



**CATHOLIC
HOME
MISSIONS**

Deepening Faith in Missouri



Fr. Javier Reyes celebrates Mass on Missouri State University campus in Springfield, MO.

By Beth Griffin

On May 22, 2011, all eyes were on Joplin, Missouri, where a catastrophic tornado touched down. It killed 161 people and injured more than 1,150 others as it caused heartbreaking devastation, and \$2.8 billion in damage. St. Mary's Church and School in the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau were in the direct path of the tornado.

"Five buildings in the parish were leveled. The pastor was spared as the buildings around him crumpled," recalls Gene Aug, Ph.D. He is director of development and properties for the sprawling Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau, which receives regular support from Catholic Home Missions (CHM). Joplin is at the western edge of the diocese, which spans almost 26,000 square miles in southern Missouri.

"Parishioners lost their homes and the diocese was able to give a number of families \$1,000 to begin to rebuild their lives. We also had to figure out what to do with the school and the church," Gene says.

In the wake of the tornado, Catholic Home Missions provided \$600,000 from the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' 2011 Tornado Recovery Emergency Collection to the diocese over several years to help temporarily relocate the grade school and rebuild the church and school buildings. The grade school was relocated to a warehouse near an existing high school and is now home to a middle school in the Joplin Area Catholic School System. Gene says the reconstructed St. Mary's Church is one of the most beautiful in the diocese.

Springfield-Cape Girardeau is a mission diocese in which Catholics constitute approximately five percent of the population. "In some areas, we're less than one percent," Gene says. Baptist and Assembly of God Churches predominate.

The diocese contains more than 20,500 Catholic households, but they are spread across 39 counties. Gene says more than 40 percent of the parishes serve fewer than 100 households.

"There's a lot of driving distance between parishes, and some priests serve as many as



St. Mary's Church in Joplin was in the direct line of the 2011 tornado.

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Neighbors

FALL 2017

A QUARTERLY NEWSLETTER FROM MISSION AMERICA

FROM THE CHAIRMAN



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

Our neighbors in home mission territories can face tremendous challenges, but an unexpected emergency can stretch these dioceses beyond their limits. As you'll read in this newsletter, the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau confronted one such disaster when a tornado tore through Joplin in 2011. Your generosity toward the 2011 Tornado Recovery Collection made it possible for the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau to relocate its grade school, rebuild its churches, and help families who needed to rebuild their lives. Your support could not undo the devastation of the tornado, but it did provide some measure of relief to those who suffered in its wake.

Today, it is not emergency relief that Springfield-Cape Girardeau requires. Your generosity to the Catholic Home Missions Appeal helps this diocese to continue the important task of ministering to those on college campuses and in prison.

Each time you open your heart and support the Catholic Home Missions Appeal, you make a real difference in the lives of your neighbors across the country. Please hold in prayer all our home mission dioceses and all affected by recent disasters. As we contemplate the devastation caused by Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, Maria and other such natural disasters, we are reminded that we are one family in Christ called to care for one another. And we recall that home mission territories still require assistance for their pastoral activities, even when these emergencies pass. Thank you for your solidarity.

In the Heart of Christ,

Paul D. Etienne

Most Reverend Paul D. Etienne, DD, STL
Archbishop of Anchorage

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three parishes. It's a challenge to care for such a large geographic area and difficult for priests to do all they want for each parish," Gene says.

Because of the small population and the big distances, Gene says people have banded together to form a strong Catholic presence. "They've been involved and generous with their time, talent, and treasure," he says.

Small, remote parishes also struggle to respond to emergencies, and the diocese works to assist them. Gene describes a spring flood that left three feet of water throughout a parish with 35 households. "When everyone in the area experiences damage, it's difficult to find remediation and construction companies to clean up and rebuild. They have to come from elsewhere at a time when every other business and home also needs services. So the diocese itself helps, as it is able," he says.

The bishops conference was well placed to provide relief and reconstruction aid in the wake of the disaster. CHM provides ongoing aid to the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau for campus ministry and prison ministry programs.

CATHOLIC CAMPUS MINISTRY

Although the diocese has no Catholic colleges, Springfield-Cape Girardeau uses Catholic Home Missions grants to support two robust Catholic campus ministry programs that serve students at five colleges and universities in two cities in Missouri: Springfield and Joplin.

Claretian Father Javier Reyes is director of campus ministry in Springfield. His program serves students at Missouri State University, Drury University, and Ozarks Technical Community College.



Students gather together for a leadership retreat.

Father Javier, who was ordained to the priesthood in May 2017, is part of an almost 40-year commitment by the Claretian Missionaries to provide campus ministry in southern Missouri. Before he became director, he worked in the program as an associate.

"Catholic Campus Ministry is a privileged place for evangelization, and evangelization is the charism of the Claretians," he says.

