

Rev. Joseph Edward Bradley (1943-2024)



By Jerry Long
c.2024



Grayson County News, Leitchfield, KY, Thursday, 14 August 1975, p.16:

**Joseph Bradley
Ordained To
The Priesthood**



Bishop Soenneker ordained three Deacons to the priesthood in the Cathedral of St Joseph on the 9th day of August at 10:30 a.m. one of whom was Father Joseph Edward Bradley, born in Grayson County, Kentucky (Dog Creek) the son of Martin Ward Bradley and Ann Lee Sims. Father Leo J. Dienes baptized him in St Benedict's Church, Wax, Kentucky on the 30th day of May, 1943. A graduate of the Peonia Grade School and Grayson County Catholic High School, he attended Loyola and Xavier universities where he obtained the master's degree. He completed his theological studies and formation in the Josephinum Seminary, Worthington, Ohio. Father Bradley offered his first Mass in St Anthony's Parish, Peonia on the 10th day of August at 4 p.m.

Seminarian Richard Meredith of Leitchfield attended the First Mass of Fr. Bradley at Peonia on Sunday August 10 1975.



Owensboro Catholic High School Yearbook, 1984, p.114:



Fr. Ed Bradley, principal, prepares to make the daily morning announcements, complete with prayers, scripture readings and a pledge of allegiance to the flag.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Wednesday, 3 June 1987, p.1A:



The Rev. Ed Bradley, pastor of St. Stephen Cathedral, stands by Cathedral School, which may be closed under a consolidation plan.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 21 March 1993, p.3B:

Owensboro
priest part
of UK family

By Rick Suwanski, Messenger-Inquirer

NASHVILLE - This is a busy time of year for Kentucky coach Rick Pitino, what with the NCAA Tournament and all, but that hasn't kept him from putting his faith on the back burner.

Pitino became acquainted with the Rev. Ed Bradley of St. Stephen's Cathedral in Owensboro last year and invited him to become the Wildcats' team chaplain this year.

"He's a new friend of mine and he's become a close friend of the family," Pitino said. "He's a part of the family."

Bradley, who baptized the Pitino's baby daughter Jaclyn, will say Mass for the team at 1 p.m. today. That's after he says it at St. Stephen's first.

"This is the Lenten season so he likes to go to Mass every day and (on the road) it's tough for him to find a church," Bradley said. "He has a strong Catholic background."

Before being ordained a priest, Bradley was a Franciscan monk teaching in New York and New Jersey. The Leitchfield native followed Pitino's career through the New York newspapers and always admired him.

The two became friends about a year ago through Owensboro's Joe Iracane. This year, Bradley attended whatever home games he could get to, even sitting on or near the team bench at times. He says the team prayer before those games.

Pitino would like to see him stay with the Cats all the way to New Orleans. He recently called Bradley the team's "good luck charm."

Earlier this season at Pitino's request, Bradley joined the team on its December trip to New York City for the ECAC Holiday Festival, which Kentucky won.

"I didn't know he was a Kentucky fan, I just liked him more as a friend and a priest," Pitino said. "I admire the works he does with the Owensboro soup kitchen."



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 30 July 1993, p.2A:



University of Kentucky basketball coach Rick Pitino, right, watches the Rev. Ed Bradley during a press conference Thursday at Walnut Street Baptist Church. Pitino and Ricky Skaggs have agreed to help raise money for the St. Stephen Cathedral's homeless shelter planned for the Walnut Street Baptist Church building. The shelter will be named after Pitino's infant son, Daniel, who died in 1987.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Monday, 22 November 1993, p.1A:

**Rick Pitino honored
at cathedral service**

By Noelle Phillips, Messenger-Inquirer

There were surprise guests Sunday morning during the 11 a.m. Mass at St. Stephen Cathedral.

University of Kentucky basketball coach Rick Pitino was sitting near the front with his wife, Joanne, and Owensboro businessmen Joe Iracane and Terry Woodward.

Pitino was in town Sunday to meet with doctors and others who will be working with the Daniel Pitino Shelter. During the Mass, Pitino, Iracane and Woodward were presented with plaques for their fund-raising work for the shelter.

"I didn't tell anyone in the parish we were having special guests, because I know how crowded this Mass is and we would be overflowing," said the Rev. Ed Bradley, pastor at St. Stephen and the shelter's founder.

One woman told Bradley after the service she was surprised when she realized Pitino was there and couldn't wait to tell her friends later in the day.

Pitino said he didn't know about the award but thought he was going to worship before the shelter meeting. When asked what he thought about getting the award at the morning Mass, Pitino joked, "I just wanted to sit back down." Joanne Pitino was given a dozen roses.

Pitino offered to help with the shelter after he became friends with Bradley. They met through Iracane, and Bradley became the chaplain for the basketball team. Pitino held a golf tournament in Owensboro to benefit the shelter. Woodward, who owns WaxWorks/Video Works, sponsored a benefit concert at the River Park Center.

Pitino said he was going to tell the doctors who will work at the shelter's medical clinic how much he appreciates them. He said the shelter will be a first-class benefit to Owensboro's poor.

Bradley said he decided to present the three plaques on Sunday because the three men were living examples of his message during Mass. Bradley spoke about feeding the hungry and the plaques were inscribed with, "Well done, my good and faithful servant."

The soup kitchen will be more than just a kitchen, Iracane said. It will be a "full-blown" benevolent organization to help the Owensboro community.

The soup kitchen and shelter will move into the Walnut Street Baptist Church building in March, Bradley said. Meals will be served seven days a week and there will be shelter for women, children and teen-agers. There will also be a free medical clinic and free legal services. The Owensboro HELP office, which provides food and clothes to the needy, will also move into the building.



