

# Parishes aid homeschool families with lessons

written by Maryanne Meyerriecks |



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**FORT SMITH** — River Valley Catholic Families, a new homeschool group, has begun deep-dive studies of the Mass, led by Christ the King pastor Father Brian Cundall.

“We began with four founding families,” parent Katie Sharum said. “We all attended different Fort Smith parishes and met at a completely different homeschool group. We were thrilled to find like-minded women whom we could connect with on a deeper spiritual level. We are all passionate about teaching our children about our rich Catholic faith and decided to set up a monthly playdate where we could practice liturgical living.”

Sharum, who has 7-year-old twins and a 4-year-old, is relatively new to homeschooling, while co-founder Shari McCoy has sent four of her five homeschooled children off to college and currently homeschools her 10-year-old daughter.

“We have belonged to a few Catholic homeschool groups over the years,” she said. “Now that I have a classroom of one, it’s great to have a homeschool community to celebrate the feast days

and traditions of our Catholic faith.”

Father Cundall said he sees the role of the parish as a support to the already rich Catholic education the homeschooling parents provide. Homeschooled children also attend PRE classes each week in their own parishes and participate in parish youth programs.

“Here at Christ the King, we have simply helped by providing a place where they can meet and get together,” Father Cundall said. “In our deep-dive sessions, we are slowly going through the Mass, and after that we will probably find a new topic to start on. I love the opportunity to teach the kids. Parents are the first teachers of the faith, so I want to help them in their mission.”

The sessions are geared to 5- to 10-year-olds, but there are older and younger children in the mix. The group has 16 families from Van Buren to Waldron, and there are usually about 30 children at group meetings. In addition to the deep-dive sessions, the group meets each month to celebrate feast days at Christ the King and other local churches.

“In August, we will meet at St. Michael’s in Van Buren to celebrate the Assumption,” Sharum said. “Parents take turns setting up feast day lessons with related craft activities and snacks. We try to engage the kids visually, auditorily and kinesthetically in faith-based activities. For the Assumption, we are making whipped cream desserts resembling clouds, doing crafts and discussing how we can bring the celebration into our domestic home churches.”

The group has taken field trips to parks, Subiaco Abbey and the labyrinth at St. Scholastica Monastery. Because St. Boniface School is closed, their playground is available to the group, and pastor Father Mario Jacobo is eager to help them in any way he can.

Early in the pandemic, every child had virtual learning but has since returned to in-person schooling. When Sharum sent her now 7-year-olds to preschool, homeschooling wasn’t on her mind.

“I only made it through half a year at preschool,” she said. “I volunteered in the classroom and tried to be present, but I realized that I was missing some of the best parts of their days, and I could just do this, integrate education into their days at home. They are now going into second grade, and each year we will pray and discern about our three children’s educations, but we are doing what we believe is best right now. All of the kids in our group enjoy extracurricular activities. My kids are active in karate, gymnastics, swim team, computer coding, piano, and pottery classes.”

The founding group, which also includes Erin Lachowsky and Natalie Jordan, welcome other homeschooling families to join them for support, community and faith-building. For more information, contact [ktea1989@gmail.com](mailto:ktea1989@gmail.com).

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# Leadership changes set for churches, diocesan offices

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |

Frank V. DuPreez relieved of his responsibilities as pastor of St. Joseph Church in Pine Bluff; Holy Cross Church in Sheridan and St. Mary Church in Plum Bayou, to cover St. Thomas Aquinas Church in Fayetteville from May 25-June 14, after which time he will return to South Africa to continue his ministry in his home Diocese of Cape Town.

Rev. Joseph Marconi appointed pastor of St. Joseph Church in Pine Bluff, Holy Cross Church in Sheridan, St. Mary Church in Plum Bayou and prison ministry in Pine Bluff. He is relieved of his responsibilities as associate pastor of Christ the King Church in Little Rock.

Effective June 14

Rev. Leon Ngandu Wa Tshianga, SVD, relieved of his responsibilities as administrator of St. Patrick Church and St. Mary Church in North Little Rock and as hospital chaplain at St. Vincent Infirmary in Little Rock (effective June 1) to continue his ministry with the Society of Divine Word.