The program is based at the O'Reilly Catholic Student Center, which includes a large chapel, lounge, library, kitchen, banquet hall, meditation garden, sand volleyball court, and retreat accommodations. "Students describe it as a 'home away from home,' and we try to be available where they are," Father Javier explains. This presence includes service opportunities and a spring mission trip in addition to daily Mass, a Wednesday escape-and-unwind session, and Thursday Eucharistic adoration and confession followed by a 9:15 p.m. Mass. Father Javier says the well-attended 10:15 p.m. Mass on Sunday night is the "latest Mass in the state of Missouri."

"The campuses we serve are secular environments," he explains. "When students don't have a supportive community, they question their identity and self-esteem."

One of the most popular and fastest growing campus ministry programs is "small groups," communities of faith that reflect on Scripture and try to apply it to daily life. Groups of 10 to 11 students are led by facilitators trained by Catholic campus ministry staff with help from Evangelical Catholic, an organization based in Madison, Wisconsin. "They're equipping and empowering our small group leaders for battle in the world, and our students feel they are missionaries," Father Javier says.

"We're forming leaders for the Church and the Church is bigger than Catholic Campus Ministry. At times students feel the Church doesn't have space for them. They don't want to be entertained; they want to get to know



St. Mary's Church after reconstruction.



DID YOU KNOW?

- The Diocese of Springfield–Cape Girardeau has approximately 68,000 Catholics. They worship at 66 parishes, 18 missions, and 4 chapels. Parishes range from 15 to 1,800 households.
- Catholics are served by 42 diocesan priests, 12 religious priests, 4 non-incardinated priests, 21 permanent deacons, and 12 seminarians, as well as the men religious of the Congregation of the Mother Coredemptrix and the women religious of the Congregation of Mary, Queen.
- The diocese includes 23 Catholic elementary schools, 12 of which have fewer than 100 students. There are also three Catholic high schools.
- The Diocese of Springfield–Cape Girardeau borders six states: Kansas and Oklahoma to the west, Arkansas to the south, and Illinois, Kentucky, and Tennessee on the east.
- The diocese lies within the area popularly called “the Bible Belt,” where socially conservative evangelical Protestantism is very strong, and Christian church attendance across denominations is generally higher than the national average. The diocese is home to the world headquarters of both the Assemblies of God and General Baptist Churches.
- It was established in 1956 from the southern sections of the dioceses of St. Louis and Kansas City and covers the entire southern third of the state of Missouri.

more about the Church they are a part of,” he says. “At Catholic Campus Ministry, students are empowered and hear their own calling.”

“We want the students’ voices to be heard because they are not only the future of the Church, they are the present, the heart and soul of the Church. It gives me hope,” he says.

Father Javier says Bishop Edward M. Rice of Springfield–Cape Girardeau is a great support to the ministry. He visits the Catholic center to eat dinner with the students, lead Eucharistic adoration, hear confessions, and participate in “Stump the Bishop” nights.

“It’s an opportunity for him to answer questions about the faith, his vocation, the stance of the Church on various things and for the students to interact with him in a personal, approachable way,” Father Javier says. “It helps the students become familiar with the bishop.”

Father Javier says he and the Catholic campus ministers who serve Southeast Missouri State University and Missouri State University have the same mission and vision, separated by a 4.5-hour car ride. Among other joint efforts, they are trying to organize a camping trip for young men to explore male identity in the Catholic Church.

PRISON MINISTRY

Springfield–Cape Girardeau provides prison ministry at one federal and three state correctional facilities. Two are maximum-security prisons, one is minimum security with a focus on substance abuse treatment, and the fourth is a medical center for federal prisoners. Gene says that ministering

to the residents’ spiritual needs in these settings presents many challenges due to the often unpredictable and random relocation and schedule changes at the facilities.

“We’re trying to prepare people to return to society. These men are in a very tough environment where it is harder to live a Christian life than it is on the outside,” Gene says. “Our programs provide contact with the outside world and can facilitate their reentry into society and their families when they are released. Spiritual growth is incremental and not easily quantifiable, yet the Spirit is always at work.”

The prison ministry programs include visits, weekly Masses or prayer services, confessions, sacraments, Bible study, Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults, pastoral counseling, and the Residents Encounter Christ program.

Bishop Rice says Catholic Home Missions grants are integral to his diocese. “We have the responsibility to give our college students an opportunity to learn the moral, religious, and spiritual values that are essential in coping with today’s society. Our Campus Ministry programs in Springfield and Joplin provide this guidance. Residents of our correctional centers very much need something to hold on to in their lives. Providing spiritual and moral direction could positively impact their lives at an extremely vulnerable time.”

He continues, “Celebrating Mass with these two unique communities of faith is always so life-giving for me. The diocese simply could not conduct the programs that are offered in these two ministries without the financial assistance of CHM.” ☺



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READ ABOUT HOW your support helps the Diocese of Springfield-Cape Girardeau strengthen its campus and prison ministries.



Your generosity to the Catholic Home Missions Appeal supports essential ministries in poor dioceses across the United States and its territories.

THANK YOU for being part of our efforts to strengthen the Church at home.

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