Rick Pitino and his wife, Joanne, are recognized for their efforts in raising funds for the Daniel Pitino Shelter by the Rev. Ed Bradley Sunday after Mass at St. Stephen Cathedral. The shelter, which is named after the couple's deceased son, will be for the homeless and needy.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 4 September 1994, p.1E:

In the Name of the Father

**One of Owensboro's
busiest clergy members
struggled early on with
priesthood, introversion**

By Karen Owen, Messenger-Inquirer

When the Rev. Ed Bradley earns his wings, he won't fly much faster in his plane than he moves on land.

The 51-year-old rector of St. Stephen Cathedral is legendary among his friends for his fast-paced life. The amazing thing is he makes it look so easy, they say.

"When Father Bradley is here, he is here with you, speaking with you, looking at you, you don't realize he is in a hurry," said Daryl Hagan, director of Owensboro Catholic Schools. "That's a real tribute to a man who does more in one day than you and I do all week long."

In addition to being pastor for the local Catholic school system, Bradley leads a parish of more than 1,000 families and a staff of eight - and oversees an annual budget of more than \$1 million. Even his free time is scheduled, with activities such as flying lessons.

He never planned to work at the Diocese of Owensboro's flagship church, however. He even remembers thinking at his ordination rehearsal he'd never want to be assigned there, Bradley said. "The Cathedral used to be a place I dreaded going."

In 1985, however, the Most Rev. John J. McRaith, the diocese's bishop, tapped him for the post.

Now Bradley works in a parish office decorated with dozens of clown pictures and figurines, although he says he's not particularly a clown fan. "I have never bought a clown in my life." They're all gifts, a collection started by students at Owensboro Catholic High School, where he was principal for seven years.

"He made so many friends when he was at Owensboro Catholic," said Lenny Norcia, a former student who named his baby after Bradley seven weeks ago.

Bradley has always loved children, his friends say.

Early in his career he struggled both with the priesthood's celibacy requirement and the knowledge he would never have children of his own, Bradley said.

Until doing volunteer work at a Louisville community center as a college student convinced him to work with the poor, he had always planned to marry, he said.

Back in Grayson County, in fact, he and his girlfriend were declared the couple most likely to marry first among their high school class, Bradley recalled with a smile.

As a young priest, "I was too young to know how the Lord would compensate for that." He didn't know it was possible to be close to someone else's children, he said.

Kathy Lanham, who now lives in Louisville, was one of his substitute children. The former Catholic High student had Bradley wear a tuxedo and give her away at her wedding. "He was a nervous wreck," she recalled with amusement. Then he donned the usual robes and performed the wedding ceremony.

Her father died when she was 9, Lanham said. Bradley "was there for me all those times I needed a father."

Bradley even played matchmaker for her in high school, she said, often calling her and her future husband to the office at the same time, hoping they'd hit it off.

"He announced to the whole school our first date," Lanham said.

Bradley's ability to make people feel comfortable and accepted is one of his great strengths, friends say. "He's about the friendliest person I've ever known," Norcia said.

"People find this really hard to understand, but I'm an introvert," Bradley said. "That's why initially I was attracted to monastic life."

He joined the Brothers of the Poor of St. Francis after his freshman year at Bellarmine College in Louisville, which introduced him to children who were hungry physically and emotionally. It was a new experience, even for a boy who grew up the eighth of 10 children of a poor tobacco farmer.

"I knew I had to do what I could to make the world a better place," Bradley said.

He taught at an orphanage and a school for disturbed children in Chicago and New York state and was all set to move to Colorado when a priest in Grayson County convinced him to go back home.

Now Bradley works in a parish of extremes. "We have the poorest of the poor and the richest of the rich in Owensboro. We have the brightest and the dullest," he said.

To him, that mixture is what church is all about. "The dull and the poor have their story too. We can learn a lot from them," he said.

Serving this particular parish and fulfilling other duties means some days start at 5:15 a.m. for Bradley. He is spiritual director and confessor for the Passionists and the Carmelites in Owensboro. One recent week's schedule also included a rotary meeting, Hospice board meeting, Mercy Hospital board meeting, visiting the sick, premarital counseling, two trips to Murray for a wedding rehearsal and ceremony, and a trip to Washington, D.C., to lead a four-day spiritual retreat.

"He'll have appointments until 9 o'clock at night," said Tammy Norcia, Lenny's wife, who has Bradley over to dinner.

To see the priest, "You've got to get on his calendar," Hagan said. "He will be 10 minutes late, but he will be there. I never worry until he's 15 minutes late."

Meeting people is the best part of his job, but functioning as an extrovert takes a lot of energy, Bradley said.

"That's why a day off doesn't do an introvert a lot of good. It takes longer than a day off to withdraw," he said.

He recharges his emotional battery by taking flying lessons, going to New York to see plays and visit friends, and attending University of Kentucky basketball games.

"I love it," said Bradley, who is the team's chaplain and has performed weddings for former players. "It's such a great escape for me. Watching a game, I'm in a completely different world."

His friendship with head coach Rick Pitino has had a great deal to do with his success in getting the community behind the new Daniel Pitino Shelter, Bradley said. The cathedral's soup kitchen moved earlier this year to the former Baptist church, which has become a mini mall of services to the poor. The shelter will soon be able to house the homeless overnight, backers say.

Bradley said he has to tell people not to volunteer at the shelter in hopes of free basketball tickets or the chance to meet Pitino. "You have to do it for the poor," he said.

Before coming to the cathedral, "I thought I would be in education the rest of my life," Bradley said. "Now I would never want to be anything but a pastor."

