

# Corpus Christi procession draws about 700 to Prairie du Chien

By JOSEPH O'BRIEN  
*Catholic Times Correspondent*

**PRAIRIE DU CHIEN** – In 1999, the Diocese of La Crosse renewed an old tradition of the Church – the Eucharistic procession on Corpus Christi Sunday. That year, as part of the preparation for the Jubilee year, Bishop Raymond L. Burke organized a procession which began at St. Joseph's Cathedral and ended at Blessed Sacrament Parish, La Crosse.

While the procession remained a spiritual staple, drawing people from all parts of the diocese, last year Bishop Jerome E. ListECKI invited each deanery of the diocese to take a turn hosting the annual procession. Last year, Wisconsin Rapids was the first city to host the procession outside of La Crosse. This year, on its tenth anniversary, the procession was hosted by the Prairie du Chien deanery on June 14, Corpus Christi Sunday.

The event attracted about 700 people from around the dio-

cese and from the parishes of the Prairie Du Chien deanery – St. Wenceslaus, Eastman; St. Mary's, Gays Mills; St. John's and St. Gabriel's, Prairie Du Chien; St. Philip's, Rolling Ground; St. Patrick's, Seneca; and Sacred Heart, Wauzeka.

Led by the bishop holding a monstrance containing the Blessed Sacrament, the procession took participants on an approximately mile-long route from St. John's to its cross-town sister parish, St. Gabriel's – the oldest parish in the diocese and second oldest in Wisconsin. Prior to the event, Bishop ListECKI celebrated Mass at St. John's. During his homily, he called the reception of the Blessed Sacrament "the most important thing you can do today."

Reflecting on the gospel of the day – St. Mark's account of Christ's establishing the Eucharist and the priesthood in the upper room the night before

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CT/Joseph O'Brien

During the June 14 Corpus Christi Procession in Prairie du Chien, Bishop Jerome E. ListECKI carries the Blessed Sacrament in a monstrance as he leads about 700 faithful from West Cass St. onto Main St. The procession went through downtown Prairie du Chien before finishing at St. Gabriel Church, the oldest Catholic church in the Diocese of La Crosse and the second oldest in Wisconsin.



# Corpus Christi procession hosted by Prairie du Chien

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His death, the bishop reminded the faithful that this sacrament is central to our understanding of the Catholic faith.

"We cannot forget what this meal is, what it represents, Who it is that is meeting us," he said. "Jesus Himself becomes the sacrifice. He extends His blood for our forgiveness. In that blood we are given a new relationship with God the Father."

But because the debt which His death paid for was real, the bishop said, the blood that was poured to allow us to become adopted sons and daughters had to be real as well. "The real relationship is the gift of Himself in that Eucharist," he said. "We as Catholics do not believe it is symbolic ... The Eucharist is not a symbol of Jesus, it is Jesus."

The bishop concelebrated Mass with the priests of the deanery, including Father Je-

rome Naduvathaniyil, OSB, administrator of St. John's, St. Gabriel's and Sacred Heart; Father Edwin Thome, a senior priest currently assisting at these parishes; Father Eugene Wolf, pastor of St. Patrick's and dean of Prairie du Chien deanery; Father Robert Chukwu, pastor of St. Mary's and St. Philip's. Father Thomas Huff, pastor of St. Wenceslaus, was also present for the procession.

Singing hymns accompanied by a host of wind instruments provided by parish youth, the procession stopped at four altars along the route. At each altar, the bishop prayed in silence with his flock before the monstrance on the altar. Then participants read from Scripture and from Pope Benedict XVI's 2007 apostolic exhortation, "Sacramentum Caritatis" ("On the Eucharist as the Source and Summit of the Church's Life and Mission"). Following each set of readings, the bishop offered a prayer and Eucharistic blessing.

Established near historical locations along the route, each temporary altar was represented by a different outlying parish of the deanery with readers from the parish. The first altar, represented by St. Patrick Parish, Seneca, was erected at Wyalusing Academy which since 1969 has served as a private school for youth with special needs. Before that, it was St. Mary's

by St. Wenceslaus, was located in sight of the Mississippi River at the Wisconsin Tourist Information Center. On the Center's grounds a statue of Father Jacques Marquette (1637-1675) stands on a high pillar overlooking the river. A Catholic missionary and explorer, Father Marquette was the first European to set foot on what is now Prairie du Chien and see the northern section of the Mississippi.

At the third altar, represented by St. Mary's, participants were reminded of the sacrifice which local veterans made. This altar was erected by the Crawford County Courthouse, in front

of the memorial for Crawford County's veterans. The procession also passed by the Lariviere-Ravoux House, the home of St. Gabriel's first pastor, Father Augustin Ravoux (1815-1906).

