

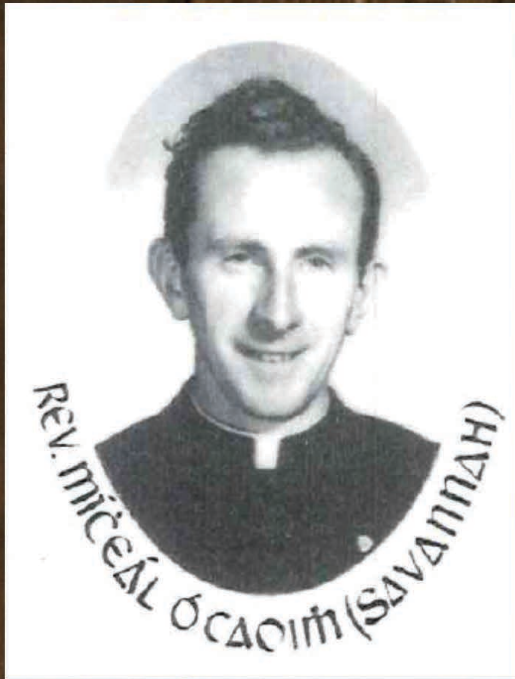
TRINITY TRIANGLE

Stewardship - A Way of Life

TIME • TALENT • TREASURE

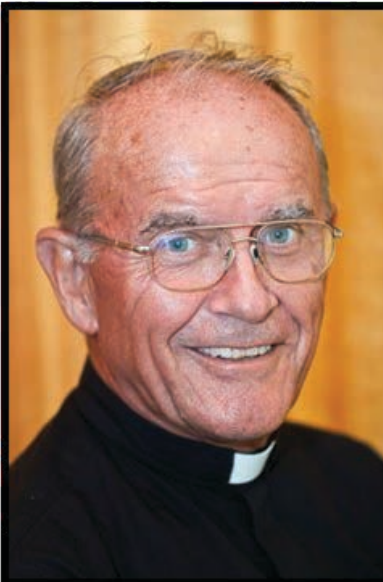
Catholic Community of  Blessed Trinity

REMEMBERING REV. MICHAEL O'KEEFFE



9/07/1931 - 1/23/2024





CORPORAL WORKS OF MERCY: Bury the Dead

The passing of a loved one is never easy, especially on the immediate relatives and friends who were very closely bonded to that person.

The full funeral rites of the Catholic church make the cross or pain of temporary separation a whole lot more bearable and much more meaningful.

The full rites involve a prayerful wake either the night before the funeral at the funeral home or in the chapel/church or immediately before the funeral Mass in the chapel. This is available to all families at no cost for use of the church, even for the funeral Mass.

The funeral Mass is the high point. Families are given a book "Through Death to Life" in advance and plan the Mass with the priest (at BT) or with a qualified lay person in other parishes. Some active Catholics, usually years before they pass on, make their own funeral plans in advance by choosing readings, the hymns, the readers, the singer(s), the photos, etc. This makes it very easy for their relatives. If you wish to plan your own funeral, please let us know and you will receive the book and helpful details.

Most funeral Masses have less than 30 people at the Mass. That is ok. Have the Mass celebrated even if only 4 or 5 people will be present. You owe the deceased person the Mass if, indeed, you are aware of the meaning of the Mass – the dying of Christ leading to the resurrection. Isn't that what we want and what we are praying for our departed loved one?

Recently here at Blessed Trinity we asked for 'volunteers' who could participate at funeral Masses when very few people are expected. This has worked out very well. Maybe 20 or 30 "extra" people come. They know the Mass. They participate in the prayers and the singing. The family of the deceased is encouraged. It is a holy and wholesome thought to pray for the dead; Maccabees 12:46. But when we expect a good number of people, we do not invite the 'volunteers': We expect there will be good participation. Often there is little or none. I say, "The Lord be with you", no answer!! Even when I say, let us pray the Lord's prayer, little or no answer! Even





Catholics, who are at the Mass must be whispering to themselves, if they are indeed responding.

A few months ago, I officiated at a funeral Mass where there were 100 people (approx.) present. I heard no responses during the Mass yet when it came to communion at least 50 Catholics received communion. Many of them were active Catholics. Is it possible we are trying to blend in with the crowd instead of standing out? Please if you are at a funeral Mass and you are used to participating, speak out or sing out more than you would at a Sunday Mass. You will be surprised. Timid Catholics will join in.