"There were times I thought about being a missionary," maybe going to Guatemala or Africa, he said.

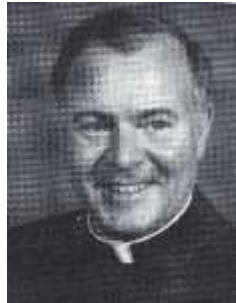
He decided against it because he's not into politics, and often that's what's required to change unfair systems, the priest said.

Also, "it would be such a small impact, when, if I stay here, we can really do something about the homeless problem in Owensboro," he said. The problem is manageable, if people work together, Bradley said.

"Isn't it better to say we took care of this problem?"



**The Roman Catholic Diocese of Owensboro, Kentucky,
Paducah, KY, Turner Publishing Company, 1995, p.207:**



BRADLEY, REVEREND JOSEPH EDWARD, was born, April 24, 1943, in Hart County, KY is one of 10 children of Martin Ward Bradley and Anna Lee Sims Bradley. A farm in Grayson County was home until his parents' death. All of the children helped with the farm work. Social life revolved around Saint Anthony Parish and School. Baptized by Father Leo Dienes. His life was greatly influenced by Father Victor Boarman who understood that the needs of young people must be affirmed and complimented. His kind and gentle way was greatly admired and respected by all. A fond memory was the Friday afternoon ball games. The students from St. Benedict Wax were brought to Peonia to play baseball. Fr. Boarman was both coach and umpire.

Joseph Edward graduated from St. Paul High School in 1960. Fr. Walter Hancock had a big influence on the youth of Grayson County. He began a TEEN CLUB at St. Anthony Parish. The big events were the dances with the students from Whitesville. There they met new faces and broadened their social life.

It was the Mount Saint Joseph Ursulines who inspired Joseph Edward to be a teacher and thus to enter the congregation of the Brothers of the Poor of St. Francis in Cincinnati, OH. He taught in schools in Ohio, New York and New Jersey and attended universities. After 10 years of teaching and studying, he decided to enter the Josephinum Seminary and was ordained a priest for the Owensboro Diocese on Aug. 9, 1975. His next 10 years were spent at Owensboro Catholic High School as dean of students and principal. He was diocesan vocation director until May 1987.

He was appointed pastor of St. Stephen Cathedral in May, 1985. He has worked on many church and civic organizations and committees. These 18 years as a priest have been fulfilling and challenging. He enjoys the ministerial priesthood and finds great satisfaction working with the people of God in the Diocese of Owensboro.



The Diocese of Owensboro: 75 Years of the Diocese of Owensboro, Kentucky,
Sarah L. Patterson, Editions Du Signe, 2012, p.50:



The Daniel Pitino Shelter, Inc. was established in 1994 to offer assistance to the homeless population in Owensboro. [Rev. Ed Bradley in the center]



Herald-Leader, Lexington, KY, Thursday, 20 March 1997, pp.1A & 10A:

A Coach OF THE Spirit

Priest is counselor,
friend to Wildcats,
Pitino and family

By Eric Gregory, Herald-Leader



Left: The Rev. Ed Bradley, shown talking with Scott Padgett during a game, is a favorite of the players, whom he often counsels and always encourages. Right: The Rev. Ed Bradley has a close relationship not only with Rick Pitino, but the entire Pitino family. Here he accompanies Pitino's son Ryan from the UK dressing room to the floor just before the Wildcats took on South Carolina. Bradley received a UK championship ring with his name engraved on it.

They say University of Kentucky basketball is a religion, its quest laden with tales of redemption and an everlasting search for the promised land.

It is worshipped by thousands across the world. An annual crusade starts just before Christmas and ends around Easter. There have been the hell of penance and the heaven of championship.

Witness the team bench for proof of this exalted order. At the end sits the Rev. Ed Bradley of Henderson, his hands clasped in continuous prayer. He is chaplain, counselor and Catholic priest.

This night he is in Salt Lake City watching Coach Rick Pitino assemble another Goliath win. In a few hours, he will jet to Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church and begin the first of three Lenten masses.



Bradley celebrated Mass recently at Holy Name Church in Henderson, where he is pastor. Servers are Brandon and Dane Shelton.



While Bradley serves as spiritual adviser to Rick Pitino, he also counsels and comforts the players. At a recent game he sat with Wayne Turner, who was holding ice on his head after being bumped during play.

No one knows March Madness better. "These kinds of things energize me," he says. "I enjoy it too much."

Bradley, 53, and Pitino share the same enthusiasm, devotion to the church and the goal to make people better. It is no wonder they have become so close. Friends say their special bond helps hold the team together. "It's one of the real hidden secrets," says Henderson businessman Dale Sights, one of Bradley's closest friends. "Rick's a very spiritual guy, but he has to coach. A lot of counseling goes on with Father Bradley."

In the last five years, Bradley has baptized Pitino's daughter, presided over his father-in-law's funeral and started a homeless shelter in his dead son's name. "He's simply a great man," the coach says.

The players bring their girlfriends to meet him - he has even married some and often seek his advice. The rectory at Holy Name is filled with autographed jerseys and pictures, most with personal notes blessing his guidance.

"He's just an angel," Derek Anderson says. "He gives us a sense of place and stability, that everything's going to be all right. You just feel like you're safe at home when you're around him."

But how did this holy man hook up with the fast-talking coach from New York and his squad of stars?

The story starts with the hoop dreams of a young Joseph Edward Bradley and his desire to be a Kentucky Wildcat.

A wish to be a Wildcat

Bradley grew up in Leitchfield, the seat of Grayson County. He played forward for tiny St. Paul High School in the late 1950s.

