

The Father Beiting Appalachian Mission Center

THE APPALACHIAN SPIRIT



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An Outreach Ministry of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lexington

From Father Beiting June 2006 Newsletter

After a fire had destroyed my place of rest and prayer, I rebuilt a better place to replace the destroyed shelter. With the help of a dear priest friend, I acquired a used trailer. I added space to it and was about to begin using it when one our Sisters, who was in charge of the homeless community, asked me if a poor homeless family with two children could use it. I gave in!

I then found a repossessed doublewide trailer. It was bigger than I needed but was the cheapest way for me to go. With the help of many of you, I finally got it installed and equipped. I was concerned with how to use it for the best good. I talked to ministers, priests, and nuns. They were all excited about how to use it for Christ and still have a little spot for me.

Then, problems came again. That weekend, Sister once again cornered me. "Father, we have a family with six children ages 6 to 13. They are living with another family who have four children. There are 14 of them living in a small one-bathroom trailer. The father sleeps outside in the pickup. She asked if they could possibly live in the double wide."

We had just made plans to make it part of our overall program. I told her, "Give me a day to pray over it. I will meet with you and the family Monday night"

Monday night came and I met the family. I saw the 5 little girls and the 6-year-old boy. I heard the story of the mother and father who had suffered so much from the selfishness and greed of others. I knew immediately I could not say no. My response was, "Would you like to see the place before you agree to stay there?"

"Oh, yeah," shouted the kids. We got to the place out in the country about 7:00 pm. It was still daylight. When they saw the beauty of God's creation that surrounded the trailer, they could hardly talk. Next, I took them inside. As they explored each room, squeals of joy burst forth, one of the girls cried out, "Mom, they have two bathrooms! There are even forks and spoons to eat with. Another called out, "Can we live here?"

OUR MISSION

The Father Beiting Appalachian Mission Center is an outreach ministry of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Lexington serving the needs of the Appalachian region of Eastern Kentucky.

We will walk together in the Kingdom of God as a holy presence that impacts a community in need with spiritual and material support.

Through face to face interactions, home repairs and safety needs, and programs for the youth and elderly we bring the presence of God and reach out to those in need.

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"Yes", I said. "I will help you." They immediately ran up to me and hugged my legs. "We love you", they shouted. Father Stricker, a classmate of mine and his two friends who were visiting me watched it all. "We thank you too." It's okay," I said, "I cannot imagine Jesus turning them away."

With many prayers and your support, I know that God will not forget me.

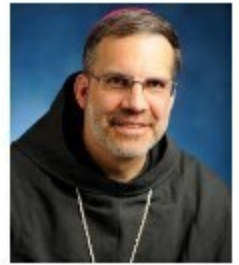


Today, this trailer and doublewide serve as the volunteer quarters for the mission center. Father Beiting called it Padres Place and all our volunteers refer to it as such. We can house up to 30 volunteers at a time in the two buildings. This past summer, the mission staff made some improvements to Padres Place, improving the drainage around the buildings and replacing some porch and decking at the upper facility. We attempted to enhance the picturesque views at Padres Place that Father Beiting appropriately referred to fourteen years ago as the "beauty of God's creation."

We invite you to come and visit this facility and see us at the Father Beiting's Appalachian Mission Center. You are always welcome.

THE SEMINARIANS (SUMMER INTERNS) REPLACE DECK AT PADRES PLACE

BISHOP JOHN STOWE - Roman Catholic Diocese of Lexington



As I adjust to what is evolving as the "new normal" in this time of pandemic, I am very grateful to be venturing out beyond the Catholic Center and beyond Lexington once again. I am always mindful of the scope of our 50-county diocese and enjoy every opportunity to visit each parish, mission, and ministry. Driving through our beautiful land, I have wonderful opportunities for meditation and prayer. Arriving in the various places that we serve, I never depart without new inspiration and admiration for the ministry being done and the community life in each place. I return to Lexington with prayers of thanks for all encountered.

A particular visit to Eastern Kentucky that stands out in my mind was a Friday visit to the Father Beiting Appalachian Mission Center in Louisa. A great deal of transition has taken place since the last time I was present there. The large warehouse where operations were once centered is no longer a part of the operation. The Center underwent a challenging but very successful process of "downsizing" because of the inability of the center or the diocese to continue to operate in deficit. But it was important that none of the mission of the center or the legacy of Father Beiting's inspirational missionary activity in the area be lost. It is vital that the outreach and service that Father Beiting directed and that so many others have shared in over the decades continue. There are so many people whose lives were completely transformed by their participation in this ministry and there was always the strongest desire to keep it going.