The church rightfully wants you to bury the remains in 'Sacred ground'. The burial ground is sacred for the family and future generations. Cremation is fully allowed. You may want to hold on to the urn with the remains for a time but have or make a plan for final burial with the cremains fully together, in sacred ground. Did you know that since cremation is now more in vogue than full body burial, the majority of the cremains are left in a carport or on a shelf and are forgotten about! You are asked not to divide the remains among relatives, not to scatter the remains and not to bury them at sea. Keep the body or the cremains intact and bury them in sacred ground.

At Blessed Trinity you can also arrange for a full hot meal after the funeral Mass at no cost. We also have trained lay people to conduct bereavement sessions for those who ask for them.

While we encourage the funeral Mass we will, at any time, conduct a funeral service at the funeral home. And anyone can have a Catholic funeral even if they have not been active in the Catholic faith for years and years. And if you are Catholic and you want a Catholic funeral for your non-Catholic spouse or relative, you can have one. You only have to ask.

The funeral services are all about life – the life of the person who passed and that person's continued life after the death of the body. We offer the Mass for that person. We continue to pray for that person. In every way our relationship with that person continues. It is just that we are not visibly present to each other. God's plan is for all to have eternal life. Our funeral services are promoting God's plan for life eternal.

Prayer



& Action

Prayer and Action (or PandA) is best described as a mission experience in your own back yard. It began in the Diocese of Salina, KS, and spread throughout the rest of Kansas and into Savannah, GA. Blessed Trinity hosted the first “PandA” in the winter of 2022 with 3 college-age leaders and 9 teenagers. We slept on air mattresses in the school classrooms and started each day with mass and a walking rosary. We then worked as crews in the Soup Kitchen and painted at BT. Each day ended with praise and worship music and a session where the teens come together to share where they saw God in their day, called “GIGs” which stands for “God is good”, and talks from the leaders. We learned to look for God working in our daily lives and each day also provided time for games and fun.

The following summer, as the word spread, the program grew to include 6 amazing leaders from Kansas and 23 on-fire students from 5 different high schools and various parishes in the area. Again, we slept on air mattresses, had daily Mass and a walking Rosary followed by 4 days of community service. All the teens had opportunities to serve in the Soup Kitchen and personally feed the homeless in Ocala, work at the Brothers’ Keeper Thrift Store, spend time with our elderly in our Adult Day Care, paint and fix a fence for a shut-in in our parish, and paint the hallway in the BT school. These teens are learning the joy of serving and being present with each other as they actually gave up their cell phones for the week!

In December of 2023, 3 leaders returned from Kansas for the 27 teens who signed up for the mini-version.

Again, we prayed and worshipped together, served at the Soup Kitchen, spent time with the elderly singing Christmas carols, and helping with their New Year's Eve party. In the evenings, we played games, sang worship songs, shared stories of God's work in our lives, listened to talks, and ended the week with Eucharistic Adoration and Reconciliation with Father Zach Gray. Due to a generous donation, we were able to attend the Concert for Good. After the concert, the teens were still singing the praise songs in the parking lot! It was a beautiful display of their growing faith and their love for God.

This program mixes daily prayer and sacraments with service projects teaching teens that they don't need to go on a mission trip to serve people. They learn that they can live out their Catholic faith by being the hands and feet of Christ right here in Ocala! Some of the Panda students have even worked at the Soup Kitchen during their school breaks after learning it really is better to give than to receive!



Our hope for the future is that Ocala will eventually have Panda grads who will become leaders! We are currently forming a Panda planning committee to work on this summer's program. We are looking for college-age leaders who are strong in their faith and wanting to share their God-given gifts. The leaders receive a week of training before the week with the teens.



As we grow, we appreciate your prayers and financial support. We like to make Panda available for all teens; even those who cannot afford it. Panda is making a difference! Imagine seeing teens at daily Mass, praying Rosaries, worshipping in Adoration, and serving our poor and elderly, and then convincing their friends to join them at Panda! "It has changed my life" is what one of the teens told us. We have seen it! God is good!