"I was as big then as I am now," he says. "I knew I wasn't that good. But as a kid, your one dream is to play basketball, and to play for Kentucky."

On winter nights, Bradley would begin his climb up that mountain. He would drive the highest hill, seeking a clear radio signal and Cawood Ledford's soothing voice.

Any visions of being one of Rupp's Runts were soon shattered. "Son, you have a big heart," his high school coach said. "But this is your senior year. I'm going to start playing some younger players."

Basketball was destined, though, to change his life. He got an academic scholarship to study mathematics at Bellarmine College in Louisville. As part of a required sociology class, he volunteered at a youth center, playing ball with underprivileged kids.

A desire to help others

"My whole value system changed," Bradley remembers. "I began to understand that I really wanted to just help people. So I went to the seminary at the end of my freshman year."

He was ordained in 1975, and named principal at Owensboro Catholic High School. Ten years later, he became pastor of St. Stephen's Cathedral in Owensboro.

Pitino became savior of the scandalridden UK program in 1989. They met in 1992 at the coach's 40th birthday party.

"I went with some friends, and Rick invited me to the next game," Bradley says. "Then he asked if I would say the team prayer. I was at the right place at the right time."

It seemed odd at first: a priest sitting on the bench of a non-Catholic school. At the other end was an immaculately dressed coach spewing profanity.

"Back east, if you went into a big game without a priest on your bench, more than likely you were going to lose," Pitino said at the 1993 Final Four. "It's a superstition of all Catholic schools. You look to him when you're a few points down."

Friendship with Pitino

Pitino asked Bradley to travel with the team, and their friendship blossomed. Bradley knew Pitino was a great coach and motivator, but he's been more impressed with what the public doesn't see.

"Rick is such a good father and husband, it really helps the team. It teaches them there is something beyond basketball."

Bradley often stays at the Pitino house – his snoring frightens the youngest son, Ryan – and holds Mass in his room on road trips.

He even forgives Pitino's foul language. "Rick speaks so loudly that I don't even hear what he says. Who the person is speaks much more than what they say."

The two share a deep love for the Daniel Pitino Shelter in Owensboro, named after the coach's infant son who died in 1987. Bradley is executive director of the soup kitchen and home for women and children.

Even though Bradley was assigned to the Henderson church a year ago, he often makes the 30-minute drive to Owensboro. Pitino sponsors a golfing fund-raiser there each year.

"It's going great," Pitino said. "We house 50 people, feed a hundred a day, seven days a week. It's a great way to honor Daniel's memory and we're very proud of it."

Their relationship does have its light moments. After Vanderbilt amassed a 22-point first-half lead, Pitino jokingly told reporters that he was going to exile the priest.

"I asked Father Bradley to leave the bench," he said. "If you can't pray any harder than that, your career as priest on this bench is over."

Good times and bad

The Wildcats have seen some heaven-sent victories with Father Bradley.

The Maui Tournament, when Jeff Brassow tipped in a miraculous last second shot. A signed photo from Brassow says, "I couldn't have made the winning shot without you here."

The Italy tour, when they met Pope John Paul II, kicked off last year's national championship season. "That would have to be the greatest experience," Bradley said.

But there have been bad times, too, especially the constant criticism of ex-Cat Rodrick Rhodes.

"Rod tries so hard. He just overdoes it," says Bradley, who still hears from Rhodes, now at the University of Southern California.

"So much is expected of our players, but people don't realize they're just kids who make mistakes."

This is where Bradley fits in.

He teaches them about family and friendship. They are special and unique, he says not just because they can dunk a basketball, but because of who they are.

"We need a guy like Father Bradley around," Ron Mercer says. "There's a lot of times when the other coaches have things to do. But Father Bradley is always there and willing to listen."

Jared Prickett says, "You don't even have to go to him. Before a game, he'll say, 'I just know you're going to have a good game tonight. Just play hard.' It's really good to have that kind of encouragement."

Bradley says a team prayer before each game, asking God for safety and strength. But he never pushes his faith on the players, five of whom are Catholic.

"I'm not here to win these kids over to the Catholic church," he says. "I would never encourage that."

It's clear UK makes him feel part of the team. He wears a championship ring and a watch from The John Wooden Classic. The mints in his jar are blue and white.

He's become something of a celebrity, despite the age-old belief that priests shouldn't have a life outside the church. He even merits two pages in Pitino's new book.

Bishop John J. McRaith, of Owensboro couldn't be more pleased with his friend's success.

"We're very happy to have that kind of visibility for the Catholic church," he says. "I find that to be a good ministry in terms of not just the ball team, but for the presence of the church nationally."

Finding enough time

With the team and the shelter, some wonder whether Bradley spends enough time in his parish. Dale Sights often flies him back to Henderson after games so he can conduct Sunday Mass.

About 3,500 people attend the Holy Name church, It's the largest in the Owensboro diocese, which covers 79 parishes and 32 counties in Western Kentucky.

McRaith says no one questions Bradley's commitment. "I'm sure that they would love to have more of his time, but he's never away that long. He just has a gift of energy that God gives to some people."

Parishioner Bruce Galloway says, "He's just phenomenal. Sometimes we think he's two different people. The other half is off somewhere finding more things to do."

Bradley sees that as his main frailty. Because he is so active, he doesn't take time to grow spiritually. "God continues to reveal himself to us. I have to take time to be open to that revelation."

If there was a conflict with basketball, Bradley says, the church would come first. He never mentions Pitino or last night's game in his sermon. "It's more important that they know me as pastor."

But a UK pin graces his lapel underneath a purple Lenten robe. A strand of the Meadowlands championship net hangs near a crucifix and portrait of the Virgin Mary in his office.