As if the challenges of cuts and downsizing weren't great enough, the pandemic came along! The volunteer groups that had been scheduled to fill the summer for trips of encounter with the people and culture of Appalachia and a chance to put their hands to work in home repair projects had to back out because of safety and health concerns. Fortunately two energetic seminarians from the Diocese of Harrisburg (where our former Bishop Ronald Gainer now serves) joined one of the Diocese of Lexington's newest seminarian as interns and did as much of the projects as they could under the direction of staff. I was able to visit them on the site of one of the projects and learn about the young couple with a new baby whose home they were helping to repair and who were inspired and encouraged by their help to find some work opportunities and continue on a path to a better life for their family. The seminarians and I learned from them and experienced the joy of seeing hope for the future in action.

All three seminarians valued their time at the Father Beiting Center and were grateful to Father Marc Bentley for helping them process the experience and connect it both to their preparation and future ministry in the Church. Cathi Kise Wells, the volunteer coordinator, made sure that they had an experience of immersion in Appalachian culture and the mission of the center. Eddie Sprouse, the construction coordinator, taught the interns what to do and provided the direction and expertise necessary. Eddie Michael, the interim director, has shown a great appreciation for the difference this ministry makes in peoples' lives and likes to be heavily involved in the projects. His leadership has made the new ways of operation as smooth as possible. Of course, his wife Sue, the long-time administrative coordinator, knows all the history and how things work and keeps up the connections with people near and far who share in the work and the vision of the center.

The staff is working now to fill the schedule for mission trips for Spring and next summer and the calendar is filling up. With the deep love of the place and the commitment to the missionary zeal and spirit of service that Father Beiting established, this ministry will flourish and is in better shape to do so now. People from far beyond our diocese have experienced the encounters with people, faith, and culture that the center provides. It remains my hope that more people within the area of our own Diocese of Lexington, especially from the Bluegrass area, will discover this wonderful Catholic presence and outreach in Lawrence and Martin Counties. I know that I look forward to the next visit I will make!

2020 SUMMER INTERNS

Most seminarians don't spend their pastoral formation summers building decks and ramps or digging ditches in 100+ degree weather. Most do not get the opportunity to make a life changing impact on a young family of three or a grandmother who just wanted to have a safer place for their daughter and grandkids to live, play and enjoy life. I can guarantee that these young men may be the only seminarians that visited Butcher Hollow (Loretta Lynn's homeplace), rode an airboat through the McCoy/Hatfield country, visited the scene where the Coal Mine Wars started, rode a horse through the hills of Eastern Kentucky and crossed the world's longest plastic-deck pedestrian swinging bridge this summer! God had a different plan for their summer and we at the Mission Center are so very blessed to have had them with us for two months. Let us introduce you to them!



Andrew St. Denis, Diocese of Harrisburg

Andrew came to FBAMC after completing his first year at St. Charles Borromeo Seminary in Wynnewood, PA. Andrew is from Maytown, PA and is an Eagle Scout and an avid runner. Andrew summed up his summer in this way: "Iron sharpens iron, and one man sharpens another (Proverbs 27:17RSV) and being able to live and work alongside my brothers, we've helped each other to grow more and more in love with Jesus Christ and our brothers and sisters in Christ. This summer I have learned to trust in God as well as those he has put in my life to lead me to him."



Matthew Smyser, Diocese of Lexington

Matt grew up in Lexington, KY and had just completed his first year at Bishop Simon Bruté College Seminary in Indianapolis, IN. Matt is very experienced in carpentry and construction and therefore was a natural fit at FBAMC. Matt stated, "I feel like I've found a new home in these mountains, and the Lord willing, I'll come back someday to serve the community as a priest. I've never before encountered such a welcoming community, always quick with a smile and a wave".



Cole Mase, Diocese of Harrisburg

Cole, a native of Palmyra, PA, also came to FBAMC after completing his first year at St. Charles Borromeo in Wynnewood, PA. While Cole was more quiet and reserved than the other interns, he was definitely quick-witted and enjoyed a good discussion! Cole summarized his summer by saying, "I was able to really take time to reflect on the call of Jesus and the importance of his love and truth in my life and the lives of others. Overall, we were able to meet many wonderful people and experience a welcoming environment while engaging in the work of God, overcoming challenges and growing in faith".

If you or someone you know may be interested in serving as an intern for the summer of 2021, please feel free to contact Cathi Wells at volunteers@fbamc-ky.org. Requirements are that you are 21 years old, be committed to a life of Catholic spiritual discipline, be willing to live communally, be available from May 23- Aug 2, 2021 and have a valid drivers license and can be insurable by the Diocese of Lexington.





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CHRISTMAS DISTRIBUTION EXPANDING

FBAMC expects that many more children and families in our community will need Christmas blessings this year. So many families that were impacted by job loss and the job insecurity created by the coronavirus are still struggling financially and will not be able to find those extra funds for Christmas gifts.

In the past, with YOUR generosity, FBAMC has been able to provide Christmas gifts to families in Lawrence County. This year, again with YOUR HELP, we will expand our assistance to the children and families in Martin County. We will be working with the school family resource directors to identify and reach those families that need those blessings.

Donations can be made to assist with this project by contacting Eddie Michael, Director or Sue Michael, Administrative Assistant, at 606-638-0219.