The fourth altar, represented by St. Philip's, was located by St. Gabriel's rectory. Located there are both a statue of St. Edmund Campion, who was patron of Campion Jesuit High School (1880-1975) and the tomb of Father Lucien Galtier (1811-1866), the founder of the city of St. Paul, Minn., and a missionary priest who served many of the outlying parishes of the Prairie Du Chien deanery — including St. Philip's.

## Year of the Priest opens

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sanctification of priests. In his homily, the pope said the "essential nucleus of Christianity" is found in the heart of Jesus: the saving love of God that "invites us to step outside of ourselves" and "make ourselves a gift of love without reserve." "God's heart throbs with compassion," he said.

He said priests should never forget that they are consecrated to "serve, humbly and with authority, the common priesthood of the faithful."

"Ours is an indispensable mission for the Church and for the world, which demands full fidelity to Christ and unceasing union with him. It demands, therefore, that we tend constant-

The liturgy closed with adoration of the Eucharist, underlining the central place of the Eucharist in the life of priests. In his final blessing, the pope lifted a monstrance holding the Blessed Sacrament and used it to make the sign of the cross over the assembly.

He said he hoped priests would use the year and its special events to deepen their commitment to their own renewal "for the sake of a more forceful and incisive witness to the Gospel in today's world."

Since the beginning of his pontificate, Pope Benedict has given special attention to priests and their ministry, holding frequent and lengthy off-the-cuff discussion sessions with clergy of Rome and other parts of It-

### Norbert and Marian Brunner Celebrate Golden Anniversary



Deacon Norbert and Marian (Boehnen) Brunner were married May 12, 1959 at St. Francis Xavier Catholic Church in Cross Plains, WI. They have been blessed with four children: Steven (Tricia), Sudbury, MA; Linda (Joseph) Beaton, Simpsonville, SC; Daniel (Stephanie), Racine, WI; and Donna (Joseph) Murtaugh, Lake In The Hills, IL; 11 grandchildren and two step-grandchildren.

A Mass of Thanksgiving will be celebrated at 10 am on Sunday, July 5 at St. John the Baptist Catholic Church, 209 South Street, Waunakee, WI. An Open House for family and friends will follow at Rex's Innkeeper, 301 North Century Avenue, Waunakee

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"Ours is an indispensable mission for the Church and for the world, which demands full fidelity to Christ and unceasing union with him. It demands, therefore, that we tend constantly to sanctity, as St. John Vianney did," he said.

The pope said pastoral formation of priests was certainly im-

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The pope has many times noted the burdens carried by priests in the modern age, including

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## *Norbert and Marian Brunner*

### *Celebrate Golden Anniversary*



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*Your presence will be our gift.*

# Corpus Christi procession at Prairie du Chien

Shortly after my arrival at St. Gabriel and St. John Nepomucene in Prairie du Chien last October, Father Eugene Wolf, our dean here in the Prairie du Chien Deanery, welcomed me and suggested that we host the next diocesan Corpus Christi procession.

When I brought this to our parish councils, I learned that they were not familiar with Corpus Christi processions. Still, we decided to host the event.

During the past few months, the parishes of St. Gabriel and St. John Nepomucene in Prairie du Chien and Sacred Heart in Wauzeka have been very busy preparing. We sought out volunteers, designed the route, prepared the decorations, established altars along the route, coordinated with local authorities, decorated the church with flowers and candles, and so much more.

By June 14 we were ready. We welcomed Bishop Jerome E. ListECKi, who explained the spiritual and the theological significances of the feast during his homily.

After the Mass, the proces-

## Bishop's Corner Guest



Father Jerome Naduvathaniyil

sion began at St. John's and headed towards St. Gabriel's. It began with 75 servers dressed in white and red, 10 Knights of Columbus, 20 children dressed as angels, and nearly 40 first communicants and confirmation students who lined up holding Eucharistic banners, Bibles, images of Jesus and rosaries. The servers were carrying two thuribles, 10 lamps, the U.S. flag, the papal flag, a crucifix and banners. Seven to eight hundred people came for the procession.

As the procession started, all the roads leading to St. Gabriel were blocked, traffic came to a halt, business centers were shut and the people came out of their houses to see what was going on.

We had well-placed loud speakers and a printed program to promote public participation. As we walked, the first communicants strew flowers on the road before the procession.

The Prairie du Chien High School Band played Christian songs and the choirs sang hymns and acclamations. We decorated the road sides and the altars, and some people even decorated their houses and business centers. Flowers and plants around the altars kept the candles burning.

As the bishop gave the blessing, we could see the faith of the people as they knelt down and bowed their heads in recognition of the Real Presence of Jesus in the Eucharist. After participating in the procession, so many people had experience of St. Thomas, who said, "My Lord and my God."

I wish to take this opportunity to thank everyone who worked so hard to make this historical event heart-touching and memorable. On behalf of St. Gabriel and St. John and Sacred Heart Parishes, I extend my thanks to all.