Year in Review 2014

By Michael Brown
Editor

Following is a review of the local people and events making news in 2014 as recorded in the Idaho Catholic Register.

January

The response by Bishop Michael P. Driscoll was almost as surprising as the number of responses to a request at the end of 2013 for a broad survey on the state of the Catholic family. Seen as a source of information for the Extraordinary Synod of Bishops set for October, the survey was sent by the Vatican to dioceses worldwide in December 2013. Each diocesan bishop was asked to submit responses based on their choice of method. Many, including Bishop Driscoll, cast the broadest possible net, putting the survey on their Web sites and encouraging parishes to hand out hard copies for members who may not have the ability to access the Internet. Within a limited two-week window, more than 900 surveys were returned. Then, in a move that was replicated by only a few dioceses, Bishop Driscoll ordered a summary of the survey be released to the public.

As the active stage of the Building On Our Past, Envisioning Our Future capital campaign closed with the 2013 calendar year, follow-up and redemption modes were in full swing. Meanwhile, Development Director Adrienne Smith continued building her office’s momentum by putting together a Planned Giving Guide and scheduling information sessions in parishes throughout the state. Smith was also working with leaders at the Idaho Catholic Foundation to continue updating structure and bylaws as capital campaign pledges funneled in and, in some cases, were already being disbursed.

Registration for the Idaho Catholic Youth Convention opened. “Get your Money’s Worth. Invest it for Eternity,” was the slogan for the first Idaho Catholic Appeal, launched in 1964. Fifty years later, there were some who questioned its continued viability, on the heels of a completed capital campaign. Yet, education began in late January announcing the goal of $2.5 million, with commitment weekend set for March 15-16. The slogan for the 2014 campaign was a simple “We Believe.”

The diocesan Catechesis Office sent the Youth Ministry Focus Tool to parishes throughout the state as part of the Smart Goal follow up to the All at the Table pastoral plan. At year’s end, a similar tool was nearly ready to go to parishes to seek information on their young adult ministries.

In a sad annual rite, Father Benjamin R. Uhlenkott, pastor of St. Mark Church in Boise and West Central Dean, encouraged those gathered in St. John Cathedral for the annual Respect Life Mass to know and value the truth and protect life.

Father Gerald J. Funke, pastor of St. Paul Church in Nampa, encouraged students in Treasure Valley Catholic schools to “bring the light of our faith to one another.” The annual Catholic School Week Mass, normally celebrated at St. Mark Church in Boise, not only had a new venue, but also a new seating chart, with students grouped by grades instead of schools.

Ten students from the University of Idaho in Moscow visited Mount Angel Seminary in Saint Benedict, Ore., as part of their ongoing discernment process.

February
Former Boise State University head football coach and devout Catholic Dan Hawkins was a jovial roostee at the Seventh Annual Loaves & Fishes Gala & Roast Feb. 1 at the Stueckle Sky Center at BSU. With more than 300 in attendance, the event raised a record amount, more than $126,000 to benefit Catholic Charities of Idaho.

For the first time in nearly a decade, the balance of basketball power in junior high hoops shifted, with two of the three titles in the 51st Annual Hallissey Tournament going to teams outside the Treasure Valley.

A record number 1,600 teens and young adults packed into the Bishop Kelly High School Carley Center Feb. 28-March 2 for ICYC. It also marked the first time that two bishops – Bishop Driscoll and Bishop Liam Cary of the Diocese of Baker, Ore. – attended.

A letter from Vicar General for Clergy Msgr. Joseph A. da Silva announces a Tour of Thanksgiving for Bishop Driscoll, anticipating his upcoming retirement. The tour will give the faithful and priests in each of the deaneries the opportunity to thank the bishop for his service and for him to thank for their help, he wrote.

March

For the first time, the diocesan Servant School program opened its door to interested lay men and women not affiliated with the program – in its Spanish-language curriculum. In a prescient move leading up to the Summit on Hispanic Ministry, the announcement came following a February planning session for the upcoming summit.