He knows that Kentucky basketball is a religion and a quest and a lifelong dream. He has become part of its lore. "I have been, and always will be, a fan of the Cats."

On the wall near his desk is a saying, hand-stitched by church member Clara King:

"If you lead a good life, go to Sunday school and church and say your prayers at night, when you die you'll go to Kentucky."



Kentucky Monthly, Frankfort, KY, December 1998, pp.17-18:

SOUL OF THE CATS

The Rev. Ed Bradley provides spiritual advice for the UK men's basketball team

By Brad Schneider

Like many priests, the Rev. F Bradley, pastor at Holy Name Catholic Church in Henderson, enjoys chatting up parishioners as they file out after Mass. He meets and greets, interested in every bit of news, always smiling, always upbeat.

And invariably, these Sunday morning social rituals will include at least one overly earnest member of the flock who will take Bradley aside and ask, conspiratorially, about the University of Kentucky men's basketball team.

"What's up with Jamaal Magloire, father?" they whisper. "Think we can beat Arkansas?" or "Got any tickets for the Louisville game?"

"I guess they consider me the inside source, although I often don't know any more about the team than they do," Bradley said. "And it's not just in Henderson. While traveling around the state, I've had strangers who've recognized me and asked to shake my hand. It's really quite amazing."

Bradley shouldn't be surprised.

As the Wildcats' unofficial team chaplain for the past eight seasons, he has a unique perspective on the Commonwealth's two primary religious pursuits—God and basketball. And thanks to television, Bradley, whose frock and collar make him easy to spot as he sits at the end of the UK bench or in a courtside seat at Rupp Arena, may now be the most well-known priest in the state.

It's all heady stuff for someone who grew up in rural Grayson County dreaming that one day he might play for the Cats. Bradley was a forward on the team at St. Paul, a small Catholic high school in Leitchfield.

"I wasn't any good, but I loved the sport, and I grew up a huge UK fan," he said. "I remember driving with my buddies in an old jalopy up to the top of a hill so we could get better reception while listening to UK games on the radio."

After graduating from St. Paul in 1960, Bradley earned degrees from Loyola University in Chicago and Xavier University in Cincinnati. He was ordained in 1975 and was assigned to Owensboro Catholic High School, where he was dean of students before eventually becoming principal. After 10 years at Owensboro Catholic High School, he was named pastor at St. Stephen Cathedral in Owensboro.

It was while he was at St. Stephen that he met former Kentucky coach Rick Pitino.

"It was during the 1990-91 school year, and I got an invitation to his 40th birthday party," Bradley said. "It was a total surprise. I had done some teaching in New York City in between going to Loyola and Xavier, and some one mentioned that to Rick (a native New Yorker). That's what prompted the invitation, I guess."

Bradley and Pitino hit it off immediately, and the UK coach invited Bradley to the Cats' next game.



Bradley comforts a fidgety Ryan Pitino during a game Photo by Daniel Coyle.

"Rick is Catholic, and grew up in Catholic schools, and it's common for the Catholic school athletic teams to have a priest on the bench," Bradley said.

"At that first game, Rick asked me to say a prayer in the locker room before the game, and then he told me to take a seat at the end of the bench. Now, I had never even been to a UK game at Rupp Arena, and here I was sitting on the bench. It blew my mind."

Kentucky won that night, and Pitino told Bradley he had the job of team chaplain. Bradley accepted, and has been an integral part of the program since.

During Pitino's tenure, Bradley not only performed priestly duties, such as conducting hotel-room Masses for team members during road trips, but also became a mentor to many players. Using off-days and vacation time, Bradley rarely missed a game, home or away.

Tubby Smith, who is Methodist, took over for Pitino before last season, but asked Bradley, 55, to continue in his role as the team's spiritual counselor. "I appreciate everything Father Bradley does for us," Smith said.

"The players really like him. He's someone they can talk to about anything."

Those relationships, with players from widely different religious backgrounds, are what Bradley cherishes most. He talks regularly with former cats Tony Delk, Walter McCarty, Allen Edwards, Nazr Mohammed, Cameron Mills, Jeff Sheppard, Mark Pope and Antoine Walker, none of whom are Catholic.

He also remains close to Pitino, now the coach of the Boston Celtics. Bradley said he attended a dozen Celtics games last year.

"My schedule is pretty hectic, but it works itself out," he said.

"My priority is still Holy Name. I would never miss a Mass for a game. And I purposely never use basketball references in my homilies, although I'd love to because I want people to understand that there's much more to my life than what I do at UK."

But Bradley also knows his connection to the Wildcats enhances his popularity as a pastor.

"It helps, and hey, I'm a fan like everyone else," he said. "I like talking basketball after Mass, just as long as I know they were listening during Mass."



**Diocese of Owensboro: A Celebration of the Catholic Church in
Western Kentucky, Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, 2010, p.24:**



Father Ed Bradley elevates the cup at a Sunday Mass at Holy Name of Jesus Christ Church in Henderson in 1998.



Father Bradley at dedication ceremony for the new Father J. Edward Bradley Parish Center at Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church in Henderson, KY.



The Gleaner, Henderson, KY, Tuesday, 2 May 2019, p.3A:

Bradley's Background

He grew up on a farm in Grayson County and served with the Catholic Church in Daviess County before coming to Henderson.

Bradley was a former longtime priest and leader at Holy Name of Jesus Catholic Church in Henderson. He arrived here in 1995 and served for 16 years.

Locally, Bradley was instrumental in the creation of the Emergency Shelter for Women and Children as well as the Women's Addiction Recovery Manor, and according to a profile by late columnist Judy Jenkins "his involvement with St. Anthony's Hospice and other helping agencies has never been a matter of mere lip service."