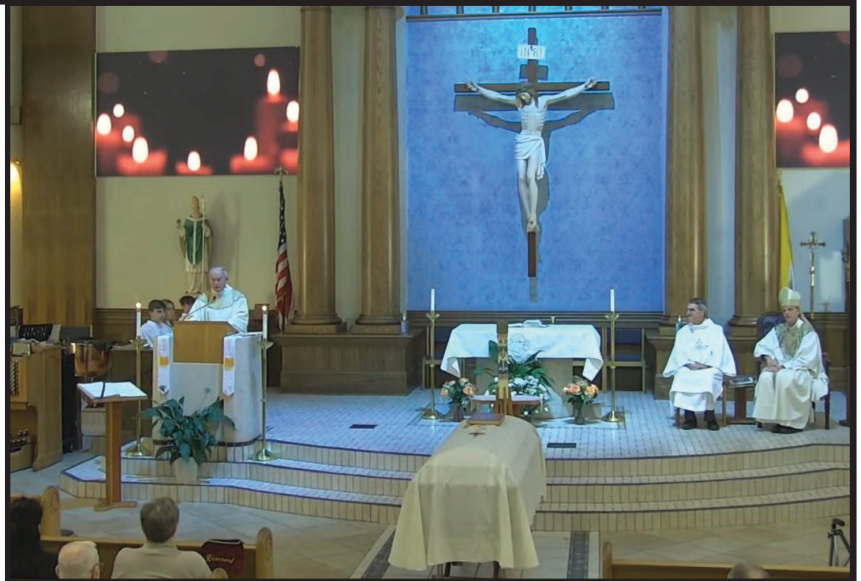
Eulogy for Fr. Michael O’Keeffe

Fr. Patrick J Sheedy

“The souls of the just are in the hand of God.” *Wisdom 3:1*

He is on his way. When he meets God face to face, he will be pushing for:

- A united Ireland!
- A decent home for everyone in the world!
- A return for all Catholics to Mass and Communion!
- A full revival for the Sacrament of Confession! and
- Another all-Ireland hurling championship for his native County Clare!



“We are God’s children now – then we shall see Him as He is.” *1 John 3:2* Fr. Mike saw only one united human family, one united family of God.

He was very much into reading and praying the Bible. In the Savannah Diocese, more than here, he joined in Ministerial Associations to pray and study with them and to unite where possible in Christian action.

We are very blessed and privileged to have Fr. Mike’s funeral here. I know the norm is to have a priest’s funeral Mass in the Cathedral of his Diocese – which for Fr. Mike is Savannah. On behalf of the community here at Blessed Trinity, I want to thank Fr. Mike’s bishop, Bishop Steven Parks, and the retired bishop of Savannah, who knew Fr. Mike very well – Bishop Kevin Boland. Fr. Mike worked here in the Diocese of Orlando for over 20 years and Bishop Noonan got to know him very well. For Fr. Mike, he really felt at home with Bishops as well as homeless people. He didn’t have to put on airs.



He loved his home country, Ireland. So, we are bringing up the Irish flag at the offertory! One of his great goals in life was to help bring about a **united** Ireland. He thought he was being called to be a politician to work toward that end. But thank God he listened to God, who called him into the priesthood. It is always a good thing to listen to God.

Fr. Mike loved his family – he was one of 11 children. Brought up on an Irish farm he knew well what the yoke mentioned in the Gospel today was used for. He was used to teamwork on the farm. He brought that into all his priestly ministries. When you are yoked, it is so much easier to understand Jesus’ words “my yoke is easy my burden light.” His sister Peg is here – she lives in California.

Fr. Mike loved all – but in a very, very big way, he extended himself to

help the poor – both here in the U.S. and worldwide. He was well known for his work with Habitat for Humanity – building houses for the needy – especially in Ethiopia – as many as 100 houses! When Habitat awarded him a plaque for the accomplishment he said, “We might never reach the place where all people are housed with dignity, but this does not mean we should not strive toward it.”

Fr. Mike just about gave everything away – even food from our priests’ rectory that parishioners gave us and that he didn’t particularly like. A few times I had to hide the food! No one will be fighting for his left-over money! We only had one angry exchange in 22 ½ years – not over food – but my stamps.

Fr. Mike had a strong daily prayer life. He loved the Mass – he went to up to 16 retirement homes or nursing homes each month to offer Mass. He made monthly First Friday calls to shut-ins with the Sacraments. He loved hearing confessions because he could readily dispense God’s mercy! To Saving Mercy he pledged \$7,000 a year for 10 years starting at age 85. He got about 5 done when he couldn’t really work anymore.

He made hospital visits several times a week – he walked there and back. On Ash Wednesday he brought ashes around the hospital to all workers who could not get to Mass and even to little kids at Angels in Arms. BT was his home for 22 years. He loved working here. He got great love and care from many, many parishioners and especially in the last few months when he had to be in a nursing home.

I want to thank a few people in particular for the care Fr. Mike received in the last few years of his life:

Sr. Theo, for keeping track of his medicine and medical care. Sr. Juliet, and her group of ministers to the sick, for bringing him the Eucharist. Katherine and Melinda, for keeping him and all his affairs in order. Reina, for countless hours taking care of his menu and his room. Dr. John Littell, for his ever present medical care and advice. And I want to especially publicly thank four employees from “Home Instead” for the loving, compassionate care they gave to Fr. Mike each day. They are Dave, Edward, Diana & Paulina.

