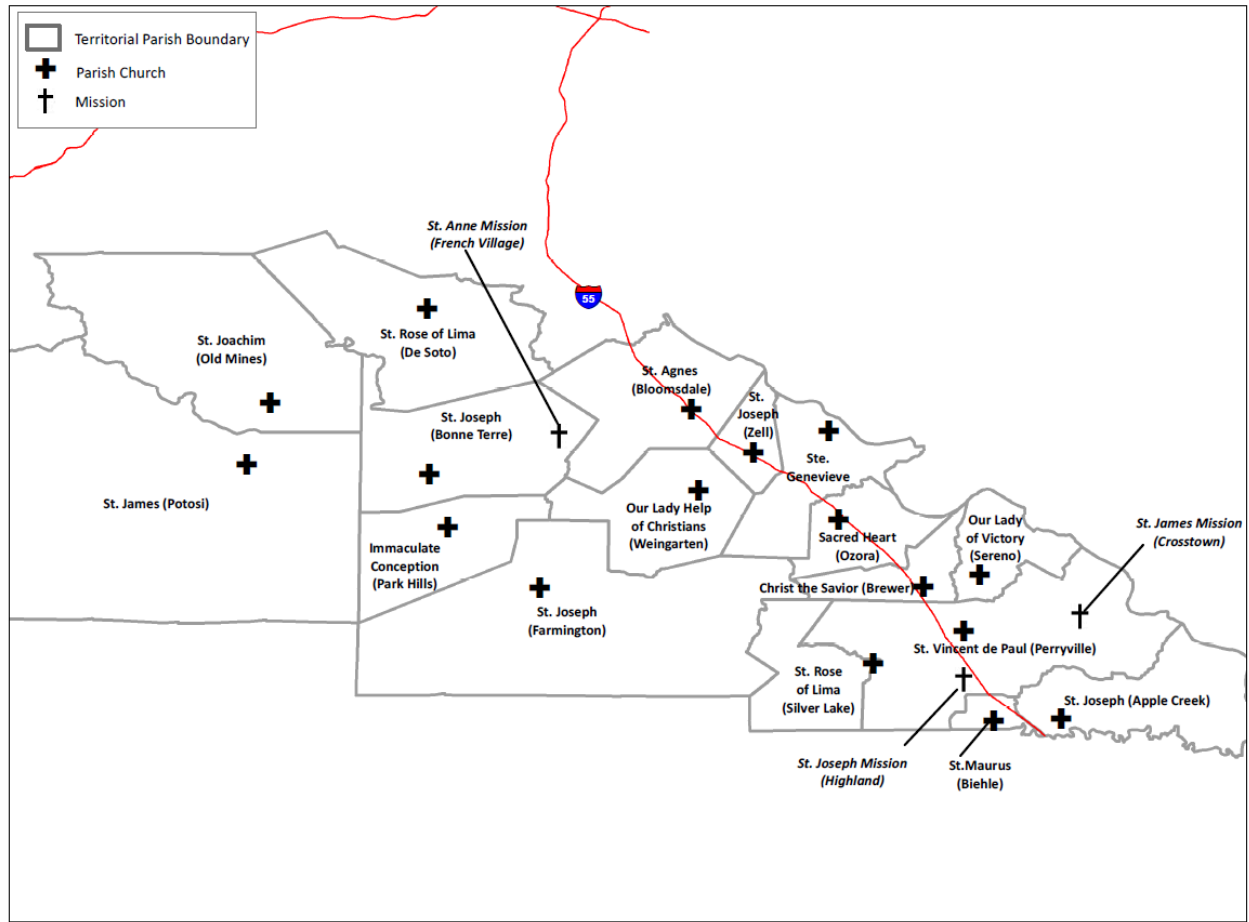
Thank you for reading this second annual edition of "Fruits of the Harvest." If you have any suggestions for improving our efforts, feel free to contact us. God bless you, your loved ones and all the people who live in the Southern Vicariate!



Southern Vicariate - Deanery 3



Southern Vicariate - Deanery 4





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