He named Henderson's Distinguished Citizen of the Year by the Henderson Chamber of Commerce in 2007.

Bradley, who is now 74, left Henderson in June of 2011 to return to Daviess County and become chaplain at Owensboro Catholic High School. Statewide, Bradley is best known as being a close friend of Rick Pitino, the former head basketball coach at the University of Kentucky and University of Louisville and member of the Naismith Memorial Basketball Hall of Fame. Bradley had the title of Team Chaplain with the Wildcats and Cardinals during Pitino's years at UK and UL.



Kentucky New Era, Hopkinsville, KY, Saturday, 1 May 2021, p.2C:

Kentucky priest accused of sex abuse reinstated by Vatican

By Associated Press

OWENSBORO — A western Kentucky priest accused of sexually abusing two minors has been reinstated by the Vatican but remains banned from entering schools for five years.

The Diocese of Owensboro announced Monday that Joseph Edward Bradley could resume priestly duties after the Vatican overrode a 2019 recommendation from the Owensboro bishop that he be permanently suspended, according to the diocese’s statement.

Bradley served in leadership roles at Owensboro Catholic High School in the 1980s. His priesthood was suspended in the spring of 2019 after the diocese received two reports accusing him of sexual abuse against a minor stemming from his time at the school.

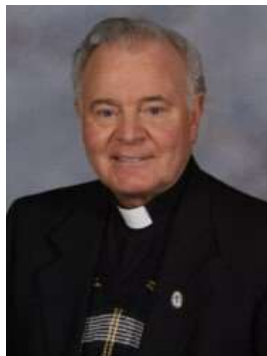
A review board found the allegations credible and they were formally deemed substantiated after an investigation, according to the diocese.

Bradley’s lawyers appealed the suspension to the Vatican, who reinstated him last week, noting in its ruling that Bradley engaged in “imprudent behavior” during his career in education, the Owensboro Messenger-Inquirer reported, citing the statement.

Bradley has always maintained his innocence and was never formally charged with any crimes. A prosecutor decided not to pursue charges against him in October 2019, saying “allegations of criminal contact were not supported by evidence.” Bradley also served as a priest in Henderson from 1995 to 2011 and as the men’s basketball teams’ chaplain while Rick Pitino was coaching at the University of Kentucky and University of Louisville. Bradley was retired and again working at Owensboro Catholic, this time as a volunteer chaplain, when the allegations emerged.



Owensboro Times, Owensboro, KY, Sunday, 1 December 2024:



Fr. Joseph Edward Bradley, a retired priest of the Diocese of Owensboro known for his devotion to the less fortunate and his compassion, passed away Saturday, Nov. 30, 2024, at Owensboro Health. He had spent his final days in the Carmel Home in Owensboro. He was 81.

Fr. Bradley left an impact and a legacy throughout western Kentucky. Bradley held several pastoral leadership positions, founded the Daniel Pitino Shelter for the Homelessness, and was the long-time “unofficial chaplain” for iconic college basketball coach Rick Pitino’s basketball teams.

Bishop William Medley reflected on his life.

“His tireless dedication to helping the less fortunate and his compassion touched countless lives, leaving a legacy of faith, love, and service,” Medley said.

The Daniel Pitino Shelter was named in honor of Pitino’s late son. Bradley opened the shelter in 1994. It provides emergency and transitional housing to homeless individuals in Owensboro and operates a soup kitchen serving meals 365 days a year.

According to the shelter’s website, Bradley’s vision for the shelter grew out of his work at Saint Stephen Cathedral’s soup kitchen, where he recognized the homeless’s deeper needs beyond physical hunger.

Harry Pedigo, executive director of the Daniel Pitino Shelter and St. Benedict’s Homeless Shelter, described Fr. Bradley as “a pillar of faith and what servant leadership is.”

“Father Bradley always spoke truth and wisdom into me and was in some form a father figure to me and many others,” Pedigo said. “The world has truly lost one of the greatest, kindest, and most compassionate men I’ve ever known. His spirit and what he stood for will live forever through the mission of the Daniel Pitino Shelter.”

Born in Grayson County, Fr. Bradley was ordained in 1975 and began his ministry in the Diocese of Owensboro. Over the years, he served multiple parishes, directed vocations, and left a mark as principal of Owensboro Catholic High School from 1980 to 1985.

His connection with Rick Pitino began in 1992, and he later served as an unofficial chaplain for Pitino’s University of Kentucky and University of Louisville basketball teams. Their friendship flourished through shared initiatives, including the shelter.

Susan Montalvo-Gesser, director of Catholic Charities, described Fr. Bradley as a mentor and friend whose authenticity inspired many.

“Fr. Bradley accompanied so many people... as a pastor, mentor, friend,” Montalvo-Gesser said. “His work with the homeless in Henderson and Owensboro was inspirational and came from an authentic place of love and service. May we all learn to love like that.”

Current University of Kentucky Men’s Basketball coach Mark Pope reflected on Bradley’s life.

“Father Bradley lives in my heart as the definition of quiet, humble, compassionate, selfless service,” Pope said. “I’m so grateful for him. We will miss him.”

Bradley officiated at the marriage ceremonies of several former UK basketball players and presided over the funeral of legendary announcer Cawood Ledford.

The Diocese of Owensboro asks for prayers for his soul and for comfort for all who mourn his passing.

“Eternal rest grant unto him, O Lord, and let perpetual light shine upon him,” the Diocese shared in its announcement. “May his soul and the souls of all the faithful departed, through the mercy of God, rest in peace.”

Funeral arrangements for Fr. Bradley are forthcoming.