Rev. Jack Vu appointed pastor of St. Patrick Church in North Little Rock. This is in addition to his current responsibilities as rector of the Cathedral of St. Andrew, and as minister to the Vietnamese community in Little Rock.

Rev. Francis Damoah, SVD, appointed pastor of St. Mary Church in North Little Rock. This is in addition to his current responsibilities as pastor of St. Bartholomew Church in Little Rock, and St. Augustine Church in North Little Rock. He is relieved of his responsibilities as hospital chaplain at St. Vincent Infirmary in Little Rock (effective, June 1. )

Dc. Charles "Chuck" Ashburn appointed assistant director for development and academic advising in the Office of Vocations and Seminarians in the Diocese of Little Rock. This is in addition to his current responsibilities as deacon at the Cathedral of St. Andrew, Catholic High School for Boys and the House of Formation. He is relieved of his responsibilities as diocesan director of faith formation and diocesan director of permanent diaconate formation.

Rev. Erik Pohlmeier appointed director of faith formation and permanent diaconate formation in the Diocese of Little Rock, with residence at Our Lady of the Holy Souls Church in Little Rock. He is relieved of his responsibilities as pastor of Our Lady of the Holy Souls Church in Little Rock.

Rev. John Marconi appointed pastor of Our Lady of the Holy Souls Church in Little Rock. He is relieved of his responsibilities as pastor of St. Joseph Church in Conway.

Rev. Anthony Robbins appointed pastor of St. Joseph Church in Conway. He is relieved of his responsibilities as pastor of St. Louis Church in Camden; and Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Magnolia.

Rev. Alfhones Perikala, a priest of the Diocese of Nellore, India, appointed associate pastor of St. Joseph Church in Conway.

Rev. Mariadass Vallapaneni appointed associate pastor of St. Joseph Church in Conway. He is relieved of his responsibilities as associate pastor of Blessed Sacrament Church and Blessed John Newman University Parish in Jonesboro.

Rev. Balaraju Desam, a priest of the Diocese of Nellore, India, appointed associate pastor of Blessed Sacrament Church and Blessed John Newman University Parish in Jonesboro.

Rev. Rajasekhar Chappidi relieved of his responsibilities as pastor of St. John the Baptist

Church in Malvern, Good Shepherd Church in Fordyce and St. Mary Church in Arkadelphia, to continue his ministry in his home Diocese of Nellore, India.

Rev. Phillip Reaves appointed pastor of St. John the Baptist Church in Malvern, Good Shepherd Church in Fordyce and St. Mary Church in Arkadelphia. He is relieved of his responsibilities as pastor of Holy Rosary Church in Stuttgart and Sts. Cyril and Methodius Church in Slovak.

Rev. Shaun Wesley appointed pastor of Sts. Cyril and Methodius Church in Slovak and from administrator to pastor of St. Rose of Lima Church in Carlisle and Holy Trinity Church in England.

Rev. Clayton Gould appointed pastor of Holy Rosary Church in Stuttgart. He is relieved of his responsibilities as pastor of St. Michael Church in Van Buren.

Rev. C. Richard "Rick" Hobbs, III, appointed administrator of St. Michael Church in Van Buren. He is relieved of his responsibilities as associate pastor of St. Stephen Church in Bentonville; and as administrator of St. John the Evangelist Church in Huntsville.

Rev. Francis Madanu, a priest of the Diocese of Nellore, India, appointed associate pastor of St. Stephen Church in Bentonville.

Rev. Mathew Vianney Malapati Santhaiah relieved of his responsibilities as pastor of St. Albert Church in Heber Springs. He remains pastor of St. James Church in Searcy and St. Richard Church in Bald Knob.

Rev. Felix Chirapurahtel, O. Praem. , appointed administrator of St. Albert Church in Heber Springs and associate pastor for Hispanic Ministry at St. Mary Church in Batesville. He is relieved of his responsibilities as pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Blytheville and St. Matthew Church in Osceola.

Rev. Thomas J. "T. J. " Hart appointed pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Blytheville and St. Matthew Church in Osceola. He is relieved of his responsibilities as pastor of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in North Little Rock (Marche).

