

Indianapolis to host national Eucharistic Congress in 2024

The U.S. bishops have voted to host the National Eucharistic Congress, slated for July 2024, in Indianapolis. To learn more about the event and its location, Our Sunday Visitor has spoken with David Spesia, the executive director for the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, the office overseeing the entire Eucharistic revival process that will culminate in this national event.

Our Sunday Visitor: Who is steering this Eucharistic Revival initiative?



Spesia

David Spesia: Bishop [Andrew H.] Cozzens, as chairman of the Committee on Evangelization and Catechesis, is absolutely spearheading this, with the full support of the committee members and also with substantial input from a bishops' advisory group for the Eucharistic revival. And so there are about 12 bishops representing a number of the committees at the bishops' conference, representing the various regions around the country. That group meets regularly and provides direction for the initiative. And then we have an executive team implementing this, and that the executive team consists of a number of volunteers from partner organizations and apostolates, as well as USCCB staff members who co-chair these

various working groups that are moving forward with planning the initiative.

Our Sunday Visitor: How was Indianapolis chosen as the city of choice to put forward to the body of bishops for this National Eucharistic Revival?

Spesia: Indianapolis is very well-known to a number of the bishops because of the NCYC event [National Catholic Youth Conference, held biennially in Indianapolis], and there's great familiarity with the setup of the hotels and the conference centers and proximity to stadiums and all of that. One of the other factors was the level of enthusiasm and the leadership at the archdiocese, starting with Archbishop [Charles C.] Thompson and his team. And ultimately, then, the dates and availability became a big factor as well. And really, I think when the bishops' advisory group reviewed the input and the background research that was done, they were unanimous in selecting Indianapolis. Everything seemed to fall into place, you know, providentially. And Indianapolis, I should also add, according to our research and the numbers that came in, indicated that close to 50 percent of the U.S. population is within a full day's drive to the city. So the accessibility, just for those who might be traveling on the road, was really encouraging.

Our Sunday Visitor: Is this something like the Olympics where you have a diocese or archdiocese vying to host this event, or is this in the reverse?

Spesia: That's a great question. There were a couple of archdioceses that were very interested, and we're grateful for that interest. We definitely wanted to work with willing and enthusiastic diocesan partners, just because of the amount of volunteer support that we'll need as the event draws near.

Our Sunday Visitor: What are the goals for this national event? What is the event envisioned to entail?

Spesia: Well, we've not gotten into too much detail. But the model for the event will be in World Youth Day style with daily sessions with catechesis and formation. Different age groups will gather for breakout sessions at venues around town, and regather [together] in the evening. And then a Sunday liturgy will be celebrated in the stadium.

Our Sunday Visitor: While it's patterned after World Youth Day, this is an event meant for everyone, correct?

Spesia: Absolutely. We're encouraging and inviting people of all ages to attend, and especially those who are open to this call to be missionary disciples. And we're picturing "Eucharistic missionaries" who will attend this National Eucharistic Congress and then be sent back to their dioceses and parishes as witnesses to the truth, beauty and goodness of the teachings of our faith.

Our Sunday Visitor: Is this envisioned as a long weekend?

Spesia: It's a Thursday through Sunday plan.

Our Sunday Visitor: What does this event hope to offer the faithful?

Spesia: The Eucharistic revival process and initiative is a multiyear plan starting with the diocesan year in 2022 and continuing with the parish year in 2023. This national event in the summer of 2024 would really help make the entire Eucharistic revival a movement, a chance for the Church in the U.S. to head together to a moment where we give witness to our faith in the Lord's Real Presence.

En route to this national event, we're planning and picturing that there will be some regional moments. Bishop Cozzens has talked about trying to get a monstrance blessed by the Holy Father that would then move to different areas around the country on a journey to the national event. We recognize that not everyone will be able to attend in person, but through

these regional moments in the process, we really see the whole Church together, in a way, moving toward the congress.

Our Sunday Visitor: How many people do you hope will gather for this event?

Spesia: Well, Lucas Oil Stadium [Indianapolis' largest venue] can hold 80,000 people, and that would be our goal. We would like to fill the stadium. So we encourage people to keep their eyes and ears open for more information as we continue to move forward.

Our Sunday Visitor: How can people be involved? If they're interested in this event, how can they learn more? And how can they help, if they desire?

Spesia: First of all, in the Eucharistic revival process – starting Corpus Christi Sunday, 2022 – we're encouraging the whole Church to embrace and explore the Faith in some new and deeper ways – to be involved at local levels, at the dioceses and at parishes, beginning with Corpus Christi 2023.

We will be doing significant fundraising for the national event, as well, to help offset costs and be able to make some scholarship access available. So we'd be excited to have donors who want to participate and step forward in that way. And also to have advocates who are encouraging attendance and to consider family trips for the July 2024 event.

Our Sunday Visitor: Is there anything else you'd like to add about either this event or anything related to the entire Eucharistic revival process?

Spesia: I hope Catholics will consider the invitation to explore the "why" behind what we do. We worship the Lord together every Sunday in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass, and we receive him in holy Communion. To consider the invitation to enter more deeply into that, to the extent that we can each do that personally, and then give witness to the reason for

that faith. To consider the reason that Our Lord gave his life for us and pours himself out to us – each day, here and now in the Eucharist – and the call that he has for each of us to go and share the good news and to go invite others into communion with him. I think this is really a moment and opportunity for the Church to reclaim the Eucharistic center of our faith. And the Eucharistic revival, as a multiyear process, has that as the goal – as living in relationship with the Lord in the Blessed Sacrament, in holy Communion.

The national event is a chance to give witness to the country as a whole, and then to let ourselves be sent out to those who are most in need to bring the good news. That's really the heart of what this is all about. I think it's the reason that the Archdiocese of Indianapolis is so excited to be hosting this, and that all of our partners around the country are incredibly passionate about this moment to unite, heal and send us into a new chapter.

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