Messenger-Inquirer, Owensboro, KY, Tuesday, 3 December 2014, p.3B:



Reverend Joseph Edward Bradley, 81, of Owensboro, passed away on Saturday, Nov. 30, 2024. Reverend Bradley was born in Hart County and was the son of Martin Ward Bradley and Anna Lee Sims Bradley. He was raised on a farm in Grayson County where he attended St. Anthony's Parish and graduated from St. Paul High School in 1960.

After one year at Bellarmine University, Rev. Bradley entered the Congregation of the Brothers of the Poor of St. Francis in Cincinnati, Ohio, taking the name of Brother Vincent de Paul Bradley. He taught in schools in Ohio, New York, Arkansas and New Jersey for 10 years before entering the Josephinum Seminary to become a priest.

After his ordination to the priesthood in 1975, he was assigned to Owensboro Catholic High School for 10 years as the dean of students and then as principal. During this time, he also served as the diocesan vocations director.

In June of 1985, he began serving as pastor and rector of Saint Stephen Cathedral and pastor of Blessed Sacrament Chapel where he remained for 10 years.

In 1995, he was appointed pastor of Holy Name Parish in Henderson where he served until 2011.

In addition to these pastoral assignments, Rev. Bradley also served as confessor to the Passionist Nuns in Whitesville, associate pastor at Our Lady of Lourdes Parish in Owensboro, Immaculate Parish in Owensboro and St. John Parish in Sunfish, pastor at St. Elizabeth Parish in Curdsville, St. Michael Parish in Sebree and Holy Cross Parish in Providence and priest pastor for the Owensboro Consolidated Catholic School System.

Reverend Bradley's heart for the poor led to the establishment of a soup kitchen at Saint Stephen Cathedral and then the Daniel Pitino Homeless Shelter in Owensboro, the St. Joseph Community Apartments for low-income residents in Henderson and the Fr. Bradley Shelter in Henderson, as well as the Henderson Emergency Shelter for Women and Children and the Women's Addiction Recovery Manor.

Reverend Bradley was the chaplain for the University of Kentucky and the University of Louisville's men's basketball teams.

In addition to his parents, he was preceded in death by his siblings, Sue Garrett, Hubert "Buster" Bradley, Rose White, John Bradley, Sam Bradley, Anna Frances, Dorothy Clemons and George Bradley.

He is survived by a sister, Mary Lou Patterson.

The Mass of Christian Burial will be held at 1 p.m. on Thursday, Dec. 5, 2024, at St. Stephen Cathedral, with the Most Reverend William F. Medley, bishop of the Diocese of Owensboro, presiding. Visitation will be from 2 to 7 p.m., with a prayer vigil at 7 p.m. officiated by Fr. Richard Meredith, on Wednesday at St. Stephen Cathedral. Visitation will also be held from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. on Friday at St. Anthony Catholic Church in Peonia. Burial will follow the visitation in St. Anthony Catholic Church Cemetery.

The Mass of Christian Burial will be live-streamed at <https://ststephencathedral.org/>.

Care by Glenn Funeral Home and Crematory.

Memorial contributions will be equally divided among the four charities chosen by Reverend Bradley via the Diocese of Owensboro, 600 Locust St., Owensboro, KY 42301. Include Father Bradley in the memo line.



Owensboro Times, Owensboro, KY, Friday, 6 December 2024:

Rick Pitino, Joe Iracane remember Fr. Bradley
for his faith, friendship, and legacy

Here's a story about how a Hall-of-Fame basketball coach and a successful businessman – both New Yorkers – found faith and friendship through Diocese of Owensboro priest Fr. Ed Bradley. For legendary basketball coach Rick Pitino and successful local businessman Joe Iracane, Bradley was much more than a priest. He was a friend, mentor, and an integral part of their lives.

Bradley died on November 30, 2024, at the age of 81.

From his service to the homeless in Owensboro to his role as chaplain for Pitino's basketball programs at the universities of Kentucky and Louisville, Pitino and Iracane most remember Bradley for his unwavering faith, compassion, and ability to connect with people from all walks of life.

Pitino first met Bradley in the early 1990s through Iracane, who was chairman of the Board of Regents at Western Kentucky University at the time. The introduction came during Pitino's tenure as head coach at the University of Kentucky.

"Joe brought him to a game and introduced me," Pitino said. "I said, 'Father, we need a little luck. How about sitting on the bench?' And from there, we became very close."

That initial meeting turned into a lasting friendship. Bradley was a regular presence at games, and afterward, Pitino said the two had a routine they always followed.

"After every game, Father would stay at my house," Pitino said. "First, we would have to watch the film after the game; then, we'd have a bite to eat and get back to my house around midnight. Then, I would make him a nightcap because I was exhausted."

Pitino quickly learned that ending the conversation would take more than a stiff drink, though, as the two would talk about everything but basketball – politics, religion, and life.

"We'd stay up until 3 in the morning, and by 5, he'd be on the road back to Owensboro or Henderson for daily Mass," Pitino said.

Pitino described Bradley as someone who could make anyone feel like the most important person in the world.

“He made everybody a better person,” Pitino said. “He baptized all my children, married them, and confirmed them. He was very much part of the Pitino family.”

Bradley’s influence extended beyond Pitino’s family to his teams, where he became a beloved figure among players and staff.

“He meant a lot to the team,” Pitino said. “He was part of two championships, in ’96 with Kentucky and later with Louisville.”

Current UK head coach Mark Pope played for Pitino at Kentucky. In a statement on X after Bradley’s passing, Pope echoed that sentiment, referring to Bradley as the epitome of “quiet, humble, compassionate, selfless service.”