Letters went out in March inviting pastors and parish leaders to attend the Summit in June, which marks another of the diocesan Smart Goals. Early outlines of the event suggest it will be a historic gathering aimed at directing new outreach by parishes and communities throughout the state to the largely underserved Hispanic community.

Among the lineup expected for the summit are national leaders Alejandro Aguilera-Titus from the US bishops’ conference; Boston College professor Hosffman Ospino, the author of a national study on Hispanic ministry released later in the year; Father Joseph Corpora, director of university-school partnerships in the Alliance for Catholic Education at the University of Notre Dame in South Bend, Ind.; and CLINIC attorney Jack Holmgren. Two young rising stars – the husband-wife team of Vince Olea and Patricia Jimenez – also played prominent roles.

Bishop Kelly High School made several important hires this year, the first of which was announced March 13. Mike Caldwell, who served as assistant principal and taught and coached at the school 2000-08, was named principal to replace Robert Wehde, who was leaving after 10 years to become superintendent of Catholic schools in the Diocese of Sioux Falls, S.D.

Big news came near the end of March for the fall catechetical event. In 2013, the diocese had gathered for a Eucharistic Congress, a two-day event that replaced the annual Fall Conference which in recent years had included multiple venues and Internet broadcasts of keynotes to sites throughout the state. Following the positive reviews emerging from the Eucharistic Congress, diocesan leaders announced the birth of a new program: the Idaho Catholic Congress. With a single site at Bishop Kelly in Boise, the announcement also included two top-tier speakers: Bishop Eusebio Elizondo, an auxiliary bishop in the Archdiocese of Seattle; and Cardinal Theodore E. McCarrick, retired Archbishop of Washington DC. It will mark the first time a cardinal came to Idaho to address a public gathering of Catholics.

The Catholic Church Extension Society announces that the diocese has been included in a program called the Seminarian Endowment Challenge. If the diocese can raise $100,000 in
endowment funds by year’s end, Catholic Extension adds a maximum $50,000 to the total, in a 2-1 match. Although final totals are not available, Smith of the Development Office expressed confidence that the target will be reached or exceeded.

In a historic moment bridging nearly 50 years, the bishop of Boise, Bishop Driscoll, and Sally Jeffcoat, the president of Saint Alphonsus Health System, were in a picture with the bishop receiving a $50,000 donation to the diocesan capital campaign from the Catholic hospital network. The ICR ran a similar photo in 1965 featuring Bishop Sylvester W. Treinen celebrating with St. Alphonsus Hospital’s Building Fund Chairman John Schoonover, following the hospital’s successful completion of its first capital campaign.

Natalie Nathan, new director of Treasure Valley Young Adult Ministry, also doubled as tour guide as she spearheaded a drive to get young adults to join a group attending World Youth Day in Krakow, Poland in 2016.

Father Caleb Vogel, diocesan Vocations Director for Recruitment, led a group of 15 young men on a weekend visit to Mount Angel Seminary in Saint Benedict, Ore. Another diocesan Smart Goal was to have 15 men in formation by 2015.

April

In what would be his final Easter message as bishop of Boise, Bishop Driscoll reminded Catholics in Idaho that the story of the Resurrection is ultimately a story of hope. “Let others know what you have discovered. Pray it. Sing it. Live it.”

The Knights of Columbus in Pocatello donated 113 wheelchairs to the Idaho State Veterans Home.

May

Jackie Hopper, longtime Catholic catechist, joins diocesan staff as Coordinator of Children’s Catechesis’

“Holy Motors” debuted, the first in a series of a new line of cause-related marketing by the diocesan Development Office. Holy Motors allowed anyone donating a car to the diocese or a diocesan entity to receive a tax benefit for the contribution. The program was developed with the help of the Hanigan Automotive Group.

A national report was released, authored by upcoming Convocation keynoter and Boston College professor Hosffman Ospino, showing the population of Hispanic Catholics as underserved in the parishes they attend, with a growing number of them leaving the church. Diocesan Hispanic Ministry Coordinator Maricela Rios helped direct the research team working on the report when she was working on her master’s degree a few years earlier.

