

# Putting Priestly Talents at Center Stage

## Louisville, Kentucky

Painter. Dancer. Writer. Sculptor. Musician.  
Actor. Poet. Comedian. Storyteller.

The men we know by the title of “priest” are so much more than that. As ministers who have the privilege of working closely with many priests, pastoral musicians often have unique insights into the hidden talents of our clergy. Members of the Louisville NPM Chapter decided it was time to publicly display some of the creative and recreational pursuits of our talented priests. This was the impetus behind the Archdiocese of Louisville’s first ever Priest Variety Show, held in late August 2018.

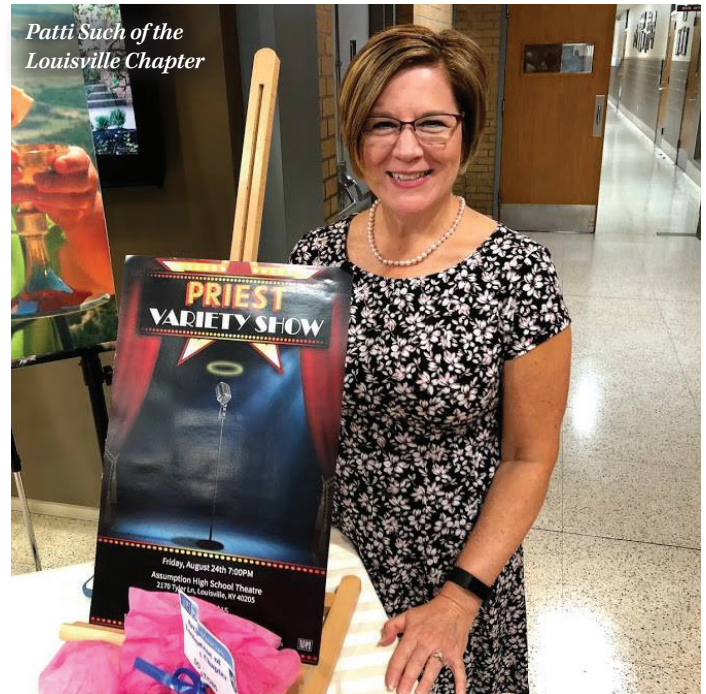
The sold-out auditorium at Assumption High School was the venue for over two hours of acts in a wide range of genres. These included:

- a guitar/vocal rendition of “Tennessee Whiskey” by Fr. Maurice Hayes, OFM, Conv.
- a waltz to “Let Me Call You Sweetheart” by Fr. Terry Bradshaw
- a clown routine in full makeup by Fr. Bill Hammer
- a dramatic recitation of “Errol Flynn” by Fr. Bill Burks
- a sidesplitting comedy act by Fr. John Burke (assisted by a bucket of Kentucky Fried Chicken)
- and a set with Fr. Chuck Walker’s rock band, “Too Young for Sextet.”

## Beyond performing arts

Meanwhile, the lobby was transformed into an art gallery, displaying original paintings, sculptures, drawings, and art in various media from the priests of the archdiocese. Before and after the show and during intermission, attendees were able to peruse the gallery, enjoy wine and hors d’oeuvres, and speak to the artists about their work.

Among the audience of 300+ were parishioners, many fellow priests, Archbishop Joseph Kurtz, and diocesan staff. Chapter members served as ushers, stagehands, and accompanists as needed. A free-will collection was taken to benefit the chapter.



## Lighthearted—and healing

In the course of planning this event, something unexpected happened. Just weeks before the variety show was set to stage, the Pennsylvania Supreme Court released its grand jury report, detailing deeply disturbing acts of abuse and cover-up by members of the clergy. For us and for many others around the country, this report seemed to reopen old wounds, and it was a hard time for many.

After some discussion about whether this was the right time for a light-hearted event, we decided to press forward with the show as scheduled. Unexpectedly, perhaps, this fun and heartwarming event became an act of healing as well. Amid a crisis of trust in the Church, this evening was an opportunity to embrace the very human side of ministry. It was a celebration of the many outstanding men who have answered the call to priesthood with lives of goodness, service, commitment, and sacrifice.

For chapters wanting to plan a similar event: talk to a variety of people about possible acts, especially diocesan leaders who are likely to know many priests and their various talents. A personal invitation to potential performers is essential. Publicize especially in the parishes where the featured priests are serving. Parishioners loved this opportunity to see their clergy on a different kind of “stage.” Add food and drink, and this event will be an easy sell-out!

–Karen Shadle, liaison to the Office of Worship