But Bradley’s connection with Pitino wasn’t without humor. Pitino recounted a memorable moment when he took Bradley’s advice to return to Kentucky as head coach of Louisville.

“Father told me, ‘They’ll welcome you back with open arms.’ I said, ‘Father when I walk into Rupp Arena, they’re not going to welcome me with open arms.’ When I walked into Rupp Arena as Louisville’s coach, 24,000 people booed me. I turned to him and said, ‘Father, you’re a really, really smart man, but don’t make any more basketball comments.’”

Iracane, who introduced Fr. Bradley to Pitino, credited the priest with bringing him back to the Church. Iracane was raised Catholic and was the head football coach at Owensboro Senior High School when Bradley first approached him.

“I was disenchanted with what happened with the Catholic Church and the Ecumenical Council, so I was limiting my visits to church,” Iracane said. “Father found out about it and came to my office, sat me down, and said, ‘You influence young people. You need to come back.’ So I did what he said.”

And so began a friendship that spanned decades and was rooted in mutual respect and shared values. Iracane assisted Bradley in establishing the Daniel Pitino Shelter, named in honor of Pitino’s late son. Bradley spearheaded the initiative, which provides emergency housing and a soup kitchen for Owensboro’s homeless.

“Father never turned anyone away,” Iracane said. “He was a man’s man – a priest, but also someone who spoke honestly and lived authentically. He made faith accessible.”

Bradley’s dedication to Owensboro was unwavering.

“He always said Owensboro was the greatest town,” Pitino shared. “I’d joke with him about the long drive to the airport, but nothing could change his mind.”

Whether he was officiating weddings, supporting his basketball teams, or serving those in need, Pitino and Iracane said Bradley left an indelible mark on everyone he met.

Iracane said his legacy lives on through the Daniel Pitino Shelter, the lives he touched, and the enduring friendships he cultivated.

“Fr. Bradley filled a hole in all our lives. He was there for everything – weddings, funerals, good times, and hard times,” Iracane said. “We prayed together often and had a lot of fun with the Pitino Shelter. He was very giving and understanding, and whatever the circumstance, he never turned away a person.”

Pitino also reflected on Bradley’s love for the community and the shelter.

“He loved Owensboro, and the Daniel Pitino Shelter was something he was very proud of, and it was something that was a labor of love,” he said. “There was no time limit to his love and his faith in people. He was on call 24 hours a day.”

Bradley’s home parish where he grew up, St. Anthony in Clarkson, KY, will host a visitation from 10 a.m. to noon Friday, followed by his burial at St. Anthony Cemetery.



Daniel Pitino Shelter, Inc., 501 Walnut Street, Owensboro, KY, 2024,
<https://pitinoshelter.org/about-us/>



A History of the Pitino Shelter

The Daniel Pitino Shelter, Inc., began with the vision of Father Ed Bradley, then pastor of Saint Stephen's Cathedral. In his longtime work within the Cathedral's soup kitchen, Fr. Bradley saw past the physical hunger of the homeless to the many hungers of the human heart. The Shelter was the natural outgrowth of trying to meet the abundant needs of the body and the spirit among the homeless.

The Daniel Pitino Shelter was the natural outgrowth as a result of trying to meet the abundant needs of the body and the spirit among the homeless. The Shelter was organized in 1993 with the expressed purpose of creating emergency and transitional housing for the growing number of homeless persons in Owensboro-Daviess County region. The three-story Daniel Pitino Shelter located at 501 Walnut Street, near the heart of downtown Owensboro, consists of 22,000 square feet of space. Built in 1959, the building originally served as the Walnut Street Baptist Church's educational building until the Sanctuary burned in 1992. The Shelter Board of Directors entered into negotiations for the building in the fall of 1993 and took possession of the property in April, 1994. Upon receipt of a HUD Supportive Housing Program grant November 1, 1995, the vision of providing transitional housing became reality.

Today, the Daniel Pitino Shelter is a non-profit, non-denominational, privately-supported organization dedicated to breaking the cycle of homelessness through a community collaborative approach, by addressing the needs of homeless or housing insecure individuals and families through emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing. We additionally offer both prevention and rapid rehousing programs, and have successfully moved

homeless persons from emergency shelter through transitional housing and into permanent residency, all the while supporting their needs and providing essential services and resources.

The Daniel Pitino Shelter properties have the capacity to serve 65 emergency shelter guests in the main emergency shelter; four families in the 3BR/1BA transitional homes; and 12 individuals or couples in the 12 units of the 1 BR/1BA Nicky Hayden Apartments. In addition, our onsite St. Stephen Cathedral Soup Kitchen provides nutritional meals not only to our shelter guests, but also the community 365 days a year with the assistance of its volunteers and donations. This additionally provides volunteer opportunities for community members on the business and personal level.

The Daniel Pitino Shelter provides a one-stop service location through the cumulative efforts of several agencies, thereby reducing duplication of services, a trend unique to a community of this size. The success of this unique program is also evident in the widespread community support of not only local social service agencies but also businesses, industries and individuals. Their donations provide systematic support enabling the shelter to meet the needs of the homeless that otherwise, due to financial strain, could not be met. This successful, cumulative effort of the entire community serves as a template for other areas focusing on providing supportive services to the homeless. We have engaged with local agencies and initiatives including the Homeless Council of Ohio Valley (HCOV), partnered with other local shelters providing resources, food, and support, and worked with Kentucky Housing Corporation (KHC) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) during our 26 years of operation in the community.



Herald-Leader, Lexington, KY:



Scott Padgett talked to Father Ed Bradley during a University of Kentucky men's basketball game. When Rick Pitino was coach, Bradley sat on UK's bench, traveled with the team and prayed with them before each game.