The spring assignments were released with longtime pastor Father Thomas J. Loucks and Cathedral Rector and Judicial Vicar Father Henry Carmona retiring. Replacing Father Carmona at the Canonical Affairs Office was Father Joseph McDonald III, and Father Gerald J. Funke, pastor at St. Paul’s in Nampa, was named Cathedral rector.

The assignments also marked a second Jesuit in the diocese, with Father Jack Bentz coming from Gonzaga University in Spokane, Wash., to replace the retiring Deacon Chuck Skoro at St. Paul Catholic Student Center at BSU. Benedictine Father Hugh Feiss, who had been serving at St. Paul’s, was subsequently assigned to St. John Catholic Student Center in Pocatello to provide a priest presence and complement the new campus minister there, Pete Espil. It marked the first time in recent memory when all three Catholic campus ministry centers had a resident priest, as Father Vogel remained at St. Augustine’s in Moscow.
June

The historic Summit on Hispanic Ministry closed with a call to action by Bishop Driscoll, who took under consideration an action plan that called for more direct involvement with Hispanic Catholics at all levels of church life. Acclaimed Christian troubadour John Michael Talbot stopped in Boise at St. Mark's as part of a national tour. Father Mauricio Medina marked his 50th anniversary of priestly ordination with a Mass in St. Jerome Church, Jerome, on June 18.

A second local business CapEd Credit Union, joined the diocesan cause-related marketing stable, offering rebates to Catholic schools when borrowers closed on qualifying loans. CCI’s leadership team was heavily impacted by the departure of Executive Director Stephanie Dockweiler in May and subsequent staff in administrative and regional offices throughout the state. Board Chairman John Fiedler announced in June that the Coeur d’Alene and Jerome offices were closing, along with the hiring of national consultant Lynch Associates to find a new executive director. Msgr. Andrew J. Schumacher became interim executive director in June. Doug Alles, who formerly served as interim executive director of Catholic Charities of Portland, Ore., was hired and began serving in October.

The Idaho Catholic Register tied its record number of awards – five – at the annual Catholic Media Conference, hitting the same mark from 2013.

Following the summit, organizers from Salt & Light radio and the diocesan Development Office held a record-breaking golf tournament to help fund the radio ministry and diocesan vocations.

July

One is a tattoo-wearing former youth minister and the other is a Jesuit with a pedigree in theater. Pete Espil and Father Jack Bentz became campus ministry’s “Odd Couple” as they moved into their roles as campus minister and chaplain at St. John’s in Pocatello and St. Paul’s in Boise respectively.

With the end of the fiscal year came the release of the 2012-13 Financial Statements, delayed because of the changes in the Idaho Catholic Foundation and in accounting software in the diocese. The news was mostly good, with investment gains and a reduction in the underfunding of clergy and lay pensions.

On July 31, the bishop approved eight goals emerging from the Summit on Hispanic Ministry. Among the actions were creation of diocesan sacramental guidelines, parish salary scales and offering intercultural competency training.

Two Benedictine Fathers from Ascension Monastery marked their 50th anniversaries of ordination: Fathers Norbert J. Novak and Meinrad Schallberger. Father Schallberger’s came in May and Father Novak’s in July.

August

On Aug. 8, Bishop Driscoll turned 75 years old, the age when bishops, under canon law, must submit their letters of resignation to the pope. The ICR began a series of five in-depth stories looking back at the life of the Seventh Bishop of Boise. At a special lunch held every year to honor Bishop Driscoll, the diocesan staff gave the bishop a celestial map on which a “star” was named for him.
Six students graduated from the diocesan Servant School formation program Aug. 9, the largest class in that program to date.

