



ROMAN CATHOLIC  
**DIOCESE of  
SPRINGFIELD-CAPE GIRARDEAU**

*Office of the Bishop*

March 3, 2025

*Feast of Saint Katharine Drexel, Virgin*

Dear Parents,

*"It is not easy being a kid these days, especially as part of a family experiencing unemployment or homelessness. Branson has more than 2,000 working poor with over 400 children living in substandard, weekly-stay motel rooms. Our community's kids deserve better."*

The above quote is from the website for ELEVATE KIDS, Branson's response to assisting the children of the working poor in their community.

We typically think of Branson, Missouri, as the center of wholesome, family entertainment that boosts tourism and is a wonderful economic experience for the Branson area during its peak "in-season" months. However, there is a downside. Being that tourism is seasonal, employment can be scarce in the off-season. The majority of the jobs in this industry offer lower wages and inconsistent hours, with no health insurance or opportunities for advancement. Unemployment, housing, health, and nutritional struggles are very real for families in Branson and throughout the entire Taney County area.

Compared to other counties in Missouri, Taney County has an unusually high number of residents working in traditionally low wage occupations like the hotel and food service industry. While unemployment in the State of Missouri runs at an average of 4.4%, unemployment in Taney County is 33.4%. And of course, the face of poverty is predominantly female and children. These kids deserve better!

ELEVATE KIDS Includes a variety of programs and services to help young children have healthy meals and renew their mind, body and spirit. The money raised for this year's 2025 *Lenten Youth Project* will help to build a safe playground for them to play. The program will include basketball, climbing nets, swings, picnic tables and slides. This will certainly put a smile on their faces.

The funds raised during this 2025 *Lenten Youth Project*, along with prayer, will be a beautiful example of "children helping children" in our diocese. And, next time you're in Branson, you can visit the ELEVATE KIDS playground!

Thank you for all that you do as parents and for teaching your children about the importance of almsgiving and helping others in need. With the assurance of my prayers for a blessed Lenten Season for you and your family, I am,

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Most Reverend Edward M. Rice

Bishop of Springfield-Cape Girardeau

CONFIRMATION CLASS OF 2025  
CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU ALL!

Savannah Aufdenberg  
Sophia Barlow  
Carson Bodenstein  
Evie Brueckner  
Pennie Brueckner  
Bryce Burk  
Finnegan Carr  
Macee Cortez  
Madden Cortez  
Kael Craft  
Sophia Crowell  
Evelyn Dixon  
Samuel Dixon  
Kyleigh Duby  
Kyle Friga  
Wilhelmina Gosche  
Lucas Green, Jr.  
Braden Grieshop  
Tatum Gross  
Kynsleigh Hamm  
Lacey Hindman  
Asher Huckstep  
Damian Huff  
Jillian Kester

Cobie Koehler  
Anna Lewis  
Jay Lukefahr  
Winston Lumsden  
Chase Market  
Korey McBride  
Liza McBryde  
Max McCall  
Nolan Moore  
Lucas Nanney  
Steven Neumann  
Rebecca Niedbalski  
William Niedbalski  
Sophie Parker  
Jackson Peek  
Lincoln Peek  
Ryan Rosenquist  
William Ruch  
Chloe Schonhoff  
John Spooler  
Kadence Turner  
Annabelle Vandeven  
Jayse VonNida