It was tough for me to visit him in the nursing home because he thought I had the power to take him back to his home at BT. But then in the last week or so he changed that request – he was ready to go home to his permanent home.

He certainly helped me much, much more than I could ever help him. He inspired countless people here at BT from the youngest to the oldest.

May his blessing on us live on for generations.



The Presence of God

Dr. Barry Meehan

When Blessed Trinity heard that a Dominican mission team was coming to Ocala from different parts of the globe to be with us for five days in January, the news was welcomed with a sense of expectation. After all, the special charism of the Dominicans—the Order of Preachers—is to break open the Word of God. In preparation, our parish community began one hundred days of prayer that ended with the mission on January 17th. The final day attracted a large number to the evening healing service which lasted almost four hours. The sacrament of Reconciliation featured strongly throughout the mission.

The friars: Father Ben originally from Colorado, Father Cristobal originally from New York and Father Jean Gabriel from Singapore all of whom are now based in Rome were joined by Father Clement from Marseille in France to form a superb team that really inspired the parish community not only by their preaching but also by their openness to one and all. If only they could have stayed with us longer!

In response to the many graces bestowed upon our parish community, we are entering upon **another** one hundred days of prayer that will take us through to

Pentecost, the birthday of the Church. The prayer is said daily at home, with a link up time of 8.00 pm:

***Lord, teach me to be generous,
to serve you as you deserve,
to give and not to count the cost,
to fight and not to heed the wounds,
to toil and not to seek for rest,
to labor and not to look for any
reward,
save that of knowing that I do your
holy will.***

Amen

We hope to form groups of parishioners that will meet weekly during the one hundred days. Our hope is that we will deepen our appreciation of the great gift the mission was, and build upon it for the good of the parish.



promoting teamwork

by Father Pat

Blessed Trinity Parish has over 100 active ministries. Each ministry – no exceptions! - works on a **vital** part of the parish's overall calling from God to promote Christ and His salvation to all people.

As pastor, I make several attempts to keep us united, as much as possible, under the same umbrella of Christ's mission. It would be so easy for a ministry to get disconnected from the overall mission of the parish. My ongoing goal is to help every ministry, and every person in each ministry, to see they have a meaningful significant role to play in building up the Body of Christ.

To paraphrase the Bible: The human body is one with thousands of parts. For the good of the whole body each part has a role. Your big toe may not seem to be as important as your heart. But it can hurt the health of the whole body in a big way if it gets a disease and cannot do its part.

Here are the three biggest occasions I schedule to try to keep everyone focused on our parish mission:

Staff meetings

Twice a month (2nd & 4th Tuesdays) our entire 16-person staff meet in the adoration chapel for Lauds morning prayer. After a short "coffee break", every staff person - including the priests - report to the entire staff news about their ministry. They report needs they have. Their connection to other ministries is reviewed and future plans are discussed by the whole staff. Many very good practical ideas and plans float to the top at these staff meetings.

September parish staff/leaders retreat

Every year on the 3rd Saturday of September we have a retreat. It begins at 8:00am with Mass and ends at noon with benediction. One of the priests from Our Lady of Mt. Carmel, Benque Belize is the retreat master. All priests, sisters, deacons, and members of

each parish board are invited – Parish Council, Finance Board, BT School Board, Angels in Arms Board, Religious Education Board, Eldercare Board, Brothers Keeper Board, Endowment Board, Stewardship Committee, Building Committee and Life Teen Core Team. These groups and the leaders of each parish ministry are expected to take part. We have had very inspiring priests from Benque over the years. We get a reasonably good turnout – but it could be better.

Ministry leaders' dinner & meeting every year on the 2nd Tuesday of January.

The same people expected to attend the September retreat are also expected to attend this meeting. After a free catered dinner, each person receives the mike to introduce themselves and share their role/ministry in the parish with the group. Each ministry head is also given a list of parishioners who signed up for their ministry during the November stewardship renewal weekend. During the meeting I give "The State of the Parish" annual review. In 2024, it included 15 items – everything from building repairs, to new staff, to a parish prayer garden, to our live nativity celebration, to school news, to plans for a new soup kitchen, to a La Guadalupana meeting room, to the 50th anniversary of the church, to Fr. Mike's health.

The January meeting is a very valuable meeting. Some boards, committees, and ministry heads have never come. Try to give it, and the half day retreat in September, a top priority in your schedule. These gatherings bear a lot of fruit.



Father Mike In His Own Words

*The following is a reprint of an article written by
Father Mike for the Triangle in 2015.*

The request to write for the Triangle has jolted my memory! When one thinks of thousands of priests who have been ordained in seminaries my contribution must be very small.