In a series of farewells, none were more poignant than what occurred at Sacred Heart Mission in Cataldo on Aug. 15, the feast of the Assumption. In what was likely his last visit, the bishop was emotionally touched by Coeur d’Alene member Calvin Nomee, who gave the bishop a personally prized blanket. This year’s Mass took place in the intimate setting of the mission, forced by a sudden downpour.

Servant School also marked the annual Rites of Progression, with 18 advancing in diaconate and ministry study.

In the first of a series of improvements, Bishop Kelly High School in Boise blessed and opened a new wing of classrooms just in time for the start of school. That would later be followed by new tennis courts and a new library named after Father Donald Fraser, high school chaplain.

September

Speaking of Bishop Kelly High School, the institution marked its 50th anniversary with a special Mass and celebration. For its part, the ICR published a three-part series on the formation, sustaining and development of the school.

In honor of their founding bishop, Catholic Charities of Idaho instituted their Bishop Michael P. Driscoll Charity Award, to go along with the established Marie Hoff award for social justice. Deadline for submissions was Sept. 30.

The inaugural Idaho Catholic Congress was a huge success with Cardinal McCarrick and Bishop Elizondo offering addresses in English and Spanish, with the former offering his own personal experiences and observations of Pope Francis. The cardinal even turned the end of his afternoon workshop into a question and answer session for those gathered.

October

For the first time, the Filipino Catholic community in the southern part of the state gathered for a retreat and Mass at Risen Christ Parish in Boise Oct. 26.

The ICR ran a 20-page special section commemorating Bishop Driscoll’s 15 years of service to Catholics in Idaho. It coincided with the final deanery gathering, and a prayer service and diocesan dinner in his honor.

All Saints Church in Lewiston was dedicated on Oct. 11, marking the end of almost two decades of work by priests and parish leaders.

Four men – Gary Anderson, James McCaughey, David Shackley and Ted Vermaas – were ordained to the permanent diaconate in St. John Cathedral on Oct. 25 by Bishop Driscoll.

Following a ruling by the US Supreme Court that paved the way for gay marriage in Idaho, the bishop issued a statement assuring Catholics that same-sex marriages would not be permitted in Catholic churches, but that gay couples still deserved the respect of the Catholic community.

November

On Nov. 4, Pope Francis appointed Bishop Peter F. Christensen of Superior, Wis., as the Eighth Bishop of Boise. The 61-year-old California native already had made history by becoming the oldest man ever appointed here, and the first to have his press conference viewed live over the Internet. It was also podcast by Salt & Light and Sal y Luz radio.
The Eighth Annual Thanksgiving Art and Essay Contest featured responses from 10 schools and six parishes.

Father Funke, rector of St. John’s and diocesan Vocations Director for Seminarians, was elected by the College of Consultors, a group of priests in the diocese, to serve as diocesan administrator from Nov. 11-Dec. 17, when Bishop Christensen was to be installed in St. John Cathedral.

CCI leaders applauded the announcement of President Barack Obama to use executive orders to try to affect some degree of immigration reform. They warned against the use of notarios, or scam agents, known to prey upon unsuspecting applicants.

The 32nd Annual Thanksgiving Ecumenical and Interreligious Service was held Nov. 24 in St. John Cathedral in Boise, with King of Glory Lutheran Church’s Rev. Kari Sansgaard providing the reflection.

December

In his first as bishop-emeritus, Bishop Michael P. Driscoll issued his Christmas message again thanking the faithful for their support and expressing gratitude for the appointment of Bishop Christensen as his successor.

On Dec. 12, the diocese unveiled a new look Web site, using a new format, after the previous site became too costly to maintain.

On Dec. 16, in St. John Cathedral, Bishop Christensen formally took possession of his see church during Vespers, followed by an Installation Mass the next day, attended by more than two dozen bishops and a full crowd. It was also live streamed on the Internet and broadcast worldwide by EWTN.

On Dec. 18, an estimated 1,200 Catholic school students and volunteers attended a special performance of “The Nutcracker,” made possible by Development Office donations from Regence BlueShield of Idaho, Insight Architects and Alexander Orthodontics.