Rev. Rubén Quinteros appointed administrator of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in North Little Rock (Marche). He is relieved of his responsibilities as prefect of the House of Formation in Little Rock.

Dc. Richard Taryn Whittington, to be ordained to the priesthood on May 28, appointed prefect of the House of Formation in Little Rock.

Dc. Norman McFall, to be ordained to the priesthood on May 28, appointed associate pastor for Hispanic Ministry at Christ the King Church in Fort Smith, and hospital chaplain at Mercy Hospital Fort Smith.

Dc. Mario Jacobo, to be ordained to the priesthood on May 28, appointed associate pastor of St. Theresa Church in Little Rock.

Dc. Joseph Tan Chan, to be ordained to the priesthood on May 28, will study at Creighton University in Omaha, Neb. , this summer from June 2-Aug. 4. He is appointed associate pastor of the Cathedral of St. Andrew in Little Rock and St. Patrick Church in North Little Rock, effective Aug. 5.

Rev. Ravi Gudipalli relieved of his responsibilities as pastor of Our Lady of the Assumption Church in Booneville and St. Jude Thaddeus Church in Waldron, to continue his ministry in his home Diocese of Nellore, India.

Rev. Alejandro Puello appointed administrator of Our Lady of the Assumption Church in Booneville and St. Jude Thaddeus Church in Waldron. He is relieved of his responsibilities as associate pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Church in Rogers.

Dc. Stephen Joseph Gadberry, to be ordained to the priesthood on May 28, appointed associate pastor of St. Vincent de Paul Church in Rogers.

Rev. John Miranda appointed administrator of St. John the Evangelist Church in Huntsville. This is in addition to his current responsibilities as associate pastor of St. Vincent de Paul

Church in Rogers.

Rev. Lourduwamy Dhanraj Narla relieved of his responsibilities as pastor of St. Mary Church in Batesville and St. Cecilia in Newport to cover St. Louis Church in Camden and Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Magnolia from June 14-30, after which time he will continue his ministry in his home Diocese of Nellore, India.

Rev. Polycarp Ssebbowa appointed administrator of St. Mary Church in Batesville and St. Cecilia Church in Newport. He is relieved of his responsibilities as associate of St. James Church in Searcy, St. Albert Church in Heber Springs and St. Richard Church in Bald Knob.

Rev. Thomas C. Marks appointed chaplain at Carmel of St. Teresa of Jesus in Little Rock, hospital chaplain at UAMS and VA Hospitals in Little Rock, with residence at Catholic High in Little Rock. He remains associate pastor of Our Lady of the Holy Souls Church in Little Rock.

Effective July 1

Rev. Robert Cigainero appointed administrator of Immaculate Heart of Mary Church in Magnolia and St. Louis Church in Camden. He is relieved of his responsibilities as associate pastor of St. Joseph Church in Conway effective June 13.

Effective Aug. 5

Rev. Silvio D'Ostilio, CSSp, relieved of his responsibilities as pastor of St. Joseph Church in Center Ridge, to return to his religious community.

Rev. Joseph Shantiraj appointed pastor of St. Joseph Church in Center Ridge. He is relieved of his responsibilities as associate pastor of Immaculate Conception Church in Fort Smith, effective June 20. He will be covering St. Thomas Aquinas University Parish in Fayetteville from June 21-Aug. 4.

Effective Aug. 22

Dc. Marcelino Luna appointed associate director of faith formation in the Diocese of Little Rock. He is relieved of his responsibilities as diocesan director of Hispanic Ministry.

Sr. Norma Edith Muñoz, MCP, appointed director of Hispanic ministry in the Diocese of Little Rock.

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## **Seven seminarians join Diocese of Little Rock this year**

written by Malea Hargett |



With seven new seminarians, diocese has 44 studying for priesthood

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## **Bishop ordains convert and Georgia native to diaconate**

written by Malea Hargett |



Mario Jacobo, Taryn Whittington take next step toward priesthood

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# **Seven new seminarians joining the diocese this month**

written by Special to Arkansas Catholic |

As new school year commences, diocesan seminarian headcount exceeds 40 men