I have had a very happy life. What is a vocation? Many persons are called to the priesthood.

My call came as I was riding in a borrowed car in June 1959. I was in my native County Clare Ireland. I was travelling to an athletic meeting in Ireland. We called it a sports meeting. The "CALL" came; it took me by surprise as God can surprise us mortals.

Later I went to Mount Melleray Seminary to study

Latin which was then required. Mount Melleray Seminary in County Waterford Ireland is a Trappist monastery founded from a monastery in France in the 18th century. SILENCE and work in the fields is the hallmark of Cistercian spirituality.

I went to the major seminary in September 1964 to study Theology. In no time 4 years had gone by. In a FLASH it was Ordination day for 31 Seminarians: June 8, 1968!

In 1961 a visiting priest from Georgia came asking for young men to come to Savannah. The 91 counties of South & Central Georgia needed priests. 19 Irish priests came to work in the Savannah Diocese.

We were surprised at the heat and the weather. We enjoyed the cuisine – different fruits and vegetables from Ireland. In the churches we encountered the singing and music. We had heard of Notre Dame Football and Andersonville, the Civil War prison camp. My first assignment was St James Montgomery Cross Roads Savannah.

The Vatican Council which began 11 October 1962 and ended 8 December 1965 opened the doors and windows of the Church to the outside world.

Aggiornamento (to bring up to date) – Ecumenism – Liturgy – Scripture – and many other topics, above all prayer, Renewal, meditation... all stressed by an ever watchful & loving faculty.

The visiting bishops, mostly from the USA, kept us informed of the deliberations then in progress at Rome, Italy.

We began to read Hans Kung, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin and many more. For me the transition from Latin masses to English was easy.

The ministers of other Christian Churches opened their churches to interdenominational marriages and the Catholics did so even more willingly. Preaching became alive, as did the visits to the hospitals and prisons. Newness was the order of the day. Catholicism enjoyed a new strength as did the work of priests and sisters. We had a larger audience than the priests ordained prior to the Council.

UNITATIS REDINTEGRATIO was drafted by the Council. We were ecumenical. The word “heretic” was banished from our vocabulary. Radio and TV became the standard fare of many priests. Of course we had the very first priest of TV & Radio – Reverend Fulton Sheen. Millions saw him – the Catholics never replaced him when he retired.

During my own pastoral work in South Georgia, an estimated 30 million Hispanic people came to the USA. Many were poor, uneducated, and only spoke Spanish. Georgia’s Hispanic population was largely from Mexico, although we had immigrants from all the nations of North, Central, and South America. We visited the migrants and ministered to their needs. We were ably assisted by Sister Patricia Brown from the Diocesan office in Savannah.

If the demographic trends continue we will have 60 million Spanish speakers in the U.S. Florida’s 7 dioceses have seen huge growth in this area. The Church is multi-lingual and will continue unite cultures in Jesus Christ.



Eucharistic Revival

Dr. Barry Meehan & Sister Juliet Nakalema

In January, our Blessed Trinity community received many blessings through the mission conducted by the Dominican Friars which ended with the evening Eucharistic Healing service. The theme of the mission, The Presence of God, was particularly helpful as the Church in the United States is now celebrating the third year of the National Eucharistic Revival. The Revival will culminate in a gathering of about 80,000 people in July 2024. Delegates from parishes across the United States will converge on the city of Indianapolis for the National Eucharistic Congress.

This three-year initiative was launched by the bishops of the United States in 2022 on the Solemnity of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ or Corpus Christi. Renewal began at the diocesan level, inviting diocesan staff, bishops, and priests to what Pope Francis has described as “a renewed

personal encounter with Jesus Christ”, particularly the transforming power and mercy of Jesus in the Holy Eucharist.

After this fruitful year of preparation, the Year of Parish Revival began on June 11, 2023, the Solemnity of Corpus Christi. The year has been marked by historic initiatives, such as the first-ever **National Eucharistic Pilgrimage**. Grassroots creativity is springing up all over the country as love and devotion to Jesus in the Eucharist blossoms in the pews!

Then, on July 17, 2024, America will gather for the first time in 83 years for a **National Eucharistic Congress**. This historic moment will launch the United States into a Year of Mission, sending on-fire Catholics out to share Christ’s love “for the life of the world.” We will continue to spread the Revival movement throughout the Church’s 2025 Jubilee Year and beyond.

Blessed Trinity hopes to send delegates to the Congress. Anyone interested should contact Sister Juliet at the parish for more information.

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Philippians 4:13

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